ISSN 1682-5268 (on-line); ISSN 1608-0599 (print)
Shìdnij svìt, 2026, No. 1, pp. 59–81
doi: https://doi.org/10.15407/orientw2026.01.059

UDC 94(520):329.15

FORMATION, EVOLUTION, AND IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING OF THE POLITICAL PROJECT OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY (*SHIMPŌ-TŌ*) IN JAPAN

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In historiography, the problem of the ideological positioning of the Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*) political project in Japan remains unresolved. This is explained by the fact that, although five political parties known in Japanese history as "Progressive" bore similar names, they differed significantly in their ideological orientations. These differences stemmed from the gradual evolution of the very idea of abstract "progress" as it developed in Japan. Initially, the dominant notion of progress was associated with the collective liberation of East Asian countries from the colonial oppression by Western powers. This idea was embodied in 1894 by the Party of Progress of the Middle States (*Chūgokushimpō-tō*), which remained largely indifferent to Japan's domestic political structure and thus was essentially centrist in nature. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, this idea was replaced by the concept of sustainable "progressive" development of the Greater Japanese Empire, achieved due to its own colonial expansion. Following the example of Western metropolises, such development was expected to guarantee high living standards, expanded political freedoms to the inhabitants of the Japanese islands, and the establishment of parliamentary control over government activities, based on democratic elections and a structured party system. Thus, the "progress" slogans, which were definitively chauvinistic from the standpoint of foreign policy, acquired traits of social liberalism and political democratism in domestic affairs. The Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*) of 1896–1898 became the political embodiment of these ideas. After the defeat of the Greater Japanese Empire in World War II, the ideals of progress in Japan were redirected toward the preservation of traditional moral, economic, governmental, and familial values – including the maintenance of conservative institutions such as private property, multiparty democracy, the imperial dynasty, and the Japanese state itself. The political representation of this vision was the openly conservative Progressive Party of Japan (*Nihon Shimpō-tō*), active from 1945 to 1947. Having undergone the "Japanese economic miracle" and become one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, Japan eventually shifted its understanding of progress from strategic to peripheral issues. On this basis emerged two "Progressive" parties in 1987–1997, which focused not on fundamental, but rather on accompanying issues of abstract progress – such as "transparent and honest politics", "true popular democracy", anti-corruption efforts, and other populist concepts detached from real socio-political challenges. While these parties considered themselves advocates of "genuine democracy", the populist and unrealistic nature of their platforms positioned them ideologically as center-left. Today's Japan faces no truly systemic or strategic challenges, which is why the revival of yet another Progressive Party project appears highly unlikely.

Keywords: history of political parties; Japan; political history; Progressive Party (*Shimpo-tō*); progressivism

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Introduction

The Japanese political tradition contains numerous examples of parties that, despite existing in different historical periods, shared identical names, emerging under varying historical circumstances and led by different political figures. The identity of their names suggests that these parties might retain a certain degree of ideological continuity, symbolically embedded in the official designation of the respective political project; however, in practice, such continuity is far from consistent within these party brands, causing confusion in interpreting the actual content of Japan's political life across different stages of its evolution. Clarifying this issue requires a detailed analysis of each party's programmatic and ideological orientation, employing the methods of historicism and systemic reconstruction, which together enable the identification of the place of the respective political project within the state structure at a given time and provide the clearer understanding of the ideological evolution of the particular party brand throughout its existence. A specific illustrative example of such ideological ambiguity within a single political name is the Japanese Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*), whose formation and evolution constitute the subject of this study.

In historiography, the issue of the ideological positioning of the political project of the Progressive Party in Japan is extremely complex. Some scholars argue that the emergence of the "Progressive" party phenomenon in Japan resulted from an almost separatist regional consolidation of businessmen of Western Honshū, explaining that their commercial activities were oriented less toward economic cooperation with other regions of Japan and more toward interaction with neighboring continental powers – China and Korea [赤井 2007]. Others a priori classify the "Progressives" as ideological liberals [川村 2021b, *88*], considering comprehensive economic, political, social, and legal liberalization of any society as either the sole or one of the main components of progress itself. A third group of researchers categorically refuses to associate the "Progressives" with liberal values, arguing that the foundational principles of Japanese liberal and progressive parties assessed the priorities of social and political development of their country too differently [金谷 2014, *206–207*]. However, if one adheres to this perspective, it becomes difficult to explain the historical fact of the organizational merger in 1898 of Japanese liberal and progressive parties into the single "Constitutional Party" (*Kensei-tō*). If the doctrines of progressivism and liberalism were so fundamentally different, how could they ideologically and organizationally unite? Some authors equate the ideology of party "progressivism" with reformist party projects [柳田 1962, *290*], yet this approach effectively ignores the existence within Japan's historical political spectrum of independent "Progressive" (*Shimpō*) and "Reformist" (*Kaishin*) parties as separate, organizationally distinct, and concurrently functioning phenomena. Finally, there are researchers who classify the first post-war Progressive Party of Japan (*Nihon Shimpō-tō*) as belonging to the category of conservative parties [渡辺 1964, *78*; 富森 1977, *8*].

To clarify these conflicting conceptualizations, it is worth beginning with a precise definition of the very idea of progress as understood in the Japanese context, since this aspect of the issue essentially constitutes the methodological foundation of the present study.

The idea of progress (進: *shin* or *susu*) as an impersonal goodness toward which every civilized society should strive, became popular in Japan from the earliest years of its systemic modernization, known as the "Meiji Era". This policy was announced by the emperor Meiji in the Charter Oath (April 1868) and in the Supreme Decree on the Reorganization of Domestic Governance of April 14, 1875. Emperor Mutsuhito (1852–1912) urged his subjects to abandon "attachment to old customs" and warned them against the desire to "pay insufficient attention to the matter of progress or to delay action" [Японцы о Японии… 1906, *4*].

The idea of the unity of progress and civilization was articulated even more explicitly in the Imperial Oath at the Imperial Palace Shrine published on February 11, 1889. Mutsuhito definitively stated in it that all current reformist policies of the government were implemented in accordance with "faith in the progressive nature of human affairs and in accordance with the achievements of civilization" [Японцы о Японии… 1906, *9*]. One of the organic components of this "progressivism" was, among other things, the formation in Japan of a legally established and ideologically differentiated system of political parties. For a certain period, however, the idea of progress was perceived by Japanese politicians not as an end in itself, but as a means to achieve the main objective set for the country by the reformers of the Meiji era: transforming Japan into one of the leading powers of the world, relying on a strong industry, robust finances, and armed forces capable of defending its sovereignty, and revising unequal treaties, which was the ultimate domestic and foreign policy goal. The modernisation of Japan, both economic and military, was a means of re-establishing full sovereignty. By the end of the 19th century, it became evident that, given the realities of the time, progressive development of all these components of imperial power was impossible without the acquisition of colonies as sources of cheap raw materials and guaranteed markets for domestic industrial products. Thus, in the context of the systemic modernization reforms of the Meiji era, the idea of progress became closely intertwined with the plans for the large-scale territorial expansion. Without this, the resource-limited Imperial Japan could not claim the status of a developed and truly sovereign state. Consequently, in the consciousness of Japanese reformers, the idea of progress acquired a clear connotation associated with slogans of external expansion and colonial conquest, which was reflected, among other things, in the party-building activities of the period.

"The Party of Progress of the Middle States" (Chūgokushimpō-tō) from Its Emergence to Its Collapse

From the perspective of all Japanese expansionists at the end of the 19th century, one of the first goals of colonial activity for the "Land of the Rising Sun" was to be the "Land of the Morning Freshness", namely neighboring Korea. However, the leaders of the Japanese political sphere were well aware that any attempt to subjugate Korea would inevitably encounter resistance from another regional contender for dominance – the Manchu-Chinese Qing Empire. This raised the question of how to manage relations with the Qing in such a situation. Ultimately, as historical records show, supporters of military confrontation prevailed within Emperor Mutsuhito's circle and the government. This culminated in the largely successful First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 for Tōkyō. As a result, Qing China was compelled to recognize Korea as falling into Japan's sphere of influence. Nevertheless, there were politicians in Japan at the time who considered the course of confrontation with China strategically detrimental for Japan, as the large-scale colonial expansion carried the risk of intervention by European imperial powers and the United States, which Japan would find difficult to counter alone. Based on these considerations, a part of Japanese parliamentarians, literally on the eve of the First Sino-Japanese War, adhered to the idea of not confrontation but a partnership between the two most powerful East Asian countries – China and Japan – aimed at jointly resisting European and American colonial expansion in the region.

The proponents of this course in the Parliament were led by then-future Prime Minister of Japan, Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855–1932), who was at the time still a member of the legislature of Japan, the Diet. In May 1894 – literally two months before the outbreak of the war with the Qing – he urged his like-minded colleagues in the Parliament to consolidate into a party with the eloquent name *Chūgokushimpō-tō* (中国進歩党) [川村 2021a, *4*]. The name can be translated as "The Party of Progress of the Middle States". The central idea championed by the founder of *Chūgokushimpō-tō* was a rather pragmatic

proposal: that the struggle for progress, understood as the possibility of building a sovereign Japanese empire, should not be waged unilaterally, but in alliance with China. After all, both China and Japan suffered equally from European and American colonial expansion, which had imposed humiliating unequal treaties on their countries. Therefore, in this regard, their interests fully coincided. Following the expulsion of foreign colonizers from the region, the two leading East Asian countries would have ample resources for further progress from their own agrarian and raw material peripheries (Sakhalin and the Kurils, Korea and Ryukyu, Mongolia, Indochina, Xinjiang, the islands of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, etc.). Thus, according to Inukai Tsuyoshi, Japan and China could jointly realize Pan-Asian dreams of expelling all European aggressors from Asia only by combining their efforts. Could Japan achieve this without an alliance, but in confrontation with China? The answer, he argued, was highly doubtful.

The main sponsors of the first "Progressive" party in Japanese history were predictably businessmen from the historical Chūgoku region, located at the far west of Honshū [赤井 2007, *76*]. During the administrative reforms of the Meiji era, this "land" was divided into five prefectures (Hiroshima, Okayama, Shimane, Tottori, Yamaguchi), yet local business circles retained a mental and economic sense of regional unity. This perception was based on the traditionally close commercial ties of the Chūgoku region with continental neighbors (China and Korea), which further influenced both the choice of the party's name ("The Party of Progress of the Middle States") and its ideological orientation.

The first "Progressive" party in Japanese history officially began its process of organizational formation on May 4, 1894 [川村 2021a, *4*] and even managed to register in the Diet as a tiny (with only five members [山田 1999, *268*]) but independent parliamentary faction. However, the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War on July 25, 1894 put an end both to the ideology of *Chūgokushimpō-tō* and to the party itself as an organizational structure. The ideals of Japanese-Chinese anti-colonial unity became obsolete, and the ideals of progress were ultimately merged in Imperial Japan with the notions of great-power Japanese chauvinism. The formal date of the party's self-dissolution was March 1, 1896 [川村 2021a, *4*], when the proponents of the "Progress of the Middle States", having accordingly adjusted their ideological slogans, participated in the formation of the next Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*), a second one in the Japanese history.

The Political Project of the "Progressive Party" (Shimpō-tō) and the Reasons for Its Ideological Decline in the Greater Japanese Empire

The founders of the Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*) were the outsider parties of the 1894 parliamentary elections. Facing their objective marginalization, they were compelled to unite in order to substantially strengthen their political standing within the party system of the country.

The reason for this unusual supra-party consolidation of yesterday's electoral competitors is entirely understandable. Following the outbreak of the aforementioned First Sino-Japanese War and the associated ideological collapse of the *Chūgokushimpō-tō* project, the Imperial Court and the government formed sought to extract the maximum political dividends from the fact that the war on the battlefield was proceeding very successfully for the Japanese armed forces. In the last pre-war elections of March 1894, a worrying signal for official Tōkyō had been the significant increase in electoral support for the opposition Liberal Party (*Jiyū-tō*). The then-principal pro-government party, with the grandiose name National Unity Association (*Kokumin-kai*), won only 35 seats in the Diet, whereas Jiyū-tō, as the main opposition party, achieved a decisive victory with 120 mandates out of 300 possible. For this reason, following a series of resounding victories over the Qing, Emperor Mutsuhito, accommodating the wishes of the militarily bureaucratic government of Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), scheduled a new parliamentary election on September 1, 1894, while the war was still ongoing.

The impressive military successes of the Japanese armed forces against the army and navy of the waning Qing Empire clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of the modernization efforts of the Meiji era. Consequently, the elections slightly mitigated the presence of opposition members in the Diet (107 mandates instead of the previous 120). Nevertheless, the representation of the pro-government Kokuminkai in the Shūgiin (the Lower House of Parliament) remained minimal (32 mandates). However, it was backed by the Imperial Court and the government. At the same time, for parties that had neither aligned with the opposition nor joined the pro-government camp, these re-elections became almost catastrophic. None of these, which can be provisionally termed centrist parties, managed to secure substantial voter support. The second-ranked party in terms of public confidence, *Rikkenkaishin-tō* ("Constitutional Reform Party"), won 49 seats in this election, from among 60. The newly established *Rikkenkakushin-tō* ("Constitutional-Reformist Party") secured 39 seats in the newly re-elected Parliament. The status of two other parliamentary parties – the aforementioned *Chūgokushimpō-tō* and the liberal-leaning *Teikoku Zaiseikakushin-kai* ("Union for Material and Political Renewal of the Divine Empire") – appeared utterly precarious, with four and five mandates, respectively. At the same time, the number of nonpartisan deputies elected to the Parliament increased significantly, reaching 60, a record for the then-brief history of Japanese parliamentarism. This indicated a systemic loss of voter confidence in most of the existing parliamentary parties, which in turn pushed their leaders toward consolidation.

The culmination of prolonged contacts and negotiations was the officially announced merger on March 1, 1896 of four rapidly drifting toward marginal parties – *Rikkenkaishin-tō*, *Rikkenkakushin-tō*, *Teikoku Zaiseikakushin-kai* and *Chūgokushimpō-tō* – into a single "Progressive Party" (*Shimpō-tō*) [時任 1996, *175*]. Its leader, the former leader of the constitutional reformists Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922) was elected the head of the largest of the consolidated groups. The party declared its commitment to the ideals of moderate liberalism and belief in Japan's progress under the banner of pragmatic Japanese nationalism. Its leaders emphasized that, in their view, the rights and freedoms enshrined in the 1889 Constitution were sufficient for the country's stable development. Therefore, the newly established "Progressive" party broke with internal radicalism, supported the expansionist policy aimed at Japan's further progress, and was ready to cooperate with the existing regime. In ideological terms, the second "progressive" party in Japanese history occupied the niche of the right-liberal electorate, while organizationally it sought to position itself as a political project of "constructive" opposition. That is, regarding imperial colonial expansion, it was fully aligned with the government, but fought to ensure that the benefits of this unquestionably "progressive" course, in its view, would be felt by common Japanese citizens. The party's ideology envisioned that Japan, guided by the Emperor and the government, should act more actively on the international stage to become the leader of the Pan-Asian movement, expel Europeans from Asia, and transform the country into a Pan-Asian hegemon. The outcome of these processes was envisaged as the construction of an ideally balanced and developed Japanese state with extensive rights and freedoms for its inhabitants. Essentially, the "progressives" aspired to turn Japan into a metropolis akin to wealthy Western colonial powers, where most social and political matters were resolved through the exploitation of colonized countries. By exploiting other peoples, Ōkuma Shigenobu promised to protect the social rights of workers in Japan and substantially expand their political freedoms. In the long term, the party envisaged a gradual extension of voting rights (i.e., increasing the number of people eligible to vote), ultimately leading to universal suffrage.

The consolidating activity, populism, and "constructive" opposition of the party did not go unrewarded electorally. In the subsequent parliamentary elections held on 15 March 1898, the "progressives" secured 104 seats out of 300. *Shimpō-tō* thus became the second most significant party in the *Shūgiin*, following the also "constructive", but somewhat more radical, liberals.

The rapid rise in popularity of the Progressive Party unequivocally indicated the great potential of unifying projects in party organization. This did not escape the attention of the leaders of the two leading, yet formally opposition, parliamentary parties. Despite their electoral successes, neither the liberals nor the "progressives" separately held a majority in the *Shūgiin*, and therefore could not influence government formation. Organizational unification of these two parties opened a wide prospect for their leaders to take up government offices. Leaders of all Japanese parties for long time aspired to strengthen their positions in the political landscape to the extent that they could form the first genuinely party-based Cabinet in Japan's history; individually, no party was capable to do it at the time [時任 1996, *175*]. However, with further consolidation of liberals and "progressives" in the Parliament, a stable opposition majority of 209 deputies emerged. This made the prospect of forming Japan's single-party Cabinet realistic. Deputies at the IX Congress of the Progressive Party, held in April-May 1898, explicitly indicated this to their party leaders [福田 2013, *390*]. Hence, as early as June 3, on Ōkuma's initiative [福田 2013, *390*], negotiations began between the leaders of these parties [正田 1980, *175*], and on June 22, 1898, the former political rivals Itagaki Taisuke (leader of the liberals) and Ōkuma Shigenobu (head of the "progressives") announced the merger of their two parties (Liberal and Progressive) into a single "Constitutional Party" (*Kensei-tō*). Thus, for the first time in the political history of the "Land of the Rising Sun", a dominant parliamentary party emerged [金谷 2014, *206*], with a faction now numbering 209 deputies out of 300. This situation guaranteed the party full control over legislation and the state budget. The budget submitted by the old nonpartisan government was immediately rejected, forcing the Cabinet to resign [宫田 2019, *24*]. The predictable outcome followed: on June 30, 1898 [八幡 2022, *28*], Japan's first party-based Cabinet [小和田 2020, *201*] was formed under the leadership of *Kensei-tō* leader Ōkuma Shigenobu [八幡 2022, *28*].

The former leader of the liberals, Itagaki Taisuke, assumed the position of Minister of the Interior in the Cabinet [久恒, 河合 2014, *162*].

Having come to power, the former oppositionists pushed through Parliament a series of laws aimed at reducing taxes and cutting the number of civil servants, including the government apparatus itself. They proposed the nationalization of all Japanese railways and categorically rejected the tax initiatives of previous governments, notably the land tax increase project submitted by former Prime Minister Matsukata Masayoshi (1835–1924) [川村 2014, *70*] and the general tax increase initiated by the "third Cabinet of Prime Minister Itō" [竹内 1978, *120*]. Members of the ruling party spoke of the need to freeze or even reduce military expenditures [八幡 2022, *28*] in order to raise the social standards for regular people. However, the price of these measures was the temporary disappearance of the Progressive Party project as such from Japan's political field. This was not about the party brand *Shimpō-tō* itself, but its substantive component. As noted earlier, the ruling circles of contemporary Japan were fully aware of the close correlation between the concepts of progress and external expansion. Colonial domination of other countries was impossible without enhanced militarization, yet the leaders of the party government supported cuts in army and navy expenditures. This marked a clear departure from the idea of genuine "progress" in Japan in its contemporary imperial understanding. Furthermore, the abstract idea of further political progress in Japan inevitably evolved into calls for the establishment of a more "progressive" republican-like system in terms of parliamentary influence over the government. This was cautiously voiced by the Minister of Education – and former "progressive" [岡 1992, *70*] – Ōzaki Yukio (1859–1954) [福田 2013, *414–415*]. In the realities of the Greater Japanese Empire, this discredited the *Shimpō-tō* party brand in the eyes of the electorate and made its revival impossible even after the fall of Japan's first party-based Cabinet and the collapse of *Kensei-tō* in the same year, 1898. For several decades, this marked not merely the formal but the substantive end of the Progressive Party project in Japan – but not for ever…

Post-war "Progressive Party of Japan" (Nihon Shimpō-tō) under the American Occupation Regime

The end of the World War II forced Japan to fundamentally rethink what should be considered progressive and regressive. Its defeat demonstrated the fallacy of the dominant view in the policy of the Japanese Empire that progress could be achieved solely through external military-imperial expansion. The "State of Japan" (*Nihon Koku*), which, following the capitulation on September 2, 1945, replaced the defeated "Empire of Japan" (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku*), was compelled to seek a new understanding of progress. This immediately reflected on the party-political landscape of Japan, occupied by the Americans and deprived of real sovereignty. Soon, the realities of the Cold War, as a systemic confrontation between the USSR-led "socialist" bloc and the USA-led "capitalist" bloc, layered on top of this. The result was an entirely new Japanese conception of progress, which, after the 1945 geopolitical catastrophe, entailed Americanization, anti-communism, demilitarization, and economic liberalization aimed at building a competitive economy in Japan. That is, an economy whose goods would conquer markets not under the protection of Japanese guns and bayonets, but through superior quality, advanced technology, and lower costs. Based on such technological and commodity-driven expansion, the standard of living of Japanese citizens was expected to rise, social development issues to be addressed, and local medicine, education, and science to improve. This represented a completely different, diametrically opposed understanding of progress compared to the previous one. Its party embodiment became the next, third in sequence, "Progressive Party of Japan" (*Nihon Shimpō-tō*).

The personnel core of *Nihon Shimpō-tō* was composed of former members of the prewar "Constitutional Democratic Party" (*Rikkenminsei-tō*). Representing the interests of Japan's contemporary "middle class", the Constitutional Democrats had historically opposed excessive social and property inequality, advocated the protection of citizens' personal rights and freedoms, and promoted harmonious international cooperation in foreign policy. Having been in power during 1929–1031, and by the outbreak of World War II being Japan's strongest opposition party, *Rikkenminsei-tō* obediently dissolved itself in 1940 and was incorporated into a single quasi-party, fully state-controlled structure under totalitarian Japan, known as the "Imperial Aid Association" (*Taisei Yokusan-kai*). Yet the memory of their former party sovereignty and ideological distinctiveness remained unmistakably alive among the deputies from the former Constitutional Democratic Party. Therefore, when the American occupational administration initiated the revival of genuine multiparty political system in Japan after the end of the World War II, former *Rikkenminsei-tō* deputies, on November 16, 1945, announced the creation-revival of a formally centrist party under the brand *Nihon Shimpō-tō* [不破 2006, *129*].

The slogans of the party largely echoed the former programmatic guidelines of their ideological and personnel predecessors, the constitutional democrats [色川 1980, *86*]. Unsurprisingly, the party was initially proposed to be named *Minpon-tō* (民本党) [赤旗評論特集版 1983, *24*], which can be literally translated as "Party of the People's Foundations" / "Party of Civic Principles", and in essence was just another variant of the name "Democratic Party". However, given the post-war realities of 1945 (the collapse of Imperial Japan plus the onset of the Cold War), the organizers of the party prudently added to the previous goals of their "democratic" party life the fight against communism and the preservation of the Japanese statehood. These were ideas that had already begun to be perceived by contemporary Japanese society as the main guarantee of the country's further "progress". This is why, after brief discussions, the central idea of the political project became the accordingly updated doctrine of Japanese "progressiveness". This gave the party grouping its name.

The leadership of *Nihon Shimpō-tō* was initially supposed to go to the influential banker, former head of the Bank of Japan and now Minister of Finance of Japan, Shibusawa

Keizō (1896–1963) [富森 1977, *8*]. He established trust-based relations with the American occupation authorities. However, the country's leading banker-financier did not receive sufficient support of the deputies. The candidacies of Army General Ugaki Kazushige (1868–1956) and Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō (1877–1964) [富森 1977, *8*] were also considered, but the Americans categorically opposed to admit former militarists as potential party leaders. Therefore, formally, the first head of the newly re-established "Progressive Party of Japan" became another authoritative financier, Machida Chūji (1863–1946) [渡辺 1964, *78*]. In the Japanese Empire, he served as Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of Finance, and also as president of various private banks. Most importantly, from 1935 to 1940, he headed [前田 2020, *255*] the same right-liberal "Constitutional Democratic Party" (*Rikkenminsei-tō*) [川村 2022a, *3*] until it was voluntarily-compulsorily merged with the quasi-party totalitarian monster *Taisei Yokusan-kai* ("Imperial Aid Association" / "Association for the Support of the Throne") [川村 2022b, *56*].

After its formal organizational establishment, the "Progressive Party of Japan" quickly consolidated the largest parliamentary faction in the post-imperial Japanese Parliament (273 deputies out of 466) [上條 1993, *96*], thus effectively claiming the right to form the first single-party government in post-war Japan. However, the American occupation administration preferred a politician more loyal to the United States for the position of the head of the contemporary puppet Japanese government – former diplomat Shidehara Kijūrō (1872–1951). Soon after his appointment as Prime Minister of Japan, the head of the American occupation administration, General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), by his authoritative decision in January 1946, also appointed Shidehara as the head of *Nihon Shimpō-tō* [服部 1964, *232*]. As a result, the Japanese Government under Prime Minister Shidehara, controlled by the Americans, obtained guaranteed parliamentary support through the largest "progressive" faction. Dissatisfied with this decision, the occupation administrators publicly accused Machida Chūji of excessively close collaboration with the criminal authority of the totalitarian past and subjected him to political purging. Machida Chūji was removed from participation in the country's political life [政権 1970, *234*] and, unable to endure such a blow, died in November of the same 1946.

The next challenge on the path to political democratization of post-war Japan under occupation was the Japanese Parliament itself. Its composition was formed based on the 1942 elections – that is, under the conditions of a dictatorial regime and the World War II. Such a Parliament required an urgent overhaul.

The elections, scheduled by the American occupational administration for April 10, 1946, proceeded peacefully. However, by placing their bet on the Progressive Party of Japan (*Nihon Shimpō-tō*) as their main partisan support, the Americans effectively deprived the "progressives" of any real chance of success. Traumatized by the defeat in the World War II, the Japanese nevertheless remained the Japanese and were unwilling to voluntarily hand over power to outright American puppets. As a result of the elections, *Nihon Shimpō-tō* received only 19% of the votes, and in order to remain in government, the party was forced to enter a coalition with the formal winners of the race – the liberals.

The latter was headed by the former Imperial Minister of Education Hatoyama Ichirō (1883–1959). However, this politician did not gain the support of the Americans, since in totalitarian Japan the Ministry he led had been the main disseminator of militarist and chauvinist ideas of the "Greater Japan". Consequently, neither Hatoyama nor the main loser of the recent elections, Shidehara, were allowed by the Americans to take the Prime Minister's seat. Instead, in May 1946 [河村 2006, *185*], the Americans appointed an external political figure to head the coalition government of liberals and progressives – the former Minister of War Construction of Imperial Japan, Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967). At the time of the elections, he was imprisoned as a suspect in war crimes, a candidate for the defendant's bench at the forthcoming Tōkyō Trials, but he was released by the

Americans and installed as the puppet Prime Minister of the fictitious two-party coalition cabinet.

Formally a coalition (liberals plus progressives) [服部 1964, *233*], but in fact Yoshida's technical Cabinet, under the close supervision of the American occupation administration, conspicuously withdrew from high politics and focused on solving immediate practical tasks. Japan now officially received a new name: instead of the "Empire of Japan" (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku*), it became simply the "State of Japan" (*Nihon Koku*). The country underwent agrarian reform and the forced breakup of monopolistic zaibatsu conglomerates. The foundation of the renewed state's future foreign policy was proclaimed to be consistent pacifism, while the delicate task of drafting a new version of the Japanese constitution was undertaken by the Americans. The results of this activity appeared rather quickly. On October 7, 1946, the Japanese Parliament approved the "new version" of the Constitution prepared by the Americans. In April 1947, new elections were scheduled for the Japanese Parliament, which for the first time was to be elected in a bicameral structure.

Under the previous "Constitution of the Empire of Japan", only the Lower House of Parliament (the House of Representatives) was elected, while the Upper House (the House of Peers) was "composed of the members of the Imperial Family, of the orders of nobility, and of those persons who have been nominated thereto by the Emperor" (Article XXXIV).

The complete political helplessness of the "progressives" led by Shidehara, as junior partners in Yoshida's pro-American Cabinet, finally buried the authority of *Nippōn Shimpō-tō* in the eyes of their compatriots. As a result, Shidehara himself, abandoning the leadership over the "progressives" imposed on him by the Americans, officially joined the Liberal Party. However, other party leaders of the third "Progressive Party" in Japan's history were unwilling to sacrifice their Party's autonomy. Nevertheless, the party brand "Progressive Party" temporarily lost its appeal among Japanese voters. What remained was to relaunch the political project under a new name.

The course for the organizational rescue of the former *Nippōn Shimpō-tō* was led by one of its former "second-tier" leaders, who lacked major personal political achievements but held an important key to the hearts of voters. This was the well-known writer at the time, Inukai Takeru (1896–1960) [服部 1964, *234*]. He was the son of Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855–1932), who was assassinated by radicals in 1932. The elder Inukai was regarded as a proponent of a course toward peaceful coexistence with all nations (for which he was killed by radicals in 1932). Therefore, his son, as a kind of moral successor to his father as a sacrificial figure in a policy of pacification very relevant to Japan at the time, stepped into the forefront of the progressives' party life. On March 31, 1947, he announced the official termination of the *Nippon Shimpō-tō* project and the founding on its ruins of a new party brand, the "Democratic Party" (*Minshū-tō*) [高坂, 佐古, 安部 1995, *12*]. The ideological foundations of Minshū-tō were proclaimed as political centrism and socio-economic liberalism. As for the political brand "Progressive Party", it was completely discredited under the conditions of the American occupation and for a long time fell out of Japan's political landscape.

"Progressive Party" (Shimpō-tō) 1987–1993: Experience and Lessons of Rebranding

The fourth "version" of the political brand of party "progressivism" in Japan was its rather short-lived reincarnation in 1987. The emergence of the Party was closely linked to the mid-1970s crisis within the long-standing ruling party in Japan since 1955, the "Liberal Democratic Party" (*Jiyūminshu-tō*). At that period, after 20 years of absolute dominance in politics, the LDP had somewhat lost touch with the reality of interparty competition in Japan. This led to the outright decay of the political elite among the liberal democrats.

Particular notoriety attached to the infamous corruption scandals surrounding the then head of the LDP and Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (1918–1993). They concerned his involvement in schemes over the allocation of land resources, large-scale tax evasion, and the most sensational scandal – the "Lockheed affair". It was found that, Prime Minister Tanaka had received, on proven episodes alone, ¥500 million ($4.5 million) in unrecorded payments from the Americans in connection with facilitating the successful sale of Lockheed aircraft in Japan [Matray 2000, *197*].

In the context of the significant decline of the LDP's authority as the main party of Japanese right-wing conservatives, Japanese centrists sought to seize their chance to return to high politics. Tagawa Seiichi (1918–2009) used this opportunity; he was elected to the Parliament as an independent single-member district deputy from Kanagawa Prefecture [宮川 1993, *210*] (eastern Honshū); he was the son of a major rice merchant [日記書簡集解題目録… 1998, *272*]. Following the aforementioned corruption scandals in the LDP, he publicly stated that the Jiyūminshutō "had already fulfilled its historical mission", that "it could no longer change for the better", and therefore for the LDP there were only a few days left in politics. He argued that under the existing liberal-democratic "one-party dictatorship, corruption would only continue to progress" [佐高 1991, *182*]. For this reason, Tagawa undertook the foundation of an independent political party. However, his initial attempts to party-building were not very successful. Only on January 22, 1987 did Tagawa finally manage to launch his own Party project under the somewhat forgotten name of the "Progressive Party" (*Shimpō-tō*).

The revival of the idea of "progressivism" in politics was linked to the fact that, after Japan had become one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, Japanese voters saw the main obstacle to further progressive development of the "Land of the Rising Sun" in corruption at the top and in the lingering grievances from neighboring countries affected by Japan's past actions. The updated idea of "progress" required a corresponding party-political reflection. This facilitated the reestablishment in Japan of yet another "Progressive Party". The main idea of their electoral campaign was a comprehensive critique of the ruling LDP for corruption and other faults. The "progressives" promised voters that, if they came to power, all these deficiencies of Japanese politics would be strictly eliminated by them. However, the "progressives' " appealing promises failed to resonate with the electorate. The liberal-democrats explained to their fellow citizens that all past scandals were not the faults of the Party but of specific individuals who had merely "attached themselves" to the politically successful LDP. The effectiveness of the reforms carried out under the leadership of the *Jiyūminshu-tō* over the past decades also left no doubt. Guided by the proven motto that the "good should not be sought beyond what is already good", Japanese voters did not support Tagawa's idea of the LDP's political helplessness. The next parliamentary elections on 18 February 1990 confirmed it, through ending in complete fiasco for Tagawa Seiichi's creation. The Progressive Party under his leadership received less than half a percent of votes, leaving its representation in the Parliament limited to a single seat taken by the party leader Tagawa Seiichi [朝日選挙大観… 1990, *83*].

The last hope for the "progressives" lay in the by-elections to the Upper House of Parliament (*Sangiin*) scheduled for April 23, 1992. However, by that time, *Shimpō-tō* faced new and no less ambitious competitors in the centrist political field: the "Party of Sports and Peace" (*Supotsuheiwa-tō*), the "Congress of Democratic Reform" (*Minshūkaikakurengō*), the "New Party of Japan" (*Nihon Shin-tō*), and others. The centrist electoral field became highly fragmented, which ultimately buried the idea of the fourth "Progressive Party" as an independent centrist force. In the 1992 elections, the "progressives" failed to secure a single representative in the Sangiin. Morally broken and organizationally depleted, Tagawa Seiichi was nonetheless drawn by inertia into the 1993 parliamentary campaign (elections held on July 18), in which his Party again failed: no representative

of the "Progressive Party" managed to enter the *Shūgiin*. The six-year party project of forming the fourth "Progressive Party" in Japanese history concluded with its self-dissolution. Tagawa announced this at a press conference specially organized for the occasion in his native Kanagawa on August 2, 1993 [國民政治年鑑 1994, *533*].

Tagawa explained his actions by stating that the main goal he had set for himself in creating yet another Japanese "Progressive Party" had been successfully achieved. Namely, with the emergence of *Shimpō-tō*, Japan had finally "freed itself from the one-party rule of the Liberal Democratic Party". However, he continued, soberly "assessing the direction in which the situation around the Progressive Party is developing, it is no longer feasible to maintain it. For this, I sincerely apologize to its supporters" [日本国会史'94 1994, *186*].

"New Progressive Party" (Shinshīn-tō) 1994–1997: from Unification to Dissolution

The collapse of *Shimpō-tō* repeatedly demonstrated to Japan's centrist politicians the necessity of organizational unification. An attempt to realize this idea within the party brand of "progressivism" came with the emergence in 1994 of yet another, the fifth in Japan's history, Progressive Party, which was named the "New Progressive Party" (*Shinshin-tō*).

The emergence of this Party was again linked to the crisis of the ongoing decay of the perpetually ruling Liberal Democratic Party (*Jiyūminshu-tō*) in Japan since 1955. By the late 1980s, this manifested in a series of related scandals, the two most notorious of which stand out. The first dates to 1989, when journalists uncovered the story of the sale of Recruit Cosmos shares at clearly speculative prices. This became possible due to the leak of highly confidential financial information from the office of the LDP Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru (1924–2000) to private speculators on the stock exchange [Oriol Junqueras i Vies et al. 2011, *285*]. As it turned out, 47 LDP legislators were implicated in the scandal. The head of Recruit Cosmos, Hiromasa Edoze, was imprisoned as a briber [Massie, Douglas 1992, *50*]. Although no direct evidence was found against Takeshita, he was accused of involvement in financial machinations or, at minimum, criminal negligence regarding the corrupt officials. The result: on June 2, 1989, Takeshita Noboru was forced to resign as head of the LDP, and on June 3 – from the Office of Prime Minister.

The next head of the *Jiyūminshu-tō* and Prime Minister of the government for a brief period became the then-serving Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Uno Sōsuke (1922–1998), since among the senior LDP leaders at the time, only Uno was clearly uninvolved in the aforementioned financial scandals. This allowed him to temporarily assume leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party and the government. However, it soon became apparent that while Uno was unblemished in financial matters, in the delicate sphere of morality he had more indiscretions than others did. The press and the opposition uncovered a sordid story regarding Uno Sōsuke's relationship with a geisha from Kagurazaka [倉山 2015, *284*], after which Uno was forced to resign as party leader on August 8, 1989, and on August 9 – from the office of Prime Minister.

The LDP urgently needed a radical rejuvenation of its party leadership. The result of this decision was the election of a relatively young yet already sufficiently experienced politician, Kaifu Toshiki (1931–2022), as party head. Within the party, he had previously been responsible for youth policy [周 2023, *12*], in the government he had effectively served as head of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology [世界年鑑 1990, *758*], and behind the scenes he gained a reputation as an extremely successful and shrewd negotiator. However, the aftermath of previous scandals had so drained the LDP's ratings that he became Prime Minister as a legitimate, yet far from uncontested, leader. The Upper House of the Japanese Parliament at the time opposed his candidacy, as the Liberal Democrats had lost their majority there following the 1989

by-elections. Although the support of the Lower House allowed Kaifu Toshiki, according to the Constitution, to assume the reins of government [小枝 2006, *62*], everyone understood the fragility of the new single-party LDP administration.

Once at the helm of the party and government, Kaifu Toshiki urgently set about restoring the LDP's prestige. He attracted votes from the conservative segment of the electorate by promising to strengthen the military-political alliance with the United States and declaring in Brussels Japan's readiness to expand qualitatively its military-technical and political cooperation with NATO. In September 1991, Kaifu Toshiki exchanged personal messages with Russian President B. N. Yeltsin (1931–2007), in which he received an apology from Russia's first President for the tragic fate of Japanese prisoners in Siberia after World War II, assurances of Russia's willingness, after the USSR's collapse, to resolve the "Northern Territories" issue and conclude a peace treaty with Japan "based on the principles of legality and justice" [Rozman et al. 2007, *204*]. Kaifu's gestures toward neighboring countries, which had repeatedly suffered from Japan's military-colonial expansion, culminated in May 1990 when the Japanese Prime Minister, in Singapore, expressed "sincere remorse" for Japan's past crimes and promised that Tōkyō would never repeat such actions [Saitō 2017, *77*]. To win young voters, Kaifu lifted the long-standing ban on concert performances in Japan by the famous British band The Rolling Stones [新たな飛躍へ… 1995, *369*]. Regarding current corruption scandals, Kaifu Toshiki acknowledged their legitimacy and promised a purge within the LDP to uphold the ideals of his proclaimed "clean politics" doctrine. However, as soon as he seriously pursued anti-corruption investigations and began tightening control over the funds used in political affairs, his government immediately lost real support from fellow party legislators. The Parliament rejected the proposed systemic political reforms: abolishing the party-proportional component of the electoral process in favor of elections solely by single-member districts [久保谷 2016, *8*]. This led to a sharp decline in Kaifu Toshiki's popularity and authority. On October 30, 1991, he was forced to resign as LDP leader, and on November 5, he stepped down as Prime Minister.

Under these circumstances, openly "offended" by his former party colleagues, Kaifu Toshiki announced his departure from the LDP in July 1994 and subsequently joined the "New Progressive Party" (*Shinshin-tō*), established in December of the same year [久保谷 2016, *106*].

The establishment of this party resulted from the merger of two centrist political projects. The first was the "New Party of Japan" (*Nihon Shin-tō*), which proclaimed liberal values and freedoms as its core ideological principles and publicly condemned the aggressive wars of Imperial Japan in the first half of the 20th century. This party, led by the governor of Kumamoto Prefecture (central part of Japan's largest southern island, Kyūshū), Hosokawa Morihiro (b. 1938), garnered 8 % of votes in the 1993 elections. The second was the "Renewal Party" (*Shinsei-tō*), founded by 44 former LDP politicians who left the Party due to the aforementioned scandals. This grouping was led by former LDP majoritarian representative Hata Tsutomu (1935–2017) and former LDP Secretary-General, another staunch advocate of abstract liberal values, Ozawa Ichirō (b. 1942). In the 1993 elections, the Renewal Party received 10 % of votes. Individually, neither party could play a major political role, but together…, on this basis, they merged in December 1994 into the "New Progressive Party" (*Shinshin-tō*). However, none of the former leaders of the two constituent parties could assume the leadership of the newly revived Japanese "progressist" party, although such ambitions certainly existed.

Hosokawa Morihiro descends from a highly noble princely-samurai lineage; his distant ancestors, while holding the post of metropolitan governor-general, administered affairs in the 15th century at the court of the Ashikaga shogunate. His maternal grandfather was Prime Minister of the Japanese Empire during World War II, Konoe Fumimaro (1891–1945) [八幡 1998, *54*], the same Konoe who, after defeat in the war, took poison

to avoid facing trial as a war criminal. Hosokawa himself had experience leading an eight-party coalition government [トップランキング… 1994, *198*] in 1993–1994. While in office, he officially acknowledged the aggressive character of Japan's conduct in World War II and, on behalf of his country, accepted responsibility for the fact that "Japan caused countless suffering to the peoples of China, Korea, and Southeast Asia". During a visit to South Korea he met President Kim Young-sam [1993–1998] and explicitly described Japan's 1910 colonial annexation of Korea as an illegal occupation [現代用語… 2006, *465*]. While maintaining a policy of close Japan-US military-political alliance, Hosokawa managed to resist Washington's pressure in the Japan-US trade disputes and at the same time signed with Russian President B. N. Yeltsin (1991–1999) the Tōkyō Declaration initiating negotiations on the "Northern Territories" issue (the Russian version: the Southern Kurils). He also signed an important environmental protection declaration with China on joint stewardship of the regional environment. Domestically, Hosokawa's coalition advanced numerous initiatives: Japan officially adopted a 40-hour workweek and enacted a series of laws on the rights of persons with disabilities and on protection for workers who lost health on the job [福祉教科書… 2016, *85*]. A new electoral bill-designed in the wake of prior corruption scandals to significantly curb avenues for political corruption (for example, by banning corporate donations to individual candidates) – was drafted and submitted to the Parliament [水口, 北原, 久米 2000, *197*], but it failed to secure party leaders' support and was soon withdrawn [新川, 大西 2008, *89*]. Financing such broad social measures required resources, attainable only through higher taxation; the Hosokawa government raised the consumption tax from 3 % to 7 % and pledged to raise it to 10 % [朝日年鑑 1996, *262*]. An exceptionally cold summer in 1993 produced a poor rice harvest, forcing Japan to admit cheaper rice from Southeast Asia and thereby depressing domestic farmers' incomes; consequently, by spring 1994 Prime Minister Hosokawa began to face serious political troubles.

In May 1994, an amateurishly executed assassination attempt was made on Hosokawa Morihiro at a Tōkyō hotel. During the Prime Minister's delivery of another public speech, right-wing extremist Masakatsu Nozoe fired a pistol, but only hit the ceiling of the hotel conference hall [Mickolus, Simmons 1997, *619*]. Then came the use of kompromat. Reports appeared in the press claiming that this supposedly impeccably clean Prime Minister had received a substantial loan of one *oku* (i.e., 100 million) yen from an auto corporation [蒲島 2018, *126*]. However, the "loan" was interest-free, making it appear as a bribe. The scandal erupted. Although Hosokawa Morihiro immediately returned the dubious loan (presenting a copy of the relevant receipt to the Parliament), the Prime Minister of the "New Party of Japan" was forced to resign in April 1994. The coalition was temporarily saved by the leader of the "Renewal Party" (*Shinsei-tō*), Hata Tsutomu (1935–2017). Previously he had held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and now became prime minister. However, after the socialists and the "Greens" left the government coalition, Hata's administration lost its parliamentary majority and on 30 June 1994 also resigned, followed by the resignation of his entire cabinet.

The failure of the coalition pushed the centrists toward unification. In December 1994, the "New Party of Japan" (*Nihon Shin-tō*) of Hosokawa Morihiro and the "Renewal Party" (*Shinsei-tō*) of Hata Tsutomu, after brief three-day negotiations, announced the merger of the "new party" and "renewal" projects into a single centrist "New Progressive Party" (*Shinshin-tō*) [蒲島 1998, *107*]. However, none of the former leaders of the merging party projects were willing to cede personal party leadership. Therefore, the first head of *Shinshin-tō* was chosen as a compromise figure. On 7 February 1995 [岩手年鑑 1997, *13*], at its party congress, the leader of the "New Progressive Party" was elected with a huge lead over competitors [二大政党時代のあけぼ… 2004, *236*]: the former Liberal Democratic Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki (1931–2022) [山本 2006, *168*]. As already noted, he had left the scandal-tainted LDP in July 1994 [久保谷 2016, *106*] and

was proud that no dark corruption stains had ever been found in his political biography. For this, journalists nicknamed him "Mr. Clean" [Lee 1995, *214*].

The new "progressive" party project under such leadership appeared very attractive, so it soon drew in:

– the left-centrist "Democratic Socialist Party" (*Minshūshakai-tō*), separated in 1960 from the "Socialist Party of Japan" [野村 1997, *37*], which adhered to staunch anti-communism and advocated the construction of an utopian "democratic socialism";

– a group of legislators who had defected from the "Clean Government Party" (*Kōmei-tō*), oriented toward Buddhist humanist values [日本新聞年鑑 1995, *16*];

– plus several former LDP deputies who, in light of the endless corruption scandals, left the Liberal Democratic Party in July 1994 and functioned in the Shūgiin as an independent faction under the grandiose name "Congress of Liberal Reforms" (*Jiyūkaikaku-rengō*) [久保谷 2016, *106*].

In the 1995 by-elections for the *Sangiin*, Kaifu Toshiki's party secured the support of 31 % of voters and established a strong second-largest faction in the Upper House of Parliament with 68 representatives, trailing only the LDP. The "New Progressives" held a similar presence in the Lower House with 169 deputies [平凡社百科年鑑 1996, *191*]. Analysts began to speak of the potential establishment of a two-party system in Japan… [冨田 2010, *264*].

However, Kaifu Toshiki, the leader of *Shinshin-tō*, began proposing overly radical projects for the country's political-administrative transformation, which alienated part of the party's potential electorate. Among other things, Kaifu Toshiki suggested stripping Tōkyō of some of its capital functions and transferring them to other cities. This involved relocating the seats of the highest legislative, executive, and judicial bodies to different cities, leaving Tōkyō solely as the country's main economic center [国民自治年鑑 1996, *249*]. Many within *Shinshin-tō*'s leadership and party apparatus found this reform program too radical. Kaifu Toshiki stubbornly refused to abandon it, which ultimately cost him the leadership. On December 28, 1995, a somewhat more cautious and moderate politician, but more charismatic in interacting with voters than his predecessor, Ozawa Ichirō (born 1942), was elected the *Shinshin-tō* new leader.

Under his leadership, *Shinshin-tō* began preparing for its first general parliamentary elections in 1996, developing a radical package of innovations proposed by the "New Progressive Party". The plan included lowering the consumption tax back to 3 % (costing a total of ¥1 trillion [読売年鑑 1998, *61*]), significantly improving citizens' pension security, decentralizing state finances, and promising to reduce all utility payments by 20–50 %. It also called for relentless combat against bureaucratization and corruption through strengthened public oversight of politicians. These slogans resonated positively with voters, and in the 1996 parliamentary elections (20 October), the Ozawa Ichirō-led "New Progressive Party" received 18 % of the votes, sent 156 of its members to the Parliament [秋山 2011, *121*], and thereby confirmed its status as the second most popular party after the Liberal Democrats.

However, in November 1997 *Shinshin-tō* was fatally struck by yet another corruption scandal. Its newly elected leader, Ozawa, was exposed for participating in obtaining a highly suspicious ¥100 million loan from Tōkyō Sagawa Express Corporation [日本経済新聞社… 1996, *303*]. Allies began abandoning the party led by such a figure. It quickly became clear that under the "New Progressive Party" banner, politicians too diverse in their ideological orientations had gathered to coalesce into a truly unified centrist party. All of this had dramatic consequences for the "new progressives": by December 1997, *Shinshin-tō* began fracturing into several separate party projects [田中 2007, *218*].

The first to break away were former *Komei-tō* members. They felt uncomfortable remaining in a purely secular party, which in fact *Shinshin-tō* was. Next, a faction of former "new progressives" who sought to restore the "Clean Government Party" and sat in the

Upper House of Parliament resumed their independent political activity under the somewhat exotic party brand “Dawn Club” (*Reimei-kurabu*) [イミダス 2006, *323–325*]. The *Shinshin-tō* deputies sitting in the Lower House of the Japanese Parliament, who also decided to revive the “Clean Government Party” project, organized the “New Party for Peace” / “New Party for Tranquility” (*Shin-tō Heiwa*) [秋山, 石川, 照屋 2000, *53*].

The last party to emerge from the ruins of the “New Progressive Party” was the re-established “Liberal Party” (*Jiyū-tō*). It was formally revived on January 1, 1998. Its leader Ozawa Ichirō was elected as the former official head of the disappearing *Shinshin-tō* due to these perturbations [久保谷 2016, *184*].

Brief results

The betrayal of the leaders marked the end of the fifth Japanese progressive party, which de jure ceased to exist on December 27, 1997 [橋本, 飯田, 加藤 2002, *155*]. Yet a question remains. Nearly three decades have passed, and Japan has not witnessed any new attempts to revive a party project under the “Progressive Party” brand. Why is that? Has the idea of progress itself ceased to interest Japanese voters?

To answer this question, it is worth first bringing together the history of the ideological evolution of the “Progressive Party” project in Japan. This may provide us with the key to understanding the reasons for its absence in the contemporary party system of the “Land of the Rising Sun” and allow us to assess its potential prospects.

The five “progressive” party projects recorded in Japanese history bore similar names but had significant ideological differences. These differences stemmed from the stages of evolution that the very idea of abstract “progress” underwent in Japan.

This process was initiated by the establishment of the “Progressive Party of the Central States” (*Chūgokushimpō-tō*) in May 1894, headed by Inukai Tsuyoshi. At that time, Japan already viewed the “progressive” results of its own modernization during the Meiji era quite positively, but it understood that further industrial development required colonies. After all, the domestic resources for its initial industrial leap by the end of the 19th century were exhausted due to the narrowness of the Japanese consumer market and the near-complete absence of significant raw material sources on the islands. Yet the struggle for colonies inevitably created the threat of war with the militarily powerful imperialist states of Europe and the USA. Japan at the end of the 19th century was not prepared to face them on equal footing, so it sought allies. For some Japanese politicians, a potential ally appeared to be neighboring China, rich in human and material resources. Like Japan, it suffered from the colonial expansion of Western powers, and thus shared a common interest with Japan in this regard. For the first time, therefore, the idea of progress as a manifestation of sustainable further development appeared in Japanese party politics as the concept of a Japan-China anti-Western alliance. However, Korea, which Japan targeted as its first potential agrarian-raw-material colony, was considered by Qing China as its natural vassal. Disputes over Korea led to the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, which ended the idea of progress through a military-political alliance of the two largest states of East Asia. The logical consequence of these processes was the collapse of the first Japanese “progressive” party.

Since then, the only possible prerequisite for the further “progress” of the Greater Japanese Empire became its own colonial expansion. Victory in the First Sino-Japanese War instilled in the Japanese political elite a sense of their country’s military capability to compete on equal terms with other imperialist states for colonies. This was meant to guarantee the “Land of the Rising Sun” a stable “progressive” development, and through it – the resolution of domestic social problems, the improvement of the material well-being of its subjects, and the development of its science, education, medicine, industry, and all other components of “progress”. Thus, the notion of “progress” acquired in the contemporary Japanese party paradigm a clear connotation simultaneously with grand-

national Japanese chauvinism, colonial expansion, and the comprehensive socio-economic progress of Japan itself at the expense of plundering its present and potential colonies among the less developed countries of the Far Eastern region. This became the ideological basis of the "Progressive Party" (*Shimpō-tō*), established in 1896 under the leadership of Ōkuma Shigenobu. However, one of the most desired manifestations of political progress in the country, according to party politicians of the time, was the establishment of the party-parliamentary principle of government formation. Individually, the fragmented parliamentary parties of the late 19th century could not gain control over the Parliament and, through it, over the government. This forced Japanese "progressives" to sacrifice their organizational independence and proceed to the self-liquidation of *Shimpō-tō* as a separate party project through a merger in 1898 with ideologically like-minded liberals into the unified "Constitutional Party" (*Kensei-tō*). The achievement of this party transformation was the formation of the first party government in Japanese history, led by constitutionalists, under the same Ōkuma. However, he and his associates had to abandon the idea of abstract "progressivism" in politics. Firstly, the abstract idea of further political progress for Japan could inevitably evolve into calls for the establishment of a republican system, clearly "more progressive" from the standpoint of parliamentary influence on the government. In the context of the Empire, this was no longer constitutionalism, which the "Constitutional Party" and its government were supposed to uphold by definition. Secondly, in a hurry to demonstrate to their compatriots the material benefits of progress as such, Ōkuma's "constitutionalist" government attempted to raise the social standards of ordinary Japanese at the expense of reducing military and naval expenditures. This contradicted the ideological doctrine of the "Progressive Party", now in its imperial-expansionist understanding. In the realities of the Greater Japanese Empire, all of this discredited the *Shimpō-tō* party brand in the eyes of voters and made its revival impossible even after the overthrow in 1898 of the first party government and the collapse of the *Kensei-tō* itself.

The Japanese were forced to view the idea of "progressive" and "anti-progressive" in a completely different light by the capitulation on September 2, 1945. The previous understanding of progress as the result of purely external military-imperial expansion was replaced by a doctrine of progress shaped, in the context of the Cold War, by anti-communism, comprehensive Americanization, demilitarization, demonopolization, and economic liberalization, aimed at building a competitive economy in Japan. Products manufactured by such economy, thanks to better quality, higher technological standards, and lower production costs, were meant to peacefully capture markets. On this basis, Japan was expected to achieve progress in terms of quality of life. This was an entirely different, diametrically opposed understanding of progress. Its party embodiment became the third "Progressive Party of Japan" (*Nihon Shimpō-tō*), established in the autumn of 1945 under the leadership of Machida Chūji.

The Japanese party oriented toward this understanding of "progress" appealed to the American occupation administration. *Nihon Shimpō-tō* quickly became dominant in the Parliament. However, the Americans did not trust Machida as a government official influential during the imperial era, so instead, they voluntaristically appointed former diplomat Shideharu Kijūrō as the new head of *Nihon Shimpō-tō*. The parliamentary faction of "progressives" accepted this forcible personnel rotation by the occupiers without resistance. In the eyes of the Japanese, this became evidence of the party's complete pro-American puppet status. As a result, *Nihon Shimpō-tō* lost voter support, joined the American-controlled coalition government as a hopelessly junior partner to the more powerful liberals, and ultimately self-dissolved in 1947.

The realities of Japan's subsequent rapid economic development demonstrated that the notion of progress as total Americanization and demonopolization did not match reality. Even after experiencing the "economic miracle", Japan remained Japan. It retained

almost complete ethnic homogeneity, as well as a significant specificity in mental, cultural-religious, educational, and business characteristics. In its economy, the old-style large keiretsu conglomerates still dominated (and continue to do so), which differ little from the former zaibatsu. In politics, the two-party system recommended by the Americans never took root. The basis of political stability in the "Land of the Rising Sun", despite formal multiparty system, became the so-called "1955 one-and-a-half party system", founded on the unshakable dominance of a single Liberal Democratic Party (*Jiyūminshu-tō*). However, under many years of uninterrupted rule by the dominant LDP, its leadership increasingly sank into the snares of corruption. This came to be seen as the main obstacle to Japan's further systemic progress. In a context where most material problems had been resolved thanks to the "economic miracle" and political stability was reliably maintained by the "1955 system" (*Gojūgonen-taisei*), the idea of progress acquired a different meaning in the eyes of Japanese voters.

The Progressive Party (*Shimpō-tō*) project revived under the slogan "Cleansing power of corrupt politicians!" in 1987. Its leader, single-member district representative Tagawa Seiichi, proclaimed that the era of unequivocal dominance by the corrupt LDP in politics had passed, and only by overcoming corruption could Japan open new paths for its further systemic "progress". Power needed new people, untainted by past party projects, and as a former independent single-member representative, Tagawa claimed he could unlock new horizons of "progress". The renewed *Shimpō-tō* was to be built as a completely new political force, with no personnel ties to the rotten parties of the past. However, the revival ended in failure: the first reason was the unconditional rise in living standards achieved under LDP rule, which clearly outweighed the negative impact of corruption scandals; the second reason was the very active formation of various centrist parties in Japan at the time, which diluted the potential electorate for the new "progressives" among *Shimpō-tō* and parties close to it in their slogans, such as *Supotsuheiwa-tō*, *Minshūkai-kaku-rengō*, *Nihon Shin-tō*, and other centrist parties. The logical outcome of these processes was the electoral collapse and official self-dissolution of the fourth Japanese *Shimpō-tō* in 1993.

The collapse of *Shimpō-tō* once again demonstrated to Japan's centrist politicians the necessity of their organizational unification. An attempt to realize this idea under the banner of "progressivism" came in 1994 with the emergence of yet another, fifth in Japanese history, "progressive" party, called the "New Progressive Party" (*Shinshin-tō*). The unification of all centrists into a single *Shinshin-tō* contributed to a rapid rise in its popularity. Under the leadership of its heads (first Kaifu Toshiki, then Ōzawa Ichirō), the "new progressives" became the country's second most popular party. Yet this project of party "progressivism" proved unstable due to the lack of real unity within the centrists themselves, who quickly began fragmenting into left and right wings, innovators and conservatives. The party's right wing believed that the headway to the country's abstract "progress" should be made through the systemic decentralization of power. Left-centrists populistically called for simultaneously lowering taxes and raising pensions, along with promises to significantly reduce all utility payments. Pro-Buddhist, idealistically exalted *Shinshin-tō* activists advocated for utopian, from the perspective of real politics, values of "pure politics". On top of this came the infighting of ambitious leaders at the Party's top circles. The result of such ideological heterogeneity was the split and self-dissolution of the "New Progressive Party", formalized on the last day of 1997.

Conclusions

Hence, what is the actual ideological character of the "progressive" party project *Shimpō-tō* in Japan?

As noted, some researchers consider the *Shimpō-tō* project conservative, others liberal, still others centrist "democratic", and yet others reformist… In the author's view, the reason

for these discrepancies lies in the fact that the compendium of Japanese "progressive" parties did not and could not have a single ideological face. It was tied to how, at different stages of history, the phenomenon of progress was perceived in Japanese social consciousness. Initially, it carried a distinctly national-liberation aspect aimed at the joint emancipation of Far Eastern countries from the colonial yoke of Western powers. This idea was attempted to be embodied in 1894 by the Party of Progress of the Central States (*Chūgokushimpō-tō*). From a national-liberation perspective, its slogans appeared quite democratic, but the party was indifferent to issues of Japan's internal political system, and therefore ideologically it can be considered centrist. Later, the condition for sustainable "progressive" development of the Japanese Empire came to be seen as effective external expansion, modeled on the most successful Western colonial metropolises in this regard (the United Kingdom, France, and the USA), which was expected to guarantee high standards of living, expanded political freedoms, and the establishment of parliamentary control over government activity through democratic elections for Japanese subjects. Thus, the slogans of "progress", which from the standpoint of foreign-policy priorities were clearly chauvinistic, became essentially liberal for the Japanese, that is, aimed at achieving greater political, social, and economic freedoms within Japan itself. The trend of "progressivism" manifested in the existence of *Shimpō-tō* from 1896 to 1898.

The ideals of progress for Japan after World War II became qualitatively different, largely conservative, that is, aimed at supporting traditional moral, property, state, and family values. In the context of the Cold War and the struggle against global communism under the aegis of the United States, the idea of progress was perceived through the lens of preserving such decidedly conservative institutions as private property, multiparty democracy, the imperial dynasty, and the Japanese state itself. It is therefore unsurprising that the *Nihon Shimpō-tō* of 1945–1947, focused on these ideals, can be ideologically classified as a conservative party project.

Having gone through the "Japanese economic miracle" of the 1960s–70s and becoming one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world by the 1980s, Japan could afford to focus no longer on strategic but on peripheral aspects of progressivism. On this basis, two "progressive" Japanese parties emerged between 1987 and 1997, concerned no longer with fundamental but with issues ancillary to abstract progress, such as "honest and transparent politics", "genuine democratic popular sovereignty", fighting corruption, and other somewhat populist concepts detached from everyday realities. They considered themselves supporters of "true" democracy, but the populist and unrealistic nature of their programmatic promises justifies characterizing the political profile of these parties as center-left.

Since then, Japanese society has faced a problem that is particularly difficult for us, Ukrainians, to grasp: what should be the country's further systemic "progress"? The population's material well-being, and consequently access to education, science, culture, and healthcare, is already sufficiently high. Migration issues in almost monoethnic Japan are essentially non-existent. Environmental problems are addressed by relocating overly polluting industries abroad and through the dominance of high-tech, post-industrial sectors in the economy, which are knowledge-intensive and not heavily resource-dependent. The security component of the "Land of the Rising Sun" is guaranteed by the nuclear umbrella established under the U.S.-Japan alliance. An additional civilizational shield against excessive Americanization is the inherent complexity (more precisely, the substantial difference from, for example, English) of the Japanese language and writing system. Attempts to elevate the problem of corruption "at the top" to the level of a national threat failed to spark significant enthusiasm among voters, and the unification of ideologically mosaic centrists under the banner of abstract "progressivism" proved unviable. Manifestations of religious or political extremism (even terrorism), technological disasters, or demographic aging are perceived by the Japanese as important issues, but fragmentary rather than systemic. This is why, in contemporary Japan, one should not expect

a revival of the project of another "Progressive Party" – at least until Japan faces new genuinely systemic and strategic challenges.

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Становлення, еволюція та ідейне позиціонування політичного проєкту "Прогресивної партії" (*Шімпо-то*) в Японії

В історіографії проблема ідейного позиціонування політичного проєкту "Прогресивної партії" (*Шімпо-то*) в Японії донині не вирішена. Пояснюється це тим, що хоча п'ять зафіксованих у японській історії "прогресивних" партій мали схожі назви, але з ідейного погляду вони суттєво різнилися між собою. Ці відмінності випливали з етапної еволюції, яку переживала в Японії сама ідея абстрактного "прогресу". Спершу панівною була ідея спільного визволення країн Далекого Сходу від колоніального ярма західних колонізаторів. Цю ідею спробувала в 1894 р. уособити "Партія прогресу серединних держав" (*Чуґокушімпо-то*). До проблем внутрішнього політичного устрою Японії ця партія ставилась індиферентно, тому, по суті, була центристською. Після Японсько-цінської війни 1894–1895 рр. їй на зміну прийшла ідея сталого "прогресивного" розвитку Великої Японської імперії як результату її власної колоніальної експансії. За прикладом західних метрополій вона мала гарантувати

мешканцям Японських островів високі стандарти якості життя, розширення політичних свобод і утвердження партійно структурованого за результатами демократичних виборів парламентського контролю за діяльністю уряду. Так гасла "прогресу", які з погляду зовнішньополітичних пріоритетів були однозначно шовіністичними, у питаннях внутрішньої політики набули ознак лібералізму в соціальному і демократизму в політичному аспекті. Партійним віддзеркаленням таких ідей стала Прогресивна партія (*Шімпо-то*) 1896–1898 рр. Після поразки Великої Японської імперії у Другій світовій війні ідеали прогресу Держави Японія були вже спрямовані на підтримку традиційних моральних, майнових, державних і сімейних цінностей, на збереження таких консервативних інститутів, як приватна власність, багатопартійність, імператорська династія та японська державність як така. Партійним обличчям такого бачення прогресу стала відверто консервативна Прогресивна партія Японії (*Ніхон шімпо-то*) 1945–1947 рр. Пройшовши через "японське економічне диво" та ставши з технологічного погляду однією з найрозвинутіших країн світу, Японія змогла собі дозволити думати вже не про стратегічні, а про периферійні аспекти прогресизму. На цьому ґрунті виросли дві "прогресивні" японські партії 1987–1997 рр. Вони опікувалися не базовими, а супутніми абстрактному прогресу питаннями "чесної прозорої політики", "справжнього демократичного народовладдя", боротьби з корупцією та іншими, дещо відірваними від реалій життя популістськими концепціями. Себе вони вважали прихильниками "справжньої" демократії, але популістська нереалістичність їхніх програмних обіцянок характеризує політичне обличчя зазначених партій як лівоцентристських. Нинішня Японія перебуває в ситуації, коли перед нею справді не стоять системні стратегічні виклики. Ось чому реанімація в ній проєкту чергової "Прогресивної партії" є малоймовірною.

Ключові слова: історія політичних партій; політична історія; прогресизм; Прогресивна партія (*Шімпо-то*); Японія

Стаття надійшла до видання 28.10.2025
Прийнято до друку після рецензування 26.02.2026
Опубліковано 14.04.2026