Comment

Fascism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept

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Old paradigms never die; they just fade away, though often not soon enough. Historians and political scientists have managed to abandon a number of misleading descriptive or analytical concepts they had once used in talking about pre-war Japanese politics—"liberalism" and "democracy," for example. But the metaphor of fascism persists, which is surprising, given the conceptual and empirical difficulties involved.

Since the revival of studies of European fascism in the 1960s, there has been much debate on what the term meant in its original context. Definitions of fascism come in all shapes and sizes, some precise and some diffuse, some mutually contradictory. The broadest of them attempt to associate fascism with a particular historical stage in the development of industrial society. Marxists—among whom there are deep internecine disagreements—generally identify fascism as the dictatorship of monopoly capital drawn by its internal contradictions into policies of oppression at home and expansion abroad.¹ Non-Marxist scholars have advanced similar arguments: they suggest that while fascism may not be an inevitable stage in capitalist development, it does constitute an avenue that some capitalist societies follow into modernization.² This developmental approach is richly suggestive, but it suffers the usual defects of "stage theories"—rigid periodization of history, arbitrary assumptions about the "normal" mode of development, notions of linearity in development, and vague explanations of causality. Studies of modernization betraying similar biases have passed from the scene, especially in political science, where they were once orthodoxy, and even some of their principal advocates have since reconsidered.³

Some scholars have attempted to describe fascism in static terms. Historians like Ernst Nolte, for example, have characterized fascism as a particular intellectual style,⁴ while other analysts have viewed it in terms of its class or social bases,⁵ or have looked at it simply as a form of political movement.⁶ One comes away from

reading much of this literature wondering if the authors are talking about the same phenomenon. Efforts to associate fascism with a particular class or social base describe it variously as a movement of the "petty bourgeoisie in town and country," "a middle class movement representing a protest against both capitalism and socialism, big business and big unions," "one of several groups of the Mittelstand and the capitalist bourgeoisie," "the small peasant and agricultural labourers," or "the vast masses of ex-combatants" who fought in World War I. That leaves in just about everybody.

Leaving aside the empirical difficulties, the logical problems involved in formulating an adequate definition of fascism are formidable. By drawing narrow definitional boundaries one might capture the experiences of one particular national society—Nazi Germany, for example—but only at the cost of leaving no room to accommodate the different experiences of another society, such as Franco's Spain. As James Gregor has pointed out elsewhere, it is difficult enough to find a precise definition that is broad enough to accommodate both Italy and Germany. If, on the other hand, one draws the boundaries too loosely, a large number of cases may be encompassed, but the fit in particular cases will be so imperfect that the explanatory value of the concept will vanish. It could be argued that lumping Germany and Italy together with Salazar's Portugal or Quisling's Norway glosses over differences so fundamental as to render the definition meaningless. In short, if finding a minimal core of characteristics shared by all fascist countries in Europe is difficult, then the task is virtually impossible if we try to include China or Japan or Korea. After surveying the scholarly publications on European fascism, Gilbert Allardyce has come to doubt whether a generic definition—even one that would apply to Germany and Italy—is feasible at all.8

Some might dismiss these definitional problems as nominalist hairsplitting, and argue that the real task is to study Japan in the 1930s by comparing it to European fascist regimes. But this approach also has serious flaws. Many analysts of Japanese "fascism" have taken pains to point out how the Japanese case differed from the European, and vice versa. Maruyama Masao's influential essay provides the best such formulation. He points out that in Japan there was no mass movement and no cult of the supreme leader, but a heavy stress on agrarianism, a central role for military officers, and so forth.9 But neither Maruyama, nor anyone else until recently, has pressed on to the obvious conclusion: the Japanese case is so dissimilar that it is meaningless to speak of Japan in the 1930s as a "fascist" political system. Sometimes incidental differences add up to an essential difference.

To compound the problem, there has been a tendency in studies of Japanese fascism to confine levels of analysis. Attention has been fixed on the macrosocietal level, specifically the political system, which has been characterized as "fascist." Implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, the rest of the society—the microlevel as well as the macrolevel—is assumed to reflect the characteristics of the central political

system. What happens at the microsocietal level is an extension of what happens at the macrosocietal level: if there is an "emperor system" or "fascism" at the top, then there must be a whole series of "emperor systems" or "fascisms" below. In other words, there is a tacit assumption of a high degree of consistency throughout the political culture. Common sense, on the other hand, tells us that even in a society as homogeneous as Japan's, there are wide variations in values and behavior dependent on geographical or class differences. The neglect of microlevel empirical studies—of small groups, organizations, or communities—has left us no very concrete picture of the lower levels of Japanese society in the 1930s. To flesh out the abstractions that macrolevel analyses offer us, we need more research of the sort that Irokawa Daikichi has done on the 1870s and 1880s and Kano Masanao has done on the 1910s and 1920s. By highlighting contradictions and countercurrents during the periods of the jiýûminken movement and of Taishô "democracy," both have enriched our sense of those periods and corrected oversimplified aggregate portrayals.

This is not to say that there were no "fascists" in Japan, or that there were no "fascist movements" or "fascist ideas" about. Fascists may have been part of the total political scene, but only as a minor side current. This is evident from the fate of self-designated or putative fascists and fascist movements during the 1930s. Kita Ikki, Nakano Seigô, Nagata Tetsuzan, and Araki Sadao all have been plausibly described as fascists, yet consider their respective fates: Kita Ikki ended up before an army firing squad; Nakano was forced to commit seppuku; Nagata was assassinated by a fellow officer; and Araki, the most successful of the group, was kept out of high-level government positions until the late 1930s. As Fletcher shows, even the Shôwa Kenkyûkai members who flirted with European fascism as a model for Japan were never able to put their ideas into practice. Perhaps we should stop pondering why democracy failed in pre-war Japan, and consider instead why fascism failed.

Or better yet, perhaps we should abandon the paradigm of fascism as one that has served its purpose but is no longer particularly useful. The application of the concept to Japan in the 1930s has certainly helped us to ask better questions, but it is doubtful that it can help build any better models or suggest any new lines of inquiry. The imposition of a generic definition of fascism—even assuming agreement on such a definition could be reached—is bound to lead either to fundamental distortions in interpreting the Japanese case or to the conclusion that the fit is not very good. Unless it is possible to work out a more complex typology of fascism that would account for national and regional variations, the hazards of using the fascist paradigm as an analytical tool are likely to offset its benefits.

This is not to say that comparative research is not legitimate, or that Japan must be treated sui generis. We merely wish to call attention to the many problems that bedevil the study of Japanese fascism, and to suggest the need for greater theoretical clarification or for new paradigms to replace the old. More important, we wish to emphasize that concern with the phenomenon of fascism has deflected attention from other intriguing questions that still need to be asked about the 1930s, and that may lead to more useful perspectives.

First of all, while we can agree that "fascism" is not an apt tag for the total political system, why was it that fascist rhetoric or fascist ideas had so much appeal in the 1930s? Why did similar searches for a consensual ideology appear in Japan, Italy, Germany, and other parts of Europe?

Second, how do we account for those features of the Japanese political system redolent of the policies and structures adopted by the fascist regimes in Europe? If it
does not all add up to fascism, then what does it add up to? Is there a more appropriate rubric for what happened in the 1930s?

Third, should we continue to see the 1930s as a deviation from a normal course that led toward bourgeois democracy through the 1920s, or as part of an ongoing pattern of response to the outside world that had characterized Japan since the Meiji era? To what extent were domestic developments contingent upon and determined by the external context and the international environment? Just as the shape of the world in the mid-nineteenth century helped to determine Japan's internal politics then, did not the shape of the world in the 1920s and 1930s shape Japanese domestic politics?

The Problem of Ideology

At first glance, the question of why fascist ideology was in the air during the 1930s might not seem hard to answer. After all, the ideas of Shōwa Kenkyūkai and other radical right intellectuals were resonant with the collectivist ethic that was deeply embedded in the political culture and nurtured by the official "family state" ideology. All were consensual ideologies hostile to ideas of personal freedom or individual autonomy, and all valued social solidarity above personal independence, social obligations above individual rights, and social conformity over individual autonomy. Was the fascist strain in Japanese thought during the 1930s anything more than a manifestation of cultural continuity?

This argument has been advanced in perhaps its most explicit form in Kamishima Jirō's essays on "emperor system fascism." He traces the origins of 1930s ideology to the structure of village social relations, which shaped the values and behavior of the bulk of the Japanese population before World War II. The problem with this line of analysis is that it does not explain why structural factors and the collectivist ethic produced a fascist ideology only in the 1930s and not before. Why, for example, did it have little or no effect on the intellectual elite in the 1920s, when left-wing ideology carried the day? Clearly, a more complex explanation is required.

While the collectivist ethic may have provided some of the important unspoken assumptions of fascist thinking in the 1930s, its emergence has to be seen within the broader context of the socioeconomic developments from 1910 through the 1930s. It was during this period that the process of economic development and industrialization began to have a major impact on all segments of Japanese society. By the end of World War I, 19 percent of the labor force had moved into manufacturing and construction, and if the service industries are included, 43.4 percent of the labor force had been concentrated in the modern sector; 28 percent of the GNP was produced by the manufacturing industries; including the services, the modern sector had already accounted for 62 percent of the GNP. Perhaps more important than these quantitative changes was the emergence of corporate capitalism, and of a small but militant labor movement. These vociferous social forces were not easily contained by appeals to the family state ideology devised in the 1890s or by the operation of the collectivist ethic more diffusely embedded in Japanese political culture. This development required a new political theory—and if possible a new

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political practice—that would meld these forces into the same consensual framework adumbrated by these earlier modes of sociopolitical thought.

The debate over whether fascism in Europe was modernist or anti-modernist is quite suggestive in this connection, especially since many intellectuals in the 1940s spoke about the need to "overcome the modern." This did not mean abandoning industrialization, urbanization, social differentiation, achieved status, or any other items on the shopping lists of modernization theorists. Rather, it referred to the need to overcome the domination of Western culture at home and abroad, and to return to a more authentic indigenous "spirit." It could also mean the rejection of two specific models of industrialization—the capitalist laissez-faire and the socialist—which had competed with one another in European social thought until the emergence of fascist ideology in the 1920s. Both models accepted a specific image of humans as "economic animals," at once individualistic and motivated by pursuit of material satisfaction.

In a provocative pre-war essay, Peter Drucker suggested that fascism in Europe meant the "end of economic man," i.e., the collapse of the image defined by classic liberal economic theory. It was a rejection of homo economicus, the dynamic, interest-maximizing actor at the center of both the liberal and Marxist versions of modernization. In place of a rationality directed toward individual well-being, self-proclaimed fascist ideologues in Europe asserted a goal of collective well-being to be achieved through a rearrangement of the market system. The specifics of that rearrangement were less important than their purpose: the elimination of social competition and conflict, with all their debilitating side effects. As Fletcher points out, these concerns were shared by the Shōwa Kenkyūkai intellectuals. They were also shared by those who, like Kita Ikki, wanted a "revolution from above" to forestall the possibility of "revolution from below." Conflict could be forestalled by uprooting the social inequities that spawned it.

Fascist ideology among the intellectuals was therefore not simply a warmed over version of the "family state" ethic. The latter still remained alive and well in Kokutai no bongi, Shinmin no michi, and other nativist tracts of the 1930s, but its audience was to be found among the educated and semi-educated masses, not among the intellectuals. The intellectuals desired not a return to the "collectivist" relations of a pre-industrial agrarian society, but the formation of a new style of collectivism more or less in tune with industrialized society. They sought a form of social coherence that accommodated both the reality of economic development and "traditional" or neotraditional values. In this sense, fascist thought was an attempt to resolve one of the central contradictions of Meiji developmental strategy.

The Meiji oligarchs had pursued economic growth through the initiative of private capital (with government assistance and direction, to be sure) while promoting an anticapitalist ethic through the educational system. The strains of this cultural dissonance produced the rampant "Japanist" and "restorationist" movements of the 1920s and 1930s, and to a large extent facilitated the downfall of the business-dominated party regimes. The intellectuals of the 1930s proposed to deal with this contradiction by creating a social order that modulated the profit-seeking impulses of the capitalists (and the wage-seeking impulses of the proletariat) by

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simplifying the social structure, and by eliminating the market mechanism as the principal means for the allocation and distribution of social goods. They wished to achieve social harmony and consensus with institutional reforms that contained and redirected individual materialistic motives in the name of higher collective purposes rather than through appeals to traditional "collectivist" values. A consistent intellectual theme of the late 1930s stressed the virtues of kyōdō—cooperation, and the suppression of individual needs or wants to further the goals of the collectivity.

It should be noted, however, that this ideological disposition did not necessarily imply unqualified support for the state. Miki Kiyoshi, for example, often displayed a profound distrust of dirigist politics or dictatorial leadership, and considered collectivism directed from above a "false collectivism." He stressed the importance of open lines of communication between the mass of the people and their rulers. The subtle interplay between the emphasis on the collective and the need to respond to the masses is one that requires further exploration in studies of intellectual developments in the 1930s. Perhaps the emergence of the working class movement in the 1920s had left a residue of doubt about the efficacy of elitist politics.

The Problem of Elite Politics

Elitist politics of the 1930s are strikingly different from Italian politics of the 1920s and German politics of the 1930s. One of the distinctive features of fascist political systems in Europe—i.e., regimes founded by successful fascist movements—is the rupture of elite continuity. In both Germany and Italy, defunct or complacent liberal-left regimes were supplanted by leaders who proclaimed themselves visionary representatives of youth, spirit, will, and action. "Revolution" is a term that has been applied to the Fascist seizure of power in Italy and the Nazi seizure of power in Germany. But where can one find an analogous moment in the history of Japan during the 1930s and 1940s? The assassination of Premier Inukai in 1932 is one possibility, but power was not transferred to the assassins, or even to those they supported. It went instead to a very respectable senior admiral not particularly known for his youth, spirit, will, or action. Similarly, the military revolt in 1936 disturbed the entrenched elite but did not displace it.

The leaders of the 1930s, as even Maruyama tacitly suggests, were "the brightest and the best," not the posturers, street fighters, and misfits who took power in fascist Europe. With occasional exceptions like Konoe Fumimaro, most were bureaucrats not so very different from the leaders who had dominated in the 1920s. They were graduates of Teidai, the National Military Academy, or the National Naval Academy—products of the meritocratic process of elite recruitment. Furthermore, while the number of military premiers and other cabinet ministers increased significantly, and while the political parties no longer supplied the majority of the cabinet members, the same elites were represented in the governments of the 1930s as had been represented in the earlier decade. The substitution of the jūshin (senior statesman) for Prince Saionji as the principal cabinet-maker did not topple the ascendency of these elites, nor did it alter the heavily bureaucratic character of the government. One cannot help feeling that the 1930s represented not a breakdown of "democratic" government, but the stabilization of bureaucratic government. R. P. G. Steven has argued that the politics of the 1930s resulted from constitutional forces that had been working themselves out since the 1890s: political leaders of the period finally learned
to live with what he calls “hybrid constitutionalism.”"\(^\text{12}\) David Titus has suggested that we might call this the “privatization of political conflict.”\(^\text{13}\) Both authors suggest that politics in the 1930s, at least at the level of cabinet formation, was business as usual rather than a revolutionary break.

If “fascist” is not a very useful adjective to describe all this, then what is? It might be most useful to see the 1930s as the formative period of a managerial state or polity, in which a dirigist bureaucracy became the central element in the formation and execution of national policy, especially with respect to economic and social development. In a sense, of course, this was nothing new—except that the scope of state intervention and management expanded considerably during the 1930s. Since the 1890s, sub-oligarchic bureaucratic leaders, jealous of their autonomy as servants of the emperor, had been impatient with the intransigent haggling that went on in the Diet. Many had also become convinced of the need to forestall the disruptive consequences of industrialization that had affected the European nations. As Kenneth Pyle, Sumiya Mikio, and others have suggested, during the post–Russo-Japanese War period elements in the Home Ministry bureaucracy attempted to manage the future course of social development in the countryside—and perhaps broaden the popular base of bureaucratic power—by creating artificial community structures closely integrated with the administrative structure.\(^\text{14}\) The merging of local shrines, the promotion of pseudo-gemeinschaft organizations like the Seinendan and the Zaigō Gunjinkai, and the shoring up of local elites through the propagation of the Hōtokusha all represented an attempt to create bureaucratic leverage in local communities where none had existed before. Did these policies represent an attempt by the bureaucracy to enlarge its sphere of competence? Did they express in a modern context the didactic function of officials that was part of the Tokugawa bureaucratic tradition? Or were they a harbinger of attempts to create a managerial polity in the 1930s?

It would be misleading to draw sharp lines of continuity between the developments in the 1910s and what happened in the 1930s. Those who expressed the powerful managerial impulses of the 1930s simply ignored the countryside for the most part, and concentrated instead on the alteration of relationships between private capitalism and the state bureaucracy. This was easier to control, though not necessarily more effective, than earlier attempts to control the countryside had been. The central nervous system of corporate capitalism was far more accessible and controllable than the amorphous mass of local communities, and more susceptible to bureaucratic penetration of the corporate decision-making process. At the same time, however, the leaders of corporate capitalism—unlike the dispersed, divided, and relatively weak local elites—had powerful political allies. Ikeda Seihin and Gō Seinosuke were more formidable subjects to control than village leaders or local

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\(^\text{13}\) David A. Titus, Palace and Politics in Prewar Politics (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974).
landlords; in their battles to establish control over corporate capitalism, the managerial bureaucrats often emerged bloody if not bowed.

Why were corporate leaders of the 1930s so difficult to control? Unlike the pioneer entrepreneurs of the Meiji period, who were more heavily dependent on official patronage, they had loyalties to their own organizations that sometimes conflicted with the collective interests of the state. The rhetoric of service to the nation sprang easily to their lips, but when the chips were down they chose to defend the interests of their firms rather than those of the collective. Precisely for this reason, it was important for the bureaucracy to crush corporate independence. Corporate leaders sought autonomy in decision-making, which was as bad as materialistic profit-seeking because it represented a defense of the private against the public. The hard political battles of the late 1930s were fought not over the budget or foreign policy, but over the extent to which the bureaucracy could define the limits of corporate decision-making. The National Electrical Industries Law, the Economic Mobilization Law, and the so-called Hoshino Plan for economic control all prompted intense debate in the Diet, and led to confrontation between the bureaucracy and big business leadership. The bureaucratic planners of the late 1930s did not reject the concept of private property or the utility of individual initiative, but they were even more suspicious of the wastefulness and arbitrariness of the free market mechanism than Meiji leaders had been. This made them vulnerable to the charge of being "red"—as corporate leaders often said they were.

In considering the elite politics of the 1930s we should perhaps pay more attention to this issue—the attempt to substitute bureaucratic rationality for market rationality in the allocation of scarce resources and in the distribution of rewards from the productive process. There are parallels here, to be sure, with the fascist era in Europe. The point to emphasize, however, is not that Japan was "fascist" or "proto-fascist," but that fascism in Europe was a subspecies of the general impulse toward managed economies that was on the rise all over the world in the 1930s—and that has survived into the postwar world as well. In other words, rather than stress that Japan resembled the European fascist regimes, let us rather remember that all these regimes grappled with a common problem: political economies that did not function well in the face of world economic crisis. Let us abandon the ethnocentric biases inherent in attempts to find fascism in Japan and search instead for alternative paradigms that might fit both cases.

We realize, of course, that constructing paradigms that can be used either as alternative or supplemental approaches to studies of fascism is easier said than done, especially given the imperfect state of macro-theory in the social sciences. But the difficulty of the task should not deter us from making the effort. One paradigm currently popular among students of comparative politics is that of "corporatism," a broad and diffuse concept which encompasses a wide array of approaches, but which emphasizes the vigorous role played by the state as the dominant actor in the political system. Unlike theories of pluralism, which stress competition between vying interest groups and the balancing of power among institutions of government, corporatism views the state as an active, powerful entity. The state is seen as determining what groups from the private sector will be heard and what policies

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will be followed rather than as responding mechanically to interest group lobbying or public demands. The notion of an assertive state, powerful enough to subordinate or at least moderate private interests, either through the imposition of coercive sanctions or through institutional cooptation, is fundamental. It poses a striking contrast to capitalist theories which see the role of the state as facilitator or neutral regulator of the political system, which functions on a more or less "self-steering" basis through the unfettered operation of the market mechanism. What happens in such political systems is often determined by the state at virtually every stage of the political processes—from "inputs" (which interest groups articulate needs), to "conversions" (how these interests are processed or filtered), and finally, to "outputs" (which policies are formulated and implemented, and with what consequences).

In spite of its pitfalls, the concept of corporatism forces us to take a harder look at the dynamic interaction between the state and the private sector. The role and power of interest groups cannot be determined simply by isolating individual organizations and assessing their influence in terms of resources available. Using the notion of corporatism, we can see how weak private interest groups were in pre-war Japan. Consider, for example, the fate of labor unions, which have been the basis for political opposition in most industrialized states. Only approximately 7 percent of the total labor force, or roughly 420,000 workers, were organized into labor unions just prior to the war. Moreover, the labor unions were enterprise-centered rather than organized across industrial sectors—as is still the case today. Such structural factors made it very difficult for groups outside the public sector to establish strong foundations for opposition to the state. The labor movement in pre-war Japan fell far short of commanding the kind of power that might have given disenfranchised groups the capacity to force the state to respond to their interests. It is not surprising that by the end of 1940 Japanese labor unions had been wholly coopted into the Industrial Patriotic Association, which served to mobilize labor for the wartime effort.

Other interest groups—with the exception of big business—were also weak. Even if they had been strong, it is doubtful that they could have influenced political outcomes, much less have resisted the state when their interests collided. This was in part because intermediating institutions, such as the political parties, were unwilling or unable to turn interest group needs into policies congenial to the groups themselves. This was especially true of political parties, the primary aggregators of private interests, which had struggled to grasp power in the 1920s, and saw it slip away during the middle and late 1930s. Although Gordon Berger has argued that interest politics continued actively even after the dissolution of the parties in 1940, party ability to articulate these interests had substantially declined from what it had been a decade before.

The corporatist approach is potentially useful for placing the events of the 1930s in a broadly comparative framework, and for drawing attention to the collective

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interests of the state and to its vigorous role in shaping policies. New questions are raised and new approaches encouraged. Let us hasten to add, however, that the concept of corporatism is still a long way from conceptual clarity and methodological rigor. Indeed, at its present stage of refinement, it suffers from many of the same problems that plague studies of fascism: uncertainty over levels of analysis, lack of definitional clarity, and normative biases, for example. We allude to it here only as a way of suggesting that there are viable alternatives to the concept of fascism. By calling attention to a different set of questions, new paradigms might provide, at the very least, fresh perspectives on problems which are no longer illuminated by the diagnostic gaze of fascism. Whether corporatism or any other theoretical paradigm leads us out of the intellectual wilderness remains to be seen.

In light of the difficulties inherent in macro-theory, perhaps the study of the 1930s would benefit most from focusing on middle-range questions. Many important empirical questions need to be answered if we are to understand what happened in pre-war Japan, a number of them related specifically to the role of Japan’s bureaucracies. If communication and information are sources of power in modern nations, as Karl Deutsch has so insightfully argued, how adequate were the levels of information available to bureaucratic policy-makers? How much in-fighting was there between the various ministries of state? To what extent is it a distortion to consider these ministries unified entities? Were the key bureaucracies, such as the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Finance Ministry, plagued by internal disunity and by what has come to be regarded as “bureaucratic politics”? Of the various models of decision-making—the unitary rational actor, organizational and bureaucratic processes, the cybernetic and perceptual models—which provides us with the most convincing explanation of how the bureaucracies behaved? How did bureaucrats influence or attempt to influence other elites? How successful were they? By answering such middle-range questions, we might find ourselves in a position to understand the larger puzzle of how and why bureaucracies in Japan have wielded such extraordinary de facto power when their de jure authority has been limited. Research on such questions should also enrich the theoretical literature on policy-making, and perhaps reveal continuities and discontinuities between the political styles of the pre-war and postwar periods.

The Problem of International Context

A full understanding and analysis of domestic politics in the 1930s also requires that attention be given to the international setting. In an age of growing international interdependence, which the period between the First and Second World Wars clearly was, international forces had a profound impact upon domestic developments, and vice-versa. So complex was the pattern of interdependence that seeking to disentangle the domestic situation from the international is both difficult and hazardous. Labeling one set of developments the causal or independent variable and the other as the dependent variable may distort the complexity of their interactions. Here is yet another area in which past studies of fascism have often been more confusing than helpful.

For a variety of reasons, many studies of Japanese fascism have placed overriding emphasis on domestic factors, even in explaining Japan’s foreign policy. For Marxist

19 Deutsch, Nerves of Government.
scholars the emphasis is understandable, given their ideological disposition to extrapolate from domestic structure to international behavior. Lenin, of course, viewed imperialism and military expansionism as external manifestations of domestic conflicts. The view is shared by a non-Marxist, Barrington Moore, who argues that if income and wealth had been more equitably allocated in the countryside, domestic demand would not have experienced a slump sufficiently serious and sustained to prompt the Japanese to seek overseas markets and resources through military conquest. 20

There is nothing inherent in Marxist thought that forbids giving proper weight to international factors. Indeed, some of the most thought-provoking works in international relations theory are currently being written by scholars who are either Marxist or have been heavily influenced by Marxist thought. One of the most widely discussed of these is Immanuel Wallerstein’s *The Modern World-System*, which stresses the importance of keeping the international system of capitalism in mind when seeking to understand how particular political regimes came into existence and why they acted as they did. 21 Wallerstein develops the notion of a core, semiperiphery, and periphery in the international system, which he feels provided the external context for national development. Another approach is taken by the dependency theorists, who see advanced capitalist countries in possession of a whole set of advantages—capital, military arms, managerial skills, technology, and so on—operating at the core of the international economy, and dominating developing nations at the periphery, which are dependent and vulnerable to exploitation. Whether such systemic approaches can be fruitfully applied to the case of Japan in the 1930s is not clear; few scholars have tried. While the preoccupation with the domestic manifestations of fascism certainly does not preclude an exploration of the links between domestic structure and regional and international systems—and indeed ought to require systematizing such links—the literature so far is not noteworthy for studies of this sort.

Serious studies which relate foreign forces to domestic developments have been done by Sadako Ogata, James Crowley, and others, and it is surprising that so few of their findings have been incorporated into the study of fascism. Only Noam Chomsky, a nonspecialist, has addressed the issue in provocative fashion. 22 It seems to us that an understanding of the 1930s requires much wider and more systematic analysis of the international system than has been done so far. We need to know, for example, how decisive an impact the world depression had on Japan’s political economy. What were the direct and indirect consequences for political stability? How much weight can be attributed to systemic factors in accounting for Japan’s aggressive behavior? If the research of Robert North and Nazli Choucri is valid, the answer would seem to be a great deal. North and Choucri construct a framework of analysis based upon the interplay of certain aggregate forces at work: aggregate demand is determined, in their formulation, by the level of population interacting with the state of technology in relationship to the availability of resources. Using

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this indicator of aggregate demand, the authors then arrive at estimates of the probability of conflict by calculating the ratio of demand to capabilities. Application of the model to the case of pre-war Japan seems, on the basis of aggregate data, to yield a fairly close fit. With the growth of Japan's population and economic infrastructure, coupled with the loss of export markets and access to overseas resources, the strains on finite resources built up to a point where the incentives to engage in war were overwhelming. How much of an impact did the loss of overseas markets and resources have? If economic incentives drove Japanese leaders to expand the country's colonial empire, then these incentives may have indirectly induced the domestic changes already noted—the emergence of “fascist” ideology and the urge toward a managerial polity.

All of this suggests that there are gaping holes in our knowledge of how the external environment affected pre-war Japan. There is a growing body of theoretical literature in the field of international relations which can be usefully tested on the case of pre-war Japan. Instead of remaining transfixed by the need to explain the aberrational phenomenon of fascism—or for that matter, the failure of democracy, or the derailing of political development—we need to press beyond the orthodox concerns of the past to formulate new questions, build new models, and test these empirically within a broad spectrum of heretofore unexplored perspectives. The study of fascism—in spite of all the problems alluded to here—has produced a number of valuable works, particularly those of Maruyama Masao. But the field has come to a stage where the problems and costs of continuing this line of inquiry outweigh the benefits. One of the underlying reasons for the postwar flurry of Japanese studies on fascism—the psychological need to identify who or what was responsible for the tragedy of the Second World War—may have passed. So, too, may the scholarly rationale for directing so much attention to this subject.

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