

MARUYAMA MASAO AND MODERN JAPANESE POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Maruyama Masao is one of Japan's influential political thinkers of the twentieth-century. This article attempts to briefly discuss Maruyama Masao's thoughts on Japanese political engagement by focusing on the intellectual and psychological causes of Japan's political ambitions over the years. Maruyama Masao commented on numerous issues like the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan, theory and psychology of ultra-nationalism and reflections on Article IX of the Japanese Constitution. Maruyama's modern thought helped the Japanese understand their role in nation building and the importance of preserving peace at all cost. The paper concludes that Maruyama's political thoughts are still relevant in this day and age.

Keywords: Maruyama Masao, Japanese political thought, Conservatism, Ultra-nationalism

Introduction

Maruyama Masao (March 22, 1914-August 15, 1996) was a leading Japanese political scientist of post-war Japan. He became influenced by his father's colleagues such as Hasegawa Nyozeikan, who was part of a circle of people known for their liberal political thoughts during the Taisho Era (1912-1927). After graduating from the Department of Law at Tokyo Imperial University in 1937, Maruyama was appointed as an assistant researcher in the same department. He initially intended to specialize in European political thought, but later switched to Japanese political thought, a discipline that until then, chiefly centred on the concept of an imperial state. Maruyama brought to the discipline a theoretical perspective grounded in extensive conservatism. During the Pacific War, Maruyama was stationed in the Imperial Army headquarters at Hiroshima, but after experiencing the atomic bomb explosion, he resumed his academic responsibilities at the Tokyo Imperial University.

Subsequently, after the end of the Pacific War, Maruyama published *The Logic and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism* and other thought-provoking articles, criticising pre-war Japanese politics of militarism and fascism, which left a strong repercussion on post war critical academic discourse of Japan. Maruyama was a powerful liberal opinion-maker, going far beyond academia, wielding great influence in issues like the US-Japan Security Treaty and the student movement of 1960. Maruyama believed that the collective mentality, inherent in traditional Japanese thinking, was a key reason for Japan's defeat in the Pacific War and was convinced that such values needed to be modernized. He was mainly concerned with Japanese intellectual history, and is perhaps best known for his studies on the influence of neo-Confucianism and on the development of nationalist thoughts in modern Japan.

Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan

The evolution of intellectual history in relatively isolated Japan during the feudal era was influenced by Confucian and anti-Confucian thoughts. In pre-modern Japan, China was the source of civilization itself. Confucianism became the 'most powerful political ideology conceived by the human race'.¹ Confucianism yearned for the lost Golden Age, ruled by sages whose virtue alone made people good, happy and prosperous. Interestingly, Tokugawa Japan adopted neo-Confucianism as an official ideology, combining traditional values of *Confucianism* with humanity's relationship with the universe.

Within this context, Maruyama describes the role of Sorai Confucianism and Norinaga Shintoism in breaking the stagnant confines of Chu Hsi Confucianism. He concluded that the new school of thought created an intellectual climate in which ideas and practices of modernization became the norm and prepared the ground for the eventual adoption of Western concepts and intellectual systems during the Meiji period.² Maruyama was not only well-versed in Chinese and Japanese classical thoughts, but also Western intellectualism. In his study of the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan, Maruyama traces the disintegration of the Chu Hsi hegemony and the eventual emergence of modern consciousness.

He explores few representative schools of thoughts; the Chu Hsi mode of thought, and the idea of Natural Order, the Sorai School Revolution, Shoeki and Norinaga Schools, pre-modern formation of nationalism, national consciousness and varieties of pre-modern nationalism. In his first essay, Maruyama commented that Chu Hsi philosophy which links all aspects of the universe was challenged by the rise of the school of ancient learning. The central figure in this confrontation was Ogyu Sorai who ultimately separated the Neo-Confucian natural and moral laws as well as private (moral) and public (political) aspects of life, thus seriously undermining its continuative mode of thinking. Maruyama believed that Sorai's mode of thinking influenced scholars, particularly Tokugawa scholars in a significant way. In exploring Maruyama's views towards the pre-modern intellectual history of Japan, American Scholar Marius Jansen notes,

All who write on Tokugawa thought must at some point ask themselves how their work relates to Maruyama Masao's brilliant elucidation of the development of the school of Ancient Learning in his *Nihon seiji shisoshi knkyu*.³

Jansen also highlighted the inter-relationship between the disintegration of the orthodox worldview and deterioration of the feudal politico-economic and social system as a whole. Maruyama's studies on the intellectual history of Tokugawa Japan proves that intellectual history at that period was not static but passed through dynamic changes that prepared the ground for the induction of modern discourses and rationalism during the Meiji era. Through his work, *Studies on The Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*,

¹ Watanabe, Hiroshi, *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1600-1901*, (translated by David noble), LTCB/International House of Japan, 2012, pp 542-43.

² Maruyama, Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1974.

³ Jansen, Marius B. ed., *Changing Japan Toward Modernization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, p 155.

Maruyama explores the static character of Chinese history and Confucianism and the formation of Tokugawa Confucianism.

According to Maruyama, it is generally believed that Confucianism was first introduced into Japan around the end of the fourth century A.D., during Emperor Ojin's reign, when Wani of Paekche (in Korea) brought the *Confucian Analects* and the *Thousand Characters Classics* to Japan. There are two conflicting views as to the extent of Confucian influence on Japanese society and culture. However, even those scholars who are most sceptical about the Confucian influence in Japan acknowledge one period in which it suited existing social conditions.⁴ It is observed that the Tokugawa era (1603-1867) depicted the golden era of Confucianism in Japan. During this period, Japan saw rapid development of Confucianism within a feudal regime. Even Fukuzawa Yukichi, an advocate of Westernization and diehard critic of Confucianism, admits that Confucian moral code was the ideological foundation for the Tokugawa system of social relations.

Similarly, Maruyama accounts that Sung or Neo-Confucian philosophy had already been imported into Japan during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) by Zen monks and was the traditional preserve of the monks of the five Zen Monasteries. Later, the attempt to establish Chu Hsi philosophy as a discipline for popular dissemination conflicted with Confucian traditions in Japan. What effect did the Chu Hsi School have on the development of other schools that emerged later?⁵ After the middle of Tokugawa period, when the Chu Hsi system had already been introduced, the scholars of Ancient Learning and National Learning of the Sorai school of thought came to prominence.

Sorai thought was quite different from Confucianism. Maruyama noted that unlike Sorai tradition, traditional Shinto was closer to Confucianism. Maruyama was the opinion that while the Tokugawa society were decaying internally and external crisis increased, the intellectuals believed in the ignorance of the common people. He highlighted the fact that the intellectuals were more concerned with punishing commoners when they did not obey the commands of their superiors.⁶ In sum, intellectuals during the Tokugawa era followed patterns of pre-modern, feudalistic and traditional regime and social structures. Moreover, they asserted that compared to Western barbarians, Japanese scholastic thought was far superior. But there was a paradigm shift in Tokugawa intellectualism when Fukuzawa Yukichi demanded for individual independence and self-respect,

In order to defend our nation against foreign powers, it is necessary to fill the entire nation with the spirit of freedom and independence. Everyone throughout the nation, without distinctions such as noble and base, high and low, must be personally responsible for the nation. And the wise and the stupid, the blind and those with good eyes, must all do their duty as members of the nation.⁷

In this regard, both Fukuzawa and Maruyama rejected the nature of feudal relations between prince and subjects which prevailed in the Tokugawa period, as advocated by the intellectuals. Maruyama criticized Tokugawa intellectualism which enriched feudalism which was a major obstacle for Japan to become a nation state or promote nationalism. He remarked that the birth of a national consciousness did not surface until

⁴ Sokichi, Tsuda, *A Study of Japanese Thought as Manifested in Literature*, Tokyo: 1916-21, ii p 585.

⁵ Maruyama Masao, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

the Meiji Restoration. Maruyama believed that to understand the historical problems of Japanese nationalism, it is necessary first to understand Tokugawa feudalism and the social consciousness that prevailed under it. Maruyama noted that Tokugawa Japan was viewed as the Land of the Gods and the emperor was revered. At the same time, developments in of internal transportation and the extension of commerce promoted a national market. These conditions preparation the Tokugawa period for an eventual unified state. He acknowledged that internal conditions and the politicization of the sense of reverence for the emperor were in response to the confrontation with the foreign powers.⁸ In the end, the concept of private and public sphere, this was advocated by the Sorai school of thought, partly fostered modern values.

Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism

After the Meiji restoration, spiritual and political power were under the leadership of the Emperor. With the Meiji Restoration the class distinction separating warriors, artisans, merchants and peasants was abolished. Most of these people were absorbed into the state service jobs within the government. State-society relationship became centralized making modern Japan more complex. Such complexity ended in aiding absolutism and ultra-nationalist tendencies in Japanese politics.

In this regard, Maruyama Masao wanted to answer the question of what was the main ideological factor that kept the Japanese people in slave like environment and finally drove them to a war with the rest of the world?⁹ Maruyama opined that ultra-nationalism in Japan was formed with slogans such as 'The Eight Corners of the World under One Roof' and 'Spreading the Emperor's Mission to Every Corner of the Earth'.¹⁰ Further Maruyama believed that Japanese ultra-nationalism lacked a clear ideology and that Japanese society had a low level of political consciousness.

Maruyama observed that European nationalism was found on the basis of sovereignty devoid of internal values.¹¹ In post Meiji Japan, Maruyama believed that Japan was built as a modern- state, without understanding the concept of national sovereignty. Moreover, Japanese nationalism strove consistently to base its control on internal values rather than on authority deriving from legality. According to Maruyama, the Imperial Declaration on Education was an example of how the state monopolized the right to determine and distribute values. Maruyama asserts that until the divinity of the Emperor was formally absolved in 1946, there was no basis in Japan for freedom of belief. Since the nation included in its `national polity` all the internal values of truth and morality, nothing could exist apart from these national values.¹²

Maruyama criticized Japanese nationalism as having no formal basis of validity. This is because all values are embodied by the Emperor himself, who is regarded as 'the eternal culmination of the Truth, the Good, and the Beautiful throughout all ages and in

⁸ Ibid., p.342.

⁹ Maruyama, Masao, 'Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism` in Maruyama Masao, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, p 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. p.3

¹² Ibid., p.,6

all places.¹³ Further, Maruyama asserts that the post-Meiji state was real repressive. The military exercised power by identifying its powerful status within the nation state. What determined the behaviour of the bureaucrats and of the military was not primarily a sense of legality, but the consciousness of being in a higher position than everyone else.¹⁴

Nationalism in Japan: Its Theoretical Background

Maruyama states that studying Japanese nationalism involves difficulties and believes politicians and political scientists have yet clearly to see a pattern of Japan's modern social and political development and at the same time asserts that Japan's place in world history is shrouded with confusion. Hence, the complexity of understanding Japanese nationalism is understandable. In some of his analyses, Maruyama seems more idealistic so his arguments are not based on rationality.¹⁵

According to Maruyama, Japan's particular social organization, political structure, and cultural patterns have been the primary determinants of Japanese nationalism. According to Maruyama, Japanese nationalism can be defined as ultra nationalism that occurred mainly due to the social and political structure up to 1945. The evolution of nationalism is not a single continuous development.¹⁶ The announcement of Japan's defeat in the Pacific War in 1945 marks the departure point of a new state of affairs. Maruyama observes that prior to 15th August, Japan experienced the highest phase of nationalism. In contrast to other Far Eastern areas in the post-colonial period, nationalistic feelings can be attributed to youthful energy. In contrast, Japan on its own, had already experienced a full cycle of nationalism; birth, maturity and decline.¹⁷ What this means is that Japanese nationalism was shaped after the Meiji Restoration of 1867. Japanese nationalism flourished as a result of wanting to expel foreign intrusions, ethnocentrism as well as strategies of the then ruling elites to maintain their social privileges. Even though feudalism was abolished in 1867, state authority remained in the hands of the old ruling class, making it easy for the traditional spirit of nationalism to flourish even after the establishment of a modern-state. Hence, it can be argued that post Meiji state, nationalism based on popularly legitimate principle could not be formed. Maruyama asserts that Japanese ultra nationalism has nothing to do with bourgeois democracy and popular sovereignty as seen in classic western nationalism. It was more of a case of fusion with imperialism.¹⁸

Though under the Meiji Restoration, the modernization process proceeded rapidly, the Japanese were detached from democratic tendencies. Without democratic influences, the ideology of ultra-nationalism took root. Maruyama Masao felt the collective mentality, inherent in traditional Japanese thinking, was a key factor for Japan's defeat in the Pacific War. He was convinced that Japanese thought processes

¹³ Ibid., p.,8

¹⁴ Ibid., p.,12

¹⁵ Maruyama, Masao, 'Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism' in Maruyama Masao, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 137

¹⁸ Ibid., p.143.

must be modernized.¹⁹ More importantly Maruyama highlights that Japan should never go back to pre-War type thinking as Japanese patriotism based on nation of god or supreme nation will definitely incur anti-Japanese sentiments from its neighbours.

Some Reflections on Article IX of the Constitution

Post war Japanese democracy and pacifism, manifested in the 1947 Constitution, especially through Article 9, was an American enforcement. Article 9 states,

The Japanese people renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes, Hence ``land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The rights of belligerence of the state will not be recognized.²⁰

Japanese patriotism remained at a primitive tribal level, unrefined by democratic principles even after the embarrassing defeat in the Pacific War. After the war, Japanese patriotism was seen as anachronistic. So Japan did not need to possess an armed forces.²¹ Many Japanese felt revulsion for anything that smacked of nationalism. In this context, Maruyama evaluated Article 9 as one of the fundamental value inception to cease and re-emerge pre-war fascism tendencies in Japan. Maruyama supported complete disarmament. He tried to justify the Article 9 provision in 1947 Constitution and criticised attempts made by the post war (especially on the back drop of Korean War, establishment of police forces and signing Security Pact with the United States) governments to amend it. The Government kept on debating whether the Japanese Constitution should be revised since the international environment was volatile.²² Maruyama criticized the historical relationship between constitutional revision and national defence.

He expresses curiosity that the constitutional revisionists emphasize the peculiar historical background of the enactment of the present Constitution but ignore the historical facts about the origin of the *constitutional revision* question. Maruyama highlights the attempts made by the revisionists,

In November 1949, the year preceding the outbreak of the Korean War, Prime Minister Yoshida answered a Diet interpretation by saying that non-armament itself was the best guarantee of national security. Nishimura, Chief of the Treaty Bureau of the MOFA gave an official interpretation of Article IX in which he said that, "Article IX" should be interpreted as also renouncing a war for self-defence.²³

In the end, General MacArthur himself suggested that Japan had the right of self-defence. Subsequently, after the outbreak of Korean War in June 1950, the National

¹⁹ Koschmann, Victor, J. "Maruyama Masao and the Fate of Liberalism in Twentieth-Century Japan", *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Volume 36, Number 1, Winter 2010, p 141.

²⁰ *The Constitution of Japan 1947, Article 9,*

²¹ Shimiz, Ikutaro, *Aikokushin, Tokyo ; Iwanami Shoten, 1950, pp.137-159; Op. Cit.Ibid., p. 23*

²² Government Commission on the Investigation of the Constitution, Final Report of the Government Commission on the Constitution, Book I Chapter I. quoted in Maruyama, *Op.Cit.* p.290

²³ Maruyama *Op.Cit.*, p.291

Police Reserve was created and this raised a political question over the constitutionality of the units. Maruyama commented that the American administration debated about Japan's rearmament frequently. Maruyama further commented against a series of endeavours to nullify the spirit of Article IX, namely the 1952 U.S. Japan Security Treaty, the establishment of the National Safety Agency Law and the Maritime Safety Force. Maruyama also referred to the anti-constitutional manipulations where during a visit to Japan in November 1953, the then US Vice-President Nixon remarked that it was mistake to have inserted Article IX in the Japanese Constitution.²⁴

Throughout his life, Maruyama insisted that Article 9 should be treated as a manifestation of the will of the Japanese people to use a nonviolent resolution and disarmament methods in solving conflicts. But personalities like Prime Minister Yoshida from the Liberal Party fought for the maintenance of the self-defence forces. Maruyama and other Japanese liberals were disenchanted with the right wing forces within Japan. For Maruyama, Article 9 was the only provision that would ensure Japan would not have the chance to re-emerge as a militarist or fascist regime in the near future. However, post-war Japanese governments tried again and again to change the interpretation of Article 9. Maruyama defended Article 9 by remarking that Japan should contribute in a non-violent manner in international conflicts and conflict resolutions. Maruyama was of the opinion that it was important to work towards preventing wars or violent conflict during peacetime. Maruyama's criticism raises the question as to why it is so difficult to imagine a state without an army. Maruyama viewed Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution as an initiative to challenge conventional accounts of a sovereign state and its right to legitimate violence. To Maruyama, in accordance to Article 9, the Japanese government should not have the power to make war, threaten war, or make preparations for war.

Why did the United States (US) include Article 9 in the Constitution? Article 9 was included to make sure that Japan will not re-emerge as a military power to take revenge against its enemies. In essence the Allies did not trust Japan with any military powers.²⁵ MacArthur, did not believe that a demilitarized Japan would be safe, but rather felt that US military bases will make the Japanese Peace Constitution workable.²⁶ As the Cold War progressed, the United States began to debate if Japan should be rearmed as an anti-Soviet ally. US occupation policy began flip-flopping from time to time and there was pressure on Japan to ignore its constitution and rearm. But Article 9 still prevailed due to massive public support. Liberal intellectuals like Maruyama and majority of Japanese society overwhelmingly supported the true spirit of Peace Constitution especially with regards to the renunciation of war.

However, the Japanese government and the US violated Article 9, by establishing the National Police Force, signing the Japan-US Security Treaty and forming the Constitutional Investigation Committee in order to amend the provision of the Article 9. Despite this, Article 9, remained intact for more than half a century since it was adopted. The social consciousness formed by liberal thinkers like Maruyama who widely denounced the pre-war Japanese state due to its fascist and ultra-nationalist tendencies made it possible to safeguard Article 9. Regrettably, the reinterpretation of Article 9 took place in the middle of this year under the leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo

²⁴ Maruyama, *Ibid.*, pp-291-192

²⁵ Lummis, Douglas, C., "The Smallest Army Imaginable", *Alternatives*, Vol. 31, 2006, pp 313-343.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

Abe. Though the Japanese Constitution was not amended or changed in any way, the reinterpretation of Article 9 now allows Japan to engage in collective self-defence, and actively assist other countries engaged in armed conflict. In other words, Shinzo Abe has succeeded in normalizing Japan's defence and military posture, something that Maruyama fought against all his life.

Conclusion

Maruyama Masao analyses in particular the impact of non-political behaviour and activities of the politics of pre-war Japan which retained many traditional Japanese attitudes. He was concerned with Japanese intellectual history especially during the Tokugawa era and is perhaps best known for his research on the influence of neo-Confucianism and on the development of nationalist thoughts in the modern period. He was well known for criticizing both feudal, neo-Confucian pre-modern Tokugawa state and the absolutist post-Meiji Japanese state.

Maruyama was much influenced by German idealism as seen in his work on the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan. Maruyama compared western spirit of self-assessment with the Japanese spirit of self-love. Maruyama's discourses on Japanese self-love, reflects a preoccupation with Japan's reputation in foreign eyes. His insights into the stratified social structure of feudal Japan, which was heavily influenced by Confucianism and neo-Confucianism is valuable in understanding the emergence of modern Japan. Confucianism asserts that the entire nation was to be regarded as a single family that did not have the opportunity to form free, individualistic and rational values. Maruyama criticized the centralization of political power in order to increase production, develop industries, and strengthen military defences during the Meiji era. Maruyama's convictions against Imperial Japan proves his liberal-left inclination. He criticized Japanese nationalism during the Pacific War when it reached its most extreme form. Maruyama's belief of nation-state building based on a social contract theory was not adhered by Japan even after its defeat in the Pacific War. Maruyama's analyses of the behavioural patterns of Japan's war time leaders makes us understand the location of authority during pre-war Japan. Maruyama's interpretation of Japanese social and political structure inherited from the image of a divine king, is a product of unilateral determinism. His incisive comments raises the question of irresponsibility in pre-war Japanese state. Maruyama also concerned himself with the choices facing Japan in seeking ultimate national security; ever-increasing armaments versus total disarmament and the issue of renouncing war.

Maruyama's discussion helps to expose how a traditional power structure mobilized/functioned under a divine monarchy. The ideology of the body polity is based on an imperial line which legitimized rapid modernization under the leadership of a monarch. In post war period, Maruyama blamed existing social-political structure for not forming self-criticism and intellectual values in Japan. Maruyama's greatest contribution is exposing the underlying values of pre-war Japanese society that was not formalized into any doctrinal or theoretical pattern. He showed the extent to which the political system conditioned the leadership and decision-making process in the polity, ultimately resulting in a militaristic regime that ended with Japan's defeat in the Pacific war. In addition, he explains the importance of Japan being neutral in any conflict and upholding Article 9 to prevent Japan from being remilitarized or too nationalistic which will have repercussions for Japan's relations with its neighbours.