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# Survival of 'freedom, democracy'

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This year we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the postwar period of Japan. After Japan lost the war, the shape of its postwar regime was prepared and arranged mostly by the victor, the United States, which occupied Japan. The ideal of freedom and democracy served as the core principles during the Occupation.

The Japanese Constitution was also established along the lines of this ideal, which was a noble cause for the Americans. During the war, they answered the question of "Why we fight?" by playing the role of the world's "police" against fascist and totalitarian evils.

The ideal also accorded with postwar America's general strategy as the hegemonic power leading all liberal countries, or the West.

We Japanese have struggled to find our own way of living under this regime. But it was only with the constraint of "imposed" freedom and democracy — the command to be free, independent and self-governing — even if it sounded contradictory as a concept.

In this sense, we were congeners of postwar Europeans under the Marshall Plan, of Latin Americans and Asians under the Point Four Program, and even of the Afghan or Iraqi people in more recent years.

In many of these countries, the ideal was internalized in due course and its original imposition lost its meaning. But we Japanese seem to have somehow failed to digest this history of imposition until now, even though the government's white paper on the economy stated as early as 1956 that the Japanese no longer lived in the postwar period.

This statement was issued only in connection with the economic growth of Japan, without referring to any politi-

cal consideration or discussion among people of the ideal of freedom and democracy of American origin.

Although the economic growth of Japan, as well as of Germany and Europe in general, was what America intended, Japan, Germany and Europe in general have outgrown much more than America's original expectations.

In the political arena, the ideal is not fully upheld. For example, the conclusion and renewal of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan — the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty — was done over relatively strong opposition among the people.

The treaty was signed between two "mutually independent" nation-states "on equal footing" as far as the institutional viewpoint is concerned. But in substance, that's not the case. The treaty was signed under circumstances in which the U.S. was overwhelmingly strong politically, economically and militarily vis-a-vis Japan.

We appear to have always sought to be free and open and friendly with foreign people and foreign cultures, using the catchwords of "internationalization" in earlier times and "globalization" in more recent ones.

Since the removal of restrictions on overseas travels in 1964, more and more people, young and old, men and women, enjoy traveling, staying or studying abroad, developing significant impressions of as well as high respect for different cultures.

There were years in which young backpackers traveling around the world included more and more Japanese. These days, teaching and learning English has been strongly promoted at each stage of school education, and it is recommended that students have experience abroad to hone their English language skill.

But the double standard under the ideal of freedom and democracy, as seen here and there in Japan, has become conspicuous nowadays.

One example is the recent media report that the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office had insisted in 2011 on the necessity to check the study and career backgrounds of those who studied and worked abroad, because those inspired by the ideal of freedom and democracy were considered more inclined to leak state secrets.

This direction contradicts the government recommendation of "education for global talent." It is very annoying for us university teachers to see such advice, which implies suspicion of people who cherish ideals, coming from an office in the prime minister's secretariat.

Another mass media report said fewer and fewer young people in their 20s are traveling abroad. It is something to worry about even though it might be partly due to the declining population of people under the age of 30 since 1975.

From both the top and the bottom, Japanese society seems to be growing more introverted and to be shedding its openness toward the outside world.

"Departure from the postwar regime" has been one of the favorite slogans of Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, which implies the need to revive the spirit of the 1956 economic white paper's statement which shunned political considerations and public discussion of the ideal of freedom and democracy.

Abe will give a stronger push to his agenda, encouraged by the ruling coalition's victory in the Dec. 14 general election (except for Okinawa).

Not only those in power but also the general public must reflect on the postwar regime's ideal of freedom and democracy and explore its meaning. This is one of the most important responsibilities for us adults at this time. We have the duty to help build a praiseworthy future for younger generations.

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