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**MAVERICK¹ OF JAPANESE POLITICS
IN COLD WAR ERA
(commemorating the centenary of Yasuhiro Nakasone)**

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Abstract. The centenary of a prominent post-war politician, former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone was observed on May 27, 2018. The personality of Nakasone attracts attention due to his being a new type of politician who left a significant footprint on the political history of Japan. Many rightfully link the political success of Nakasone to his phenomenal capacity for political maneuvering, and the ability to gain support of stronger political opponents and to establish temporary unions, which resulted in his nickname, the “Weather Vane”.

In contrast to his predecessors, Prime Minister Nakasone was actively using mass media to create a favorable image in the eye of the public and to appeal to his voters directly. In fact, Nakasone was the first leader of the Liberal Democratic Party to transform his personal popularity with voters into a powerful internal political resource in the party.

Nakasone is the example of a successful reformer, whose undertakings set the tone to the national development in the field of administrative, tax, and social affairs and education for many years ahead. The Nakasone reforms are mentioned in many textbooks on public politics and governance as remarkably productive and effective against the backdrop of unsuccessful reforms held in a number of European countries in the same period.

¹ The coined term comes from the name of Samuel Maverick (1803-1870). Unlike other farmers, the Texan entrepreneur and politician of the 19th century refused to brand his cattle, amongst other things. The term means “individualist”, “dissident”, and “neo-Orthodox”.

In fact, Nakasone's neo-conservatism relied on economic nationalism: the establishment of Japan as a global economic leader that could dictate its terms on the world. A major idea of Nakasone's neo-conservatism was that Japan should stop following examples of other nations' patterns others but become fully politically and spiritually independent. He believed that, apart from stopping to borrow foreign practices, Japan should develop into an attractive role model to be followed by others. In that sense, Nakasone's neo-conservatism was an impressive call for internationalizing Japanese cultural and spiritual values.

Nakasone's institutional reforms faced fierce resistance from the government bureaucracy and, despite partial success, were not fully implemented. In the field of diplomacy, many initiatives of Nakasone aimed at increasing the political role of Japan on the world stage remained unfinished during his Premiership.

Keywords: Nakasone, Maverick, the "Weather Vane", neo-conservatism, "autonomous defense", privatization of public corporations, "unsinkable aircraft carrier", populism.

The centenary of a prominent post-war politician, former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, was observed on May 27, 2018. The Nakasone personality attracts attention not just because he had a longer premiership than many other Japanese politicians in the post-war history of the 20th century (his five-year tenure was shorter only than the eight-year term of Eisaku Sato) but also because he was a new type of politician who left a significant footprint on the political history of Japan.

This article will follow the political path of Nakasone and evaluate his political legacy in a great variety of spheres: the domestic and foreign policy, ideology, national security, public governance, education, etc.

Yasuhiro Nakasone was born in a big family of timber merchant in Takasaki, Gunma prefecture, on May 27, 1918. He had five brothers and sisters, two of whom died in their early years. The Nakasone family derived from an old Samurai clan and even claimed being direct descendants of the Minamoto clan via the famous Minamoto-no Yoshimitsu and his son Minamoto-no Yoshikiyo. According to the Tsunayoshi family chronicle, a tenth-generation descendant of Yoshikiyo,

a vassal of the Takeda clan, took the name of Juro Nakasone and died in the Battle of Sagami-gawa [Nakasone 1999, pp. 1-2].

Nakasone's father settled down in Takasaki in 1912 and started a timber business that was thriving on the construction boom of the post-WWI period. Yacchan (the child name of Yasuhiro) was in his own words a calm and balanced child. He was admitted to the Shizuoka secondary school in 1935, excelled in history and literature, and acquired a fluent knowledge of French. In the fall of 1938, Nakasone was admitted to the Department of Law of the Tokyo Imperial University, a forge of Japanese civil servants, graduated in 1941, and was employed with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Later that year he volunteered to join the Imperial Japanese Navy, where he served as officer and treasurer until the end of war. Notably, Nakasone was the only post-war prime minister of Japan with an experience of active military service.

In 1946, the young man with firm anti-Communist outlooks decided to retire from civil service and to start a political career. He established in his home district of Takasaki the *Seiun Juku* (Purple Cloud Society) which declared in its charter the goal of reinstating national pride and independence of Japan [Seiunjuku to wa 2018].

As early as in April 1947, he was elected to parliament for the first time on the ticket of the Democratic Party, which united many right-wing politicians of the pre-war generation.

Instead of concealing his nationalistic views, Nakasone made a point of them. In the beginning of his career, Nakasone rode his white bicycle throughout the third electoral district of the Gunma prefecture and presented anti-communist pamphlets to voters. He was always wearing a black tie in parliament to express his grief over the country's occupation [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 438]. In his public speeches, Nakasone called for the immediate reinstatement of the Armed Forces, the abolition of Article 9 of the imposed 'MacArthur Constitution', and the raising of the younger generation in the spirit of patriotism and respect for the emperor. He also started calling for modifying Article 1 of the new constitution, which defined the emperor as "the symbol of state," in order to give the sovereign the status of "the chief of state." [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 439]. It was

only in the 1960s, when the period of “ideological policy” came to an end and more reserved sentiments became to prevail in the country, that Nakasone changed his tone and concluded that the constitution enjoyed public support and should be changed in a gradual and long-term manner.

Nakasone was a political newcomer in 1951 but did not hesitate to send a 28-page letter to Gen. Douglas MacArthur, head of the General Headquarters of the Occupation. The letter strongly criticized the occupation policy of the United States, and the angry general immediately tossed it into a waste basket [Fackler 2010]. In 1952 Nakasone became known for his criticism of the emperor for losing the war. He urged Emperor Showa to abdicate his throne in favor of the crown prince as an effort to console families of fallen soldiers, to strengthen the moral foundation of the imperial system, and to give a fresh impetus to its development. [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 439].

In 1955, Nakasone and his supporters from the Democratic Party joined the newly established Liberal Democratic Party. As early as in 1959, being a young politician of 41, he was appointed to his first cabinet member position as the minister of science and education in the Kishi Cabinet. In 1968, Nakasone headed his own faction in the Liberal Democratic Party that was of the anti-mainstream origin (the faction was led by Ichiro Kono until 1965). Later on, he occupied many significant positions in the government: he was the Minister of Transportation in 1967-1968, the Director General of the Japan Defense Agency in 1970-1971 (in the cabinet of Eisaku Sato), the Minister of Foreign Trade and Industry in 1972-1974 (in the cabinet of Kakuei Tanaka), and the Director General of the Administrative Management Agency in 1980-1981 (in the cabinet of Zenko Suzuki). October 1982 was Nakasone’s finest hour. After the resignation of Suzuki, he ran for the Liberal Democratic Party presidential election and won with 58% of the vote. The support from Tanaka faction, the most powerful one in the Liberal Democratic Party, played the decisive role. In November 1982 he was elected prime minister by the parliament’s lower house.

The tenure of Nakasone could have ended soon enough: a year later the opposition pushed through the motion of no-confidence to his

cabinet, and the Liberal Democratic Party lost the absolute majority in the parliament's lower house as a result of the early election of December 18, 1983.

Nonetheless, Nakasone retained his premiership, and lured eight independent MPs from amongst former members of the New Liberal Club to join the ruling party. Nakasone took revenge in July 1986 by winning a landslide victory in the "double election" to the upper and lower houses of the parliament. In recognition of Nakasone's achievements, a party congress extended his presidency for another year (the party charter limited presidency to two two-year terms), which enabled him to remain prime minister until November 1987.

Upon resignation from the prime minister's position, which was extended to Noboru Takeshita, the new party president, whom Nakasone designated his successor (it was the only case in history when the successor was named by an outgoing party leader), Nakasone, like most leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party, appeared to be involved in the Recruit corruption scandal and had to leave the party in May 1989, handing over the leadership of his party faction to Michio Watanabe. Still, Nakasone returned to the party in April 1991 and retained the MP mandate for more than a decade. It was only in 2003 when Nakasone, then 81, was not on the ticket of the Liberal Democratic Party and his parliamentary career came to an end.

Having resigned as prime minister, Nakasone established the Nakasone Yasuhiro Peace Institute (NPI) in June 1988 with the goal of "research, international exchange, and other measures promoting studies of major problems faced by the world and Japan." [About NPI]. The institute's research programs embrace international politics, economy, security, energy, and environment.

Nakasone founded a political dynasty: his son, Hirofumi (born in 1945), became a member of the parliament's upper chamber and occupied various ministerial positions, including the posts of the Minister of Education and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and also served as the Chairman of the General Assembly of LDP Members in the House of Councilors. Nakasone's grandson, Yasutaka (born in 1982) was for the

first time elected to the parliament's lower chamber from the Liberal Democratic Party in the proportionate representation constituency in 2017.

The noticeable footprint left by Nakasone on the history of Japanese politics was primary the result of his personal abilities. An article published by The New York Times in September 1970 described the new head of the Japan Defense Agency as a Maverick, a man of remarkable style whose appearance was completely unexpected in the country where individuality was not a fashion and convenient mediocrity was expected of politicians [Oka 1970].

Many justly linked Nakasone's success on the political stage with his phenomenal knack on political maneuvering. Nakasone repeatedly demonstrated his ability to gain support of stronger political opponents and forge temporary alliances, which gave him a chance to win in a losing situation with much worse position than his rivals had initially. This is why he was nicknamed "Weather Vane" (kazamidori). Nakasone often said, "A weather vane stands upright but rotates its body. This is the essence of politics." [Encyclopedia of World Biography 2004].

In the late 1960s, when Nakasone had a deficit of funds and lost the support of his own faction and, he joined a coalition with his rival Eisaku Sato, representing the Liberal Democratic Party's "mainstream" faction. As a result, he became a member of the Sato cabinet.

In the election of the Liberal Democratic Party president, which followed Sato's resignation in 1972, he shifted his focus on Kakuei Tanaka. This move brought victory to the latter and provided Nakasone with a ministerial position in the new cabinet. A decade later, Tanaka supported Nakasone who was running for party presidency against Takeo Fukuda. As a result, the Nakasone Cabinet was highly dependent on the opinion of Tanaka and was dubbed as the "Tanakasone Cabinet." [Hrebenar 1992, p. 253]. At the same time, fair relations with the party faction leaders Tanaka and Suzuki, who could actually veto any party decisions, made Nakasone feel confident in his position as prime minister for the whole five years period of his tenure.

Another important element of Nakasone's success was his unusual for Japanese politicians ability to appeal directly to people and a remarkable personal charisma. Nakasone was actually the first LDP leader to transform his personal popularity with voters into a powerful intra-party political resource. Many voters and party colleagues especially liked Nakasone's ability to assume personal responsibility and to be accountable for his own actions. As the prime minister, he drew many new members to his faction, both new MPs who took part in the election campaign under the banners of the Nakasone faction, and independent MPs and members of other party factions and groups.

In 1981, a year before Nakasone was appointed the Prime minister; his faction was the fourth largest in the party (after the factions of Tanaka, Suzuki, and Fukuda) and comprised 52 members. Given the moderate faction size, Nakasone could not aspire for independence in managing the party and government affairs. But as soon as he gained substantial ground in the dual election of 1986, his policy towards rival factions became much more independent than before. After the election, his faction in the party grew to 87 members, which put it on the third position amongst LDP factions in the parliament and on the second position after the Tanaka faction in the House of Representatives [Curtis 1988, p. 105]. The reliance on the might of his faction and the ability to maintain the intra-party balance enabled Nakasone not to look back at his party opponents but to initiate a series of risky and controversial reforms, such as the administrative reform or the introduction of consumer tax.

Later developments demonstrated that the phenomenon of charismatic Nakasone was short-lived. The epoch of populism was still a long way off in the Japanese politics; the popularity of Nakasone was based on his "presidential style" management and the ability to assume personal responsibility as the leader, which was still a unique case [Curtis 1988, p. 106]. Maverick Nakasone was succeeded by a series of traditional type politicians. The first LDP leader after Nakasone who dared to challenge the tradition and to rely on the rank-and-file party members and the public opinion was Junichiro Koizumi, who took the position of the party president in 2001.

Political innovations of Nakasone which deserve a special mention include his broad use of mass media for directly addressing the public. For instance, in early 1984, when the party's approval rating fell after the unpopular "hawkish" statements of the prime minister, Nakasone loudly declared the launch of "three reforms" – administrative, financial, and educational – and took a lot of effort to promote his undertakings. At the same time, newspapers and national television broadly advertised the cabinet's welfare policy, "the course of flowers and greens" (protection of city environment), measures against cancer, the fight against juvenile delinquency, etc. As a result, the approval rating of the Nakasone Cabinet stabilized at 40% level, which was quite high for Japan [Masumi 1995, p. 423]. This enabled him to win the LDP presidential election held in the same year.

Nakasone was even more efficient in using media resources for promoting his foreign policy undertakings. For instance, in January 1983, right after the formation of a new cabinet, he paid a visit to South Korea, which drastically improved the atmosphere of bilateral relations and made a good publicity for the prime minister. Right after that, he went to the United States and made a series of flamboyant statements, which caused a mixed public response but markedly increased his rating.

The innovations introduced by Nakasone in various spheres drew attention at every stage of his political career. An illustrative example is the defense policy where Nakasone was campaigning for a proactive course. He believed that Japan should be capable of autonomous defense, so it should renounce the pacifist self-restrictions assumed after the WWII. In the middle of the 1950s, he called for Japan's acquisition of tactical nuclear weapons. Later on, he abandoned the idea of nuclear choice as he realized that the possession of nuclear weapons per se would not solve the problem of national security.

From the very beginning of his political career, Nakasone earned a reputation of an opponent to the Security Treaty, which, in his opinion, infringed the Japanese sovereignty. Nonetheless, he was appointed Director General of the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) in 1970. Being true to his beliefs, Nakasone proposed in his new capacity the course of "autonomous

defense” (*jishu boei*). Notably, the “autonomous defense” line basically corresponded to Japan’s foreign political conditions after the release of the “Nixon Doctrine,” which implied a reduction in the US military presence in Asia and required much more self-defense efforts from the US Asian allies.

The ideas of “autonomous defense” was reproduced in the conceptual documents of Japan’s military policy, which were adopted in the period of Nakasone’s tenure as the JDA Director General. He attained a revision of “Japan’s National Defense Basic Policy” (October 1970) and succeeded in the adoption of a new five-year national defense plan (1972-1977). The publication of the White Book on Defense had a special significance for Nakasone, as all previous White Books, due to the Constitutional restrictions, had been for official use only. The publication of the White Book put an end to the taboo on public discussion of defense issues. Another important innovation introduced by Nakasone was the inclusion to the White Book on Defense of the proposition that the Self-Defense Forces would be resisting to a foreign aggression along with the U.S. troops stationed in Japan (according to the 1957 provisions, the Self-Defense Forces had been viewed only as a “supplement” to the U.S. forces performing auxiliary functions) [Hoey 2012, p. 48].

In fact, the “autonomous defense” course did not gain much support from the government and caused resistance on the part of the party colleagues and from inside the Japan Defense Agency. Prime Minister Sato generally backed the ideas of his minister but worried that the “autonomous defense” concept might weaken the Security Treaty and might erode the zone of responsibility of the U.S. forces. [Hoey 2012, p. 74]. It was one of the reasons for Nakasone’s resignation as the head of the Japan Defense Agency in 1971.

Nakasone also gave much attention to national defense issues while serving as the prime minister (1982-1987). For example, he took personal efforts to adopt an increase in defense expenditures, which disagreed with the general line of reducing the national budget deficit. Despite the silent rule that defense expenditures should not exceed 1% of the country’s GDP, Nakasone believed they must be raised to the level of 3% of GDP

and called for an annual increase by 5-7%. A commission designated by him to address the issue recommended in 1986 that the 1% limit be lifted, but leaders of party factions and the Finance Ministry raised objections, and all he achieved in the 1987 budget was the 1.004% of GDP level of defense expenses [Pyle 2007 p. 273]. An effective adjustment of budget priorities required the overriding of the tradition of incrementalist budget planning (when all changes to the budget policy are smooth and proportionate for all appropriations). Even the political heavyweight Nakasone did not have enough might to redistribute appropriations: any attempts of the sort encountered resistance of agencies and “rooted interests” of the corporate sector dependent on budgetary investment.

The most significant economic achievements of Nakasone were accomplished in the period of his premiership. He tried to reform the Japanese model of capitalism, whose primary features were a high level of state regulation of the economy, especially in the field of foreign trade and taxation, limiting of free competition, a secluded and non-transparent system of public procurement, the mandatory placement of the state debt, the encouragement of saving as an incentive for exports, etc. It became obvious by the early 1980s, that the model used to promote the industrial growth of Japan lost its efficiency and slowed down the economy, which could not rid of ineffective and noncompetitive industries.

In 1985, Prime Minister Nakasone set up an advisory council under his aegis. The council, headed by the former governor of the Bank of Japan, Haruo Maekawa, was entrusted with elaborating practical recommendations on reducing the trade surplus of Japan which had reached by that moment its historical maximum. The council delivered the Maekawa Report in April 1986 to raise the subject of economic internationalization for the first time in Japan’s history. The report recommended that the economy be restructured, protectionist trade barriers be removed, imports be enlarged, the preferential tax regime be changed, and the system of distribution, which led to high consumer prices, be reformed.

Ideas proposed by the report became the cornerstone of the country’s economic development for a long period of time. However, they looked

practically unachievable at the time the report was released, considering the scope of “rooted interests” they concerned. The growing economic nationalism based on economic successes also played a role: then Japan was “dizzy with success” and had faith in the correctness of the earlier closed-economy course. Eventually, Nakasone had to admit that economic restructuring was a long-term goal for the next generation of politicians to cope with.

Nakasone’s premiership coincided with a peak of economic disputes with the United States, which was actively urging Japan to abandon its protectionist policy and to reduce the huge trade surplus. In September 1985, the Japanese government concluded the Plaza Accord, which considerably strengthened the yen to the dollar. The yen was relatively weak in the first half of the 1980s, and the exchange rate averaged at 260 yens to the dollar, which gave Japan a significant competitive edge in foreign trade. The Plaza Accord signed by the finance ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan, resulted in a rocketing growth of the yen, and the exchange rate reached 120 yens to the dollar by the end of 1987. This dealt a strong blow to the interests of Japanese exporters, but Nakasone signed the accord on purpose: for him, it “liberated the weak yen from the yoke of the strong dollar,” and became an additional argument in favor of the theory of Japan’s economic leadership based on strong national currency.

While advocating the internationalization of Japanese economy, Nakasone also called for lifting protectionist trade barriers and actively consuming imported goods. During a shopping tour covered by the media, the Japanese prime minister bought a U.S. tennis racket, a French shirt, and an Italian tie [Harvey 1994, p. 369]. In 1986, Nakasone called for reforming the tax system and proposed a value added tax, which would not apply to imported goods. He viewed the proposal as a way to increase the consumer demand for imported goods and to reduce the trade imbalance. The idea proved extremely unpopular, and the prime minister had to drop it.

On the other hand, Nakasone was pragmatic and careful and always avoided reckless radicalism. For instance, during talks in America in

January 1983, he successfully resisted the pressure of the administration of the U.S. President Ronald Reagan, which insisted that Tokyo should lift all limits on the imports of U.S. beef and oranges. One of his motivations had a domestic orientation: Nakasone feared criticism from his opponents before elections of the parliament's upper chamber.

As a result, Nakasone's premiership was one of the most successful for the economic development of Japan. The Japanese economy continued to demonstrate sustainable growth in the first half of his tenure, and in 1986, by the end of Nakasone's second term, Japan became the world's biggest creditor and competed with the United States for global economic leadership.

An important element of Nakasone's political heritage is the drastic reforms of public governance, finance, and education he implemented as the prime minister.

The most noticeable reform of Nakasone in the field of public governance was privatization of Japanese railroads. It was the most favored reform of Nakasone, who was serving as the head of the Administrative Management Agency before taking the prime minister's position and was well aware of the state of affairs in public business. It was at his initiative that the 2nd Provisional Council on Administrative Reform was established on March 16, 1981. The Council gained enormous political weight after Nakasone was appointed prime minister in November 1982 and practically became an informal supervisor of administrative reforms.

The Council was broadly representing various population groups, including big business, trade unions, the media, and the academic community, and had a large auxiliary staff. The Council was headed by Japan Business Federation President and former Toshiba CEO, Toshio Doko, whose career demonstrated his remarkable abilities as an outstanding businessman, who knew a lot about the economic and political realities, a distinguished manager, and an influential public leader with broad connections in the political circles. As a result, the Council was supported by the business community and the public, and that was an important factor preventing open sabotage by agencies. Importantly, members of the Council, including numerous personal

friends and sympathizers, had no close connection to the government, which made the Council decisions objective and immune to bureaucratic influence [Streltsov 2002, p. 88]. The establishment of an advisory body, which formally operated outside the party-and-government structure but had real powers and employed skilled experts, appeared to be highly effective in the prime minister's top-to-bottom model of management. The Council enabled the implementation of an effective program aimed at reducing public expenditures, promoting de-regulation and rationalizing the system of licenses and permits, etc.

Public corporations were privatized on the basis of recommendations of the Council's report. In 1986, the government decided to dismantle the network of state-owned railroads JR, whose inefficiency was a cause of the chronic budget deficit. The corporation was divided into six regional passenger companies and one national cargo company, and new companies were corporatized. Another object of the Nakasone Cabinet's privatization plan was the National Telecommunications Corporation, NTT. The decision to privatize NTT was rooted in the conceptual strategy of telecommunication business, for which the status of public corporation was a disadvantage preventing the necessary flexibility of management, the attraction of private investment in the sphere directly controlled by the parliament, etc.

A keystone to the success of reforms was the personal involvement of the prime minister in their preparation and implementation. For instance, as the decision to privatize the railroad corporation JR met resistance at every stage, Nakasone had to personally "persuade" top-ranking bureaucrats of the Transport Ministry and to reshuffle the JR management for removing privatization opponents from their positions.

Education was also an important sphere of Nakasone's reforms. The centralized, rigid system of school education, which aimed at mechanical memorization and high test scores, was focused not on educating a creative person, but on meeting the corporate sector's demand for obedient and disciplined workforce in mass production. Standardization and centralized regulation of education were slowing down national development.

In 1987 the Advisory Council on Education was established at the initiative of Nakasone. The Council recommended that the school curriculum be based on new, broader criteria of knowledge evaluation rather than mere test results. The Council called for fostering creativity and creative individuality to provide Japan with proper cadres of an international leader. Nakasone wanted educational establishments to head the process of internationalization, and that required opening of international schools and universities, liquidation of hindrances to the recruitment of foreign teachers and the admission of foreign students, intensified studies of foreign languages, and the improvement of Japanese people's understanding of other people's cultures. The Council said in its recommendations that a "good Japanese" should be brought up so as to develop into a "tough international man." [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 440].

Emphasis was also put on patriotic upbringing: in the opinion of Nakasone, Japan must rid of negative recollections of its humiliation in order to be a global "political giant." Despite the resistance of the left-wing teachers trade union, the Education Ministry decided that students must learn the imperial anthem and honor the national flag. At the same time, the course of social sciences, which was added to the school curriculum under the influence of reformist ideas of the first days of occupation, was practically abolished [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 440].

The education reform was inseparable from the task of implementing new ideological values so that society stopped perceiving its past in the "masochist" manner. An important message sent by Nakasone was the idea of historical rehabilitation of Japan and the elimination of the "hostile state" label. He wanted Japan to stop feeling awkward for its historical past. Nakasone presented his vision of the difference between defensive and offensive wars at a meeting of the House of Representatives' Budget Committee in September 1983. In his words, the Russian-Japanese war of 1905 was defensive for Japan. As for the Pacific war, many soldiers and officers viewed it as a war for liberating Asia. Many fought and died believing that the war was sacred [Tsuzuki 2000, p. 441]. Masayuki Fujio, the Education Minister in the Nakasone Cabinet, went further and wrote in an article published by the magazine *Bungei shunju*

that Korea was partially responsible for its annexation by Japan in 1910. (Nakasone had to fire Fujio because of the scandal) [Tsunami 2000, p. 442].

The political views characteristic of Nakasone in that period were vividly demonstrated by his attitude to the Yasukuni Temple bill. The Yasukuni Shinto temple, which was built in 1869 to honor the Japanese fallen in the war, lost the status of a state sanctuary. Since the middle of the 1950s, Japanese prime ministers visited the temple only on the autumnal Shinto holiday as private persons and never went there on August 15 (the day of the end of WWII observed by Japan). Nakasone was the first prime minister to participate in New Year celebrations in 1984 and to pay a formal visit to the Yasukuni Temple as the head of government on August 15, 1985, the 40th anniversary of the end of war, for the first time in the entire post-war history. Protests triggered by the visit in China and Korea were so fierce that Nakasone never dared to go on pilgrimage again. Nakasone concluded in the end of his premiership, when he was thinking on the mistrust other countries had towards Japan, that “a century must pass before the suspicion and mistrust of our neighbors will dissipate.” [cit. ex.: Pyle 2007, p. 276].

The foreign policy of Nakasone is known no less, or even better. The course taken in relations with the United States won attention for several reasons. First of all, the strategic partnership was raised to the level of philosophical values. Nakasone said at the talks with President Ronald Reagan during his first visit to the United States in January 1983 that Japan and the United States formed “a partnership of fate” (*ummei kyodotai*), which extended across the Pacific Ocean. In his interview with the Washington Post, Nakasone compared Japan to an aircraft carrier (*okina koku bakan*). The translator used the phrase “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” (*fuchin kubo*) to emphasize the hyperbole [Pyle 2007, p. 272]. The phrase, which symbolized Nakasone’s approach to the alliance with the United States, was mentioned in the context of Japan being an outpost of the military standoff between the West and the Soviet Union. Reagan gladly welcomed the bravado speech by Nakasone, which started their cordial personal relationship. In fact, Nakasone was the one who launched the tradition of personal diplomacy – President Reagan and he

were on the first-name terms (known as Ron-Yasu relations), which was a practice unthinkable in diplomatic etiquette.

Nakasone called for Japan's active participation in the consolidated strategy of the West towards the Soviet Union. Against the backdrop of a new outbreak of the Cold War in the early 1980s, the strategy was based on the escalation of military confrontation. Nakasone underlined in his speeches that Japan would seek full control over straits to prevent Soviet submarines from entering the Pacific Ocean and carrying out naval operations in case of emergency [Murata 2011, p. 151]. Japan and the U.S. Pacific Fleet started the joint planning of ways to block the La Perouse, Tsugaru and Korean Straits, so that Soviet warships were trapped in the Sea of Japan should a Soviet-U.S. conflict break out.

At the G7 meeting in Williamsburg in May 1983 Nakasone actively backed Reagan's intention to prevent redeployment of Soviet intermediate-range missiles, codenamed by the West as SS-20, from the European part of the Soviet Union to its Asian part. The main thesis of the Japanese prime minister was that security is "indivisible" and that military security of Europe must not be achieved to the detriment of security of Asian allies of the U.S.

Later on, when the United States took the course towards gaining a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union in outer space through the Strategic Defense Initiative, Nakasone violated Tokyo's three principles of arms exports and initiated sharing with the United States of its advanced military technologies in which Japanese leadership was most tangible at the moment: semiconductors, microcircuits, laser hardware components, optical fibers, and some other communication and control means. In 1985, the Japanese government approved the engagement of private companies in military research held for the Strategic Defense Initiative, and in September 1986 it was decided to formally join the "Star Wars" program. The Nakasone Cabinet also made some decisions to enlarge Japan's input in the nuclear strategy of the United States with military cooperation, including the provision of navigation and reconnaissance information by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, the planning of joint combat operations involving nuclear weapons, etc.

Nakasone's diplomacy had both "hawk-style" and "dove-style" angles. For instance, Nakasone and Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe initiated the process of normalization of political relations with the Soviet Union. He was the only Japanese prime minister in the 1980s who, in the words of a major Japanese expert in Japanese-Soviet relations Nobuo Shimotomai, "had at least some understanding and experience of contacts with the Soviet Union." [Shimotomai 2008, p. 19]. Prime Minister Nakasone attended the funeral of Konstantin Chernenko and was received by new Secretary General Michael Gorbachev in March 1985. The first positive changes in bilateral relations on the long road to normalization occurred during Nakasone's premiership. These include the visit of new Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Tokyo in January 1986 and the reciprocal visit of his Japanese counterpart, Shintaro Abe, to Moscow in January 1987.

Prime Minister Nakasone gave much attention to Asian affairs in his diplomatic work. As soon as he took the office, he visited Seoul and approved a long-term loan to South Korea. In 1984, Nakasone visited China on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of Japan's diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic. In turn, the Chinese government invited 3,000 young Japanese to visit China. Nakasone was trying to use his amicable relations with the then Secretary General of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Hu Yaobang, to begin cooperation with China in search for peace on the Korean Peninsula. While visiting China in November 1986, Nakasone told the Chinese leader about the wish of South Korea to establish official relations with Beijing. While trying to broker relations between Beijing and Seoul, Nakasone proposed a simultaneous improvement of relations between Japan and North Korea [Nakasone pitched trade... 2017].

Personal views and convictions of Nakasone left a tangible footprint on Japanese politics. He became known as the founder of neo-conservatism in Japanese ideology. In contrast to the majority of political heavyweights, Nakasone presented his views in fundamental monographs written in a completely clear and precise language (which was completely uncharacteristic of Japanese authors from among national politicians) [Nakasone, 2002].

It is true that other politicians, who had occupied top political positions before Nakasone, also initiated new guidelines in the national development. For example, several think tanks were operating in the late 1970s under the aegis of Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira to develop ideas of weaker state control, de-regulation, and abolition of the total bureaucratic control system. Yet Nakasone is believed to be the politician who laid the ideological groundwork for the country's transition to a brand-new development model of the post-industrial epoch.

The ideological heritage of Nakasone is usually opposed to the conservative tradition of the Liberal Democratic Party's mainstream, which was established by Shigeru Yoshida. The meaning of "old conservatism" was the commitment to the pacifist tradition and Article 9 of the Constitution, and the renouncement of an active defense policy and of an equal relationship within the alliance with the United States. In the economic sphere, "old conservatism" declared by the Yoshida doctrine gave an ideological explanation of the catch-up modernization strategy, which was guiding Japan's policy for several post-war decades.

Instead, Nakasone believed that the Constitution of 1947 was pushed on Japan by foreign troops and should be modified, that the Security Treaty with the United States should be revisited to ensure full equality of mutual obligations, that the San Francisco system of international relations based on the Peace Treaty of 1951 was an anachronism, and that Japan should have the ability and the capacity for independently defending itself.

The neo-conservatism of Nakasone was centered on social matters topical for many countries of the West, primarily the United States and the United Kingdom. It is not accidental that Reaganomics and Thatcherism are usually attributed to the same neo-conservative trend of the active withdrawal of the government from the economy, the reduction of taxes, the shift to a small government, de-regulation, and the stake on market principles. In the foreign policy, the neo-conservatism of the West manifested itself in fierce confrontation with the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc.

Yet Nakasone's neo-conservatism had a number of substantial distinctions from its U.S. and British analogues. First of all, it derived from understanding of the need to end the epoch of Japan's catch-up development which lasted for over a century and resulted in Japan's leading position in the global economy. In fact, Nakasone's neo-conservatism relied on economic nationalism, namely, Japan's self-establishment as a global economic leader capable of dictating its rules of conduct to the whole world.

A key premise of Nakasone's neo-conservatism was that Japan must stop following others' example but become completely independent in the political and moral respects. Besides, Japan should not just borrow foreign practices but also set an attractive role model. In that sense, "Nakasoneism" was an impressive call for internationalizing Japanese cultural and spiritual values.

In his works Nakasone insisted that "healthy" nationalism, which promoted Japan's self-identification, was fully justified. "We should be fostering it through education," he wrote. [Nakasone 1987, p. 13-14] In the opinion of the Japanese politician, a high level of homogeneity is an advantage of the Japanese nation. For instance, Nakasone said in his address to young members of the Liberal Democratic Party in 1986 that an average American was less smart than an average Japanese because of the large number of national minorities in the U.S. – black people, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans – lowering the average level of the nation. [Page 1986]. Nakasone had to publicly apologize for his statement after the protests made in the U.S. Congress.

Nakasone is the example of a successful reformer, whose undertakings set the tone to the national development in the field of administrative, tax, and social affairs and education for many years. The Nakasone reforms are mentioned in many textbooks on public politics and governance as remarkably productive and effective against the backdrop of unsuccessful and even failed reforms in a number of European countries in the same period.

Nakasone had a strong influence on the Japanese political tradition. The country's political scene was always dominated by unimpressive and

low-profile apparatchik type politicians whose power was based on techniques of internal intra-party political manipulation. Nakasone added an element of vibrant personality in politics and revealed the potential of populist resource, which primarily relied on the force of media. The new generation of politicians learned from Maverick Nakasone the art of political image-making and his ability to appeal to voters and to receive his mandate from society instead of mighty party bosses from amongst the heads of the LDP party factions.

Far from all undertakings of Nakasone were successful. His institutional reforms bumped into fierce resistance of government bureaucracy and, despite their partial success, were not brought to the end. In the sphere of diplomacy, the undertakings of Nakasone, which were unfinished during his premiership, required the collapse of the Cold War system to be fully accomplished. When leaving his post in 1987, Nakasone said ironically that the result of his effort to transform the international role of Japan was “yet to be seen.” [Pyle 2007, p. 276]).

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