

life, male and female; economy, capitalism versus socialism; so on and so forth. The above-mentioned underlying trends, however, pushed to change some of the personal and collective behaviors so that people or groups could adapt better to the changing surroundings. Ideological support is also important. The traditional Confucian ideology has faded away, while the modern Human Rights ideology has begun to consolidate itself. Thus, the male, paternal prestige has disappeared and the traditional social hierarchy weakened. The feeling of 'ambiguity' brought about by the collapse of Cartesian categorization resulted in cognitive confusions, which need to be re-articulated, but the new 'order' is not yet in the horizon. Here, I deal with four ambiguities to illustrate the contemporary situation; 1) economic, 2) political, 3) social, and 4) cultural.

1) Economic ambiguity

When Japan became one of the largest and advanced economies in the world, it lost the model to emulate, literally lost in the uncharted sea of the competitive world market, where it is not easy to distinguish friend from foe. Japan cannot retreat from the game. 'It is already a satellite of the planet earth' (Jean Baudrillard, 1988. *America*. London: Verso). De-territorialized and weightless, Japan is now to be found all around the world. Here, Japan is imaged as an economic power, and economy (or money) is the last entity that recognizes national boundary. From the 'yellow peril' to contemporary 'Japan bushing,' Japan, as the only non-Western successful capitalist power (until recently), has been an unwelcome guest to the West. Particularly, as it has a peculiar 'Peace Constitution,' which strictly bans the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces outside its territory, it suffers enormously from the 'status-inconsistency' in the international scene. The high saliency of Japan as an 'economic animal living in a rabbit hutch' lead to create many negative image of this nation in the world – "Efficient" becomes 'ruthless' or "aggressive," "pragmatic" becomes "unprincipled," "group behavior" becomes "conformism," "disciplined" becomes 'regimented' or "docile," "willingness to learn" becomes "slavish imitation," and so on (Wilkinson, E. 1990. *Japan versus the West: Image and Reality*. London: Penguin). With the dissolution of the USSR and its satellite socialist nations and employment of pragmatic 'capitalist' economic policies in 'socialist' (or 'communist') China and Vietnam, a new prescription for a sustainable economic system is in urgent need – how to get the balanced combination of private and public sectors? At the same time, Japanese economy has to reform its traditional 'particularistic' conventions in order to fit its domestic system to the world one.

2) Political ambiguity

Japan's politics after the War became relatively stable when the 1995 regime was established in 1955. Based on the Western two-party system, the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) as conservative and the SDPJ (Social Democratic Party of Japan) as progressive were supposed to check each other, taking turn in forming the government. In reality, however, the latter had never taken power until this system was broken in 1993. Yet this system did serve as a protector against ideological attack from the outside, representing the 'dual' Japanese psychology, the LDP as *honne* (what that individual is really going to do) and the SDPJ as *tatemae* (an individual's explicitly stated principles). The supporters of the SDPJ (the Japan Socialist Party in Japanese – *Shakaito*) were typically working class people organized by the labor unions. Except immediately-after-the-War period, union membership rate has never surpassed the 40% mark and it fell to a postwar low of 23.2% toward the end of June 1996, mainly due to the 'enbourgeoisement' of the working class in an affluent society, and partly due to the increase of part-time workers who cost less to employ. In addition, labor unions themselves are not unified any more, thus resulting in the muddling party loyalty. Facing the diminishing support from labor unions, the Socialist Party began to transform its character. Since this party had never been at the helm of the 'responsible' government, it could maintain its pure 'noble stubbornness.' Its policy was based on the firm determination to protect the Constitution, without compromising the changing national and international reality. It had never recognized the legitimacy of the US-Japan Security Treaty or the very existence of the Self-Defense Forces. In the 1993 General Election, it lost almost half of the seats in the House of Representatives from 136 to 70. The fact that it gained 136 seats in the previous election was due to the