

Switzerland as a Topic in the Political Discussion of Japan¹

By Roger Mottini

I) The first Appearance of Switzerland in the Public Mind of Japan

Although Japan and her inhabitants did already appear 1586 in a Swiss description written by Renward Cysat, a scholar and town official from Lucerne, it took nearly 300 years before Switzerland appeared as a topic in Japan due to her strict seclusion policy (*sakoku*) which lasted from 1603 until 1868 under the Tokugawa shogunate.

Yukichi Fukuzawa² (1835 –1901) Japans great liberal thinker and author, mentioned Switzerland early on in his hugely popular writings; a brief description of the country and its political system appeared 1867 in his report about the eleven countries with which Japan already had formal relations at that time.³ In his book “All the countries in the world” (*sekaikunizukushi*) two years later, he mentioned Switzerland, besides all the other countries, again.

His ideological counterpart, **Hiroyuki Katō** (1836–1916) examined the Swiss political system in his report “miscellaneous from the neighbourhood” (*tonarigusa*), which was circulated among intellectuals in 1861. Comparing republican and monarchical forms of government he concluded, that Switzerland, together with the USA, represented the “true type of republican government” (Morita 1988 p. 14).

The first comprehensive study of Switzerland was a report compiled by a large diplomatic mission under the leadership of count **Tomomi Iwakura** (1825–883) visiting the United States and Europe from 1871 until 1873. They toured in Switzerland in the summer of 1873 before returning to Japan. In their report the Japanese diplomats and scholars focussed their attention on four main issues:

political system, military and defence, education and economy/finance.

The Swiss democracy was described on the federal as well as the cantonal level, taking the political system of the canton of Geneva as a thoroughly explained example (Tanaka/Kume, 1982 vol 5 p. 55, 105 – 107). With regard to the foreign policy of Switzerland, her standing in the world was, according to the Iwakura report, defined by three principles:

¹ Based on a lecture on the occasion of the Swiss – Japanese Seminar in Humanities, at the University of Zurich, August 27th – 29th 2003.

² Japanese names are written according to Japanese custom, ie family name first.

³ Switzerland concluded the first treaty of Friendship and Commerce with the shogunal government in 1864.

1. Preservation of Independence and Sovereignty
2. Non – interference in foreign conflicts
3. Strong and credible self defence capabilities on the basis of a militia army comprising every citizen (male and female).

The Iwakura report went on to explain the concept of armed neutrality as the leading principle of Swiss foreign policy and drew the conclusion, that this system was indeed highly effective in preserving the Independence and sovereignty of the country, as none of the powerful neighbouring countries dared to attack Switzerland since her founding as a federal state in 1848.

The Swiss militia was described as a 'citizen – soldier' – system (*minpeitai*) in which every citizen kept his arms and equipment at home, quickly turning into an armed soldier once the need should arise (A.Tanaka 1999, p. 41).

In their analysis of the western countries, the members of the Iwakura mission soon found out, that small countries like Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands did not lag behind the larger ones when it came to technology, science and education. Further proof of the fact that the technological level of a country was not linked to its size could be gained at the world exhibition in Vienna (1873), a showcase of Western technology and civilization. It was there that a samurai from the southern Saga domain, **Tsunetami Sano** (1822-1902), became convinced, that technological progress had to be accompanied by moral and ethical progress as well; he stumbled upon this idea during his visit of the pavillon of the International Red Cross organization at the Vienna exposition (Mottini, 1998, p.136 - 144). Later on he was to become the founder of the Japanese Red Cross Society when Japan signed the Geneva Convention on June 5th 1886.

The members of the Iwakura mission took the small country example as an encouraging sign that Japan, although in a weak and awkward position towards the western powers at that time, could be able to catch up technologically and earn the respect of the big countries without necessarily being a great power herself (Tanaka A.1999 p. 44).

Under the impression of the unequal treaties which feudal Japan was forced to sign, the members of the mission strove to find out more about the importance of international law in the workings of international relations. In this respect, they got a forceful explanation by the chancellor of the German Reich, **Otto v. Bismarck** (1815-1898). In March 1873 he explained to his Japanese guests that small countries always strive to respect international law because it is in the best of their interests, whereas big countries must always be prepared and willing to use military force in order to defend their interests, even if this meant to trample over international agreements (A.Tanaka 1999, p. 46). Bismarck's 'Realpolitik' was clearly

influenced by the experience of the formation of the German Reich two years before; according to him, in the Hobbesian world of Europe in the 19th century, the birth of the German Reich was only possible by means of 'blood and iron'.

The leaders of Meiji – Japan must probably have felt a certain affinity towards the German Reich, as young and ambitious a nation as the emerging Japan of the Meiji.

II) Which Size Fits Japan – the 'Small Country Discussion' (*shōkokushugi ron*)

According to the 'Great Japanese dictionary' (*Nihon kokugo daijiten*) under the entry 'small country' (*chiisai kuni, chiisana kuni*) the following clues can be found (cited according to A. Tanaka 1999, p.2): country with little political power (*seiryoku no yowai kuni*), a small territory and a small population.

This definition, although useful, does not cover all the relevant aspects playing a role in the 'small country – discussion' of Japan.

Although the small – country - discussion (*shōkokushugi ron*) became known under this title only much later, the issues dealt with in the discussion were already around in the early Meiji period.

Looking for a definition of the Japanese term translating as "Small – Countryism" (*shōkokushugi*) we can subsume under this title all those political forces in modern Japan which were opposed to the expansionist and militaristic worldview that from 1926 on dominated Japan's policy until her defeat in 1945.

Tanaka defined these forces as "anti imperialistic" and "antisupremacist" (A. Tanaka 1999 p. 7), in other words all those opposed to the then predominant policy of "rich land – strong armed forces" (*fukoku kyōhei*), the rallying cry of the Meiji leaders opposed to the feudal order of the Tokugawa shoguns. That slogan was originally directed against the imperialistic western powers perceived to be a threat to Japan; later on this defensive strategy was re-interpreted in an expansionist sense thus justifying Japan's rush to join the club of the great powers with two victorious wars against China in 1895 and against Russia in 1904/05. The Japanese grand strategy was carried out at the expense of a defenseless Korea and a weak China, leading Japan down the slippery path of confrontation with European and US interests in East Asia.

The domestic political forces opposed to that expansionist policy were ideologically split and included the left with an traditional penchant for pacifism and liberal as well as conservative groups favouring economic development and prosperity based on trade and co-operation. Despite their ideological differences these political forces did however, share a common view

of Japan as a democratically organised country, focussing on domestic development based on international trade rather than on colonial exploitation and autarky. These forces included namely the liberal, conservative and socialist strands of Japanese politics facing the military, the bureaucracy and the ultranationalist movements on the far right.

This does not mean however, that they saw Switzerland as a model for Japan; Switzerland did play an exemplary role only in the leftist interpretation of the “Small Country -Discussion” (*shōkokushugi ron*) and here primarily with regard to Japan's foreign policy orientation as a neutral country (A. Tanaka 1999, p. 3, 6) – and this in the most basic sense of the term “neutrality” as one should add.

What the liberal thinker Fukuzawa already noticed, later confirmed by the findings of the Iwakura – mission, small countries like Switzerland or the Netherlands did carry a far greater weight with regard to their economic strength than their size would suggest; as mentioned above, the first Japanese visitors to Europe observed as well, that technological and scientific progress was not linked to the size of a country. In the case of Switzerland the early Japanese visitors noticed with apprehension the patriotic sense and civic spirit of her citizens; according to them this was crucial to nation building and must be the result of an efficient educational system (A. Tanaka 1999, p. 44).

Combined with the worshipping of a godlike Emperor, the divinization of the country and a single-minded interpretation of the ancient warrior's ethic however, the Japanese “patriotic sense” later degenerated into a supremacist ultranationalism opposed and disdainful against anything alien.

A) Switzerland As A Topic In the “Freedom and People's Right Movement” of The Meiji

Back in the Japan of the early Meiji, the discussion among the Japanese leadership erupted around the fundamental question which political system would be most suited to attain the objective of rapid modernisation in order to catch up with the leading western powers of the time. The Meiji leaders, mostly hailing from the warrior proud class, were obsessed with the wish to gain the acceptance of Japan as being an equal by the great powers. Equally important was their perception of neighbouring Russia pushing southward as a threat to Japan's security. These strategic considerations defined Modern Japan's foreign policy early on. Korea, isolated, defenceless and under the tutelage of a weak China, was to become the centrepiece in the Japanese foreign policy of the Meiji leaders (*seikanron*).

The dispute amongst them reached a new climax in 1874. In that year, **Taisuke Itagaki** (1837-1919) a disgruntled former member of the Meiji government published a “Memorandum for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected National Assembly”. He and his followers had left the government earlier as a consequence of being in a minority position with their view of a forceful policy towards Korea.



Taisuke Itagaki

The request of democratising the political establishment put the government under considerable pressure to act. Although the memorandum was intended by its author to serve as a political means in the ongoing powerstruggle, it struck a raw nerve with the Japanese public. Following the publication of the memorandum, a political and philosophical discussion erupted, spreading quickly engulfing the whole country; large swathes of the population engaged in a lively and sometimes chaotic discussion about Japan’s political future, cutting through social barriers comprising young and old. This unco-ordinated, spontaneous movement can be seen as the awakening of Japan’s democratic consciousness, it has since been called the “*jiū minken undō*” (Freedom and People’s Right Movement) and lasted from 1874 until 1889 when the first constitution was enacted which met the main request put forward in the Itagaki – memorandum fifteen years earlier.



Emori Ueki (1857-1892)

In the process, Japan’s first political parties were formed. The publicly discussed topics included the ideas of western political thinkers and philosophers like Locke, Bentham, Mill,

and very prominently, Rousseau among many others. The notions of “Freedom” (*jiyū*) and “Democracy” (*minshūshugi*) took shape in the minds of many ordinary Japanese. The movement even adopted foreign heroes as symbols of freedom like Washington, Brutus and, the great mythological hero of Switzerland's struggle for freedom: William Tell (Miyashita 1977, p. 226 - 227).

民権歌謡

民権かぞへ歌 植木枝盛作

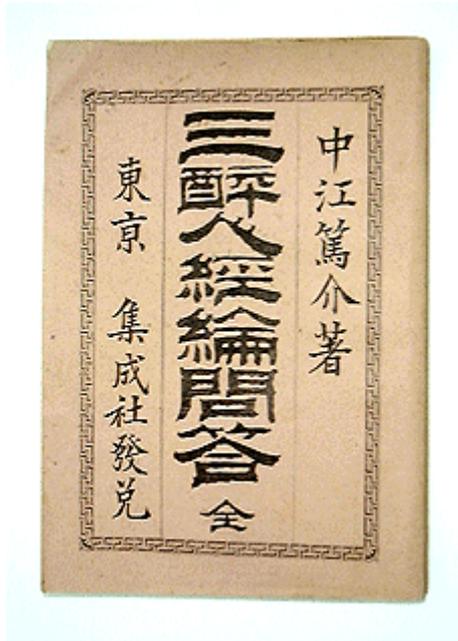
一つとせ 人の上には人はなき 権利にかはりがなければ この人じやもの
 二つとせ 二つとはない我が命 捨てても自由がないからは この惜しみやせぬ
 三つとせ 民権自由の世の中に まだ目のさめない人がある このあはれさよ
 四つとせ 世の開けゆく其早やさ 親が子供に教へられ この気をつけよ
 五つとせ 五つに分れし五大州 中にも垂細垂は半開か この恥かしや
 六つとせ 昔し思へばあめりかの 独立なしたるむしろ旗 このいさましや
 七つとせ 何故おまへがかしくくて わたしらなんぞが馬鹿である このわかりやせん
 八つとせ 刃で人をころすより 政事で殺すぐちをしや この罪じやぞへ
 九つとせ こゝらでもふ目をさまさねば 朝寐は其身の爲じやない この起きさんせ
 十とせ 虎の威をかる狐等は しつばが見へても知らぬ顔 この畜生め
 十一とせ 犬も喰ない内喧嘩 やるからけふ日かやすじよたい このかなしさよ
 十二とせ 西と東へ昼と夜る 文名野蛮のわかちこそ この口惜しや
 十三とせ 栄へ行く世の基本は 民の自由にあるぞいな この知らないか
 十四とせ 四民ひとつの其中に とげけ華族のかへり笑 このめづらしや
 十五とせ 五尺からだに五十年 道理を踏より外はない この恐れやせぬ
 十六とせ 牢屋の中のうさかん苦 ほれた自由の爲なれば このいとやせん
 十七とせ 賢にも置かないわが権利 うけ出す道理があるものか このしれた事
 十八とせ 鼻の高いに羽根がはへ 鞍馬山でなにをする この人知らず
 十九とせ 愚痴やこゝとをこぼすのも みんな自由の爲じやぞへ この許るさんせ
 二十とせ 日本垂細垂の燈明台 消へて東洋が闇となる この照らしやんせ

Ueki's Hymn to citizen's rights

Paramount among the intellectual avantgarde in that discussion were the above mentioned liberal thinker Yukichi Fukuzawa, his conservative counterpart Hiroyuki Katô and on the left side **Chōmin Nakae** (1847 - 1901) and **Emori Ueki** (1857 – 1892).

Nakae who studied in France translated Jean-Jacques Rousseau's works into Japanese and was a lifelong ardent promoter of Rousseau's radical democratic ideas he even earned the nickname “Asia's Rousseau”. Thus, the central ideas of the Geneva- born philosopher, the idea of the sovereignty of the people and the theory of social contract as the base of republican government entered the political and ideological landscape of Meiji-Japan. It was within the logic of Rousseau's thinking that his ideas could successfully be applied in a space

of limited size where most of the citizens knew each other; Rousseau himself saw his hometown Geneva as the place that came close to his democratic ideal. As a consequence, Nakae embraced a “Small Nippon” – attitude best explained in his fictitious 1887 novel with the strange title: “Three drunken men discuss politics” (sansuijin keirin mondō):



In his novel, Nakae’s alter ego, opposed to a forceful expansionist policy, advocated a neutral non-aggressive and democratic Japan, focussed on domestic development and good neighbourly relations with China and Korea. In the same novel he likened Switzerland, together with Belgium and the Netherlands, to small children playing undisturbed in the midst of quarrelling and fighting adults by which he meant the European powers (Kawano 1996, p. 234).



Chōmin Nakae (1847 - 1901).

Under the growing oppressive policy followed by the Meiji government, the Democracy Movement eventually began to falter. In 1889 when the Meiji constitution, modelled after the German model was promulgated, this first attempt at establishing a truly democratic system in Japan came to an end. The oligarchs dominating the Meiji government followed the prevailing imperialist mood and led Japan on the road towards expansionism and empire

building, the first victims of that policy being Korea and China. With the overwhelming victory against China 1895, the question of being a “Small country” was out of fashion.

By the way, in Switzerland the Sino – Japanese war was followed with great interest and unabashed sympathy towards Japan, the latter being seen by the Swiss as the David in his struggle against Goliath (Mottini 1998, p. 146 – 160).

B) The 'Taishō Democracy' 1912-1926

The victory against China seemed to vindicate Japan's policy of gaining respect by muscling her way into the exclusive club of imperial powers; and it was only the first step in Japan's quest for hegemony on the Asian continent. Once China's influence in the Korean peninsula had been eclipsed, Japan faced a much more fearsome adversary who contended her role in Korea: Russia.

The struggle over Korea culminated in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904/05, ending with yet another Japanese victory. Switzerland's sympathies were again firmly on the side of Japan and her victory was enthusiastically welcomed by the leading Swiss newspapers (Mottini 1998, p. 164-177).

Despite the triumphs of Japanese nationalism, the era Taishō saw a re-emergence of the Democracy – Movement of the preceding Meiji period. Sparking this development, were the so called “Hibiya riots” which broke out as soon as the terms of the peace treaty between Japan and Russia became known to the Japanese public; to many, the gains from this war did not measure up to the huge sacrifices that had been made in order to achieve that stunning victory.

The term “Taishō Democracy” was coined by Japanese historians because this period saw an increased political influence of the democratically elected House of Representatives (*shūgiin*), despite the modest role attributed to parliament by the German inspired constitution. Furthermore the Taishō era saw the emergence of cabinets dominated by party politicians (the first being **Takashi/Kei Hara**) at the expense of the House of peers (*sangiin*), the military and the career bureaucracy; another feature of that period was the increased political grassroots activities and mass rallies (quite often turning violent however). Although this Democracy was still a far cry from popular sovereignty, the trend was clearly pointing towards an increased role of democratically elected bodies at the expense of the imperial, bureaucratic, military and oligarchical power centres (Kodansha Japan vol.2, 1993, p.1501). With Japan already on the slippery road of imperialism, it was only the Japanese left which was still upholding the “Small country” – vision as an alternative to the ongoing process of

empirebuilding and militarisation of society; this social and democratic movement was centered in and around the urban centres of Japan, whereas the rural areas remained mired in conservatism and thus were easily susceptible to reactionary forces (Kodansha Japan vol.2, p.1503). The leading figures on the left were **Isoo Abe** (1865-1949), cofounder of Japan's "Socialist Democratic Party" (*shakai minshūtō*) together with **Sen Katayama** (1859 - 1933), and **Shūsui Kōtoku** (1871-1911) who was tried and executed for allegedly planning to assassinate the emperor. All three were ardent critics of the Greater Japan - dreams propagated by the rightwingers in the military and the oligarchy. Abe argued, that Japan was protected by the surrounding seas like Switzerland by her mountains and therefore equally protected against her powerful neighbours, hence there was no need for offensive action in the name of self-defence (Morita 1980, p. 43). In 1904 Abe had published a book about Switzerland as a model for Japan under the title 'Ideal country on Earth – Switzerland' (*chijō no risōkoku suisu*); in his book he painted an idealised picture of Switzerland as a "pure Democracy". However, after the victory against Russia in 1905 the forces of imperialism prevailed, aided by the draconian "peace preservation law" (*chian iji hō*) of 1925, enacted by a parliament that was locked in a fight with those same antidemocratic forces that were to profit most from this law designed to cripple the political left in Japan.



Isoo Abe (1865-1949)

C) The Occupation Period from 1945-1952

Maybe it was not a coincidence, that the authoritarian structures which Japan copied from Germany produced the same outcome in both countries. After the catastrophic end of the Greater Japan – dream, the unresolved questions about the size of Japan arose again and Abe's book on Switzerland saw a second edition in 1947.

Defeated Germany was to discuss her future role in a very similar way: neutral and on her own or integration into an American-led alliance,- that was the paramount political question just after the war. The German Socialdemocrats were in favour of neutrality, whereas in the end the conservative chancellor Adenauer prevailed, firmly anchoring postwar Germany in the western alliance of NATO and later on in the nascent European institutions as well.

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In Japan the discussion was similarly split between the left, favoring an unarmed neutral small country role and the liberal and conservative camp, eyeing an alliance with the USA. General MacArthur stated 1950 in an interview given to the New York Times the following (cited in: Welfield 1988, p.29):

Neither side would profit by the arming of Japan. We don't care to use her as an armed ally but we don't want to see Russia or China use her against us. Japan's neutrality would be a benefit to everyone, including not only Japan but also the United States, Russia and China.

On the Japanese side, the year 1945 marked the dawn of those forces which had been critical towards the Greater Japan folly, namely the liberals and the political left. Leading figures in the political discussion with the occupation authorities were the liberal politicians **Kijūrō Shidehara** (1872-1951), prime minister in 1945/46 and **Tanzan Ishibashi** (1884 - 1973), his finance minister; both were outspoken critics of the Japanese military and Shidehara was well known for his co-operative, pragmatic approach to international relations as a diplomat and foreign minister between the wars ("Shidehara diplomacy").



Tanzan Ishibashi (1884 - 1973)

The small country – discussion was integral part of a postwar movement which strove to reform Japan radically encompassing all the forces opposed to the course that had ended in agony; the movement saw itself as a continuation of the People's Rights Movement of the Meiji and the Taishō-Democracy. Their aim was revolutionary in a sense of enlightenment (*keimō undō*): to open the hearts and minds of the humans, to develop and free them (*kokorobae o kaihatsu kaihō suru*) with the paramount objective of democratising Japan (A.

Tanaka 1999, p. 156). Although acting under foreign pressure and with foreign support, according to Ishibashi who wrote in the *Tōyō keizai shinbun* (Far Eastern Economic review) this development was inevitable anyway and should be a reason for joy (A.Tanaka 1999, p. 155).

After considerable territorial losses to the North and South and in comparison with her giant neighbors Russia and China, Japan now looked definitely like a small country. The economist Ishibashi however saw these losses rather as an opportunity for the country; Japans economy would from now on be geared towards export markets instead of imperial autarchy thereby forcing her to modernise and develop her industrial base (A.Tanaka 1999, p.157). Economically, postwar Japan would from now on look decidedly more like Switzerland, relying on free international markets for much of her economic wealth.

As for the Americans, their original aim just after the war was to forestall a re-emergence of Japanese militarism. Although probably not aware of the “small country – vision” in the Japanese political debate, the measures which the occupation authorities undertook in order to ensure that history would not repeat itself did point all in the direction of a “small country” – future for Japan: Dismantling of the military industrial complex (disarmament, demilitarization, dismembering of the *zaibatsu*, Japan's giant corporations), purge of bureaucracy and politics (to which even Ishibashi fell victim in 1947), democratisation and, most important of all, the promulgation of a new constitution.

The pacifist Shidehara played a crucial role in the process of creating Japan's new constitution which was put into effect on May 3rd, 1947. Although it is still being disputed whether it was Shidehara's or MacArthur's original idea to incorporate a clause into the constitution in which Japan renounces war as a means of international politics (art. 9 constitution of Japan)⁴, Shidehara did at least encourage this course of action (Schlichtmann 1998, p. 463). The now famous article 9 of the constitution can certainly be considered as the embodiment of a central quest of the “small country” – debate, together with the new role of the Emperor. The three main pillars of Japan's new constitution, are (according to A. Tanaka 1999, p. 158):

- The sovereignty of the people
- Pacifism and Renunciation of war (*heiwashugi, sensō hōki*)
- Basic human rights (*kihonteki ninken*)

⁴ article 9 CJ (Constitution of Japan) reads: Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.

(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Soon however, the emerging political order of the Cold war began to cloud Japan's aspirations to a peaceful future. America's geo-strategic interests towards the communist camp gained priority over her fear of a rearmed Japan. Japan's strategic location in East Asia was similarly important to the USA as Germany's in Western Europe. The question of rearming and/or neutralising Japan gained center stage in Japanese politics, with Japan's left being unrelenting against any formation of an armed force and clearly in favor of an unarmed neutrality. The outbreak of the Korean war 1950 softened the attitude of liberal and conservative politicians in Japan towards rearmament and under the leadership of Prime Minister **Shigeru Yoshida** (1878 – 1967) the country was firmly anchored at the side of the USA as an ally, following the San Francisco peace treaty of 1952 which led to the restoration of Japan's sovereignty and the conclusion of the US – Japanese security agreement in the same year. As a consequence, Japan started to build up defence capabilities which evolved into the present "Japan Self Defence Forces" (*Nippon jieitai*).⁵ However, Yoshida staunchly refused the build-up of a Japanese arms industry for fear of the re-emergence of a military-industrial complex. He also dodged American pressure to increase Japanese defence spending by referring to article 9 of the constitution.

Still, the discussion about how best to ensure Japan's security without the threat of a re-emergence of fascism and militarism did not stop there. In 1959/60 the debate revived again with the signing of a renewed and expanded security treaty between Japan and the USA; the widespread and often violent opposition to that treat led to the downfall of Prime Minister **Nobusuke Kishi** (1896 – 1987) and his cabinet.

The strongest opposition arose from the Socialist Party of Japan under her left leaning leader **Inejiro Asanuma** (1898 – 1960) who, as a consequence of the heated and violent atmosphere surrounding the discussions, was assassinated by a rightwing student onstage during a rally.

The foreign policy approach of the Socialist Party was based on four principles (Kodansha Japan 1993 vol.2, p. 1661):

- settlements with all former enemy countries
- permanent neutrality
- no military treaties with other countries and no foreign military bases in Japan
- no rearmament

⁵ For a thorough legal discussion (in German) of the existence of these forces in the face of art.9 CJ (Constitution of Japan), turn to the internetlink of the university of Berne mentioned in the Bibliography.

The depth of the socialist “Small – country” vision of the Japanese left is highlighted by Asanuma's answers given in a personal interview (Kindermann 2001, p. 491 – 492) shortly before his violent death. According to him, only a policy of unarmed neutrality could ensure that Japan would not be drawn into foreign conflicts; he denied the possibility of a power vacuum being exploited by a foreign power, citing popular opinion worldwide which would not tolerate future aggressions. Any kind of Japanese rearmament, according to Asanuma, would inevitably lead to a re-emergence of fascism and any tinkering with Japan's constitution must entail the danger of rearmament.⁶

Turning to the admittedly ill defined notion of “shōkokushugiron” (Small Country discussion) in Japan's traditional foreign policy debate the following questions emerge:

- a) What are the central requests of its proponents?
- b) How much of their vision has been realised?

Response to a):

According to Tanaka (A.Tanaka 1999, p. 180 – 202) the shōkokushugi – debate started in the early Meiji with the controversy what form of government would suit Japan and which course her foreign policy should take; the adherents of “shōkokushugi” (‘Small countrism’) expressed their vision through the “Freedom and People's Rights” – Movement (jiyū minken undō). Although the imperialist strategy of “fukoku kyōhei” (Rich country, strong military) with its authoritarian course of action prevailed, the democratic non-aggressive ideas continued to be alive and erupted again to the surface during the “Taishō - Democracy” (Tanaka A. 1999, p. 198 – 200); forced to give way to a rising militarism and chauvinism ending in disaster, the “Small country – “ debate revived only after Japan's defeat and saw its biggest triumph in the enactment of the new constitution, committed to democracy, human rights and pacifism.

Response to b):

The Japanese constitution of 1946 is the answer to the second question about how much of “Small countrism” has been realised in postwar Japan.

If we define “Small countrism” (shōkokushugi) as the opposite of “Big country - ideology” (anchi daikokushugi) and of “Suprematism” (hakenshugi), then one can say, that much of the “Small country” vision has finally been realised (Tanaka A. 1999, p. 202) namely: sovereignty

⁶ In my personal opinion this argumentation betrays a rather romantic view of foreign relations and shows a disturbing lack of understanding with regard to the meaning of neutrality.

of the people, democratic and civil government, human rights and renunciation of violence as a means of foreign policy.

The only exception to that was and still is the realisation of a presumedly Swiss type of neutrality in the sense of the Japanese left. This leads us to consider if and how far the Swiss model could have been an alternative to Japan being the closest US ally in East Asia.

III) Switzerland as A Model for Japan?

To begin with my personal opinion, I do think that Switzerland never could have been nor ever will be a suitable model for Japan - not even in the leftist sense of shōkokushugi ("Small Countrism").

This leads us to the question about the reasons, why the Japanese "Small-Country" discussion did not lead to an outcome that even remotely resembles the Swiss system. The answer to this question has, in my opinion, a lot to do with the lack of knowledge about Switzerland by those who did refer to her in their argumentation. None of the political influential persons had first hand experience about Switzerland. Nakae studied in France and had never been to Rousseau's native Geneva; his view of Switzerland was a rather romantic one lacking substance and insight, but this can be said of all the main Japanese advocates of "Small Countrism" as well as General MacArthur whose utterances regarding neutrality and Switzerland were equally superficial.

Their use of the term "Neutrality" had not much in common with the Swiss type of permanent neutrality as defined by international law and shaped by practice during two world wars. Neutrality referred to in the Japanese debate (including MacArthurs understanding of it) merely meant to stay away from foreign conflicts and keep a low profile with regard to international relations. This most basic meaning of neutrality does not face up to the dimensions of the Swiss neutrality as defined on the Vienna congress 1815 and in the Hague treaties concerning land and naval warfare.⁷

Switzerland's neutrality in its comprehensive/integral form has clearly circumscribed obligations and can be characterised by the following elements:

- Permanence (No case by case neutrality ie simple neutrality like the Swedish model).
- Credible self defence capacities, ie armed (and deterrent).
- No hostile action against a warring country.

⁷ For a brief and concise discussion of Swiss neutrality and membership of the UNO: Botschaft über den Beitritt der Schweiz zur Organisation der Vereinten Nationen (UNO), Bern 21st December 1981 Document Nr. 81.081

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- No support of a warring side, neither by troops, material, information nor by cessation of sovereign territorial rights (including air space).
- Obligation to safeguard the integrity of its territory (including air space) with all means available, including military means if necessary.
- Comprehensiveness: no participation in economic sanctions or blockades against a country at war.

Whereas the military side of her neutrality never posed a problem to Switzerland, the issue of 'comprehensiveness' proved to be nearly impossible to fulfill as the export driven Swiss economy always entertained trade relations of different proportions to the different countries in the world.

In the case of UN-imposed sanctions, Switzerland's answer was to observe a policy of "courant normal" (normal practice): trade volume with a country under boycott was frozen at a pre-sanction level (average of three preceding years) in order to prevent the circumvention of a boycott by re-directing trade through Switzerland.

However, that policy has been quietly abandoned on the eve of the first gulf war in 1991 to avoid being perceived as a quiet ally of the Iraqi regime thus risking possible US sanctions (legally speaking the USA were not bound by the Vienna treaty of 1815 because they were not part of the anti-Napoleonic alliance and did not sign it). It is very unlikely that the policy of "courant normal" will ever be applied again in the future after Switzerland has meanwhile become a member of the UNO.

In the case of Japan with its mighty economy, the problem of economic neutrality would be simply unfeasible.

An unarmed neutrality advocated by the Japanese left has nothing to do with Swiss neutrality; the latter could only be kept intact during two world wars thanks to strong and credible defence capabilities, denying foreign troops access to Swiss territory to gain tactical or strategic advantages (German strategic planning during the two world wars always played with the thought of circumventing French defences at the Rhine river by crossing Swiss territory in the Northwest but the Germans eventually turned to Belgium instead).

The fact that a strong defence was the cornerstone of Switzerland's independence and sovereignty had already been noticed by the members of the Iwakura mission in 1873 ! A peaceful country did not need to be a defenceless country, a lesson that was not lost on the early visitors from Japan; even a liberal thinker like Fukuzawa did not rely on international law with regard to safeguarding Japan's sovereignty (Matsunaga 2001, pp. 120).

With regard to the Swiss democracy serving as a model for Meiji or postwar Japan, there must be said, that this thought was highly theoretical and had never been discussed in

earnest. Although the members of the Iwakura mission were equally interested in the workings of Switzerland's Democracy, her system must probably have been the most 'exotic' one seen from a perspective of the members of a feudal aristocracy, with not even a strong president as a head of state like in the USA.

The Swiss political system could not serve as a model for Japan, be it Meiji – Japan or postwar Japan, because of the following obvious reasons:

- There would have been no place for the Emperor being crucial to the national identity of Japan
- Direct democratic instruments of people sovereignty have traditional roots in Switzerland, but not in societies with a long feudal history
- The distinct confederalism reflects Swiss cultural and linguistic diversity; Switzerland is the creation of political will (and foreign pressure) rather than the result of common cultural, linguistic or ethnic features.

Japan's present democracy, being primarily defined by American political thinking has more in common with the parliamentary democracies of Britain, France and Germany than with Swiss democracy where political power ultimately rests with the people and not with parliament because of her direct democratic instruments (initiative and referendum).

As a conclusion one can say that the romantic view of Switzerland espoused by the Japanese left could not become a base solid enough to build on. However, even a simple - albeit armed - neutrality observed by a democratic Japan like the one envisaged by the democratic movements between the wars would have been certainly a better alternative to the road towards empire building.

IV) Japan in the 21st Century – an Outlook from the “Small – Country” perspective

Compared with her larger neighbors, China and Russia, Japan looks indeed small in size but certainly not in terms of population and economic power.

The Japanese nowadays enjoy a level of security, social stability and wealth like never before in their history, clearly a proof of the superiority of an economy based on technology and foreign trade rather than on colonial exploitation and autarky. This might indeed be

called the “Small country” way of economic growth, the path of free trade which Switzerland followed against all odds even during the heyday of imperialism and which had been already noticed by the Iwakura mission in 1873.

At the beginning of the 21st century Japan is facing a series of daunting challenges:

- Possible Threats from a nuclear armed North Korea
- Long term and ongoing economic stagnation (mounting public debt, banking and insurance crises)
- Ageing of the population

Against the first threat Japan has already reacted by passing new legislation concerning the use of the Self Defence Forces (SDF) against armed threats from abroad; under the current legislation, the role of the SDF resembles more that of the Swiss army: non aggressive in scope but credible as an instrument of defence; still conventionally armed and limited to the defence against direct threats to Japanese territory (and air space).⁸ The Swiss answer to the threat of nuclear war during the cold war period might also be of some interest for a conventionally armed Japan. While profiting from US guarantees against a nuclear attack, an additional option for Japan to enhance her own security may consist in further building up her passive defence against strikes with weapons of mass destruction.⁹ In the sphere of democracy, Switzerland might also have something worth contemplating, already made popular by prime minister **Hosokawa** in 1993: Decentralisation and, as a result of that, the strenghtening of direct democratic means on the lokal and regional level. As one can see, the “Small – country” discussion is far from over as long as democracy is not seen as a one size fits all – system that can be established once and for ever. It is up to the people of Japan to decide how much the “Small – country” discussion can contribute to their future and that of their children.

⁸ In my opinion, the overseas employment of Japanese forces with a clear UN mandate and under international command is a part of legal self defense, taking into account the global reach of modern weaponry and the spread of irregular violence through the same channels of transportation and communication which are crucial for the well being of open economies and societies; the objective of art. 9 CJ (Constitution of Japan) is to avoid that Japan becomes a security threat to her neighbors ever again. This does not mean however that the government has to abstain from any action until a threat to the security of the Japanese people is imminent or has already materialised. A policy aimed at the preservation of international peace is more efficient under the absence of duress. Referring to Rousseau, it can not be unlawful, to employ all means at ones disposition in order to hide your purse from a robber (contrat social).

⁹ During the cold war, air raid shelter space in Switzerland was planned in order not only to host the entire Swiss population but also the tourists staying in or passing through the country during the main seasons!

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