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*Economic Development as Social Dreaming:  
Understanding the Social Dimension of Rapid Economic  
Growth of Post War Japan*<sup>\*1</sup>

社会夢としての経済発展：  
社会文化から見た戦後日本の高度経済成長

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*Abstract:*

1960年代から日本を嚆矢として、その後のアジア四小籠、アジア・ニーズ、そして近年の中国やインドの経済発展などアジアの多くの地域、社会で目覚しい経済成長が実現され、現在もその趨勢が続いている。

アジアの経済成長の原因や経過については、儒教資本主義の議論、「アジア的価値」の強調、あるいは権威主義体制と経済成長の関連などをめぐる議論が行われてきたが、ここではそうした因果論的追究ではなく、経済発展を刺激し、時には影のように、あるいは発展の果実として現れた、「時の勢い」「社会のムード」「人々の夢」など社会・文化的な「時代の軌跡」に注目し、経済成長を支え、また所産でもある主要な言説や社会現象の一たんを明らかにしようとした。

なお本稿は、2007年8月2日にマレーシア、クアラルンプールにて開催された第五回国際アジア研究者会議でのパネルディスカッション「社会夢としての経済発展」の基調報告のテキストである。このセッションは国土舘大学アジア・日本研究センターのご援助により可能となり、本学の樋田満教授、キティ・リムサクン博士（チュラロンコン大学）、ムハマッド・アリフ博士（マレーシア経済研究所 所長）のご協力を戴いた。センターの土佐昌樹副センター長、田所清人事務長、斎藤牧子氏も含め、以上の諸氏に深甚の感謝を捧げたい。

*Keywords: Economic Development in Asia, Development and Social Mood, Narratives of  
Development, Social Dreaming, Aspiration for Development*

キーワード：アジアの経済成長、経済発展と社会のムード、発展言説、社会夢、発展願望

## INTRODUCTION

In the last 20 years, most part of Asia has been experiencing the unprecedented economic growth, except some turbulent years of recession such as the one in 1997.

Asia has become the engine of global economic development, beginning with Japan, followed by Asian Four Tigers, China and India as new leaders of further growth. This trend seems not to be interrupted and appears to be continuous.

Overviewing this ascendance, there have been various academic efforts and popular explanations to look into causes and reasons of Asian economic predominance, such as the notion of Confucian capitalism, Asian values, and the effect of Asian authoritarian regimes. Discussion on authoritarian regimes and crony capitalism are the good examples in this regard by which the rise and fall of Asian economy can be well described. Anyway a serious search into the cause of Asian economic growth should be conducted. This panel, however, would like to pay attentions rather to the social mood of the era which energized economic growth. We would like to locate master-narratives of both official and popular, which dominated the whole process of Asian economic growth illustrated by exemplar cases from Thailand, Malaysia and Japan.

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In my personal reflection, the social mood and ethos of people in Japanese society, at the time of early 1960s was not just that of mammonism. Economy did not mean just profit and interest, but a humble achievement of daily decent life. People strived to get a meager return for their strenuous labour in order to maintain their families and to raise their children.

Economic development itself has been a principal national policy among Asian states for years since their independence after the 2nd World War. It became so especially in the 1960s after witnessing Japanese trajectory in its steep post-war growth. It was urgent for “free-market” societies in Asia to counter the threat of spreading socialism in Cold War era. In this view, economic development, though it is useless to mention, was no doubt an official national policy, and was regarded as a major sphere to be propped up by their mentor, the US. Aside from this international political environment, economic development *per se* intrinsically was a national and popular aspiration. It, however, required a whole sale transformation of national economy and society concerned. Economic development then was usually accompanied by ill-balanced growth among economic sectors and brought social inequities such as the increase in urban-rural disparity.

Scrutinizing an exemplar model of national economic development such as Singapore, many tend to pay attentions to her government policies and her political leadership before and during her economic expansion period. It seems quite natural to praise her well-planned economic policies and initiatives which facilitated rapid growth by bringing foreign investment, technological transfer, and incentives to allure the above. It is also emphasized that the architects of development, Lee Kuan Yew, Goh Keng Swee, and others played a decisive roles in designing, executing and realizing their national economic objectives. Singapore case shows a well-made mixture of policy success and personal cult.

In case of Japan, the picture appears to be different. A seeming watershed for Japan’s economic growth was the coming of prime minister Ikeda in 1960. Ikeda Hayato succeeded Kishi Nobusuke after Kishi resigned from the reason of unpopularity caused by his tenacity and stubborn handling of the renewal of Japan-US security pact. The national level of anti-Kishi movement, especially in Tokyo, reached a degree of social unrest, meaning there were continuous political rallies, confrontations with police forces, and interventions of right wing thugs around national Diet building in the heart of Tokyo.

The visit of President Eisenhower was cancelled, and the Lower House meetings on the issue of pact renewal could not be conducted. The pact itself was renewed without the decision of meeting (because of a clause by which the renewal is passed if there is no formal objection from respective government). Ikeda's cabinet was formed in the middle of June, and he gave refreshing policy platforms such as "shotokubaizo seisaku" (doubling the income policy) and he situated the character of his leadership as "kanyo to nintai (tolerance and patience)", meaning "listening to others." This mixture of policy and political attitude gained the popular sanction and were well matched with constituents' longing to their better life and democracy. In short, Ikeda cautiously grasped the tide of time – he somehow transformed the season of politics into that of economy. This change was not totally new, but the firm re-enactment of post war policy of Prime Minister Yoshida's "light defense and economy-centered policy." His predecessor Kishi put more ideological emphasis on national defense, reshaping of constitution and educational policy. Ikeda, instead, focused on more economy and immediate daily concerns of populace. This policy change affected the political climate drastically and brought an ever continued rapid growth of economy *vis a vis* a personal economic accomplishment for years to come. It is quite symbolic to notice that Ikeda's reign lasted just until the end of Tokyo Olympic Games when the Japanese were immersed in the euphoria of post war celebrations of socio-economic accomplishment. The continuous economic growth then lasted until the so-called "Oil Crisis" in 1973, however, the Japanese self-celebrated the humble fruit of their endeavour by hosting the Olympic Games, IMF general assembly (both in 1964) and World Expo (1970).

Looking back the period of Ikeda's administration, one would notice a disturbing fact that there was no clean cut substantial economic policy which did not straightforwardly facilitate steep development, nor doubling income. There were seldom policy directives in the report of overall economic policy submitted by the Economic Planning Committee.

There must be concrete policy initiatives and ministerial directives for encouraging high rapid growth of economy during Ikeda's administration. but the seminal move for doubling income policy was triggered by the previous Kishi administration. And the above mentioned committee was virtually organized during his time in 1959. There were some other initiatives regarding new economic planning such as worked by Ichiro Nakayama, Osamu Shimomura, and others, which concentrated on policy proposals for doubling income in a short period since 1958. One common denominator of these papers and proposals is an optimistic view regarding the future potential of Japanese economy. It is telling that a professional meeting of government economists and academics to rebuild post-war Japanese economy even during war time, expressed a striking optimism for post-war economic recovery. Those view and opinions of professionals were not readily accepted by the majority in years immediate after the war. Those, however, had been fermented in the 50's, and almost ripen to be picked up by Ikeda.

The idea of "doubling income in a decade" itself is not solely attributed to Ikeda and his advisors. We found some other identical ideas before Ikeda, but we also notice that it is Ikeda who propagated and situated the idea as a principal policy orientation for his administration and for even the entire society at the time. We can rather easily conclude that the whole stage was well set up and waited for a principal actor to come. Ikeda appeared on stage and stole the whole show. In doing so, his political posture of "tolerance and patience" gave an enormous effect, and even his past political trauma of verbal indiscretion could be pleaded not guilty. Years before when Ikeda was the Minister of Treasury, he made slips of tongue by saying as followings; one who could not afford rice must have wheat, or there won't be any problem if only some small industries collapsed. His straightforward words and attitudes, once criticized as impolite and indiscrete, in the new context, were regarded as honest and frank. It should be

noted that Ikeda, stating his policy objectives, after added “I dare not tell a lie.” There existed a strange chemistry of credibility around Ikeda, who once gave up his career, and miraculously came back to the center stage. Ikeda, then a career official of Treasury Department caught pemphigus, a rare and fatal disease, and suffered for five years to get a miraculous recovery. Because of his ailment, although he luckily was reinstated in his former office, he was not on his way to the top of the ladder. He, however, got promoted to the Vice-minister, due to the post-war drastic change in the officialdom. The upper echelon was eliminated by purge, and he rose to the top. Then he changed his course to politics. His trajectory seems to be coincided with the fate of society to some degree. The notion of survival or being die-hard was highly appreciated and gave encouragement to us all. His personal appearance, straightforwardness, frankness, and down-to-earth manners, which are quite contrary to those of his predecessor Kishi who was aloof, elitish and dreary, nurtured an intimate interface between prime minister and populace even better than before. His administration was the first one which had a well organized and media sensitive advisors and brains who could solicited comprehensive policy packages and presented the image of political leadership succinctly. One of his brains once mentioned that “doubling income” statement was the most effective political catch-copy for mobilizing the whole society into the track of high economic growth. It was a mood enhancing engine which reflected popular aspiration for better life in the post-war period.

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The Japanese case mentioned above illustrates the following points in regard of scrutinizing economic development as social phenomenon.

Our interest or focus in the panel does not lie in the cause-effect theorization of the development. We would rather like to present the whole social picture coincided with the period of growth. How the popular aspiration for better life was represented and projected into the other sphere than economy. One exemplar sphere of representation is the domain of popular culture. Popular feature films made by Toho Co. conveyed atmospheric messages suitable for the spirit of the era of economic growth, Toho films in the post-war period, targeted on the so-called ‘salary men,’ office workers and produced feature films depicting lives of people in the corporate world. One typical main character performed by Hitoshi Ueki, then a block buster actor cum musician, is named as Hitoshi Taira, literally meaning ‘an average’; who marked a successful career in one company by his ingenuity and ‘*bric collage*’ way of problem solution. He, without distinctive social background, rose to the higher position in business and eliminated the unfair and evil elements of the company.

His humble standing and peculiar optimism could be a role-model, although he was extraordinary in many senses, in the age of growing economy. His steep ascendance, however, is narrated in comedy form, so that the reality of this “Horace Alger” story, staged in Japan at the time, is reserved and obliged to be a comedy. The main character, despite his ordinary appearance and minor delinquency, is, to be sure, the hero of the time. Movie audiences showed an ambivalent reaction deciphered as distant/intimate sympathy; he is one of us, and distant adoration; we cannot be him. Anyway, his optimism and never-give-up attitude were unanimously welcomed by audiences.

Another example is an energizing drink (bottled nutrition supplement drink) “Lipovitan D” which was put on the market in 1962. This drink is sold world over currently including ASEAN countries (in Malaysia it is called “Livita,” and “Lipovitan” in Philippines). The whole notion of this drink is to fight with any sort of burden in work, and to gain psychosomatic strength required in the growth era. The heavy working load and stress could not be recuperated by daily meals. This belief might be relevant to

the notion of “power lunch.” “Energizing” had become a common denominator for the growth era. “Lipovitan D” was approved as a well-made symbol and spirit of the era representing hyperactive atmosphere of the economic development. The sales of this supplement, to be sure, sustained the high growth of the pharmaceutical company and made it a leader of the industry. It would be fair to say that the energizing function of this supplement and of its equivalents is not precisely akin to that of health conscious food and supplements in 1990s and after. The former is dominated by the obsession of hard working, on the other hand, the latter by the obsession, though identical, of shaping up and being lean. We may find a difference between the age of rapid growth and after as the change in the notion of body, health and well-being. The connotation of ‘hyper’ and ‘excessive’ would be considered to illustrate the spirit of rapid economic growth. So that the maintenance of body did not mean the notion of fitness, but the body was transformed into a vessel of energy. “Lipovitan” constitutes about a quarter of the company’s whole annual sales of 28.5 billion yen. The main ingredient ‘taurine’ is liver nourishing detoxication. Although vitamins are included, this supplement is directed to workers who are obliged to take part in business/social drinking. This reminds me of corporate customs prevalent in those days. Annual corporate recreational trip (one night two days), frequent business / social drinking sessions, helping corporate colleagues’ funerals and giving hands to house movings were common practices. And companies often were considered to be an equivalent of a home. A business organization, company, had multi-faceted functions and constituted a microcosm which so dominated lives of ‘salary man’ in the growth era (or it is believed so).

Speaking of the growth era, especially about Japanese society in 1960s, we cannot dismiss the significance of “Three regalia” of household appliances; TV set, refrigerator and washing machine, regarded as a sign of middle class prosperity. Since late 50’s, so called ‘home electrification’ became vogue and a symbol of quasi-American standard of living which was adored by the Japanese in the post-war period. The amount of consuming durable goods by the lowest bracket of economic standing increased by 28.3% in 1961, and 64.5% in 1962. These are enormous increase compared with 16.3% in 1959. Regarding this trend of home electrification, sociologist Shunya Yoshimi draws our attention to the change of advertising strategy for electric appliances. He asked what symbolic strategy was employed for mass sales (mass production) of these commodities. As I mentioned earlier three kinds of appliances, such as TV set, refrigerator, and washing machine constituted a set of ‘Three regalia’ which marked a standard of living in the growth era. Yoshimi pointed out that the principal recipients of the fruits of economic advancement were house wives (‘Okusama’) who enjoyed the surplus of time availed by home electrification. Reduction of domestic works by electrification, in some way, mitigated the burden of house wives, and made them a champion of democratization of family life. This is well illustrated, according to Yoshimi, in advertisements for electric appliances which featured symbolic figures of house wives represented by then leading film stars who acted exemplar role of house wives. This democratization or ascendance of wives showed a peculiar division of labour. Home electrification had a clean boundary of being domestic (in-house) in which wives were emancipated. On the other hand, husbands had their own domain of activities, outside of house.

Change in administration from Kishi to Ikeda, the introduction of new economic policy of “doubling income in a decade”; the arrival of mass consumption and better standards of living, and a relevant social phenomena, marked 1960 and a few years after as a period of drastic change for further continued bright economic future. It was true that the high growth rate of economy lasted for another decade until 1973. It was also true that the bright growth era had the other side of a same coin. From 1959 to 60, we experienced an abrupt shift of energy policy from coal to petrol which resulted in shut

down of coal mines all over and produced a huge number of unemployed. The other serious outcome was industrial pollution and health hazard represented by Minamata disease. We cannot dismiss these dark sides of economic development, or at least these coincidence at the time. However most of us still enjoyed the fruit of development. But our conviction of situating 1960 as a watershed must be further reappraised.

According to Saburo Okita, one of post war economic architects, there was a consulting group of economic planning for the post-war period during the final part of the Pacific War. Their first meeting was held in August 1945 with participation of leading economists of the time such as Hyoe Ohuchi, Seiichi Tohata, Ichiro Nakayama, Masamichi Royama and others. The conglomeration of economic professors (including mild Marxists) and bureaucrats had an optimistic view of future economic performance of Japan, and compiled a report on 'Basic problem of the Economic Recovery' in 1946. Then the Agency of Stabilizing Economy (which later developed into the Economic Planning Agency) was established which provided a blue print for economic development. The basic ideas for economic recovery were the followings; first, following Breton Woods sprits, liberalization of world trade was emphasized, and an attention was paid to the matter of unemployment and the mitigation of business recession. In those meetings, even the defeat of war could be considered as a harbinger for economic development of the future. There had been continuous efforts to enhance the economic potential of the post-war Japan since the end of war and until 1950s. The policy base for rapid growth was well prepared before Ikeda emerged as a prime minister. Ikeda cautiously picked up this trend and added a determined political will to it.

Rethinking Japan's rapid growth of economy in 1960s, we cannot dismiss the effect of the post-war reforms and democratization. Free press, universal suffrage, liberalization of labour movements and trade union, the abolishment of controlled war-time economy and so on surely encouraged our economic recovery and put the foundation of rapid growth. It should be reminded of the impact of Korean War on the recovery of Japan's economy. We may conclude that the rapid growth in 1960s was well prepared in previous years and revealed itself in the very right moment when Ikeda reached at the apex of power. Aside from the hard-core of economic growth, we notice that the mood and spirit of economic boom such as "energizing" "optimism" "comical factor" and "frankness" greatly contributed to the acceleration the economy.

In examining the whole process of economic development, we noticed there was a favorable linkage / coincidence of suitable conditions and trends prevailing the society. In short, there is no shortcut or special formula for the quick success. It is also necessary to examine the past and to implement well defined policies and orientations in exploiting the fruits of economic development in order to build more equitable society for future Asia.

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**Endnote**

- \*1 This paper is Opening Remarks for the session “Economic Development as Social Dreaming” at the occasion of 5th International Congress of Asia Scholars, held in Kuala Lumpur, on August 2, 2007. The session was organized by the author, by collaboration with Dr. Mitsuru Toida (Kokushikan University), Dr. Kitti Limskul (Chulalongkhorn University), and Dr. Mohammad Ariff (Director, Malaysia Economic Institute), sponsored by Asia-Japan Research Center, Kokushikan University. The author expresses a profound gratitude to my colleagues mentioned above and the Deputy Director of the Center, Prof. Masaki Tosa, Chief Administrator, Mr. Kiyoto Tadokoro, and Ms. Makiko Saito, who extended very thoughtful assistance.

