



A Critique of Japan ' s Political-cultural Nostalgia and its Impasse

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A Critique of Japan's Political-cultural Nostalgia and its Impasse*

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Introduction

The LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) won a landslide victory in the general election in December, 2012. Harshly criticizing the DPJ (The Democratic Party of Japan)-led government since its great victory at the election in 2009, Shinzo Abe and his leading LDP titled its campaign policy 'We will restore Japan' (*Nippon o torimodosu*). In the socio-political context after the 3/11 Earthquake in 2011 (Higashinohon Daishinsai), the political message aiming to recover from the damages and regain the bright future of Japan seems to have appealed to the majority of Japanese.

In this article I try to analyze the relationship between the political term of 'restore' and the cultural term of 'nostalgia' that has been seen in Japan's popular cultural scene for almost two decade. Through the discussions in the paper it will be clarified that there exists strong affinity between the two key terms characterizing the present political-cultural scene in Japan. Backed by the popular sentiment longing for the heyday of Showa era ('it is called 'Showa Nostalgia'), Abe and his LDP succeeded in gaining the majority of seats in the National Diet. It seems to be possible to regard the sense of loss that is widely shared among the public as a common factor discerned in both Abe's politics of restoration and the 'Showa Nostalgia' in popular culture.

Considering the ideological implication of the 'We will restore Japan' campaign, this paper aims to investigate the socio-historical background of 'political-cultural nostalgia' seen in contemporary Japan and critically assess its impasse from the viewpoint of the melancholic nationalism rising in the age of globalization.

Victory of LDP in the 2012 general election

At the election held in December 2012, the LDP gained an overwhelmingly victory and DPJ's seats in the House of Representatives were drastically reduced. It meant the end of the government led by DPJ since the election in 2009. Even though the majority of the nation seemed not to fully agree with the policies of the LDP (especially their long-lasting ambition of rewriting of the Constitution), the choice they made was 'preferring LDP to DPJ or The Third Parties (*dai sankyoku*)'. While the defeat of leading DPJ was easily predicted, the magnitude of the LDP victory was somehow surprising for the public. Many scholars and critics have discussed and analyzed the results of the election. Some of them pointed out that the majority of the electorates just showed their disdain for the DPJ, which

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Key words: 'Showa Nostalgia', 'Restoring Japan', Article 9 of the Constitution, melancholia

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does not necessarily mean their truthful support for the LDP.

Of course the large number of policies that the LDP focused on and debated: the economic crisis, the gloomy prospect for social security owing to the rising rate of elderly population, the threat to national security caused by the territorial conflict between Japan and China, North and South Korea were significant factors. It may be true to say that the LDP were seen by the electorate as being more likely to tackle these emergent agendas than DPJ who was in power in the past three years and failed to address any of them adequately.

However, it seems that not only political but also cultural aspects are important in considering why the people preferred LDP to DPJ at the election in 2012. In this paper I would clarify the sociocultural background that enabled the victory of LDP at the general election in 2012 from the viewpoint of prevalent sentiment of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ in Japan.

Ambiguous Message of ‘We will restore Japan’

The campaign slogan of LDP during the election in 2012 was ‘Restoring Japan (*Nippon o torimodos*)’. It might be easy to understand what the slogan means in the context of Japanese society at that time, but how to restore Japan is not necessarily clear enough. A majority of the people may admit that Japan should retrace its steps in recent times to recover some of its strength and integrity, and to take something back, but no one can tell exactly what that something is and what restoration would be like. Even after reading the documents LDP issued for the election campaign, we cannot understand how to restore Japan in each area of economy, education, diplomacy and public safety. The political objectives that the LDP promised were too general to be specifically implemented.

However, the LDP’s message stressing ‘restoration’ seems to have appealed to the public and it gained for them the majority of seats in the House of Representative. One of the reasons why they successfully gained the support from the public is that many Japanese people were damaged, not only physically but also psychologically, by the huge earthquake occurred on March 11 in 2011. After the *Higashinohon Daishinsai* (East Japan Huge Earthquake), the majority of the Japanese people considered that Japan should recover from the enormous damages caused by this terrible natural disaster. In the light of such devastation the word restoration could easily invoke the necessity and urgency of reconstruction required in a socio-economic context. Even if the content of the LDP’s political programme was neither concrete nor specific, the slogan of ‘restoring Japan’ was somehow appealing for the public suffering the strong sense of loss after the earthquake.

Anatomy of ‘restoring Japan’

The message that LDP proposed to the public at the 2012 election was easy to understand¹⁾. Its rhetoric is very simple and clear. However, it was not concrete enough to be a party’s ‘manifesto’, which is expected to be a political platform that should be completed when the party gets the majority of the seats in the National Diet.

Why could the LDP win the public’s support without having the concrete manifesto? To analyze this point it is useful to pay attention to semantics of the slogan of ‘restoring Japan’. It seems that ‘We

1) 自民党 CM 「日本を、取り戻す。」 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5rhUHmPbZc>

will restore Japan' campaign was successful not only in its direct meaning, but also in its ideological connotation of 'national restoration'.

As a denotative meaning, the word 'restoring' relates to the four areas; economy, education, diplomacy and safety, each of which has faced troublesome problems these days. At the same time, the term of 'restoring' implies at least three tasks that the LDP aims to accomplish. The first is to give the LDP the power of government. During the election campaign in 2012 LDP harshly criticized the DPJ's three years in power and it is easy to understand the term 'restoring' for them is closely related to their political objectives and to win the majority of seats in the House of Representatives so that they may organize government.

The second is related to the long-lasting economic crisis of Japan since the breakdown of the bubble economy in early 1990s. As was often said by economists and critics in the early 2000s, the decade of 1990s was called 'the lost decade (*ushinawareta ju-nen*)' in Japanese postwar history owing to its economic downfall. The following decade has suffered the lasting instability failing to recover from the economic crisis. People were beginning to refer to this as 'the lost two decades (*ushinawareta niju-nen*)' of Japan when describing the socio-economic conditions of Japan in 21st century. Keeping the long-lasting economic problems since 1990s in mind, we can interpret the connotation of 'restoring' as taking back the economic prosperity that Japan once enjoyed in the heyday of the postwar era.

The third concerns the postwar political regime of Japan. For those who stand by the side of rightwing conservatism, the postwar regime of Japan is regarded as being 'compelled' to Japanese nation by GHQ through its occupational policy for postwar Japan. Therefore, the political ambition of conservative politicians like Shinzo Abe is to rewrite the Japan's constitution anew so that Japan can be a self-made nation. He has enthusiastically proclaimed that we have to restore the Constitution to Japanese nation.

Considering the political context concerning the legitimacy of the postwar regime of Japan, the connotation of 'restoring' is more historical and ideological. For Abe and those who share his rightwing nationalistic ideology, the word of 'restoring' might mean the true restoration of sovereignty so that Japan can have its own military power legitimized by the Constitution. This sort of interpretation of the term restoration is not so insignificant as we have already seen the aftermath of LDP's gaining the majority of the seats in the National Diet in which they harshly tried to implement several policies to change the political-military foundations of postwar Japan.

Cultural background and atmosphere accepting the LDP's message

As pointed out early, it is often said that the 1990s and 2000s are the lost decades because Japan failed to recover from the economic damage faced after the bubble economy in 1980s. The long-lasting period of hardship for Japan made the people feel that they had lost what had been its greatest achievements after the World War II. The most prominent aspects are the economic prosperity realized in postwar Japan. The economic miracle Japan made in recovering from damages of the war was so drastic that it astonished the world in the decades of the 60s and 70s. It enabled the nation of Japan to be proud of herself and diminish the historical trauma of defeat at the WWII. Therefore, for Japan and its people losing the economic prosperity was not only economic but also a socio-political matter of

great concern. As the economic downfall continued into the 1990s and 2000s, the socio-cultural atmosphere in Japanese society became more and more gloomy even though the GDP of Japan was still the second biggest in the world in those periods of time.

During this time when people had the sense of something lost, we have seen as a consequence the phenomena of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ in the popular cultural scene. In 1990s and 2000s, the socio-political conditions of present Heisei Japan was regarded to be problematic and miserable in comparison to those of past Showa Era, especially its 30s (1955-1964). In the discourse of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ the past history of postwar Japan is excessively romanticized. ‘Showa Nostalgia’ often described the period of Showa as the time when Japanese people were most content with the socio-economic conditions and hoped for the future development, even though they were not wealthy enough at that time. As many critics have pointed out, the image of Showa depicted in the media discourse is not what the time of Showa exactly was. It is apparently selective and sometimes contradicts with the historical facts. However, for people now living in the era of Heisei the Japan of the past holds a nostalgic fascination and made it a key element in popular culture for almost two decades.

Politics of ‘Showa Nostalgia’

It is apparent that the media representation of the 30s of Showa is not necessarily objective (in the sense of social science) in its description of the socio-cultural conditions of postwar Japan. However, the positive image of Showa Japan is pervasively shared and praised among the public at large in the time of Heisei Japan. Not historical truth but imaginative memory is important when the people talk about what the past time of Showa was like. Naïve but humane trust for other people and the strong ambition for future development depicted in the media discourse on Showa seems to function as a socio-cultural mechanism to compensate the ‘sense of loss’ for the nation living in the desperate time of Heisei.

One of the most typical examples of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is the film trilogy of ‘*Always, Sunset of Third Street (Sancho me no yuuhi)*’. The time of Showa the films describe (the period of Showa 33-39: 1958-1964) seems to be very peaceful, joyful and full of dream and vitality. Even though they were not wealthy enough, people were helping to each other in the harmonious community in downtown Tokyo.

One of the characteristics discernable in the phenomena of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is that not only the generations of people who actually lived the time of 30s of Showa, but also the younger generation born long after then seem to have the sense of nostalgia watching ‘*Always, Sunset of Third Street*’. This fact tells that the ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is rather simulacra in the sense of Jean Baudrillard’s²⁾ than the historical fact in that people who have not experienced the time of Showa can enjoy the feeling of nostalgia for that time. It is the nostalgia for which one has never ever had in the history. One of the reasons why the younger generation seeks ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is that they (believe they) can enjoy the brighter future in the mediated representation of Showa. According to the ‘Showa Nostalgia’ the future was so bright and hopeful that people living in the 30s of Showa could unite together for realizing better life for all. For the younger generations the retrospective image of Showa Japan is of historical context. As they were yet to be born at that time, their familiarity is selective. The hopeful, dream-like

2) Jean Baudrillard, 1994, *Simulacra and Simulation*, University of Michigan Press.

future at that time, which ‘Showa Nostalgia’ repeatedly praises, was realized as the present when they now live. But ironically enough, in the era of Heisei it is almost impossible for the young population to have the hopeful prospect for future they will have.

Affinity between ‘Showa Nostalgia’ and ‘Restoring Japan’

After considering why the LDP could win the general election in 2012 with respect to how the public has perceived the socio-economic conditions of the ‘lost two decades’, we can see a subtle affinity between the sentiment of Nostalgia and the politics of Restoration. Though not clearly articulated in ideological messages or speeches of political leaders, it is not so difficult to discern the logical connection between ‘backward-looking’ nostalgia and ‘forward-looking’ restoration in political discourse. Shinzo Abe’s book of *‘utsukushii kuni e’* (towards a beautiful nation)³⁾ shows the relationship between the two. Abe seems to be fascinated with the films of *‘Always’* because it typically represents the virtue of Japanese that is fading in the present era of Heisei. When he talks about ‘a beautiful nation’ that Japan is to be in the future, it actually means that Japanese people should reclaim what they have lost during the period of postwar. Here we can see a political affinity between the hawkish conservative politics of Abe’s and the nostalgic popular sentiment concerning the ‘lost Japanese-ness’.

It could be said that one of the reasons why LDP succeeded in gaining support from the majority of electorate is that they somehow channelized the cultural sentiment of nostalgia into the political arena where the ‘restoration’ is mystified.

Conflicts between Nostalgia and Abe’s Politics

While we can see the affinity between the cultural nostalgia and political conservatism in recent Japanese politics, there also exists the potential tension between them. The sentiment of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is basically backward-looking as it is based on the popular sentiment of remembering the heyday of postwar Japan. Though the younger generation seems to be fascinated by the brighter future they can see in the media representation on Showa, the future they admire is actually ‘the future at that time’, which chronologically is ‘the present we now have’. It is nothing but the phenomena of ‘back to the future’ in imaginatively enjoying an alternative vision of possible future that is different from what actually became reality.

Contrastingly, Abe’s politics of ‘Restoring Japan’ is more mundane and realistically based vision of the ideal nation that Japan should become. While he shows his sympathy with the ‘Showa Nostalgia’, his political vision is forward-looking in its ambitious attempt to reshape the postwar regime of Japan. In his political ideology of *‘utsukushii kuni’*, the sentiment of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ is utilized for envisioning the image of coming future that we should have through ‘Restoring Japan’. Not just to remember the past enjoying the memory of heyday of postwar Japan, but to in fact become what is to be ‘a beautiful nation’ of the future inheriting Japanese virtues embodied in the 30s of Showa. This is the political objective that Abe’s politics aims to accomplish. It is quite different whether the sentiment of nostalgia is consumed and enjoyed for its own sake, or channelized and mobilized for other purposes.

3) 安倍晋三, 2006, 『美しい国へ』文藝春秋

Abe and other members of his cabinet might recognize the potential tension rising up from those who sympathize with the cultural phenomena of ‘Showa Nostalgia’, at the same time they seem to be careful not to stimulate the public so that the concerns about Abe’s hawkish policy will not occur. This is one of the reasons why Abe’s government has been so keen to implement seemingly drastic economic policies, which is often called ‘Abenomics’, since their coming back to power in the National Diet as a result of the general election in 2012. As far as the public’s concerns are directed towards the economics, the potential tension lurking between the nostalgic sentiments and hawkish nationalism can be nicely managed. It seems that utilizing the banner of ‘Abenomics’ they skillfully try to camouflage their hawkish faces so that the relatively high popularity of Abe’s government and LDP is extended.

For Abe and LDP to accomplish such a political strategy, the agenda of hosting the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo could be utilized in channeling the sentiment of nostalgia into future-looking politics they advance in seemingly neither nationalistic nor hawkish way. Hosting the Olympic Games in 2020 seems to be a nostalgic repetition of Tokyo Olympics in 1964, which was one of the most proud national event of postwar Japan. While those who tried to host the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo promised that hosting the Games fosters the economic recovery from damages caused by the 3/11 Earthquake, how it actually works has been not clear at all. However, as far as the festive mega-events like Olympics are concerned, the politics of Abe and LDP is naively welcomed by the majority of Japanese people backed by the sentiment of ‘Showa Nostalgia’.

LDP won again at the following general elections of the Upper House in 2013 and the House of Common in 2014. It means that the political condition for LDP to rewrite the present Constitution became more feasible. Actually, unless they dared to change the Constitution, Abe’s government and LDP could drastically reform the basic political-military relationship with USA. In September 2015, the National Diet passed the law concerning the peace and security of Japanese nation enabling Japan to enact the collective self-defense with USA, even though many scholars and citizens criticized it insisting that such a law is unconstitutional. As is well known, Article 9 forbids Japan to fight with other nations and it has had a symbolic status in legitimizing the peace of postwar Japan. However, as a result of the recent political challenges initiated by Abe’s government seems to drastically undermine the normative foundations of postwar regime of Japan.

Difficulties of politics of ‘Restoring Japan’

At first glance, the combination of ‘Showa Nostalgia’ and LDP’s policy of ‘Restoring Japan’ seems to be compatible in its romanticized nationalistic orientation. However, there exists potential tension and conflict between them. On the one hand the phenomena of cultural nostalgia consumed by the media audience does not necessarily contradict with the postwar political regime of Japan (often called ‘*sengo-minshyushyugi*’ in Japanese). While the discourse of nostalgia laments over the lost Japanese-ness recognized in present Heisei by contrast to the time of Showa, it seems to be loyal to the legitimacy of postwar regime, even though it often avoids talking about the politics in general. In contrast, Shinzo Abe’s conservative politics apparently declares to leave the postwar regime behind in order to rebuild the nation of Japan as a ‘new and beautiful country’. It is probable that Prime Minister Abe and his government will start the process of revising the present Constitution in case that they

can get another victory at coming general election in 2016. However, it might be not so easy for LDP and its coalition parties to keep the political support from the public unless they can invent another political strategy to tame a profound concern rising from the strong public support for the ideal of peace that is embodied in Article 9.

Results of a series of survey that *Yomiuri Shinbun* released after the comeback of LDP to the power (*Yomiuri Newspaper*: 20/04/2013; 15/03/2014; 23/03/2015)⁴⁾ show that the percentage of the people who support the policy of ‘revising the Constitution’ is 51%; 42%; 51% among the whole population. This number is remaining fairly stable around the half of the population over the last few years. At the beginning of the 2000s, the percentage of people supporting that policy was less than 30. In that sense the public opinion in Japan is becoming more affirmative for the revision of the present Constitution. However, the public opinion concerning how and on what articles the Constitution may be re-examined is diverse, and the survey questionnaire doesn’t sufficiently specify that point. It only asks the respondents to select the topics they think may be considered for Constitutional revision. The result is as follows; having own military power to protect the nation (32%; 27%; 39%), keeping the good balance of public budgets (29%; 25%; 44%), division of roles between state and local government (27%; 21%; 30%), right to live in sound environments (25%; 25%; 32%), etc.

It is widely recognized that the Japanese people are very sensitive about whether they should change Article 9 or not, believing that having its own military power for protecting the nation from its potential enemies may increase the risk of becoming involved in a future war. This sensibility is also shown in the results of *Yomiuri*’s survey. The percentage of the respondents supporting the given choice that we should cope with the present situation not changing but interpretatively applying Article 9 is 40 in 2013; 43 in 2014; 40 in 2015. That of supporting the opinion that we should change Article 9 so that we can adjust ourselves to the changing conditions of the contemporary world is respectively 36; 30; 35. The result of *Yomiuri*’s survey shows that about a half of the population seems to be affirmative in revising the Constitution. However, as far as Article 9 is concerned, public opinion shows a somehow ambivalent attitude towards its revision.

More interestingly, the majority of the people in Japan enthusiastically support the ideal of renouncing war embodied in the paragraph 1 of Article 9. A series of survey of *Yomiuri* indicate that the number of the respondents against any revision is very high (74%; 76%; 84%). That of supporting the choice of ‘we need to revise’ is only 19%; 17%; 14% respectively. Concerning the paragraph 2 of Article 9, which concerns the ‘not having the forces’ and ‘not recognizing the belligerency’, the percentage of the respondents supporting that ‘we need to revise’ is 44 in 2013; 39 in 2014; 46 in 2015. That of ‘we don’t need to’ is 45; 52; 50 respectively. Carefully reading through the results of a series of survey on the matter of revising the Constitution, we can recognize the general trend of the public opinion concerning how we should revise it. While about a half of Japanese people think the Constitution should be revised considering the changing conditions surrounding Japan, the majority of the nation strongly support the ideal of peace and renouncing war declared in Article 9. It is not so difficult to point out a logical inconsistency or contradiction discernable in the public opinion on what and how we should revise the Constitution. Logically speaking, it is impossible to revise the paragraph 2 with-

4) 読売新聞 2013年4月20日「憲法 世論調査 96条改正 活発議論望む8割」、2014年3月15日「憲法 世論調査 議論活発化 7割望む 集団的自衛権「容認」49%」、2015年3月23日「憲法 世論調査「活発な論望む」72% 改正 自・維支持層 前向き」

out changing the paragraph 1 of Article 9. However, for the purpose of discussion in this paper it is much important to recognize the dilemma of people who on the one hand wish to revise the Constitution and on the other hand remain loyal to the ideal of peace.

Keeping the above-mentioned popular sentiment prevailing among the public in mind, it seems apparent that the law formally allowing the collective self-defense that was passed in 2015 basing on the government's interpretation of Article 9 is for many people almost synonymous with revising the Constitution. For those who cling to the normative ground of Japan's postwar regime, what Prime Minister Abe and his government have done and will do utilizing their political power is nothing but the total abolishment of '*sengo-minshyushyugi*' and heralds the coming of another dawn of wartime that threatens the peace and security of ordinary people living in Japan.

Nostalgia or Melancholia?

At the more philosophical level, Abe's politics of 'Restoring Japan' seems to have its own problems. As I analyzed in the preceding sections, the feeling of 'loss' is a common factor that combines the cultural sentiment of nostalgia with the political orientation of restoration. However, what the sense of loss actually means is quite different in each case.

In case of 'Showa Nostalgia', something lost is 'visible' or 'visualized' in its mediated representations. As pointed out earlier in this paper, the media's representation of the heyday of the Showa era is selective and narcissistic. However, it certainly refers to specific historical events that were significant at that time (for example, hosting the huge national events like Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964, World Expo in Osaka 1970, and Sapporo Winter Olympic Games in 1972). As the heyday of Showa has passed and Japan began to face the troublesome time in the Heisei era, many people longed for the peace and prosperity they enjoyed in the era of Showa. This is a typical phenomenon of nostalgia in that we can discern the psychic symptom of looking back to the past with the feeling of being lost and far away from 'home'.

Contrasted to that, in case of the politics of restoration PM Abe and the LDP enhance what has been lost is more imaginative and ideological, even though they stress to restore it through their hawkish policies. For Abe and his colleagues who share his political ideology it might be too clear to be questioned whether something authentically Japanese was repressed in the history of postwar Japan or not. They also seem to be fully confident that a main cause of the loss of Japanese-ness is the postwar regime that was 'imposed' on Japan by GHQ. However, as a lot of historical researches on the process of postwar occupation of Japan have clarified, the political relationship and struggle between Japan and the occupational power was more tangled and complicated⁵⁾. It was not so simple and one-sided as Abe and his colleagues seem to think it was. Moreover, we can raise the question whether the lost Japanese-ness Abe stresses to restore had actually existed before being repressed and lost through the occupational policy. In other words it might be probable that the authentic Japanese-ness the politics of restoration enthusiastically underscore is rather an ideological construct than a historical entity. It might be nothing but a typical case of the 'invention of tradition' as Hobsbawm depicted more than thirty years before in his discussion of modern nationalism⁶⁾. If the case is like this, the lost Japanese-

5) John W. Dower 1999, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II*, New York; London: W. W. Norton.

6) Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., 1983, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge; London; New York: Cambridge University Press.

ness for Abe's politics is, I suppose, a subject of not nostalgia but melancholia.

As is well known, Sigmund Freud formulated the difference between melancholia and mourning⁷⁾. The characteristic of melancholia is that those who suffer from it cannot tell exactly what was lost in their psychological condition of grief. Patients of melancholia cannot mourn for that lost something because they don't know what they actually have lost. As well as the case of the patient of melancholia, it seems to be hard for the politics of Abe's to fully mourn the lost Japanese-ness because they cannot tell precisely what sort of authentic Japanese-ness we have lost in the postwar history of Japan. As a result of it, the more support the politics of 'Restoring Japan' gets among the public, the deeper the melancholic feeling of discontent becomes, even though people can temporarily celebrate the nationalistic self-pride of 'restoration'.

In order for patients who suffer from melancholia to mourn what they actually lost, confronting their past may be on recourse, even though it may be very hard to face. The same thing could be said in case of the political-cultural nostalgia we observe in contemporary Japan. If Japanese people can have the courage to look objectively at its colonial and post-colonial history in Asia, they might be able to escape from the long-lasting melancholia combined with the narcissistic nationalism. However, the recent political tension and conflict seen between Japan and neighboring Asian nations tells the severe fact that Japan is rather inclined to inward-looking narcissism than sincerely facing the traumatic past in the East Asian region. As far as Japan desperately aims to restore the 'lost Japanese-ness' only in its own way, it will miss the opportunity to encounter the Asia with which Japan is to make a new and lasting relationship in the coming future.

Out of the Legacy of Nostalgia

After gaining the majority of seats at the general elections in 2012, 2013 and 2014, Abe's government has tried to implement several statist policies that underscore emergent needs for the stronger leadership by the government. Establishment of Japanese version of NSC (National Security Council) in 2014 is a typical case of those political endeavors. However, the hawkish policies that Abe's cabinet enforces seem to be not so enthusiastically supported as in the case of 'Restoring Japan' politics by the general public. While the rate of public support for Abe's government has been relatively high and stable in comparison to the preceding ones led by DPJ, the main cause of supporting it is that many people still expect the success of the Abenomics. What the Abenomics promises the public to achieve is the rapid recovery and dynamic growth of Japanese economy through the active economic-financial interventions initiated by the government and Bank of Japan. Such a political-economic policy reminds us of the heyday of Showa era when the governmental economic policy was so optimistic that the people could believe in the prospect for economic growth in the coming future. Keeping this in mind, it is not so difficult to depict a sort of shadow of 'Showa Nostalgia' in the ideology of Abenomics. Therefore, as far as the present economic conditions seems to be not so gloomy, the public support for Abe's government is somehow guaranteed. But it doesn't necessarily mean that the Abe's statist policies have been smoothly accepted without dissents.

Actually, when they arrogantly passed the law enabling Japan to enact the collective self-defense

7) Sigmund Freud, 1991, 'Mourning and Melancholia' in *The Penguin Freud Library volume 11, On Metapsychology*, London: Penguin Books.

with USA in September 2015, the wide-ranging protest movements against the law spread all over the nation. It surely suggests the fact that the public opinion is divided with respect to how they assess the statist policies enforced by Prime Minister Abe and LDP.

Observing the aftermath of LDP's victories at the last three general elections we could judge that while the Abe's government is in the position where they can realize their political ambitions with ease, at the same time the prospect of public support for them is neither stable nor predictable depending on what sort of policies they persuade the public to accept. When we pay attentions to how and on what issues the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020 is recently discussed, the impasse of political-cultural nostalgia will become much clear to understand. On the one hand, hosting the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo aims to revive Japan, remembering the previous one held in 1964 when Japan was just to enter the economic heyday of postwar period. In other words, the objective of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics is projecting the 'Showa Nostalgia' into the Heisei's future. However, on the other hand in the process of preparing the Olympic Games we have already faced a series of troublesome incidents like the rising budget for rebuilding a new national stadium, the suspicious case of selecting the main emblem for the Tokyo 2020 Games. Facing those scandals concerning the Tokyo Olympics it is often pointed out that more transparency and compliance are definitely needed in implementing the mega-events like Olympic Games. Moreover, critique of lack of transparency and compliance also illuminates the fact that we have long lived in the political-cultural legacies in which the secrecy has dominated in the politics of national events. While the TOCOG's (The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games) official declaration of socio-cultural significance of hosting the 2020 Games is 'leaving positive legacies in sport and other various fields for Japan and around the world even after 2020',⁸⁾ we are now facing a continuing legacy that prevents us from getting out of the nostalgia in which we just keep on dreaming an ever-unrealized dream. What we should complete is not to self-proudly reproduce, but to self-reflectively reassess the political-cultural nostalgia in which Japanese people indulge themselves for more than two decades. It is time for us to leave behind not the postwar regime per se, but the legacy of political-cultural nostalgia.

8) The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Tokyo 2020 Games Foundation Plan, Chapter 6: Action & Legacy. https://tokyo2020.jp/en/plan/gfp/Tokyo_2020_Games_Foundation_Plan_EN.pdf

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ABSTRACT

The LDP won a landslide victory in the general election in December, 2012. Harshly criticizing the DPJ-led government since its great victory in 2009, Shinzo Abe and his leading LDP titled its campaign policy 'We will restore Japan' (*Nippon o tori-modosu*). In the socio-political context after the 3/11 Earthquake in 2011 (Higashinihon Daishinsai), the political message aiming to recover from the damage and regain a bright future of Japan seems to have appealed to the majority of Japanese.

It is clear that the political term of 'restore' has strong affinity with the cultural term of 'nostalgia' that has been seen in Japan's popular cultural scene for almost two decades. Backed by the popular sentiment longing for the heyday of Showa era (called 'Showa Nostalgia'), Abe and his LDP succeeded in gaining the majority of seats in the National Diet. It seems to be possible to regard the sense of loss that is widely shared among the public as a common factor discerned in both Abe's politics of restoration and the Showa nostalgia in popular culture.

Considering the ideological implication of the 'We will restore Japan' campaign, this paper tries to clarify the socio-historical background of 'political-cultural nostalgia' seen in contemporary Japan and critically assess its impasse from the viewpoint of the melancholic nationalism rising in the age of globalization.

Key Words: 'Showa Nostalgia', 'Restoring Japan', Article 9 of the Constitution, melancholia