*Issues & Studies* 33, no. 2 (February 1997): 65-96.

# Japanese Realism and Its Contribution to International Relations Theory*

*Yoshihiko Nakamoto*

*The purpose of this paper is to examine the contribution of Japanese realism to international relations theory by analyzing the works of one of postwar Japan's representative realists, Yonosuke Nagai. Nagai's version of realism purports to be a science of self-liberation and self-understanding which encourages those (including himself) who are only interested in understanding what they cannot control and helps them to reconstruct themselves as autonomous actors in world politics. Using rigorous concepts of power and institutions, Nagai has attempted to provide his readers with a "public philosophy" that aids them to acquire inner strength to give an account of the foreseeable results of their actions. However, Nagai shares an important weakness with Western realists. Adopting the ethics of responsibility, he did not elaborate on how we can* weigh *consequences, stating only that we should* face *them. Here, Japanese realism shares an important agenda with Western realism.*

**Keywords: power; institutions; ethics of responsibility; public philosophy; Yoshida Doctrine**

* * *

In a brilliant essay written in 1977, Stanley Hoffmann argued that international relations is an "American Social Science": it became a discipline in the United States; it has been developed largely in the United States; and it has acquired some American traits, such as the quest for certainty, the preponderance of studies dealing with the present, and light treatment of the weak.[1] Almost twenty years later,

---

**Yoshihiko Nakamoto** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs, University of Virginia.

*The author would like to thank Chalmers and Sheila Johnson, Hidenori Ijiri, Michael Joseph Smith, Kenneth W. Thompson, Leonard J. Schoppa, Peter M. Beck, and reviewers of this journal for comments.

[1]See Stanley Hoffmann, "An American Social Science: International Relations," in his *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), 3-24.

Hoffmann stated again in a Japanese journal that international relations "remains very largely an Anglo-Saxon discipline," which is "probably not good in the long run."[2] There is little doubt that theories of international relations have come mostly from the United States. Japanese scholars have devoted considerable energy to simply learning them. But do the Japanese have nothing to contribute to the discipline of international relations? Are Japanese scholars' works on international relations simply echoes of what has been done in the United States? Do they have no bases to improve the parochial condition of the discipline? In this paper, I will attempt to answer these questions by analyzing the works of one of postwar Japan's representative "realists," Yonosuke Nagai (1924- ).

As an approach to the theory and practice of international relations, realism, which was constructed by such eminent thinkers as Edward H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, and Henry Kissinger, has had enormous influence and remains important today. As Michael Smith concludes in his exhaustive work on realist thought, there are four key components to the realist approach: (1) the *animus dominandi* assumption; (2) the state-centric assumption; (3) the power assumption; and (4) the rationality assumption. He also points to five essential deficiencies of realism: (1) the conception of power is too broad and undifferentiated; (2) it underplays or ignores the crucial interactions between domestic and international politics; (3) it too assuredly insists on the durability of the nation-state; (4) it is too confident of the contribution of professional diplomacy in easing international tensions; and, most importantly, (5) adopting the ethics of responsibility, realism fails to present any coherent and convincing criteria for judging what is responsible.[3] Does Nagai's realism consist of the same components? Does it share the same deficiencies? What

---

[2]Stanley Hoffmann (interviewed by Michael Joseph Smith), "The End of the Traditional View of the State," *Gaiko Forum* (Tokyo), August 1996, 19. At the end of his classic essay, Hedley Bull also warns of the parochial condition of the international relations discipline: "At first sight the theory of international relations in this century has been overwhelmingly Western, predominantly Anglo-American. . . . If the theories that are available are almost exclusively Western in origin and perspective, can they convey an adequate understanding of a world political system that is predominantly non-Western?" See Hedley Bull, "The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1969," in *The Aberysthyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969*, ed. Brian Porter (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 54-55.

[3]See Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 219-26, 234-38.

does his realism tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of realist thought in general?

In the first section, I will describe how Japanese realism emerged after World War II and show the context of Nagai's debut in 1965. Second, I will provide the exegeses of (1) the theoretical foundations of Nagai's political science, (2) his analysis of international politics, and (3) his advocacy of Japan's diplomatic strategy. Finally, I will attempt to assess Nagai's version of realism by examining three aspects: the general theory; its policy advice; and its moral argument. Nagai's conception of power is more rigorous than the Western realists' and thus he can understand the need for a "public philosophy for peace" in a "multi-hierarchical system." Nagai understands the strong domestic constraints on foreign policy and thus never overestimates the contribution of professional diplomats to easing international tensions. Instead, he correctly attaches greater importance to the roles of "institutions" in stabilizing international relations. However, in spite of these contributions to international relations theory, Nagai shares an important weakness with Western realists. Nagai also fails to present his own values openly and thus cannot provide coherent criteria for what constitutes responsibility.

## Emergence of Realism in Japan

As Akira Iriye's classic work vividly describes, Japanese diplomacy in the twentieth century has been more or less a product of interactions between the "realism of the government" and the "idealism of the citizens." While the Meiji leaders understood international politics as the survival of the fittest and concentrated on *fukoku kyohei* (rich country, strong army) to make their country as powerful as European countries, some intellectuals strongly dissented from the government's ideas and advocated that Japan should be a leader of Asia in confronting the West. The government's success in achieving *fukoku kyohei* encouraged realism to turn into opportunism for the development of overseas interests. When the intellectuals supported it as a step for realizing "Asianism," Japan entered into the hopeless Pacific War.[4]

[4]See Akira Iriye, *Nihon no gaiko* (Japanese diplomacy) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1966).

Unfortunately, the interactions between the government's opportunistic realism and the intellectuals' utopianism continued even after World War II. When Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida concluded the Peace Treaty without the Soviet Union and China and entered into the Security Treaty with the United States in September 1951 under the tense international milieu of U.S.-Soviet confrontation, socialists and progressives who advocated Japan's unarmed neutrality strongly disapproved. In 1960, when Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi attempted to revise the security treaty from an agreement on stationing U.S. troops in Japan to a more reciprocal and comprehensive treaty, the intellectuals' anger reached a boiling point and turned into a massive revolt.

In the August 1959 issue of *Sekai* (The World), Yoshikazu Sakamoto (1927- ) of the University of Tokyo wrote a sensational article, "A Plan for the Defense of a Neutral Japan," which provided the unarmed neutrality argument with a theoretical foundation. The argument of Sakamoto, who later came to be called an "idealist," ironically used the theories of Hans Morgenthau, who was a representative realist in the United States and also Sakamoto's teacher at the University of Chicago. Sakamoto asserted that the most important structural factor in international relations at that time was "danger by mistake." The danger of an American or Russian warning planes dropping an atomic bomb by mistake or accident was real. "If the explosion is regarded as an opponent's attack," he wrote, "the world may immediately enter into a disastrous nuclear war." It was clear to Sakamoto what Japan should do to survive in this dangerous world:

> First of all, the withdrawal of U.S. troops stationed in Japan is necessary to avoid an attack from the Soviet Union in case of a war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Second, Japan should not be an ally of the United States so that U.S. military planes with atomic bombs will not fly over Japanese territory and the Soviet Union will not regard Japan as an enemy or a potential base of the United States. In other words, here, we can already reach the conclusion of "military neutrality for survival."[5]

Sakamoto believed that any future war would be nothing but a "total war": "Nuclear weapons are becoming smaller, i.e., more tactical nuclear weapons are being produced constantly, . . . a local

---

[5]Yoshikazu Sakamoto, "A Plan for the Defense of a Neutral Japan," in his *Chikyu jidai no kokusai seiji* (International politics in the global age) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990), 14.

war will probably be a nuclear one." Although the defense plans of the United States and Japan assumed a local war, he predicted that it would be nothing but a "total war," with the Japanese people affected by radioactivity from a "tactical nuclear war on the sea and in the air *of Japan*." Thus, Sakamoto thought it was "hopeless" for Japan to attempt to defend itself through an alliance with the United States or U.S. troops stationed in Japan. He believed that Japan might need some police force from the United Nations for its security, but definitely not troops from the United States.[6]

Japanese realism emerged as a counterargument to these contentions by the progressive intellectuals. At the end of 1962, Masataka Kosaka (1934-96) of the University of Kyoto, who had just returned from a two-year sabbatical at Harvard University, wrote a criticism of idealists such as Sakamoto entitled "The Realist Theory of Peace" in *Chuo koron* (Central Review). He pointed out two weaknesses in the idealists' arguments which were similar to Hans Morgenthau's criticism of Sakamoto's unarmed neutrality, which appeared in *Sekai* in 1960.[7]

First, Kosaka argued that even if Japan cannot defend itself in a nuclear war, this does not lead to the conclusion that any defense is meaningless; idealists "ignore the fact that conventional force can be a shield against aggression." Second, Kosaka pointed out that Sakamoto had not given a "satisfying criticism" against the argument that the Security Treaty had been useful in avoiding war, as it had established a balance of power in East Asia. Referring to the example of the divided Korean Peninsula, Kosaka stated:

> Most of those who advocate Japan's neutrality overemphasize the importance of setting a neutral direction and rarely argue about the concrete policy to achieve it. If we attempt to neutralize Japan, how shall we deal with the military confrontation between the South and North on the Korean Peninsula? If we neutralize Japan without doing anything about the situation in South Korea, U.S. troops in Korea, which would have no relay bases in Japan, will be isolated and lose their effectiveness. The balance of power in Korea will collapse and the only deterrent against North Korea's unification of Korea by force will be North Korea's self-restraint. This consequence will not ease tensions in the Far East and will not make Japan more secure.[8]

---

[6]Ibid., 13-26.

[7]Hans Morgenthau, "The Character of the Changed International Tensions," *Sekai* (The World) (Tokyo), April 1960, 47-51.

[8]Masataka Kosaka, "The Realist Theory of Peace," in his *Kaiyo kokka nihon no koso* (A plan for maritime state Japan) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1969), 4.

It should be noted here that although Kosaka severely criticized the idealists' lack of understanding of power politics, he did not reject their argument for Japan's neutrality completely. According to Kosaka, the idealists' argument could contribute to our understanding of world politics because it emphasized "the importance of ideas in diplomacy" and thereby introduced the problem of value into our thinking about international politics. He admitted that the idealists' rejection of nuclear weapons was based on the Japanese experience of the atomic bombings and that the value that Japan should seek was absolute peace, as prescribed by Article 9 of the Constitution. Just like Edward H. Carr in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939), Kosaka emphasized sound interaction between idealism and realism. The most important question for him was "how we can smoothly transfer from peace by power politics to a peace which is more stable and one in which Japan can realize its value."[9]

Thus, Japanese realism was born in 1963 when lingering passions against the Security Treaty with the United States still remained. As Kosaka himself admitted in the afterword to his first book, which includes "The Realist Theory of Peace," realism was essentially no more than a powerful argument against the idealists and was not established on strong theoretical foundations.

Since 1965, the person who has contributed most to the development of Japanese realist theory has been Yonosuke Nagai. His first book, *Heiwa no daisho*,[10] which contains three articles originally published in *Chuo koron*, was a head-on attack on the "progressives" who made up a large majority of the intellectuals at the time. His criticisms of the progressives were so powerful that Tsuneari Fukuda, a well-known conservative writer, described it as a "mutilation murder case in the world of criticism."[11] In these articles, Nagai seized upon the pitfalls of the progressives' arguments concerning Japan's "unarmed neutrality" and strongly argued for Japan's light armament based on the balance of power among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. When the progressives lost considerable influence and the so-called "military realists" suddenly rose in the mid-1980s,

---

[9]Ibid., 11.

[10]Yonosuke Nagai, *Heiwa no daisho* (The cost of peace) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1967).

[11]Quoted in Kazuki Kasuya, "The Ideological Character of Nagai's Political Science," in *Nijusseiki no isan* (The legacy of the twentieth century), ed. Yonosuke Nagai (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1985), 605.

Nagai initiated another debate, criticizing the latter's calls for a military buildup and emphasizing the wisdom of Japan's postwar strategy by clarifying what he called the "Yoshida Doctrine."

## The Theoretical Foundations of Nagai's Political Science

### *Politics and Morality*

Like many other eminent realists such as Hans Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr, Nagai bases his political arguments on his insights into human nature. Why do men fight with each other continuously, when even lions pay attention to game only when they are hungry? Nagai answers this question using Hobbesian concepts: Man is essentially an "animal with imagination" and therefore is able to "predict" that if he does not catch his prey, others will gain strength by catching it and subsequently attack him. The lust for power stems not from man's desire for it but from his anxiety, and thus man is placed in a potential state of battle.

According to Nagai, man needs "politics" precisely because he cannot remain in such a state for long. Man seeks certainty and predictability and desires order and stability. But as he cannot be a God, he can acquire neither perfect certainty nor Plato's philosopher-as-king status. Man cannot help living in the dimensions of both reality and utopia, and therefore he needs politics, a demand rooted in human existence itself.[12]

What does Nagai mean by "politics"? In commenting on Thomas D. Weldon's *The Vocabulary of Politics* (1953), which he translated into Japanese in 1968, Nagai makes exactly the same point that Morgenthau made in his first book, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (1946): "politics is an art and not a science." Nagai writes, "'Difficulties' occur of themselves and cannot be solved for good. The way to deal with them is to overcome, reduce, avoid, or ignore them. Political problems are not puzzles but difficulties."[13] For Nagai, "pol-

---

[12]See Yonosuke Nagai, "What Is Politics?" in *Gendai seijigaku nyumon* (Introduction to contemporary politics), ed. Yonosuke Nagai and Hajime Shinohara, 2nd edition (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1984), 1-2.

[13]Yonosuke Nagai, "Symbols for Understanding and Symbols for Organization: On Weldon's *Vocabulary of Politics*," in his *Seiji ishiki no kenkyu* (Study of political consciousness) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1971), 104.

itics'' cannot be dealt with using ''technical knowledge'' formulated according to rigorous rules. Only through acting with ''practical or traditional knowledge'' can we have a certain order and stability.[14] As Nagai notes, ''Just as love is the only answer for a free man in the world of sex, so politics is the last word for a free man in the world of violence.''[15]

This definition of the political problem leads Nagai to a position on political morality which is strikingly reminiscent of Morgenthau or Max Weber. Nagai asserts that in a world primarily characterized by the universal lust for power, absolute ethics or the ethics of conviction cannot be pursued because good intentions often result in bad consequences. The best solution to the ethical problems inherent in all political actions is for the individual statesman to exert moral and political judgment in choosing the most effective and least evil of several actions. The true politician's conduct should be oriented to the ethics of responsibility: he should have ''inner strength'' to give an account of the foreseeable results of his actions.[16]

Nagai, who in 1966 translated Harold Lasswell's *Power and Personality* (1948) into Japanese, believes that ''inner strength'' could be acquired only by modern autonomous individuals who had been liberated from the yoke of traditional community. However, Nagai agrees with Masao Maruyama, his teacher at the University of Tokyo, that the Japanese have not become mature political individuals.

> In our country's ideology of the Emperor system or the psychological structure of Japanese nationalism, the state tends to be considered the *direct* extension of the first group, such as the family, clan, and village. It is not based on institutionalized modern nationalism, which is mediated by individual initiatives or independence. The ideology which did not come through the ''rationalization of self'' could not but be divided into bare egoism (pursuit of private interests or desire), on the one hand, and the self-ruinous thought of selfless devotion to one's country, on the other.[17]

---

[14]See Yonosuke Nagai, ed., *Seiji teki ningen* (The political man) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1968), 48-49. This anthology includes nine works which strongly influenced Nagai's thought: Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*, Introduction and chap. 1; Carl Schmitt's *Theory of Partisan*; Ango Sakaguchi's *Daraku ron* (Falling down); David Riesman's ''Some Observations on the Limits of Totalitarian Power''; Eric Hoffer's *The Passionate State of Mind and Other Aphorisms*; Masao Maruyama's ''From Physical Politics to Physical Literature''; Max Weber's *Politics as a Vocation*; Harold Lasswell's *Power and Personality*, chaps. 1-4; and Michael Oakeshott's ''Political Education.''

[15]Nagai and Shinohara, *Gendai seijigaku nyumon*, 2.

[16]See Nagai, *Seiji teki ningen*, 40-41.

[17]Ibid., 45-46.

How, then, can the Japanese become autonomous individuals? This is a question Nagai has devoted himself to finding answers for during his academic career. He has thus tried to delineate the conditions for acquiring "inner strength."

*Institutions and Power in Mass Society*

At the very beginning of his scholarly career in the late 1950s, Nagai's main concern was the erosion of "institutions" in contemporary mass society.[18] In his first article published in 1955, he states:

> We are observing a constant increase in the problems which can be dealt with only by the state's coordination because the development of capitalism has created complications and a diversification of interests in each area of our lives. Moreover, political power has become much more pervasive and mobile in every area as the development of technology has brought a sophistication of equipment through which one can control the masses *at a stroke*. . . . But on the other hand, the increase of the impact of political power means the mobilization of enormous political energy, which is created as a reaction to political power. . . . In modern society, it has become impossible to maintain a static equilibrium based on clear class rule.[19]

How, then, in this mass society, should we understand power? In an interesting 1959 article, Nagai attempts to answer this question by comparing David Riesman's theory of "situational power" in *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) with C. Wright Mills' theory of "structural power" in *The Power Elite* (1956).[20] Nagai argues for Riesman by clarifying two main issues which have very much to do with his major concern: how can we be autonomous individuals in contemporary society? First, power in modern mass society should basically be understood in terms of what Robert Dahl calls the "potential for unity." In modern society, even a group which has high potential for control cannot exert power effectively without having unity because

---

[18]Nagai contends that any political phenomenon can be categorized into a "situation," "institution," or "organization." Politics concerns a dangerous explosive, i.e., power, which is comparable to the sexual impulse. Therefore, just like sexual life, political life can take the form of (1) a chaotic situation (complications of love and hatred between man and woman), (2) institutions defined as a "form of behavior which is accepted as legitimate in society" (marriage), or (3) organization (family). See Nagai and Shinohara, *Gendai seijigaku nyumon*, 7-13.

[19]"Things Which Move Politics," in Nagai, *Seiji ishiki no kenkyu*, 1.

[20]Riesman pointed to a change from the hierarchy of a ruling class to the power dispersal of veto groups, whereas Mills argued that a change had occurred from checks and balances among plural interests with a decentralized political organization to a monopoly of power by economic, military, and governmental elites.

"the effectiveness of leadership depends not only on the potential for control, such as coercive power, economic power, organizing power, and mass manipulation skills, but also on the potential for unity, such as value symbols, ideas, and an ethos which can maintain the unity and homogeneity of the group."[21] As no individual or group leadership is likely to be very effective where the issue involves the country as a whole, power on the national scene must be viewed in terms of issues.

The second reason why Nagai finds Riesman's argument more persuasive than Mills' results from the difference in their answers to the question: What type of knowledge should we acquire and for whom? Mills' argument is directed toward *others*. Assuming that society is divided between elites who know the truth and the masses who are ignorant, his purpose is to enlighten the ignorant masses by simple words. In contrast to this, Riesman's argument is firstly directed toward the *self*. Riesman, who regards himself as a successor to Karl Mannheim, thoroughly understands that "no matter how much an image attempts to be whole and objective, it is doomed to be partial as it will be linked with a certain group's interests." Therefore, he attempts to understand the relations between each image and its holder's position, perspective, and interest, and then construct a whole image by combining the partial images. For Nagai, as for Mannheim and Riesman, the most important purpose of political science is self-liberation and self-understanding. Political science must help the minorities (including the author), who suffer from a sense of powerlessness, to reconstruct themselves as "autonomous floating intelligentsia" or political actors.

## International Politics in the Era of War and Revolution

It was in 1962 that Nagai, who had devoted himself to the study of political consciousness in mass society, started to seriously analyze international politics. While Nagai was conducting research as a visiting scholar at Harvard University, where David Riesman was

[21]See "Structure of Power in Mass Society: On the Confrontation over Power Images between D. Riesman and C. W. Mills," in Nagai, *Seiji ishiki no kenkyu*, 301-2. Also see Robert A. Dahl, "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," *American Political Science Review* 52, no. 2 (June 1958): 463-69.

teaching, the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred. After war had been avoided, he asked himself many questions: Why did Nikita Khrushchev take such a risk and why did he shamefully withdraw in the face of the enemy? Was the "missile gap" a fiction? Nagai studied international politics by reading extensively and talking to many scholars, including Stanley Hoffmann. After three years, he published a series of articles in *Chuo koron*.

### *The Erosion of Institutions and "Chronic" International Civil War*

Nagai posits that modern international society has seen an erosion of "institutions" parallel with the same phenomenon in mass society. After the Westphalia Conference of 1648, institutions formed the "European state-system," based on *Jus Publicum Europeum*, or norms among members in the Christian community. War was institutionalized in terms of formal procedure. The balance of power was buttressed by many elements, such as clear spheres of influence, the secrecy of diplomatic negotiations, and the separation of diplomacy from public opinion. However, the practical norms in Europe started to erode around 1890. With the rise of emotional nationalism in mass democracy and the development of technology, the traditional distinctions between war and revolution were blurred. As a result, the norms in the European order lost their "semi-public, semi-private" character, becoming "public" principles, i.e., universal and empty abstractions, and the interstate system lost its predictability with the erosion of "institutions," becoming the "private" realm of violent *Realpolitik*.[22]

Nagai believes that the two World Wars were actually "global international civil wars" and that the Cold War was the era when international civil war became "chronic." In his *Reisen no kigen*, Nagai explores these issues and attempts to expose the ideological bases of America's containment policy by emphasizing its deep psychological roots.[23] Why was George Kennan's (a minister-counselor

---

[22]See Nagai, *Seiji teki ningen*, 12-14; and Yonosuke Nagai, *Reisen no kigen: Sengo Ajia no kokusai kankyo* (The origins of the Cold War: International environment of postwar Asia) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1978), 111-16.

[23]Nagai defines the Cold War as "exchange of nonmilitary unilateral actions with mutual understanding of the impossibility of negotiations" and contends that the Cold War began during the period from late February to early March in 1946, approximately when George Kennan's telegram arrived in Washington. See Nagai, *Reisen no kigen*, 9.

at U.S. Embassy in Moscow) telegram so well-accepted by the decisionmakers in Washington? Nagai suggests it was not only because the Truman administration was changing its view of the Soviet Union from "strong and friendly" to "indomitable" but also because of Kennan's epidemiological metaphor in the telegram, which is structured like a typical warning against an epidemic. It offers a pathogenic organism (Russia's traditional and instinctive anxiety over security), claims to have discovered the transmission medium for the pathogenic bacteria (Bolshevism), and calls for a strengthening of the healthy body against an attack by the bacteria. In Nagai's opinion, this metaphor strongly helped induce America to quarantine itself by drawing lines unilaterally.[24]

Nagai agrees with David Riesman, who emphasized the limits of totalitarian power, rather than with George Kennan, who regarded communism as an epidemic disease. Nagai believes that even totalitarianism, which appears to have omnipotent power, cannot control the process of "privatization," or people's escape into the self, such as through political apathy, corruption, black market, and crime. This belief was also buttressed by his own experience in prewar imperial Japan.[25] Nagai agrees with orthodox historians that the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was probably inevitable after World War II, but also thinks that the United States overestimated communism's "epidemic" power and overreacted against Russia's rather defensive actions.

*The Meaning of the Vietnam War*

Did the United States change its approach to international affairs after the beginning of the Cold War and adopt what Nagai calls "the 'esprit de finesse' of traditional European diplomacy"? He attempts to answer this question in his first article on international politics, "America's Image of War and Mao Zedong's Challenge," published in *Chuo koron* in 1965.

In this article Nagai adopts the framework which he uses to analyze mass society, applying the concepts of "organization," "institu-

[24]See ibid., 15-38; and Yonosuke Nagai, "The Roots of Cold War Doctrine: The Esoteric and the Exoteric," in *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, ed. Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1977), 19-26.

[25]See Nagai, *Seiji teki ningen*, 25-31; and David Riesman, "Some Observations on the Limits of Totalitarian Power" (1952), in *Abundance for What?* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 80-92.

tion," and "situation" to the *images* of ideal international order held, respectively, by the United States, Europe, and China. First, there is the liberal image of international order held by the United States, which is a projection of a harmonious civic order. This leads the Americans to adopt what George Kennan calls the "legalistic-moralistic approach." Second, there is the European image of international order as maintained by the balance of power. Third, there is an image of international chaos held by unsatisfied forces in general. What Nagai attempts to do in the article is to show "how these images interact, clash, and modify each other and thereby converge on the image of 'institution' (balance of power) during the Cold War."[26]

When Nagai wrote the article in 1965, he had seen the United States gradually change its attitude toward the world since the Cuban Missile Crisis, ceasing from thinking about war only in terms of a total one and starting to move toward what Robert McNamara called the "strategy of multiple options." It began to keep open lines of communications with its enemies and use its power as "a means to force enemies to follow its limited political goals and intentions." Thus, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Berlin Crisis ended without escalation and the United States and the Soviet Union mutually recognized each other's spheres of influence. Here, notes Nagai, was "a kind of tacit provisional agreement between the United States and the Soviets," which was subsequently buttressed by the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. Nagai regards these as "institutions" established, at least, between the two superpowers.[27]

From Nagai's point of view, the problem was China rather than the Soviet Union. Mao's "situational" strategy, which was a projection of his own experience in the Chinese Revolution, squarely challenged the "institutions" being established between the United States and the Soviet Union. It also challenged America's "rational" view that nuclear weapons could be used if necessary; as Nagai commented, "McNamara's rational deterrence theory is based on the assumption that no decisionmaker will run a risk of having 70 to 80 percent of his people killed. But since Chinese leaders virtually reject the assumption by saying that they can afford to have 200 or 300

---

[26]"America's Image of War and Mao Zedong's Challenge," in Nagai, *Heiwa no daishɔo*, 7.
[27]Ibid.

million Chinese killed, America's nuclear threat does not work against China."[28]

Nagai understood the Vietnam War as America's attempt to contain China with the cooperation of the Soviet Union and he expected it to be somewhat successful. He stated in 1966:

> The United States is, on the one hand, implementing an "imperialistic" policy to such a degree that it will receive only verbal criticism from the Soviet Union, and on the other hand, giving the Soviets an advantage to such a degree that it will prevent hawkish China from gaining a total victory. The United States is thereby attempting to strengthen Russia's role as an intermediator in Asia and Africa, restore Russia's prestige in the world communist movement, and expand Russia's economic-military aid to nonaligned countries around China; it is trying to deter Chinese force indirectly. For example, the purpose of America's bombing in North Vietnam is to gradually increase Russia's aid to Vietnam, for only Russia can provide Vietnam with modern weapons.[29]

As Nagai predicted, China certainly became isolated, but he found himself wrong about the *process* of China's isolation. The isolation of China was caused not by America's success in the Vietnam War but by the failure of McNamara's strategy and the rise of Vietnamese nationalism. It was only after America's withdrawal from Vietnam became a question of time that the Soviet Union decided to increase its aid to Vietnam in order to prevent China from taking full advantage of America's failure. North Vietnam also showed its resolution to be independent from China by accepting President Lyndon Johnson's proposal for limiting America's bombing despite China's advocacy of continued resistance.

In articles written in 1967 and 1975, Nagai admitted that he had overestimated the effectiveness of McNamara's strategy and tried to analyze why he had done so. First, he concluded that he had not thoroughly analyzed the "relations between decisionmaking for foreign policy and domestic structure," i.e., interactions among the administration, the Congress, and the public in the United States, and had wrongly regarded the United States as too rational an actor. Second, he had not analyzed what Andrew Mack called the "asymmetries" of the conflict, and thus had not attached sufficient importance to the stark differences in stakes, sizes of political mobilization, and public support between the United States and Vietnam.[30]

---

[28]Ibid., 50.

[29]"Restraints and Choices in Japanese Diplomacy," ibid., 89-90.

[30]See "Johnson's Diplomacy and the 'Wall of Information'," in Yonosuke Nagai,

*Public Philosophy in a Multi-Hierarchical System*

Despite these weaknesses in Nagai's argument, his predictions largely came true. China became isolated from the outside world and relations among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China were gradually institutionalized. However, ironically, as superpower relations became institutionalized, the structure of the international order became more complex. Security relations among the powers became stabilized, but the hierarchy of issues became twisted, as not all of them converged on security concerns, and their integration could no longer be maintained. Since Nagai understood power in terms of not only "potential for control" but also "potential for unity," he regarded this as a dramatic change in international relations. In an article published in 1972, he wrote:

> The so-called "tripolar structure" among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China has a quite distorted structure. Each issue holds its own hierarchy of players. (1) The United States and the Soviet Union have a monopoly on nuclear first-strike capability and hold the key to world peace; they can engage each other in an exclusive dialogue about strategic arms limitation. (2) We cannot deal with the problems of stability and peace in the areas around China, including Indochina, Korea, Taiwan, and Pakistan, without a dialogue with Beijing. (3) We cannot deal with economic problems, such as economic development in Asia, trade relations in Asia, and international currency, without Japan, despite the fact that Japan is still a nonnuclear middle power and far from great. Thus, there exists what Stanley Hoffmann calls a "multi-hierarchical system," i.e., a multipolar system which includes a vertical hierarchy of players over each issue-area.[31]

Interestingly, seeing the emergence of a multi-hierarchical world, Nagai began to emphasize the importance of the *image* we have about this world. The emergence of a multipolar system with a vertical hierarchy of players in each issue-area and dispersed power became an undeniable fact in international society. If so, the essence of David Riesman's analysis of mass society can be applied to international politics; international politics should also be a science of self-liberation

---

*Takyoku sekai no kozo* (Structure of the multipolar world) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1973), 29-61; and "Time as Political Source," in Yonosuke Nagai, *Jikan no seijigaku* (Politics of time) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1979), 49-82. Also see Andrew J. R. Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 175-200.

[31]Yonosuke Nagai, "Fiction and Reality in the Sino-Japanese Diplomatic Normalization," in Nagai, *Takyoku sekai no kozo*, 208-9. Also see Stanley Hoffmann, *Gulliver's Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 17-51.

which encourages "those who are only interested in understanding what they cannot control" (inside-dopesters) and helps them to reconstruct themselves as autonomous actors in world politics.

In 1986, in a commemorative speech for the thirtieth anniversary of the Japan Association of International Relations (JAIR), Nagai, then-president of JAIR, suggested that his colleagues provide their readers with a "public philosophy for peace."[32] In Nagai's opinion, the "public philosophy for peace" should be based on the understanding that politics is not puzzles but difficulties. It should be founded not on the epidemiological way of thinking, which assumes there is a bacteria or cause we should eliminate, but on a "political ecological paradigm" which attempts to live with evil rather than trying to identify and eliminate it, and attempts to maintain a balance within the whole milieu.[33] As George Kennan once stated, "we must be gardeners and not mechanics in our approach to world affairs."[34]

## Japan's Diplomatic Strategy

*Restraints and Choices*

Given this perspective on international politics, what kind of diplomatic strategy does Nagai advocate for Japan? In *Gendai to senryaku* published in 1985, Nagai states: "If somebody asked me what the essence of strategy is, I would answer that it is the wisdom of reducing one's policy purposes commensurate to the limits of one's means."[35] Keeping these precepts in mind, Nagai has always approached Japan's diplomatic strategy by first analyzing the limits of Japan's means, i.e., the restraining factors in Japanese foreign policy. If the weakness of the progressives' argument for Japan's

---

[32]By "public philosophy," Nagai means "something not as systematic as ideology and not as changeable as a public mood, but a basic framework that gives meaning to events and integrates all of them when we think about social reality." See Yonosuke Nagai, "In Search of a Public Philosophy for Peace," *Chuo koron* (Central Review) (Tokyo), February 1987, 161.

[33]Nagai believes that a single cause rarely corresponds to a single consequence and that problems are intertwined with the whole milieu in complex ways.

[34]Quoted in Nagai, "In Search of a Public Philosophy for Peace," 169, from George F. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), 93.

[35]Yonosuke Nagai, *Gendai to senryaku* (The contemporary age and strategy) (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1985), 328.

unarmed neutrality is "the lack of an active dialogue between means and goals," the strength of Nagai's argument is his analysis of the limits of Japan's means and his setting of realistic medium-term goals for Japanese foreign policy.

In "Restraints and Choices in Japanese Diplomacy" (1966),[36] which was written after Stanley Hoffmann's "Restraints and Choices in American Foreign Policy" (1962), Nagai considers international structure the most important constraint on Japanese foreign policy: "After World War II, Japan was intertwined in the bipolar structure of the United States and the Soviet Union not by choice but by fate. . . . Despite the idealistic argument for overall peace, Japan had only an academic choice to be either a hibernative peaceful country, like Austria or Spain, or a power in Asia with some risks." Since the international structure remained basically unchanged in 1966, Nagai argued there were few possibilities for Japan to be a neutral state.

> Even if it is right for Japan to go in the direction toward a nonaligned-neutral state in the long run, it should be done by a step-by-step withdrawal from the status quo, keeping pace with the progress of détente. Otherwise, we might give the United States the impression that Japan is getting closer to the Communist Bloc. At worst, Japan would be encircled by U.S. troops on the defense line from the Aleutian, Ogasawara, to Okinawa. . . . Depending on the political context, neutralization can become nonneutralization.[37]

Nagai believes that domestic factors also make it difficult for Japan to be a neutral state. Japan's neutralization would divide leftist forces into pro-Russia and pro-China forces. This might induce foreign forces to intervene in Japan in the name of economic-military aid. Moreover, as a response to a leftist movement, reactionary-rightist forces might also become radicalized and carry out a military coup d'etat.[38]

Instead, Nagai summons a vision of Japanese diplomacy as "creating a value-plural international order and participating in the establishment of a strong international security community which can maintain permanent peace." He also sets medium-range goals for Japanese diplomacy: namely "to make Japan secure based on the balance of power among the United States, the Soviet Union, and

---

[36]See Stanley Hoffmann, "Restraints and Choices in American Foreign Policy" (1962), in his *The State of War: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 160-97.

[37]Nagai, *Heiwa no daisho*, 80, 120, 161.

[38]See ibid., 120-21.

China; to economize on the defense budget as much as possible; and to make the best effort at creating a social democratic society."[39] According to Nagai, a secure Japan means maintaining friendly relations with potential threats in terms of capability, i.e., (1) the United States, (2) the Soviet Union, and (3) China, and rendering the threats harmless by establishing a mutual security regime. Only by doing so can Japan engage in reducing its defense budget and creating a wealthy society.

Seeing China challenge the "institutions" established between the United States and the Soviet Union, Nagai argued that Japan should support the "institutions" and induce China to follow them; Japan should thus promote China's political-economic inclinations to become a regime that can peacefully coexist with other countries. As *The Economist* described in an international report, what Nagai proposed was a "Moscow-Tokyo-Washington axis."[40] He commented, "Japan should be connected with the Soviet Union by adopting an indirect approach. . . . It should progress to the conclusion of a peace treaty with the Soviet Union, even if it puts aside the Northern Territories issue. . . . Japan should indirectly advance the normalization of relations with nonaligned countries which are getting closer to the Soviet Union, through help from the Russians. It should multiply communications by doing so and deepen the economic exchanges with them."[41] Moreover, Japan's best political deterrent against China would be to become a model for developing countries and show the possibilities for them to create stable and wealthy societies based on a liberal regime.[42]

Unfortunately, Nagai's suggestion of an indirect approach was never implemented by the Japanese government. Sticking to the Northern Territories issue, Japan persisted in its unwillingness to conclude a peace treaty with the Soviet Union. When Japan agreed

---

[39]Ibid., 104.

[40]"The Country That Doesn't Want a Front Seat," *The Economist*, April 16, 1966, 231-32.

[41]Nagai, *Heiwa no daisho*, 110.

[42]It should be noted here that what Nagai proposed was not the "containment" of China. Rather, he argued for the importance of keeping the "windows" of the United Nations and disarmament conferences open to China. He advocated expanding private-level exchanges among journalists, scholars, businessmen, and labor union leaders, maintaining economic exchanges based on the principles of the separation of politics and economics, and approving China's membership in the United Nations.

to insert the so-called "anti-hegemony clause" into the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty without seriously examining its implications, Nagai described it as a major error in postwar Japanese foreign policy. No matter how Japan might interpret the clause as saying that it would "deal with China and the Soviet Union separately" (Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda), it was certain that the Russians would regard it as an anti-Soviet clause. In fact, the Soviets had publicly stated that "third countries have a right to retaliate" against the conclusion of the anti-Soviet clause. In early 1978, Nagai stated: 'If Japan is going to resume the negotiations for a Sino-Japanese peace treaty following the pledge in the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué, it should also enter into negotiations with the Soviets for a Russo-Japanese peace (or good-neighbor and friendship) treaty no matter how long it may take. Now is the time for an overall peace."[43]

Few intellectuals joined Nagai in criticizing the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty; even Masataka Kosaka emphasized the fact that the treaty included not only the "anti-hegemony clause" but also the so-called "third country clause" which states that the treaty "shall not affect the position of either contracting country regarding its relations with third countries."[44] However, Nagai was correct in predicting Russia's retaliatory responses to the treaty. Russia's ground troops began to be deployed in the Northern Territories in 1978 and the *Minsk* group of battleships was transferred there in 1979. Renewed MiG-21s and new bombers were deployed in the territories in 1980. In addition, the Soviet Union started to refer not only to China and the United States but also to Japan as threats in the Far East in the beginning of the 1980s. Responding to these changes and the international mood of the new Cold War, the so-called "military realists" were also on the rise in Japan. The most influential writer among them was Hisahiko Okazaki, then director-general of the Research and Planning Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, after confronting the progressives who had advocated Japan's unarmed neutrality, Nagai found himself debating right-wingers, this time calling himself a "political realist."

---

[43]"Consequences of the Sino-Japanese 'One-sided' Treaty," in Nagai, *Jikan no seijigaku*, 262.

[44]See Kosaka and Nagai (discussion), "Russia Will Decline," *Shokun* (Fellow Citizens), June 1979, 24-39.

*Debate with the "Military Realists"*

Although both Nagai and the military realists believed that Japan needed cooperation with the West based on the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty, there were two important differences between them.[45] First, while the military realists, such as Okazaki, mainly focused on the *capabilities* of potential adversaries, the political realists, such as Nagai, attached greater importance to the *intentions* of potential adversaries. According to the military realists, it is too difficult to distinguish the intentions of potential adversaries from their capabilities, so Japan should develop concrete regional and global war scenarios based on the former's worst intentions to deal with the potential threats. The military realists found it urgent to do so in the early 1980s because they concurred with the Pentagon's analysis, *Soviet Military Power*, that a relative parity (according to Okazaki, 1.0 vs. 1.0-1.5) in the U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear balance had weakened the credibility of the American nuclear deterrent.

In contrast to Okazaki, Nagai believed that the Pentagon report was distorted by political pressure in the United States and found the analytical framework problematic. The report argued there was a military balance without analyzing the "software" in Soviet military organizations, or their "potential for unity." Nagai believed the Soviet Union to be much less of a threat than the Pentagon did because he thought that the Soviet Union had become a kind of slack society, far different from the Stalin regime. Taking into account crime, alcoholism, bribery, low morale in the Red Army, and also increasingly run-down military facilities, Nagai could not agree with the assessment of the Pentagon and Japanese military realists.

Also, Nagai questioned a defense strategy based on various scenarios. First, both the scenarios of Russia's limited and local aggression into Hokkaido (local escalation) and those of defending Russia's sea lanes into the Pacific (regional escalation) too easily assumed that the military conflicts could be limited to conventional levels. Second, the scenarios focused only on the situation after the failure of deterrence; they ignored the fact that such scenarios could themselves provoke Russia's aggression. Third, the scenarios did not take into account the differences in the stakes between Japan and the United States. The

[45]See Nagai, *Gendai to senryaku*, part 1. Also see Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan's Search for Strategy," *International Security* 8, no. 3 (Winter 1983/1984): 152-79.

United States, as a global power, could give priority to the interests of the West as a whole over the interest of Japan and ultimately accept the total destruction of Japan.

According to Nagai, the biggest dilemma for Japan's security policy is the fact that deterrence can be changed to provocation by the very effort to strengthen defense capability. The theories that do not directly face this dilemma are those of outsiders or onlookers, not of responsible persons. The ambiguities of Japan's Defense Agency's *National Defense Program Outline* (1977) and *Report on Comprehensive National Security* (1980) reflect this dilemma. In other words, the ambiguities are not hallmarks of the lack of strategic thinking but products of eminent political realism.

The second difference between Nagai's argument and that of the military realists concerns the means of Japan's cooperation with the United States. In contrast to the military realists, who tend to emphasize military cooperation, such as Japan's blockade of the three channels (Soya, Tsugaru, and Tsushima) against the Soviet Union and its defense of the sea lanes, Nagai insists on the need for a comprehensive security strategy which focuses on "software," such as "credibility building, arms control, mutual disarmament, nonmilitary deterrence, foreign aid, cultural exchanges, diplomacy, and information analysis."[46] Nagai believes Japan should not symmetrically respond to Russian forces with its forces, but asymmetrically and indirectly.

From Nagai's point of view, what Japan needed most was to strengthen its *political* solidarity with the West. Understanding that Russia's goals and rules of the game are different from the West's, Japan should not eliminate them as evils but live with them; it should let the Soviet Union gradually change its behavior by creating a milieu where the Russians will find it disadvantageous to emphasize confrontation with the West. Japan's security policy should basically focus on the creation of this milieu.

Holding the above-mentioned strategy for Japan, Nagai did not think that Japan needed to increase its military spending, as the military realists advocated. Conversely, Nagai highly valued postwar Japan's wisdom in keeping its military spending under one percent of the gross national product (GNP) in comparison to the United

[46]Nagai, *Gendai to senryaku*, 26.

States. After experiencing the miraculous success of the war economy during World War II, the United States continued to increase "butter" by producing "guns." In contrast to the United States, Japan managed to resist the temptation to depend on "military Keynesianism" several times in the postwar period. Above all, Prime Minister Yoshida's rejection of America's offer of the Mutual Security Act (MSA) should be highly valued. Nagai argued: "If Japan had advanced toward raising its own military industries and exporting arms abroad with America's support under the MSA of 1951, it would not have had the present economic miracle."[47] Supported by the rationalism of the conservative mainstream from Yoshida and Hayato Ikeda to Kiichi Miyazawa, the insistence of the Ministry of Finance and big business on a balanced budget, pressure of the opposition parties, and a national sentiment of pacifism, Japan has not taken that "economic drug"; it has avoided the "institutionalization of the follow-on system" created by the military-industrial complex.

It should be noted that Nagai wrote "the Yoshida Doctrine will be permanent"[48] in this context. The Yoshida Doctrine has often been interpreted as Japan's economism, or its separation of politics and economics after regaining its sovereignty in 1952. It is true that Yoshida, who vehemently opposed U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' request for a major rearmament of Japan in 1950 and shrewdly acquired America's obligation to defend Japan in exchange for permission for U.S. troops to be stationed in Japan, attached great importance to economic power. However, Nagai defines the Yoshida Doctrine in terms of Japan's resistance to military Keynesianism.[49] Nagai himself has never completely separated politics

---

[47]Ibid., 60.

[48]See ibid., chap. 2.

[49]This definition is also slightly different from Kenneth Pyle's. According to Pyle, the Yoshida Doctrine's tenets were: (1) Japan's economic rehabilitation must be the prime national goal, with political-economic cooperation with the United States necessary for this purpose; (2) Japan should remain lightly armed and avoid involvement in international political-strategic issues, which would not only free its people's energies for productive industrial development, but also avoid divisive internal struggles—what Yoshida called "a thirty-eighth parallel" in the hearts of the Japanese people; and (3) to gain a long-term guarantee for its own security, Japan would provide bases for the U.S. army, navy, and air force. See Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Japanese Question: Power and Purpose in a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1992), 25. However, Nagai has never argued that Japan should "avoid" involvement in international political-strategic issues. Rather, he has advocated implementing "indirect approaches" to issues.

and economics and designed Japan's strategy with emphasis on the "software," such as credibility building, arms control, and foreign aid.

Unlike many writers in postwar Japan, Nagai has never defined Japan's national interests exclusively in terms of its relations with the United States. He has always attempted to design Japan's diplomatic strategy from a perspective of the game among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. While Japan has been basically what Kent Calder calls a "reactive state,"[50] Nagai has advocated active strategic actions. His "Moscow-Tokyo-Washington axis" was and still is an interesting idea that deserves serious consideration even after thirty years. His "Yoshida Doctrine" is still valid if we follow his definition, in which it is described in terms of resistance to the creation of a military-industrial complex.

## Nagai's Political Realism Assessed

In assessing Nagai's realism, three general points can be noted about his political science at the outset. First, Nagai's writings are dialogues with Western thinkers as well as challenges to Japan's progressives and military realists. It is no exaggeration to say that his arguments on mass society were prompted by David Riesman's works. Also, most of his analyses of international relations were influenced by the works of Stanley Hoffmann.[51] Just as Riesman gained some important insights from the works of Thorstein Veblen and Stanley Hoffmann developed his own arguments in response to Raymond Aron's theory, Nagai has also attempted to create his own thought through his dialogues with important contemporary thinkers.

Second, Nagai's argument is characterized by his emphasis on the existential condition of man: man exists *in* history, which is uncertain and unfinished, and bears within him the historical reality he explores. While many other intellectuals in Japan developed their arguments with the framework of Marxism, Nagai challenged them by

---

[50]Kent E. Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formulation: Explaining the Reactive State," *World Politics* 40, no. 4 (July 1988): 517-41.

[51]Curiously, Nagai seems not to have been influenced by Hoffmann's ethical studies, such as *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

emphasizing such political thinkers as Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. As Kazuki Kasuya, the former editor-in-chief of *Chuo koron*, states: "Yonosuke Nagai's ideas are based on his sense of human existence, including passion. His work is filled with sharp insights into the contingency and uncertainty of man's future. The political science of Nagai attracts many people because of its acute awareness of man's freedom to choose."[52]

Finally, it should be noted that Nagai's version of realism is more similar to the classical realism of Max Weber, Edward H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and George Kennan than the neorealism or structural realism of Kenneth Waltz or Robert Keohane's neoliberal institutionalism, which attempts to incorporate structural realism, a modified structural research program, and theories of domestic politics. Nagai's realism purports to be not only a general theory but also a criticism or justification of specific policies for a given state and a solution to the problem of moral considerations' place in foreign policy.[53] In other words, Nagai is what Raymond Aron called a "committed observer" (*spectateur engagé*)[54] rather than a completely detached observer who attempts to construct "scientific" theories.

Let us now attempt to assess Nagai's realism in terms of the three aspects of theory, advocacy, and morality.

*Theory*

Does Nagai's realism consist of the same components as those of Western realism? Does it share the same deficiencies as those of Western realism? First, unlike Morgenthau, Nagai does not clearly assume an ineradicable tendency to evil, a universal *animus dominandi* among all men and women. Also, he seems not to share a Niebuhrian concept of original sin. Simply stating that man can neither be God nor animal, Nagai emphasizes the fact that men need "politics" to acquire certainty and stability. However, it should be mentioned that Nagai does posit a search for power and security as a fundamental human motivation.

Second, attempting to position Japan in the game among the

---

[52]Kasuya, "The Ideological Character of Nagai's Political Science," 619.

[53]On these three main aspects of classical realism, see Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*, 1-2.

[54]See Raymond Aron, *The Committed Observer* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 253-82.

United States, the Soviet Union, and China, Nagai undoubtedly assumes that the state is the most important actor in international politics. In his valedictory lecture at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, he confessed that he had been a nationalist. He also revealed that when he returned from Taiwan at the end of World War II, he tearfully read Weber's statement in *Politics as a Vocation*: "We lost the war. You have won it. . . . A nation forgives if its interests have been damaged, but no nation forgives if its honor has been offended, especially by a bigoted self-righteousness." However, in the same lecture, he recognized and actually valued the transformation from "interstate order" to "world order" by saying that: "The war criminals who were executed under the orders of the trials in Tokyo and other places will be able to rest in peace only if we regard them as valuable sacrifices for the process in the legislation of global norms in international society."[55]

Third, like the key exponents of realism, Nagai holds power and its pursuit by individuals and states to be ubiquitous and inescapable. Although Nagai does not explain why individuals' lust for power, which results from their security anxiety, leads states to search for power, his conception of power is more rigorous than that of the Western realists. Following Robert Dahl, he defines power as "the ability to get people to do what one wants them to do when otherwise they would not do it on a certain issue" and also distinguishes the "potential for control" from the "potential for unity." By doing so, unlike Kenneth Waltz, who states that "an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him,"[56] Nagai does not fail to distinguish the *supply* of power on the one hand from its *uses* and *achievements* on the other. Also, viewing power in terms of issues, he could fully understand the dramatic changes from the bipolar system to the "multi-hierarchical system." And this led him to understand the need for a "public philosophy for peace."

Finally, unlike Morgenthau, Nagai does not explicitly assume that the real issues of international politics can be understood by a rational analysis of competing interests defined in terms of power. Repeatedly emphasizing that politics consists of "difficulties" filled

---

[55]Nagai, *Nijusseiki no isan*, 21, 26.

[56]Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 192.

with uncertainties, Nagai seems to prefer what Raymond Aron calls "sociological analysis," which attempts to retain *all* the elements instead of fixing one's attention on the rational ones alone.[57] Although Nagai attaches importance to the roles of power in international relations, he has never argued that all states have "the same kind of foreign policy." Rather, he emphasizes the importance of the *images* of ideal international order held by states, which are projections of their people's lives and experiences. Especially after realizing that his predictions about the Vietnam War did not come true, he seemed to understand that, even in the abstract, it is difficult to assume an actor's rationality. As early as 1968, three years before the publication of Graham Allison's *Essence of Decision*, he attempted to analyze interactions between domestic and international politics theoretically. In 1972, he also pointed out domestic constraints in Japanese foreign policy by revising Masao Maruyama's analysis of the "system of irresponsibility." While Maruyama had searched for the ethos behind the Japanese decisionmaking structure from robot or "portable shrine" (authority) on the top down to bureaucrat (power) and outlaw (violence) on the bottom in wartime Japan and found the logic of "submission to *faits accomplis*" as a common theme,[58] Nagai found the same type of "transference of responsibility" among chapeau (politician), myopic experts (bureaucrats), and outlaws (mass media) during the panic caused by the Nixon shocks.[59] Understanding these strong domestic constraints, Nagai has never overestimated the contributions professional diplomats can make to easing international tensions.

Instead, he has focused on the roles of "institutions" in stabilizing international relations. It should be noted that Nagai's "institutions" are different from those of neoliberal institutionalists such as Robert Keohane. Keohane states that institutions can take three forms: (1) *formal intergovernmental or cross-national nongovernmental organizations*; (2) *international regimes*, which are defined as "institutions with explicit rules, agreed upon by governments, that pertain to particular sets of issues in international relations"; and (3) *conventions*, which are "informal institutions, with implicit rules and understand-

---

[57]See Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 3.

[58]See Masao Maruyama, *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), chaps. 1-3.

[59]"The Pitfalls of Alliance Diplomacy," in Nagai, *Takyoku sekai no kozo*, 181-96.

ings, that shape the expectations of actors." On the other hand, Nagai contends that "institutions" are different from "organizations" in that they are *informal* norms which are created *spontaneously* and accumulated little by little over a long period of time. According to Nagai, "institutions" have been created only between the United States and the Soviet Union in the postwar era. More formal and artificial norms, such as international organizations and what Keohane calls "international regimes," exist only on the bases of Nagai's "institutions."[60]

*Advocacy*

Like other classical realists, Nagai has persistently demonstrated a willingness to engage the controversial issues of contemporary foreign policy. For Nagai, the primary task of theory was what Weber called "understanding" (*Verstehen*) rather than explaining causation; he has attempted to understand the meaning agents give to their actions rather than making a clear distinction between the independent, intervening, and dependent variables. What interests Nagai most has been the gap between intentions and consequences, the undetermined, or the uncertainties of man's future and his choices. Moreover, seeing the dispersion of power in domestic and international society, Nagai has believed that it is intellectuals' duty to provide a "public philosophy" for his readers. He has thus attempted to encourage his to be autonomous political actors.

Unlike Weber's realism, which grew largely out of nationalism, Nagai's realism was shaped by liberating himself from his own emotional nationalism and subsequently confronting the idealists' nationalism. There is little doubt that the idealists' advocacy of Japan's unarmed neutrality in part resulted from their desire for their country's independence. As Raymond Aron stated after his visit to Japan in 1953, "In Japan, as in France, the intellectuals feel humiliated by the fact that their country is supported and protected by the United States."[61] What Nagai did under this circumstance was to show that in the intense

---

[60]See Robert Keohane, "Neoliberal Institutionalism: A Perspective on World Politics," in his *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989), 3-4; and Yonosuke Nagai, "The Cold War in History," in *Chitsujo to konton: Reisengo no sekai* (Order and chaos: The world after the Cold War), ed. Yonosuke Nagai and Saneo Tsuchiyama (Tokyo: Ningen no kagaku sha, 1993), 32-33.

[61]Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 249.

Cold War between two nuclear superpowers, medium-sized or small states such as Japan had to maintain their survival at the cost of complete independence and that, even without perfect independence, Japan did have choices in contributing to world peace. For Nagai, Japan's lack of total independence was the "cost of peace" (the title of his first book).

Nagai's view of the Soviet threat was more similar to Kennan's than Morgenthau's. He based his prescription on an analysis of the *motives* of the Soviet leaders rather than their *capabilities*. Unlike Morgenthau, Nagai did not consider military strength a prerequisite for negotiations. Seeing the establishment of "institutions" between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, Nagai saw an opportunity for Japan to negotiate a peace treaty with the Soviets. For Nagai, the bigger threat was China, which had "situational" strategic thought.

It should be noted that in regard to these potential threats, Nagai has not used elastic terms, such as "containment" or "national interest." Studying the origins of the Cold War, he understood too well that Kennan's "containment" had been tragically distorted. Moreover, to expose the idealists' moralistic illusions, Nagai emphasized the restraints of the international system over Japanese foreign policy, instead of using the term "national interest."

Nagai has tried to dispel not only moralistic illusions but also political illusions, repeatedly reminding his readers that politics is not a puzzle to be solved directly but a set of difficulties to be overcome largely by the indirect approach. He strongly stated that Japan should approach China through the Soviet Union, and gradually induce China to follow the "institutions" by changing the international environment. Also, in contrast to the military realists, Nagai has placed greater emphasis on "software" means. What Nagai has set for Japanese foreign policy are what Arnold Wolfers once called "milieu goals," which consist of "shaping conditions beyond national boundaries," rather than "possessions goals," which pertain to "national possessions . . . the enhancement or the preservation of one or more of the things to which [the nation] attaches values, which are in limited supply and for which the competition is necessarily intense."[62] We

[62]Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 73 ff.

may also say that Nagai has attempted to repatriate Japan's possession goals; while he has advocated neither economism nor mercantilism, he has clearly defined as one of Japan's national ambitions the development of its *domestic* politics and economy.

*Morality*

Following Weber, Nagai has insisted on the inescapable responsibility of power and urged statesmen and citizens to apply an ethic of responsibility to moral judgments of state behavior. He has urged people to be autonomous individuals with "inner strength" in order to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's actions. By adopting the ethics of responsibility, Nagai has effectively criticized the progressives who argued that Japan should preserve its security merely by trusting the "peace-loving peoples of the world" and who regarded Nazism as a threat but Bolshevism as a hope.[63]

Yet, Nagai's answer to the thorny problems of ethics and foreign policy is ultimately disappointing and inadequate. In restating Weber's characterization of the ethic of responsibility, Nagai simply accepts it and thus, like Weber, "prevents himself from founding his own authentic system of values."[64] Contending that we should *face* the consequences of our actions, Nagai says nothing about how we should *weigh* them.[65]

Although he wrote a chapter about America's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in *Reisen no kigen*, Nagai has never attempted to ask the question whether it was justifiable or not. He has merely accepted the proposition of orthodox historians that the United States dropped the bomb under the force of bureaucratic inertia. Also, it is striking that Nagai never dealt with the questions which

---

[63]Nagai criticized them using Weber's argument that those who deny war should also deny revolution because they are the same in that they resort to violence.

[64]Raymond Aron, "Max Weber and Power Politics," in *Max Weber and Sociology Today*, ed. Otto Stammer (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 98. I believe Nagai's Mannheimian approach to political reality also prevents him from founding his own authentic system of values. If, as Mannheim contends, each group has its own manner of conceiving the world, there are as many perspectives and partial truths as there are points of view. As he assumes we can reconstruct the whole reality by "moving" one interpretation of the world to another, a question of which interpretation is right becomes a wrong question. The Mannheimian doctrine tends to fall into a thoroughgoing historical and moral relativism. See Raymond Aron's criticism of sociology of knowledge in *German Sociology* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 51-65.

[65]On this point, see Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*, 51.

some American realists asked in public when he wrote about the Vietnam War. Does Vietnam constitute a vital interest for the United States (or Japan)? Should the United States root out the Viet Cong at an enormous cost of civilian lives? Answering these questions, American realists such as Morgenthau and Kennan have inevitably applied their values to judge political consequences and possibilities, although they have claimed that their arguments were merely practical and not moral.[66] Nagai's argument on the Vietnam War has been characterized by his unwillingness to judge America's policy.

In 1986, with indications that the end of the Cold War was approaching, Nagai simply celebrated a "historically exceptional 'long peace'," or the stability between superpowers, without questioning its morality. Nagai agreed with John Lewis Gaddis that the long peace had been brought on by a certain kind of self-control function, which had been created by the combination of the geopolitical structure of the bipolar system with the conditions of the Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD).[67] Peace had thus been prolonged by the "institutions" between the United States and the Soviet Union which Nagai recognized as early as 1965. However, while the "institutions" between superpowers consist of rules and procedures, they do not necessarily constitute a formula for justice, which depends on the very substance of the rules and procedures. Even if nuclear deterrence played an important role in stabilizing U.S.-Soviet relations, could we have lived with it forever? Did not the spheres of influence provide a license for brutality with the result that the order maintained was both violent and unjust?[68] Nagai has said that political order precedes other goals, such as that of justice. However, it does not follow from this that order is to be preferred to justice in any given instance. As Hedley Bull states: "While order in world politics is something valuable, and a condition for the realization of other values, it should not be taken to be a commanding value, and to show that a particular institution

---

[66]See ibid., 231-32.

[67]See Yonosuke Nagai, "Nomos in the Universe: Postwar Peace and Strategic Defense," *Kokusai seiji* (International Relations), October 1986, 5-16. Also see John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," in his *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 215-45.

[68]See Stanley Hoffmann, "Ethics and Rules of the Game Between the Superpowers," in Louis Henkin et al., *Right v. Might: International Law and the Use of Force*, 2nd edition (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), 71-93.

or course of action is conducive to order is not to have established a presumption that that institution is desirable or that that course of action should be carried out."[69]

When Japan could not respond to the Persian Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 quickly and many of its intellectuals understood the war as the "destruction of the ecological system" without referring to Sadam Hussein's aggression, Nagai recognized the danger of an isolated Japan and inevitably argued the need for "compassion." He stated that Japan did not need to send its untrained troops to the Gulf but that it should learn to share joys and sorrows of the international community.[70] However, for whom should we have compassion? What if a more morally complex war occurs? What kind of criteria should dictate a nation's decision to share its compassion with the international community? These questions are left unanswered.

As Michael Smith points out in *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*, Weber's ethic of responsibility can lead us to various moral judgments because Weber and his followers have failed to present any coherent and convincing criteria for what constitutes responsibility. Nagai has also been unwilling (or unable) to state his criteria for the ethic of responsibility, and his judgment has sometimes been quite different from that of other realists on important issues. For example, while Kennan rejected the nuclear bomb as "a sterile and hopeless weapon" as early as 1958 and Morgenthau ultimately opposed the existence of nuclear weapons themselves,[71] Nagai firmly believes that we need nuclear weapons in order to have a peaceful world. In his afterword to the Japanese translation of *Living with Nuclear Weapons* (1983) by the Harvard Nuclear Study Group, he regarded nuclear weapons as a "necessary evil," contending that we

---

[69]Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 98.

[70]See Yonosuke Nagai, "Theory of War with No 'Subject'," *Asahi Shimbun*, March 20, 1991; and my interview with Nagai in "*Heiwa no daisho* Twenty-five Years On," *Rekishi to mirai* (History and the Future), no. 17 (1991): 6-15.

[71]See George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 7; and Hans J. Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?* (New York: New American Library, 1972), 149. Morgenthau states: "The possibility of nuclear death radically affects the meaning of death, of immortality, of life itself. It affects that meaning by destroying most of it. . . . Nuclear destruction destroys the meaning of death by depriving it of its individuality. It destroys the meaning of immortality by making both society and history impossible. It destroys the meaning of life by throwing life back upon itself."

should not attempt to eliminate them but learn to live with the "evil."[72] In 1985, he thoroughly opposed President Ronald Reagan's plan for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) only to defend the conditions of MAD.[73]

Confronting Marxists and progressives, Nagai has often emphasized the uncertainties in a world in which good intentions often result in bad consequences. It should be remembered that Immanuel Kant also emphasized the uncertainties of the world but reached a quite different moral conclusion. Kant believed that we must completely abstract from considerations of acts' consequences once the imperative of duty supervenes. Otherwise, we will face difficulties in reaching a decision. Our will will vacillate among various motives because "the possible results of its decision . . . are highly uncertain." And because of this uncertainty, we often face disaster when we seek good consequences: "The sovereign wants to make people happy as he thinks best, and thus becomes a despot, while the people are unwilling to give up their universal human desire to seek happiness in their own way, and thus become rebels." Men must have "the incentive which men can have before they are given a specific goal"—the moral law.[74] Are Kant's moral theory and Weber's ethic of responsibility mutually exclusive? How can we get out of the dead end of realism? Here, Japanese realism shares an important agenda with Western realism.

---

[72]See Yonosuke Nagai, "Absolute Evil or Necessary Evil?" in *Kakuheiki tono kyozon: Ima nani ga dekiruka?* (Living with nuclear weapons: What can we do now?) (Tokyo: TBS buritanika, 1984), 393 ff.

[73]See Yonosuke Nagai, "Political Science on SDI," *Asahi jyanaru* (Asahi Journal), March 8, 1985, 6-12; and his "Orthodox and Heresy of SDI Religion," *Shokun*, July 1985, 8-18.

[74]Immanuel Kant, "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice'," in *Kant's Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 71, 83, 67.