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Any readers will mostly be invited to send me some comments

1. Introduction

In the neo-liberalist policies, in the deregulation, in the privatization and the securitization, in the culture of mass consumption, in the destruction of environment of the earth, in the increasing trend of crimes related with internet, in the extension of income differentials, in the increasing of unemployment and contingent works, in the Iraqi War and the disorder after the outbreak of the war, in the reinforce of anti-terrorist measures, and in any other matters and happenings in this world now, we can find the influence of activities originated from the United States. Who in that country decide such streams of the age? It might be unreasonable to put the blame only on the political leaders, the business leaders, or gigantic mass media, for the United States is a country, somehow or other, of established democracy. If so, we should focus in the usual lives of the ordinary people as well as economic activities in general in this country.

In the same way, Japanese political trends such as the privatization of public postal services and the Japanese Government's decision to dispatch the Self Defense Force (SDF/Jieitai) to Iraq in 2003, and the social trends in Japan such as the increasing rate of part-timers and contract employees, and still more the increase of so-called "Freeters" and "NEETs" (Japanese-English meaning "free arbeiter" or "free workers" and "Not in Employment, Education and Training" people) should not be attributed only to the prime minister Koizumi Jun'ichirow (retired in September 2006) himself or LDP (the Liberal Democratic Party, the government party) itself, the huge corporations or big media. Such affairs as mentioned above in the political and social fields might be considered, not a little, as the results of the democratic process in Japan.

This paper will focus rather not on the conspicuous matters like the political and business processes or socially influential instruments like giant media, but on the situations and consciousness of ordinary people in the United States and Japan today. This paper will discuss, too, the class position of the ordinary people in the United States and Japan in the dimension of global scale. Then this paper suggests, as a conclusion, a proposal of consumption reduction policy among the developed nations. Although it is my sincere desire to refer this paper's context to the European welfare states, the task will have to be postponed in the near future due to the limited time and space.

2. A Concept of "the Citizens like Middle Class" or "the Middle Citizens" in the United States

Unlikely in the European countries, it seems not worthy to analyze such immigration country as American society with the concept of "class", i.e. ruling and ruled classes. Instead, the concept of "citizen" and the actual outsiders of it seem effective in the United States. This paper supposes that the actual ruling people in the United States today would be considered to be middle citizens constituted mainly white people.

The middle citizens are found easily everywhere in the United States. They are usually in a situation even at any type of the work, get suitable incomes, have their own cars, live in a house in which they can lead happy days and nights whether they possess it or rent, keep not a few credit cards, consume ordinarily or more as a resident of developed country, hold stocks and believe the rise of stock prices would benefit their lives.

The majority of white middle citizens have been classified as non-proprietary class in the academic discourse. It is why the many of them are hired and leading their lives by salaries and wages from their employer. But the different feature would be disclosed up if one would observe them from different point of view. They exist in the developed market economy and share each other the effective market, not only commodity market or financial market but also labor market. They are able to get almost any goods and services everywhere at any time they want through well-developed market. Moreover they are able to get even money relatively easily, which needed to get goods and services, by acquiring profitable job through well developed labor market, if they feel necessity. Therefore they are able to behave as if they are the people in the middle class like landowners or

managers of small firms. Their consciousnesses are, therefore, getting to be similar to that of middle class people. This paper defines such people in the United States as “the Citizens like Middle Class” or simply “the Middle Citizens”.

Among the Middle Citizens, not only the overwhelming majority of white people are included, a few non-white winners in the competitive society, too, should be contained. Meanwhile the rest of the people such as the overwhelming majority of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics (Latinos) and ruined white people seems to be regarded actually the outsiders of the civil society in this country even though they are called by any beautiful rhetorical words. The population of the Middle Class would be more or less than 200 million, i.e. approximately 70 percent of all population of the United States. Although the ratio seems very high, it is the least percentage in the developed countries such as the European countries and Japan.

The Middle Citizens generally has a strong inclination not to become workers. Even if they happen to choose to be workers, their aim is generally to move up to get more self-reliant jobs in the future or to make money for future independence. Therefore, the elasticity of labor market is huge compared to other developed countries and the mobility of labor is extremely high. Especially as the result of neo-liberal reforms of recent decades, the elasticity of labor market and labor mobility continue to rise higher. The undercurrent reason for such higher flexibility is American Middle Citizen’s desire not to be fixed as workers. The actual meaning of the so-called “American Dream” should be understood as a hope of the ordinary American someday to have her/his own companies and a strife towards that goal.

Here is a suitable background history, as known well, that the United States founded itself as a republic of a loose community with free independent citizens who are the heroes of the community. Considerably large part of the people in this society originally consisted of farmers who managed, worked, defended and prayed by and for themselves. The shortage of labor power supply made the country accept immigrants from abroad and slave workers from Africa. When industries developed and the shortage of labor became more serious, the greater number of immigrants were accepted and employed in industrial workshops. In addition, African Americans who were liberated from slavery position came to be wage-earners in the factories. In this historical context, the Middle Citizens from earlier time normally preferred not to be wage-earners, but to stand in the position of employers. America has been a republic of petit capitalists since its very beginning, and the social logic as a petit capitalist society has been the core of the founding ideal of the nation.

America has been, and is, a republic of those who take upon themselves the ideal of national foundation, i.e. a republic of Middle Citizens. In other words, even though America should be recognized as a capitalist republic, it has not been and is not a republic of rich millionaires alone.

3. American Middle citizens with Financial Businesses are the leading actors of Globalization today

As the U. S. economy and the Middle Citizen’s life after WWII has been largely relied upon a plenty of raw materials, fuels, industrial products from all over the world, as well as the abundant money flows from abroad, American Middle Citizens aware of the importance of the effectively full-operating international market for their daily activities and lives, either consciously or unconsciously.

Stagflation in the 1970s was one occasion in the U. S. economic history that remarkably hampered the effective operation of the market. Confronting such critical situation, the Middle Citizens as the heroes/heroines of American society came to search actively for the full operation of the market and the worldwide spread of its function. This search for an exit from stagflation could never be found along the policy agenda of the former Democrat, but along the direction of returning to a certain original state of the country, i.e. a petit capitalist republic and free-market economy. Much attention should be paid to this point.

It can be considered that the root of Globalization today lies in a small deregulation movement that began in the financial institutions. That was triggered by an unusual tiny happening occurred in the financial institutions under stagflation of the 1970s. The high interest policy of the Federal Banks under inflation activated the dealings of high yield short-term government securities. This motivated the Middle Citizens to move their money from the banks to the securities firms. On the other hand, the banks required the abolition of interest regulation, and then the securities firms started to sell new financial securities with greater yield. On the contrary the banks required more and overall deregulation, and such movement jumped upon the other field of economy and magnified to be a general movement of the United States. Still more this deregulation movement caught government and this huge wave supported by the U. S. government attacked many countries like Japan and European countries. We can find here a typical example of the “butterfly effect”, i.e. a tiny wind raised by a butterfly grows into huge wind like typhoon. This world-wide deregulated economy itself which grew up from a small movement happened in the U. S. financial community is exactly no other than the so-called globalization.

The question here is why the “butterfly effect” that never occurs in the normal economic conditions occurred. In the United States, a republic of petit capitalists, it is a well known fact that a half of individual financial assets are possessed by stocks. Those who supported the “butterfly effect” were surely the Middle Citizens in the United States. They had strong interest not in the production of manufacturing goods but in the multiplication of individual assets, i.e. stocks, housing, etc. On the other hand, the financial institutions stood at the most convenient spot to affect the Middle Citizens as stock holders. Therefore, exactly in these facts, we can find an American feature that deregulation in the financial institutions was a starting point of the overall deregulation movement. The Middle Citizens having strong interest in multiplication of assets on the one hand, and the financial institutions targeting the Middle Citizens on the other, were both the players of big wave for globalization.

The Middle Citizens stand in a contradictory position in the sense that they are stock holders, i.e. petit capitalists, on the one hand, and the greater part of them are also employees on the other. If we look at them focusing on the latter feature, we can see their agonies from the unstable employment, the low wages, the long labor hours and the greater labor intensity, and the deepening of stress, either mental or physical. Much attention on these conditions is worthy to be paid. However, another position as stock holders should not be overlooked, which is in fact the more important position to be emphasized. To look at American working people in the same way as to look at them in Europe or Japan will lead us to a big mistake. American Middle Citizens are, first of all, investors of big corporations, secondly, voters whom the President of the United States and his brains primarily rely upon, and thirdly, the important readers and listeners for mass-media. Here is the reason why the United States has been and is now a republic of the Middle Citizens. Those who decide the basic stance of the U. S. politics, economy, society and culture are exactly the Middle Citizens themselves.

4. The Whole U. S. Middle Citizens now stand at the Ruling Class Position in the Contemporary Global Economy

The daily lives of the U. S. Middle Citizens, that consume one-fourth of oil in the world, discharge a considerable carbonic acid gas, not make remarkable protest against the President Bush who kick away the Kyoto Protocol, throw away the foods worthy of 60 million people’s nutrition as the leftover, be eager for excessive diet while consume 14 percent of the GDP into the medical treatment..., are maintained by abundant low-cost products flow from all over the world through well arranged market economy. Under contemporary global economy, abundant low-cost materials produced by abundant low-cost labors support everyday lives of the U. S. Middle Citizens. Therefore, we can say, if we watch from worldwide view, that the country of the United States itself turned into a fortress of the Middle Citizens who stand on the ruling class of the world today. This is the source of American chauvinism against strangers, too, and is the social/economic background of the U. S. unilateralism. As the U. S. Middle Citizens could acquire the ruling status thanks to the realization of global market economy, and they can get daily benefit out of it, they tend to be conservative as the result. If someone outside the United States directly attacks the life of the Middle Citizens, then they would exercise a drastic punishment against those who attack America. The military crashes concerning the United States after the Nine-Eleventh Attack, such as Afghan War, Iraqi War, Lebanon trouble, etc. show us the clear evidences. There are more than 20 thousand Gated Communities in the United States, i.e. fortresses of large-income earners, with more than eight million citizens living in them. If we watch this from worldwide view, we can find the United States itself turned into a fortress of the Middle Citizens (a fortress of large-income earners, if watched outside of the United States). Although the Middle Citizen’s ratio amount to 70 percent of the U. S. total population, they are only less than three percent of the whole population of the earth. While the very center of contemporary world is the United States, those who have now decisive power upon contemporary world political, economic and cultural affairs and have gained ruling class position and even more are actually governing the whole world are exactly the U. S. Middle Citizens.

5. The Economic background of the Japanese reliance upon the U. S. economy

The Japanese economy after WWII have been searching widely for almost all raw materials and fuels as well as a considerably wide foreign market for getting money to import raw materials, fuels and foods. Besides, Japan developed a very favorable industrial plant after the war. We can find some of the remarkable features of Japanese manufacturing after WWII on “The Coastal Heavy and Chemical Industrial Region (Rinkai Ju-kagaku Kogyo Chitai)”.

The Coastal Industrial Regions were constructed after the defeat of WWII. The purpose was to create new industrial zones for rebuilding giant corporations that had destroyed during the war, and through such growth of

industrial areas, finally to create employment, increase individual incomes, and improve the national standard of living, which fallen to the lowest level of the world in the end of the war, to the level of developed countries. Almost all conventional industrial regions were not only small but also destroyed by US air raid during wartime. Fortunately Japan has complicated but comparatively long seacoasts and broad mountainsides close to the seacoast. The construction began after the end of the war and continued during well over thirty years by local autonomies (prefectural governments), and as a result all the natural seacoasts near big city areas disappeared (Tokyo Bay Area, Osaka Bay Area, Ise Bay Area of Nagoya, Kitakyushu Seacoast, etc.).

The coastal industrial regions brought extraordinary effects to Japanese industries. Reformed Japanese industries came to be able to import any raw materials easily (sometimes directly on each company's own wharf) at remarkably low cost. For example, the ship transportation cost for iron-ore or steel between Tokyo and Los Angeles was much cheaper than railway transportation cost between the two giant cities of Tokyo and Yokohama (only 20km). While there is only one industrial raw material, i.e. lime, which Japan can supply for herself, this country has been importing almost all necessary raw materials from other part of the world. In the same way, each corporation could easily export everything they produced to all over the world with very low transportation cost. This way of industrialization has been far more advantageous compared with inland industrial regions like Rhein in Germany and the Great Lakes in the United States. The coastal industrial regions made Japan into the strongest export-oriented industrialized country. Low ship transportation cost is, needless to say, favorable especially for heavy industry, so that Japan could become one of the most developed heavy industrial countries.

Thus, Japanese industry has largely developed from the coastal industrial regions. The important point here is the scale of the productive capacity of Japanese industry. The capacity has grown rapidly to a level far too big for the domestic demand of such a small country, and become as big as to satisfy world's demand. Actually Japan has made almost all newly built ships in the world at the height of the Japanese shipbuilding industry by around mid-1950s. Japanese ironworks made one third of the world's demand of steel around 1970. Just after then the Japanese automobile industry reached to make one third of world's new cars, and exceeded the total production in the United States in the middle of 1980s. In the same manner, Japan made more than 90% of video decks in the world in the early days when such electric appliance appeared in the late 1980s. The Japanese coastal industrial regions were indeed the factory of the world.

In consequence of this country's big industrial establishments, Japan became a country that cannot cease to export a plenty of manufactured products, and that needs a worldwide market. The largest market was the United States as the biggest importer of automobile and electric products, and Asian newly industrializing countries which inevitably import not only machinery and electric equipment but also an overwhelming amount of consumption goods. The reason why we can easily find Japan-made commodities like cars, electric goods, precision machines and optical instruments everywhere in the world today might already be clear.

In order to function the coastal industrial regions, Japan needs a world-wide supply of resources, fuels and market. In order to maintain the nation's security, Japan has been obliged to conclude an alliance with the United States, which has the biggest economic power, the largest domestic market and the strongest military power. For Japan as a developed capitalist country without considerable domestic resources and market, the construction of coastal industrial regions and the conclusion of an alliance with the United States have seemed, in a meaning, the most essential way to survive on this planet.

6. The Social background of the Japanese reliance upon the U. S. economy

Today, the Japanese standard of living which shows up never disadvantageously in comparison with that of European and U. S. citizens is built up on the abundant imported materials. For example, Japan is the greatest grain importer in the world. According to 2004 data, while Japan can supply herself with 95% of her rice, it imports 99% of corn, 97% of soybean, 86% of wheat, and imports 72% of her total grain. Tofu, natto, miso (soy-bean paste) and shoyu (soy, soy-sauce) are known as typical Japanese foods and seasonings, but most of their materials are imported, especially from the United States.

Japan is one of the greatest consuming countries of marine products. It imported 3,343,000 tons of sea products in 2005 from more than 70 countries including such Atlantic countries as Norway, Iceland, Morocco, South Africa, Argentina, etc. Tuna is the mostly essential material for sushi (one of the most typical and traditional Japanese foods), but 60% of tuna is imported in 2005 from more than 50 countries. Particularly 90% of lobster consumed in Japan is imported, amount to 233,000 tons in 2005, mainly from Asian developing countries. Lobster is the most expensive sea food among all marine products that Japan imports.

Japan cannot supply herself with the fuels necessary for normal life as well as for industry. In particular, 99.7% of crude oil, about 100% of coal and nearly 99% of natural gas are imported.

There are many other facts that indicate how Japan maintains a high level of the nation's consumption by

materials and resources from abroad, but I lack space to itemize them here. In any case the Japanese people and their belongings became beautiful and polished in these decades after WWII and they became one of the most zealous nations for clean and beautiful things. Generally speaking, those who have got once a fortunate condition, become unable to go back to the unfortunate days as before, and the Japanese case seems to be exactly so. And once the Japanese stand in such happy position, they can hardly cease to continue to import everything they need both to maintain a favorable business cycle and to lead an abundant life. Japan seems to have, in a meaning, only one option: to cooperate with the largest economic power as well as to obey the strongest military power, and Japan seems to be unable to break off the relation.

A more important matter is that mass consumption has been supporting and supported by shaping the so-called “Japan Corporation” system (a systematically controlled nation-wide economy under governmental orientation) during the latter half of the twentieth century. Each big company under the “Japan Corporation” system established life-time employment, a pay-for-age salary structure (or promotion-by-age structure), a union-management cooperation system with enterprise unions, etc. and such a company system has come to be called “Company-ism (Kaishashugi)”. Under “Company-ism”, the salary of each employee has rapidly increased and her/his standard of living has highly improved. “Company-ism” has been sustained inasmuch as salary and living standard are expected to increase. “Company-ism” under the “Japan Corporation” system has enabled this small country to be one of the most distinguished industrially developed countries after WWII. Thus, “Company-ism” has been an essential part of Japanese life especially for those working at relatively big corporations.

“Company-ism” is now rapidly getting out of shape. Notwithstanding, as far as “Company-ism” has been established and brought immeasurable benefit for the Japanese people in recent years, it will not disappear thoroughly in the near future. The Japanese people seem to be unable to find another available way to maintain such developed and fortunate economic conditions as that under “Company-ism” and the “Japan Corporation” system.

7. The Contradictory Consciousness of Japanese People and its Economic Background

The majority of Japanese seems to be difficult to abandon the cooperation with the United States by which the national economy grew up to be the world’s second largest economy on the one hand and by which the national standard of living rose up to be one of the world’s highest consumption levels on the other hand. If Japan would change the usual course, the economic conditions would rapidly drop down into great disorder and, as a result, the stable, abundant consumption life of the people would largely fail. If such situation occurred, people sooner or later may demand a return to the former situation of economic activity and standard of living, and cling to the U. S. rule even though throwing away righteousness, humanitarian standpoint and national pride. Accordingly, there is such a probability as almost all people, except for minor political parties and eccentric person, might bow at the last moment to the pro-US political leaders and party.

The consciousness of the Japanese people which was distorted to imperialistic route under the circumstance of imperialist age of the world history during the end of 19th to the mid-20th centuries came back to a “peace and harmony”-oriented one through the experience of defeat in WWII, the disorganization of army and navy, the democratization of political processes, the dissolution of Zaibatsu, etc. (“peace and harmony” – Japanese traditional spirit since 7th century). At the same time, Japan became extremely reliant on the world economy in a double (economical and social) sense, i.e., the export-oriented economy on the one hand, and the import-dependent mass consumption on the other hand. The facts signify that coexistence with the United States is necessary as far as keeping the export-oriented economy and import-dependent high standard of living. But the coexistence with the United States does not necessarily always coincide with the policies of “peace and harmony” or anti-war. This is the background of the deep contradiction lying between the anti-war opinion and the Prime Minister’s decision to cooperate with the United States into Iraq. It is very interesting that both ideas actually derived from the experience of the defeat of WWII and the real sensation of recovery and development of Japanese economy after the defeat.

When the contradiction appears in real political process, the majority of citizens orientate towards anti-war. In the case of sending Japanese Self Defense Force to Iraq, the majority of people opposed, while the Prime Minister could not choose a policy to escape cooperating with the United States. Then we should ask here why the Prime Minister’s decision was not suffered definite counterattacks by the people. The reason is that the majority of Japanese people do not seem to continue to support the noble ideal of “peace and harmony” even when their accustomed economic and living conditions collapse. In evidence, peace movements, the rate of labor organization and the Left parties’ seats in the Diet are indisputably diminishing, especially in the long-term depression of these fifteen years.

To maintain the world-wide Japanese corporate activities and to sustain the fortunate standard of living of the Japanese people seem to be exactly not both retrogressive, and therefore Japan comes out as one of the subordinate countries to the United States. The class position of the Japanese people in the global scale is, I dare say, actually a subordinate partner of the U. S. Middle Citizens, whatever they think about their situation.

8. Conclusion

We have discussed in this paper two cases, i.e. about on the United States and on Japan. As for the United States, “the Middle Citizens” in this country are now actually dominating the contemporary world economic and political systems and culture. They are only less than three percent of world’s population, but have been enjoying high and increasing levels of material well-being, under the cooperation with subordinate partners such as Western European and Japanese middle citizens, and they also are increasingly wasting natural resources, disrupting the natural environment and exacerbating poverty among people in underdeveloped countries. They are really getting mountainous benefits from all over the world in double meanings: getting products and resources on the one hand, and getting money flow as the foreign investment into the U. S. (especially into the U. S. Treasury Bonds), etc. on the other. This situation might be exceedingly fortunate. Therefore they tend to be conservative, and father more they tend to be chauvinistic to protect such fortunate situations, when their individual and/or national identities are attacked by unexpected threats.

As for the Japanese case, people as well as business enterprises rely too much upon the imports not only to continue the business activities but also to sustain everyday’s high standard of living of the people, and upon exports, too, to get money to buy everything from raw materials for the industry to daily consumption goods for the people. Just exactly this situation forces Japan not to be able to refuse the intolerable U. S. requests.

Now we can learn some lessons which requires for us today from the abovementioned facts. Given the Japanese case, the pursuance of unsuitable high level of living standard (such living style as to consume considerable kind of daily consumption goods from all over the world) as well as unsuitable high level of productive capacity (such productive forces as to be able to supply not a few production goods for all over the world) is harmful not only for the preservation of the natural environment of the earth as a whole but also for the preservation of national identity of each country itself.

This point of view suggests us at least one instructive proposal. Namely, it is the precious task not only for the government and each business enterprise but also for each individual person in the developed countries to reduce consumption level. It is already well known fact that the consumption level can hardly be lowered once it has been raised up (“ratchet effect” by Duesenberry, J. S.). But Duesenberry’s find is to be effective in the condition there are neither inducement of government policy nor individual awakening and endeavor. Each individual behavior such as consumption styles is directly connected with the mode of the society as a whole. Therefore the importance of rethinking of consumption styles should be recognized as essential for the government policy in the developed countries. By the way as for the developing countries, it should be recognized much more essential, too, what style of consumption should be created for each countries hereafter.

Referable good example here is the Kyoto Protocol that arranged the reduction of discharge for carbonic acid and some other gasses in 1997 at Kyoto, Japan. In this agreement, the reduction of 8 percent of such gasses for EU, 7 percent for the United States, and 6 percent for Japan are arranged. Like that, the reduction of a certain percent of consumption should be arranged among the developed nations in the near future, and along this policy, the project of economic development with consumption-restrained growth should be introduced for the developing nations. By the way, such trading business as emission trading recognized in Kyoto Protocol should never be accepted in the international agreement of the consumption-reduction. As for the detailed investigations into the way how to reduce consumption, the effects of consumption reduction and the counter-effects of the measure, all will be a big tasks for us from now on.

As for the ordinary people in the United States and Japan, they should recognize the mission of developed country. For the mission of the people who lead fortunate life should be considered as to contribute human beings to develop sciences, technologies, arts and culture. Generally speaking, to engage such tasks require considerably much time and fund, i.e. those who have relatively free time and those who have relatively surplus fund. If there would be some historical meanings in the age of extension of differentials (not only among the individuals but also among the nations), it would be taken by the ordinary people who enjoy relatively fortunate in the time as well as in the fund. But if the fortunate people only consume too much without developing sciences, technologies, arts and culture, then they should be regarded as those who abandon their proper historical mission.

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