

# **The Historical Dynamism of the Arab Revolutions**

Eiji Nagasawa

## **1. The Arab revolutions in the context of world history**

[The Arab world and Japan in 2011]

2011 was a historic year for both Japan and the Arab world. On February 11, the long-standing Mubarak regime in Egypt was brought to an end by a grassroots youth movement that rallied in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Exactly one month later on March 11, the Japanese archipelago on which we live was plunged into crisis by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. These respective experiences of a revolution and a disaster/accident became events marking points of origin to which we should return over and over again in considering how to rectify our situations. Naturally, the two events do not lend themselves to a simple comparison, but they do share certain aspects in common. One of these is crisis and the concerted efforts of people faced with crisis.

Japan's crisis stemmed from a natural disaster that included many elements of a man-made disaster, while the Arab revolutions in Egypt and elsewhere were social crises generated by corrupt dictatorships that took place against a backdrop of a chronic but intolerable limit situation. What sticks out strongly in one's mind about these revolutionary movements is the image of young people exposing themselves to danger on the streets, without fear of the savage violence or sniper bullets of the security police. Stories will no doubt long continue to be told of the

self-immolation protest of Muhammad Buazizi that set off the revolution in Tunisia, the vicious murder of Khaled Sa'īd by police that lit the fuse for the revolution in Egypt, and the sacrifices of other martyrs (*shuhadā'*) of the revolution.

In Japan, on the other hand, it was the actions of people putting their lives on the line to warn others of the danger of a tsunami, of people desperately trying to contain the nuclear power plant accident, and of people participating in various ways in post-disaster/post-accident relief efforts that were most unforgettable. In what forms will the sentiments that supported and encouraged the actions of people in both countries be carried on for the future of these two regions?

Historians bear part of the responsibility for answering the profound questions of what meaning these two events hold for Japan and the Arab world and how they will be handled as starting points for the respective futures of these two societies. Many discussions have taken place on Japan's case, including comparisons with post-war rebuilding following the defeat in World War II. However, this experience should not be reduced to an inward-looking tale of "national history," as we have a responsibility to present the world with answers for the future derived from our experience. The inherent meaning of the revolutions in Egypt and other Arab countries must not be shut away inside arguments that the revolutions are historically characteristic of this region alone or mere debates about developmental stage theory applied to democratization. The recent Arab revolutions must be considered within the context of the global spread of social movements in the same time frame, such as the grassroots "Occupy Wall Street" movement that opposed neoliberalism, the villagers' protests against corruption in China (Wukan, Guangdong Province) and others.

[The Arab revolutions as seen by two historians]

The political upheavals that struck Tunisia and Egypt in January 2011 generated a wave of movements across the Arab world demanding change. However, the configurations and objectives of these movements were not uniform across all countries, and differed by political system and social structure. In Libya and Syria, an initially non-violent protest movement turned into an armed conflict as the country descended into civil war. The demands of these reform movements varied greatly, with some working to overthrow the regime in power (the aforementioned republics) and others seeking a progressive democratization of the political system (Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and other monarchies). The movement in the occupied Palestinian territories denounced the schism between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and called for national reconciliation.

“The Arab revolutions” is the general term applied to this collection of movements of such diverse forms and characteristics and to the political and social reforms they achieve. However, the struggle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces is intensifying, making it difficult to obtain accurate information and get a true picture of the situation. How should the complex development processes of these Arab revolutions in individual countries be viewed within the context of regional and world history? Let us address this point by first discussing the views on “the Arab revolutions” of two historians: Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) and Yuzo Itagaki (1931- ).

Hobsbawm had the following to say during a December 11, 2011 interview with the BBC:

"It reminds me of 1848 - another self-propelled revolution which started in one country then spread all over the continent in a short time." For those who once crowded Tahrir Square and are now worried about the fate of their revolution, he has a word of comfort. "Two years after 1848, it looked as if it had all failed. In the long run, it hadn't failed. A good deal of liberal advances

had been made. So it was an immediate failure but a longer term partial success - though no longer in the form of a revolution." (Note 1)

The Japanese historian Bokuro Eguchi (1911-1989), among others, has a different view on the consequences of the European Revolutions of 1848, pointing out in his book published in 1968 that while these brought liberal and progressive reforms within European countries, the 'international significance' of the 1848 revolutions in the world history lay in the reactionary consequences of the revolutions that opened the era of imperialism (Note 2). The reactionary consequences of the 1848 revolutions in Europe were the formation of "social states" (the forerunners of welfare states) through the incorporation of the rising socialist movements, and the simultaneous reinforcement of colonial policy and imperialistic expansion. The problems presented by the paradoxical consequences of the revolutions being both liberal and reactionary in nature coincide with the points at issue in considering the current Arab revolutions.

Another point made in Hobsbawm's comparison with the European Revolutions of 1848 is the regional linkage of revolutions, the resonance among reform movements within the same region. In other words, the 1848 revolutions took place within a regional system known as the European state system, and these revolutions resonated within the region but had limited impact beyond it. From the perspective that these revolutions ushered in the age of imperialism, then, the global impact of the internationalism advocated by revolutionary Europe at the time must not be overestimated.

The recent Arab revolutions are comparable not with isolated single-country revolutions (e.g., the 1986 "People Power Revolution" in the Philippines) but with these earlier European revolutions in that they occurred within the framework of an Arab state system. What's more, these revolutions not only generated a resonance of change within the region, but also have the potential to

alter the framework of the regional system. A more important characteristic is that these social movements are superbly characteristic of the current era in being linked globally.

Yuzo Itagaki's discussion "Dawn Rainbows Witnessed by Humanity – A Rethinking of World History in Regional Viewpoint" (*Rekishī Hyoron* [The Review of History], January 2012 edition, in Japanese) raises an issue on this point. Itagaki offers an observation similar to Hobsbawm's that these Arab revolutions are another of the "dawn rainbows" seen by mankind on numerous occasions that could disappear quickly. He draws attention to the reactionary, i.e., counter-revolutionary, moves that have accompanied these revolutions while also focusing on the revolutions' global resonance (in the US, China, India, Europe, Israel, Okinawa, etc.) in seeking to ascertain their significance within world history as "the revolution of new citizen [*muwātin*]."

It is difficult at the moment, however, to forecast whether an age of "new people's revolutions" has started or whether these revolutions will end as an ephemeral rainbow. In considering the outlook for the future, it is necessary to ponder the historical circumstances that have given rise to movements with the potential of engendering a new form of internationalism, particularly given that some of these movements have burst out of the rotting skeletons of older forms of internationalism that have a history of disappointment.

The author's opinion is that these Arab revolutions are aimed at fundamentally transforming the ruling system set up in the Arab countries during the national revolutions of sixty years ago. The shock wave of republican revolution caused by Nasser's Revolution in Egypt in 1952 similarly swept across the entire Arab world. This "first" Arab revolution was one of the principal waves of national liberation revolutions in Asia and Africa after World War II. People caught up in this wave of revolution in the Third World were seeking to institute a new

internationalism (Third-Worldism) developed out of frustration with the Europe-centered internationalism in place since the 19th century. (Note 3)

The national revolutions in Asia and Africa, including the Arab revolutions, led to a variety of reactionary consequences. The experiment of African socialism failed early on, and the tragic and cruel realities of Asian communist states left many of those sympathetic to Third-Worldism crestfallen. On the other hand is the reality that the system of developmentalist totalitarianism that emerged as a reactionary consequence of these revolutions has become the central axis of the global economy and has fused with neoliberalism. The Arab revolutions resulted in the formation of an Arab totalitarianism reliant on an Arab nationalist ideology. Many of these regimes subsequently faced crises, but they have continued to survive in an odious fashion on the life support provided by oil money.

## **2. Background and development of the Egyptian revolution**

[The history of movements underlying the revolution]

A variety of factors have been cited to explain the causes and background of the revolutions that occurred in Tunisia and Egypt. These include the use of Facebook and other social media, demographic factors such as increased literacy rates, the surge in international food prices, and unemployment/poverty among the younger segments of society. Another view that can be taken is that both countries were “prize pupil” or “poster child” exemplary in their acceptance of the structural reform programs recommended by the IMF and the World Bank, and that the strains caused by these neoliberalist policies sparked the protest movements.

To examine the historical background of the revolution more broadly in the case of Egypt, however, one must take into consideration the dynamism of social movements and regime changes in the country’s modern history (Note 4). The experiences of social movements over the extended past have accrued into a “collective memory” ingrained in the recent revolutionary movement. This

“collective memory” of earlier movements stretches back across three generations of young people who participated in these previous movements. The starting point was the youth movement of the 1940s, which paved the way for the age of Arab national revolutions that followed shortly thereafter. The tradition of solidarity between labor movements and student movements that was born at this time can be seen carried on in the movements of the 1970s and in today’s revolution.

Nevertheless, the movements of the 1940s were ultimately exploited by Nasser and his associates and incorporated into the Arab socialist system. When its crushing defeat in the Six-Day War of June 1967 threw this regime into crisis, student demonstrations in February 1968 constituted the first anti-regime movement since March 1954 Crisis. These famous demonstrations served as a starting point for the strident movements that continued during the early 1970s. In the face of oppression by the regime and harsher security legislation and repressive measures as well as radicalization prompted by the rise of a new trend in Islamism (an orientation toward violent Islamic revolutionary ideology influenced by the Iranian Revolution), these movements entered a long winter period.

It was not until the first decade of this century that these circumstances underwent significant change. Noteworthy in this regard is that the citizens’ movement linked with the Second (al-Aqsā) Intifada (an anti-occupation struggle against Israel, the originator of the War on Terror) was one catalyst. This movement led to the 2004 Kifaya movement (so named by those who had had “enough” (*kifāya*) of Mubarak) and blazed the trail for the current revolution.

[Outline of the developmental process of the Egyptian revolution]

There is no room here to describe in detail the developments that occurred during the January 25, 2011 revolution in Egypt, but the following constitutes the author’s interpretation of its broad outline as assessed at the time this paper was

written (June 2012: before the final stage of the presidential election). This can be summarized by three key players, three processes and three political stages that appear in the political course of the revolution.

The three key players are (1) the military (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), (2) the Muslim Brotherhood, and (3) the revolutionary youth and liberal forces supporting them. The first two – the military and the Muslim Brotherhood – also played leading roles in the 1952 revolution, and the cooperation and confrontation between the two provides the principal storyline in the political course of the latest revolution (Note 5).

Surrounding these three key players were Islamists (Salafist groups, al-Jamā'a al-Islamiyya and other former extremist Islamic movement organizations), traditional Islamic forces (al-Azhar and Sufi orders), the Coptic Christians, and the “remnants” of the former ruling National Democratic Party.

The three political processes were (1) parliamentary elections, (2) the presidential election, and (3) the establishment of a new constitution. The order in which these are to be implemented remains a point of contention among the various forces. The revolutionary/liberal forces' insistence that the drafting of a new constitution, or at least a charter determining the principles for a new constitution, come first was dismissed, and ultimately the transition to a new regime was pursued in the aforementioned order by the military, which was given responsibility as the overseer of the revolution's roadmap.

Characterizing the relations among the three main actors at the initial stage was the cooperation between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood ran a campaign in support of the March 2011 national referendum on the amendments proposed by the constitutional amendment committee appointed by the military, and overwhelmed the revolutionary/liberal forces opposed to it. The Brotherhood, which also won in the subsequent People's Assembly elections

(November 2011 – January 2012), amended its original policy of not fielding candidates from within the Brotherhood in March 2012 and put up Khairat el-Shater, a businessman and the Brotherhood's deputy *murshid* (supreme guide), as its presidential candidate. The Brotherhood also made moves toward forming a new cabinet, as was its right as the majority holder of seats in the People's Assembly, to replace the cabinet appointed by the military, and this only further intensified its adversarial relationship with the military. In the second process, the presidential election, the military presumably used a judicial decision as cover to blatantly intervene by qualifying candidates to exclude powerful figures such as el-Shater.

After the actors and the political processes, the third element of the revolution's developmental structure was the stage of practical politics on which the various political forces established their adversarial and cooperative relations. This stage comprises three sections. The first is the main stage of "official politics," where events (the previously mentioned national referendum on amending the constitution, the People's Assembly elections and the presidential election) took place within the framework of relations between the executive branch (the cabinet appointed by the military), the legislature (the People's Assembly in which the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists held a majority of seats) and the judiciary (judges and prosecutors) with fragile independency.

Second is the grassroots movement stage of "street politics" that were truly a creation of the revolution. During the revolution's initial period of elation, the popular attacks on the National Democratic Party's headquarters and the State Security Investigation Services (Mubāhith Amn al-Dawla) of the Interior Ministry in February and March of 2011 led to an order disbanding the party and a name change for the Services. The start of President Mubarak's trial in August 2011 was also the result of a fierce street demonstration. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has continued to manage the revolution's progress while under

pressure from these street politics, but a major fissure arose between the military and street politics in October when military police moved against a sit-in protest staged by Coptic Christians engaged in front of the national television bureau that resulted in large numbers of people being killed. In November the military declared that it would firmly side with established interests: the constitutional principle of the inviolability of the defense budget announced by the deputy prime minister. This further damaged the prestige of the army as the self-claimed faithful guardian of the revolution. In the face of swelling popular protest demonstrations, the military-appointed cabinet was forced to resign en masse.

The third is the level of “politics of principle.” The drafters of the new constitution scheduled as the third process following the presidential election will likely be seeking to establish philosophical foundations for the coming new regime that will cement the successes of the revolution. The axis for discussions had been Islam’s position within the state structure, that is, the debate over a “civil state” versus a “religious state.” As circumstances changes, however, discussions on other principles such as civilian control of the military will be undertaken. The friction between the military and the Brotherhood that escalated over the course of the presidential election campaign has already resurfaced in a dispute over the composition of the constitutional drafting committee. The scenario to be played out on this stage of “politics of principle” will not be a simple one, though, given the participation of the revolutionary youth and liberal forces that were defeated in the parliamentary elections, respect for the position of minority Christians, and the role of al-Azhar as the highest Sunni Muslim authority. Various forms of revolution and counter-revolution will likely appear in clearer fashion on this very stage.

### **3. The future of the Arab revolutions**

[Various forms of counter-revolution]

Shortly after President Mubarak stepped down in February 2012, a sudden surge of demands and requests from the people came bursting out in the midst of explosive demonstrations of joy throughout the country. The expectations of the revolution illustrated by these demands were truly wide-ranging, and the reactions against the revolution and the directions taken by the counter-revolution also assumed numerous forms. Even as the impacts of the revolution were being felt in every corner of the Arab world, the counter-revolution also extended its reach across the region. This occurred in connection to both the structural changes in the regional system overall and the restructuring of relations with the global hegemonic system.

For example, neighboring Saudi Arabia and the UAE sent security forces and cooperated in putting down the demonstrations in Bahrain, even as Qatar and other oil-producing Arab states voiced support for NATO air strikes and other military assistance for the anti-regime movement in Libya. The GCC countries thus took completely opposing positions, suppressing revolutionary forces in one instance while offering support in another. They pursued closer relations with NATO and proposed GCC membership for the non-Gulf oil-producing states of Morocco and Jordan in seeking out regional collaboration to maintain their monarchical regimes. Major changes may be underway in the structure of regional politics as Turkey, a NATO member, has adopted a policy of becoming actively involved in the internal politics of the Middle East and signs are emerging of improved diplomatic relations between Iran and Egypt.

The military assistance provided by the “international community” for “democratization” in Libya and Syria is similar in nature to the 2003 US-UK attack on Iraq, differing only in scale. These three countries were all established through the Arab national revolutions, and Iraq and Syria in particular were

fraternal countries, both being ruled by the Ba'ath Party. All three of these countries were ruled by regimes known for repression of human rights, and "humanitarian intervention" was justified using reasons of the moment. The invasion of Iraq was conducted as part of the post-9/11 war on terror, the US-led restructuring of the hegemonic system, while attempts are underway to restructure the hegemonic order combating the new Arab revolutions, with advocacy for "Arab Spring" being championed to provide justification.

Another face of the counter-revolution is the instigation of sectarian confessionalism. National solidarity between Muslims and Coptic Christians was emphasized in the Egyptian revolution's initial period of elation. Only later did the rise of the Salafists help reignite disputes between the two religions over the issues of conversion and church construction. Reporting on the revolutions in various Arab countries did cover the eradication of confessionalism (*ta'ifiya*) in Lebanon and an anti-tribalism (*qabaliya*) slogan in Libya, but it was very much a situation where the confessionalism was only exploited to crush the revolutionary movements. Oppression of the protest movement in Bahrain was justified by framing it as a sectarian dispute, as rioting by Shi'ite citizens against a Sunni royal family. As seen in the assertion that the machinations of Shi'ite Iran underpinned these movements, the flames of confessionalism were fanned within an international framework to contain revolutions threatening to spill across national borders. Ever since the Eastern Question of the 19th century, inciting confessionalism in this region has been continually tied to Western intervention, and the ongoing counter-revolution movement offers yet another example. The civil war in Syria is intensifying due to support from outside forces, and there is a risk that the situation could grow more serious and protracted as the conflict transforms into a dispute between the ruling Alawis (a heterodox Shi'ite minority) and Sunnis.

In the free elections conducted as part of the revolutionary process in Tunisia and

Egypt, Islamist political parties made breakthroughs in both countries. This does not mean, however, that the Islamist movements themselves all have a counter-revolutionary tendency; the movements themselves feature combinations of various tendencies, as illustrated by the participation of many young Islamists in the revolution. Furthermore, the reactionary tendencies seen within the movement are not all pointed in the same direction. In Egypt after the revolution, for instance, a campaign was begun demanding that the policies implemented by the former regime to boost the status of women (government-manufactured feminism) be reconsidered, and even some Islamist veiled women joined the ranks of this movement to suppress the rights of women. Meriting particular attention among the numerous reactionary trends is the neoliberal direction of Islamism. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, as it moves closer to becoming the ruling party in the regime, has shown such a tendency from early on as it seeks cooperative relations with the US. Tunisia's Nahda (Renaissance) Party is similar. The "Nahda Program" for the future presented by this Muslim Brotherhood-inspired political party represents an obvious continuation of the neoliberal policies pursued by the former regime.

There has been a reactionary movement against this neoliberal direction of reform that remains firmly committed to maintaining the various Arab socialist systems in place since the Nasser regime. As the foundation of the former regime, the military is likely to play an important role in determining the direction of this reaction. The military's reactionary role has become steadily more conspicuous, and there are concerns about the military control over the independence of the judiciary, an essential condition for future progress in the revolution, and the functions of a free media. The issue of civilian control of the military will undoubtedly become a major point of dispute in the aforementioned scenario of "the politics of principle."

The public security institutions that constituted some of the largest targets for

attack by popular movements during the revolution are also hoping to maintain the former regime by maintaining collaboration with the military. There are forces with diverse interests and ideas aligned in reaction against the revolution, including the up-and-coming privileged business elite who were the beneficiaries of the neoliberal policies instituted by the former regime in the closing days of its hold on power, the public corporation and bureaucratic elite who alongside the military were supporters of the Arab socialist system, and former ruling party supporters based around powerful families in the rural establishment. If the grassroots resistance to future progress by the revolution coalesces into a “counter-revolution,” then the structural corruption eroding Egyptian society must take some of the blame.

[The new culture emerging from the revolutions]

The counter-revolution resisting the expansion of the Arab revolutions is robust in structure, and the dream of the revolution could very well disappear like an ephemeral rainbow. Indeed, it could even produce, as have many revolutions heretofore, a variety of negative legacies that might best be termed reactionary consequences. Returning once more to the discussion of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, the age of imperialism that was the consequence of these revolutions was also an age that saw the rise of anti-Semitism and the growth of its twin Zionism. The Arab revolutions of 60 years ago were triggered by the effects of the 1948 Nakba (“Catastrophe”: the Israeli declaration of independence and the Palestinian exodus), and these revolutions left to subsequent generations a bitter legacy on the issue of Palestine (Note 6).

Nevertheless, revolutions do convey a legacy of positive value to the next era. The collective memory of movements past that became the driving force for these recent revolutions will likely be passed on even more vividly to the next generation. The vision of young people repeatedly taking to the streets without

fearing the violence of the public security institutions will be remembered in numerous ways as a new tradition.

What is the legacy (*turāth*) of these new Arab revolutions? Attention should be focused not only on the elation of the revolution but also on the signs of a new culture created in the streets and plazas that hosted repeated demonstrations and in cyberspace. The new culture of the revolution has produced an eruption of “literary works” in the broad sense. There are true-to-life novels about the revolutionary experience, humorous books and collections of short stories, scripts for revolutionary dramas, collections of revolutionary proverbs and anecdotes, and collections of literary reviews on the revolution. In the poetry genre, there are collections of songs and poems about the revolution as well as collections of slogans and chants, varying in form and content from religious to satiric, from literary poems in standard Arabic to colloquial poems and folk songs in the Egyptian dialect. Popular topics are “the revolution and love” and memorials to the martyrs. Comic books have also appeared, albeit in small numbers, featuring not only standard one-frame comics but also story comics, something of an “alternative art form” in the Arab world, that depict the participation of young people in the revolution. Revolutionary art in the form of graffiti written on walls represents a continuation and extension of this. Interesting for their novelty are commentaries on the relationship between Facebook and the revolution and how-to books on political participation.

Let us choose from among these many publications just one for closer examination: a pamphlet entitled “The Rights and Duties of Egyptians” illustrated with cartoons. This pamphlet is for the most part an Arabic translation of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it is noteworthy in being written in colloquial language (*‘āmmīya*) readily comprehensible to ordinary people (Note 7). The meaning of the words “dignity” (*karāma*) and “freedom” (*hurrīya*) shouted throughout the Egyptian revolution are explained in concrete detail using

everyday expressions readily comprehensible to the average Muslim citizen. Egyptian society still has a significantly high rate of illiteracy, so colloquial Arabic as a “spoken language” is of great importance to this society. Putting into print “spoken language” not normally written down offers a new form of expression able to overcome the cultural divide between the intellectuals and the masses. New words and new forms of expression have the power to change the relationships between people and to create new ties and bonds. Learning about the new culture continually being produced by the Arab revolutions and the legacies of the revolution that will be passed on should help enhance our own empowerment.

[The Arab revolutions and Japan’s role]

The first Western dignitary to visit Egypt after the collapse of the Mubarak regime in February 2012 was UK Prime Minister David Cameron. The prime minister was welcomed by the people in Tahrir Square, but his visit to Egypt was only a stopover on his way to an arms fair in Kuwait commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Gulf War. During the revolution in Tunisia, news coverage made it clear that France and other Western countries had supplied the riot police with equipment. Not only have the Western countries made the Arab world a major export market for arms, but they have also assisted many repressive regimes by providing riot-control equipment. It was noted earlier that the Arab revolutions prompted the GCC countries and NATO to begin close collaboration on the security front as well, but there have been even newer developments in terms of bolstering their internal security apparatus: Germany’s Merkel administration approved the sale of tanks to Saudi Arabia in October 2011 despite objections from the opposition Social Democratic Party, and indicated its willingness in June 2012 to cooperate in security training for Saudi religious police.

Unlike the countries of the West, Japan has exported neither arms nor security equipment to the Arab countries, and assistance in security training for the suppression of demonstrators is out of the question. Military contributions to stabilize the region are not what the countries of the Middle East expect of Japan. Twenty years ago the Japanese government was criticized by “the international community” for not making a military contribution to the Gulf War, and so in December 2003 it dispatched Self-Defense Forces units to Iraq over the objections of much of the nation.

Still, Japan should contribute in its own way, not merely mimicking the Western countries, to the development and stability of the Middle East, and this will require that it revise some of its existing perspectives on the region. Japan has regarded the Middle East only as a region that poses risks to the running of the Japanese economy. In other words, its sole perception is a negative one of the Middle East as a region whose instability threatens Japan’s supply of petroleum and natural gas. Japanese companies are similarly timid of their investment activities in the Middle East, nervous about managing the safety costs of dispatching employees into this troubled region, and their risk-averse behavior is obvious. Until about thirty years ago, Japanese companies, like their South Korean and Chinese counterparts at present, pursued active expansion into Middle Eastern markets. The Arab revolutions currently underway may cause disruptions in the short term but, over the medium term, they will open the way to economic development accompanying political and social reform and increase the possibility of free inflows of foreign capital.

Regional stability in the Middle East is an important condition for Japan’s economy. Accordingly, it would behoove Japan not to cooperate in military interventions but instead to make its own independent diplomatic efforts. Japan’s mediation during the Iran-Iraq War was praiseworthy, and Japan has considerable room to contribute through diplomatic efforts to the resolution of the Palestinian

Question, too, as a country with an even-handed historical perspective trusted by the parties involved. Expectations are high that Japan can contribute across many facets, including independent peace diplomacy on the issue of nuclear arms as a country that has suffered nuclear attacks, fair and positive approaches to resolving religious conflict that differ from those of the Christian countries of the West, which have had atypical relations with the region in respect to religion since the Eastern Question, and systemic assistance to help develop local governing regimes as part of the political and social reforms accompanying the Arab revolutions.

Notes:

- (1) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16217726>
- (2) Bokuro Eguch, “the International Significance of Revolutions in 1948,” *The Age of Imperialism*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968. (in Japanese)
- (3) On the argument of Japanese historians about 1952 July Egyptian Revolution, see my article: Eiji Nagasawa, “Japanese Arab Studies after World War Two: The Case Studies of Two Pioneer Researchers, Nakaoka San’eki and Itagaki Yuzo,” in Nagasawa, *Modern Egypt through Japanese Eyes, A Study on Intellectual and Socio-economic Aspects of Egyptian Nationalism*, Cairo: Merit Publishing House, 2009.
- (4) I argued the development of social movement as the background of the current revolution in the following: Eiji Nagasawa, *The Egyptian Revolution and the Future of the Arab World*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2012 (in Japanese) and “Urban Unrest and Social Movements under ‘Soft State’ after the Introduction of Open Door Policy in Egypt,” in Nagasawa, op.cit.
- (5) I argued the comparison of two revolutions: the 1952 Revolution and the current revolution in the following article, “Comparing Two Egyptian Revolutions: 1952 vs. 2011,” *Mediterranean World* [Hitotsubashi University Mediterranean Studies Group] XXI, 2012: <http://www.econ.hit-u.ac.jp/~areastd/mediterranean/publication.htm>

- (6) Eiji See Nagasawa, *Jewish Egyptian Marxists and the Palestine Question*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2012. (in Japanese)
- (7) ‘Azzat, Najlā’ (ed.), *haqq wa wājib al-misrī*, Cairo: Diwan Bookshop, 2011.