

# Kase Hideaki's Revisionist Vision for Twenty-First-Century Japan: A Final Interview and Obituary

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**Abstract:** *The late writer and journalist Kase Hideaki was long involved in shaping public opinion in Japan. Espousing a conservative and nationalist worldview, he chaired several major associations that sought to revise Japan's constitution and embellish its history. In an interview shortly before he passed away last November, Kase discussed his upbringing and his political and social outlook. This article offers a brief obituary of Kase and explores his worldview.*

**Keywords.** *Kase Hideaki; Abe Shinzō; revisionism; constitution; Nippon Kaigi; Shinto; rearmament; nationalism*

For decades, Kase Hideaki was one of the leading figures shaping public opinion in Japan. As a political adviser at the highest levels, chair of various associations, and the author of countless books and articles dealing with international relations and with his country's place in the world (see Kase 2022), his influence was far-reaching. Many viewed him as the mentor of the late Prime Minister Abe Shinzō—it is said that Abe visited him unflinching for a monthly conversation even at the height of his power.

Kase, who died on 15 November 2022, shortly before his 86th birthday, was a dynamic and charismatic person. He was active to his last day, his office filled with admirers and aides thirsty for his opinions. For many years he headed and served as the chief ideologist of an array of nationalist groups that urged Japan to pursue a more hawkish and independent foreign policy, and to bolster the nation's image both at home and abroad. Kase was also a senior member of the country's largest conservative and right-wing organization, Nippon Kaigi (The Japan Conference). Its 40,000 members include many of the nation's ranking political figures, among them Abe until his assassination last summer (on this organization, see McNeill 2015; Sasagase et al. 2015; Mizohata 2016; Tawara 2017). At present, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's second cabinet includes 11 ministers (57 per cent) who belong to this organization (Shinbun Akahata 2022).

Many of these organizations urged for revision of the country's constitution, and have also sought to rewrite Japan's history, especially the problematic chapter of its imperialist expansion until 1945. In recent years, this revisionist line has enjoyed increasing success, as its ideas take hold among the public, and the influence of liberal circles and left-wing parties fades.



**Figure 1: Kase Hideaki (1936-2022).  
Photograph: Rotem Kowner, Tokyo, May  
2022.**

I met with Kase in Tokyo for an interview three times during the late spring of 2022. Our last session took place a little more than a month before the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō on 8 July. In these interviews, Kase made clear his views on a range of issues. He was convivial, communicative, and resolute. ‘I am not a nationalist,’ Kase declared, ‘but a patriot.’ If, to a foreign ear, many of his opinions may sound radical, at times callous, they represent the views of quite a broad sector of contemporary Japanese society. One place where his ideas enjoy strong support is in Japan’s long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which despite its name, espouses a spectrum of conservative and nationalist views. Some of Kase’s ideas, such as the aspiration to see Japan acquire nuclear arms, are not at the heart of contemporary Japanese consensus, and as such may constitute no more than wishful thinking in far-right circles. Nevertheless, the seeds of

these views have already taken root, and in a regional crisis, they sprout and even bloom.

### **Blacks on Television**

Kase Hideaki was born in 1936 into an affluent, land-owning family; his father was a high-ranking diplomat in the foreign service. His unusual childhood, and the education he received, can explain his subsequent understanding of the outside world. Among other positions, he served as special advisor to the Prime Minister in the Fukuda Takeo (1976-78) and Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982-87) Cabinets. He was also an adviser to large corporations, and in this capacity visited the Middle East.

‘When I was six months old,’ he related, ‘I was taken to London and I spent three years there. My parents liked parties and they hired an English nanny for me, Betty, so that my first language was English. In the last year of World War II, my family—my mother, my sister, and I—was evacuated to a resort town in Nagano Prefecture, where we had a villa. My mother was Catholic, and the local priest was an Irishman who hated the British. Under his guidance, we prayed for Japan’s victory. I was in third grade when the war ended, at an age when it was impossible to understand what war is. We didn’t return to Tokyo until October.’

Spending one’s early childhood abroad, as Kase did, does not necessarily lead to liberal beliefs. He absorbed his deep loyalty to establishment Japan and his historical outlook at home, particularly from his father, Kase Toshikazu (1903-2004). As a diplomat whose career took off early, Kase’s father was personally involved in the fateful agreements with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union his country signed on the eve of the Asia-Pacific War. He took part also as one of Japan’s representatives at the 1945 surrender ceremony aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*.



**Figure 2: Kase Toshikazu (on the right) at the surrender ceremony on board the USS *Missouri*, Tokyo Bay, 2 September 1945.**  
 Source: [Wikipedia](#).

Ten years later, the elder Kase was appointed Japan's first ambassador to the United Nations, and even after retiring, he continued to act as a personal adviser to prime ministers. A prolific writer, he wrote about Japan's diplomacy on the eve of the war as early as 1950 (Kase 1950, 1951a, and 1951b). Over the years his nationalist bent became ever more apparent. In 1981, Kase senior founded and led the National People's Council to Defend Japan (Nihon Omamoru Kokumin Kaigi), a far-right organization, which among other projects published textbooks of its own making about Japanese history (on his later views of the war, see Kase 1981, 1994, 2003, and 2004, as well as Kase and Kase 1990; on his public activity, see Yoshida 2006: 122, 142).

Until the end of his life, the son seemed to go on fighting his father's war and to defend his reputation. 'Three or four years after the war, I asked my father how he felt when he stepped onto the deck of the *Missouri*,' Kase said. 'He

replied that even though Japan lost on the battlefield, we won the war because we succeeded in liberating Asia from the yoke of the Christians. He felt an exaltation of the spirit over that. The war ended on 15 August, but the Indonesians went on fighting against the wicked Christians until they liberated themselves from the shackles of Dutch rule.'

Indonesia's war of liberation, which broke out when Japan surrendered and ended its occupation led to independence in 1949, provides a good example of the way that Kase presented Japan's struggle against the West. Kase made no mention of the fact that, after Japan took over the Indonesian archipelago from the Dutch in 1942, it never granted the local population independence (see Mark 2018). Moreover, immediately after Japan's surrender and Indonesia's declaration of independence, the Japanese occupation army in Indonesia suppressed the local forces, until the arrival of British and Dutch forces and the transfer of rule to them. Few people today, both within and outside Japan, are aware that more Japanese soldiers than British or Dutch were killed in the struggle to restore European colonial rule in Indonesia in the year after the conclusion of the Pacific War (Kowner 2020: 129).

Kase, for his part, was intent on emphasizing the aid Japan proffered to advance Indonesian independence. In 2001, he headed the production committee of a Japanese feature film titled *Merdeka 17805*, which focused on the assistance that a number of Japanese officers gave the Indonesian liberation movement after the war (Merdeka was the Indonesian term for independence in the post-war era and the number indicates the date of its declaration, that is 17 August 1945). Even though there were indeed such cases, the film ignored the broad, and problematic, nature of Japan's intervention, let alone its three-year colonial rule and harsh treatment of the local population, and not surprisingly it stirred

protests in Indonesia (see Goto 2003: 272–83).

India's independence, in 1947, also attracts considerable interest among revisionist circles in Japan. 'We liberated India,' Kase asserted in the interview. 'The campaign in Imphal [March–July 1944, when Japan invaded India to attack Allied forces] sparked Indian independence. Every Japanese person is certain'—here, Kase raised his voice— 'that the war was important! It was the war that brought equality between the races.' Although the Japanese were frequent victims of Western racial discrimination since the mid-nineteenth century, this notion of a wartime Japanese crusade for racial equality stems mostly from a single event: The 1919 Racial Equality Proposal (人種の差別撤廃提案).

The story of this proposal has been resurrected recently due to its centennial anniversary (see, for instance, Yamashita 2019; Tsutsui 2021; JMOFA n.d.). Submitted by Japan as an amendment to the Treaty of Versailles at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the proposal was rejected, due to opposition by the United States and the dominions of the British Empire Delegation (Shimazu 1998). Japanese revisionists have parroted this notion of racial equality when discussing Asia's decolonization, ignoring Japan's record of inequality in its own colonial empire. Moreover, they overlook the fact that in 1919, Japanese Foreign Minister Uchida Kōsai noted that the proposal was intended to apply only to members of the League of Nations (and first and foremost to Japanese citizens) rather than to 'all colored peoples', notably excluding the people of the colonized territories of Asia-Africa and Latin America, some of them even under Japanese yoke (Shimazu 1998: 114; Konishi 2019). Kase, for his part, extended this limited scheme into a global struggle. 'Today,' he concluded, 'we see Black commentators on the television networks [globally], and that is thanks to the war.'

## From Merchants to Samurai

It is not by chance that Kase played up World War II and the short period in its wake. The war was a seminal event in the history of the Japanese nation and of Asia as a whole and remains extremely controversial in Japan and in the country's relations with its neighbors. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan expanded its Asian empire, especially throughout South and Southeast Asia. With its defeat, Japan not only lost the empire it had laboriously built across the Asian continent for half a century but was also occupied by foreign forces for almost seven years and for some time had the status of a pariah state. Moreover, American bases in Japan continued to expand following Japan's independence and remain to this day. In return, the US occupation paved the way for democracy, prosperity, and a protracted peace, which it still enjoys.

There remains disagreement among Japanese over the reasons that Japan went to war. Some in liberal circles view the war starting in 1931 (the 'Fifteen Years War'), and especially its final chapter known as the Asia-Pacific War (starting in December 1941), as a gross blunder. This extended conflict was the outcome of colonial ambition, gradual deterioration into adventurism, and flawed decision-making. Others, however, argue that the Japanese leadership was pushed into the Asia-Pacific War by the Anglo-American powers, which controlled a large part of Asia and its raw materials. Still others consider it an ideological campaign that was aimed at liberating the peoples of Asia from the yoke of the white man. Kase's approach fuses the second and third views, and thereby guides concepts that are widespread in Japan today, not least among members of the ruling party (on views of the war in postwar Japan, see McCormack 2007; Saaler 2013; Yoshida 2018; Yamaguchi 2017 and 2020).

In the early 1980s, Kase embarked on what

would become a lifelong crusade to persuade the world, and his fellow Japanese in particular, that his country had been Asia’s liberator rather another colonial power. In this he followed his father’s lead but was more outspoken and pugnacious. Unlike Stalin, Kase junior was unwilling to admit even the most basic aphorism that where trees are felled chips will fly. Kase was one of the main advocates of the 2007 Japanese film *The Truth about Nanjing* (南京の真実) which claims that this atrocity had been a hoax. More recently, he appeared in the 2018 film *Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of Comfort Women Issue* where he served as a major denier of the experience of the comfort women, the sexual slaves of the Japanese military (Dezaki et al. 2021).



**Figure 3. Kase expressing his view about the Comfort Women in the film *Shusenjo*. Source: @gatamchun Twitter Account.**

Kase expressed his grand view of the war repeatedly and unequivocally. ‘Japan went to war [in 1941] because of unfair pressure of the Roosevelt administration,’ he said. ‘Supplying arms to Chiang Kai-shek [the leader of Nationalist China in the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-45] was a gross violation of the rules of warfare. We had no territorial ambitions; we did not enter China for land or

raw materials. The deterioration toward war happened because the Americans persecuted us and the Japanese immigrants [in the United States]. I am an ardent supporter of the United States today, but not before the war. At that time, we were contemptuous of the Americans. They were barbarians.’

‘We did not surrender unconditionally,’ he continued. ‘The Potsdam Declaration [of 26 July 1945, setting forth the terms of Japan’s surrender] contains explicit conditions. Shortly after the war, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu [Mamoru] met with General [Douglas] MacArthur [US military governor of Japan during the Allied occupation] and protested the US claim that Japan had surrendered unconditionally. In light of all of Japan’s achievements, it was a worthwhile war. It was our nation’s most glorious period since its founding by the Emperor Jimmu [in 660 BCE]. There’s a popular saying that the war turned a nation of samurai into a people of merchants,’ said Kase, before adding, with a smile, ‘and the most mercantile people into samurai’ hinting apparently at the Jews.

Today’s Japanese revisionists try to play down the importance of Japan’s alliance with Germany and Italy in World War II—and quite justifiably. Historians, too, agree that the alliance was hollow, despite late, unsuccessful attempts at naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean from 1943 onward by the Axis partners. Germany’s surprise attack on the Soviet Union, in June 1941, shattered the limited trust that had existed between the partners. In response, Japan did not give Germany advance notice of its attack on Pearl Harbor, and thereafter each side followed its own course.

‘Japan’s alliance with Germany was the handiwork of Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke. My father was his private secretary and joined him everywhere,’ Kase related. ‘Matsuoka dreamed of a quadripartite alliance, including the Soviet Union. [On behalf of Japan,

Matsuoka signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940, and the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in April 1941; see Figure 3]. At that time, no one dreamed that Hitler would invade Russia. From Japan's point of view, the invasion was a betrayal' [which harmed Japan's fragile trust of Germany].



**Figure 4: Kase Toshikazu (third on the right) at the conclusion of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, Moscow, 13 April 1941. Source: [Wikipedia](#).**

### Not a Holy Constitution

'Betrayal' is a much-used word in connection with Japan. In American eyes, the word refers to the Japanese 'sneak' attack on its naval base in Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. Ironically, the United States, of all countries, became Japan's closest friend and ally after vanquishing it. The connection between the two countries is a deep, multilayered but also traumatic one that had its origin a century earlier, in 1854, when a fleet of American warships forced Japan to abandon its partial insularity. Since then, it has had its ups and downs, extreme enmity and close partnership. The first years of the occupation period between 1945 and 1952 played a crucial role in Japan's recovery and

integration into the US-led Western bloc, but American efforts to alter the country from the foundation still spark mixed feelings today, seven decades later (on this period, see Dower 1999).

'The postwar alliance with the United States was the right thing,' Kase avers. 'The two countries fought against communism. However, the reforms introduced by the occupation authorities were problematic in part. The Americans prevented us from teaching national pride.' Across East Asia and also elsewhere, it is difficult today not to feel that the strength of the United States is ebbing. Because of this, some think that Japan is liable to revert to the Chinese sphere of influence in the future. After all, Japan was under the Sinosphere for more than a thousand years, and its transition to the Western sphere of influence some 150 years ago stemmed initially from the need to assure national survival. Still, nationalist circles in Japan continue to cling to the United States.

'The United States is not weakening,' Kase said emphatically. 'The idea that it is growing weaker has been in the air since 1960, but Nixon believed that the Soviet Union would not overtake his country. The president whom I love best, Trump, also maintained that it was necessary to make America great again. China itself has not changed since the time of the empire. We [Japanese] need to reduce our ties with China to the level of economic relations of give-and-take. If China attacks, we need to assist Taiwan militarily. It is more of a moral than a strategic issue. Taiwan was a Japanese colony for 50 years and was never part of China.'

Kase's apprehension of China is understandable. In the wake of its meteoric rise over the past three decades, China has not only supplanted Japan as Asia's major economy, but also became a world power with considerable military strength, which it uses to gain political leverage. Despite the longtime historical ties

between the two and the cultural debt it owes China for the legacy it bequeathed to Japan, China arouses not only deep anxiety but also aversion among nationalist circles in Japan and is perceived as a major threat to its sovereignty. Since 2020, even the Japanese Communist Party has seen China as a current that is in opposition to peace and to world prosperity, whose ‘aggressive territorial claims and human rights violations ... are not worthy of the name of a communist party’ (Ryall 2021). At the heart of the conflict today, and beyond apprehensions concerning the future, there is a territorial conflict over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai group of islands on the Japan-China maritime border. Their recent past also separates these two great nations, as they are divided over the interpretation of the modern wars, and above all over the event known as the Nanjing Massacre of December 1937.

‘We are today experiencing a national crisis with regard to China,’ Kase stated. ‘Fifteen years ago, Russia was a world power and China assisted it. Now it’s the reverse. That said, I doubt, or at least I hope, that China [under Communist rule] will not hold on for another 30 years.’ At the time of the interview, Kase was less bothered by threats from North Korea. Fears of this neighboring country, whether because of belligerent declarations, or the firing of missiles above the Japanese archipelago, provoke outrage among nationalist circles in Japan, leading to calls to enlarge the army and revise the peace clause of the constitution to permit the use of military power to solve international conflicts (Wada 2022). Kase dismissed the threats from Pyongyang also ruled out a scenario in which South Korea finds itself under attack from the north. ‘That will not happen. North Korean weapons are so outdated. Look at their tanks, they’re World War II surplus. That’s why they’re developing nuclear weapons.’

Kase did share, however, the views among Japan’s right-wing circles that the constitution

is an obstacle to contend with. A less peaceful constitution could serve as a more effective deterrence of North Korea and, in the longer term, of China, during what some perceive as a period of growing American reluctance, perhaps even incapacity, to serve as a regional, let alone global, policeman. At the heart of the constitution, which was written by a team led by a New York lawyer shortly after Japan’s surrender, is Article 9. It contains an unprecedented assertion that ‘the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation,’ and that to ensure this, ‘land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be sustained.’ However, in 1954, under American pressure in a period of an escalating struggle with the Soviet Union, Japan established ‘self-defense forces’ that in time became one of the world’s strongest military forces (see Skabelund 2022).

Present-day Japan is by no means a pacifist state, but because of the constitution and a (constantly diminishing) public consensus, it has so far refrained from using its forces on the field of battle (Almog 2014). During his tenure as prime minister, Abe tried, unsuccessfully, to reach broad agreement on revising the constitution and Nippon Kaigi helped him invigorate the idea (on recent attempts to revise the constitution, see Goodman 2017; Lummis 2018; Okano 2018). Kase for one, has never given up this idea. ‘Article 9 must be deleted,’ he stated. ‘The US Constitution also makes no mention of military forces. Every sovereign nation has the right to maintain such forces. The present situation is problematic. The entrance to the Japanese Defense Ministry is protected only by policemen and guards from a private company. The soldiers there are only for decoration—they are not allowed to bear arms. The average age of the soldiers in Japan [34] is the highest in the world. We lack 20,000 soldiers to fill the quota.’

‘While the government is talking about doubling the defense budget within five years,

we need to triple it. As for the planned deal between Japan and Britain, I think it's wonderful [a huge deal for the joint development of a future warplane]. Japan needs to become an arms exporter. It is too bad Putin didn't attack Ukraine when Abe was in power. Abe would have taken advantage of the development to double the budget.' This last sentence was almost prophetic as a half year later, Kishida's government would increase the defense budget for 2023 by 26 per cent and project increases of as much as 56 per cent over the next five years (Takahashi 2022; The Defense Post 2022).

## Weapon of Peace

Geopolitical developments in East Asia, the war in Ukraine, and the possibility of revising the constitution all have implications for the nuclear arms issue. In the late 1960s, Kase's father was an adviser to Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (in office from 1964 to 1972), an uncle of Abe Shinzō. Satō sought to arm Japan with nuclear weapons to counterbalance China's recent status as a nuclear power. Nevertheless, under US pressure, Japan in 1967 signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and Satō adopted the policy of the 'three non-nuclear principles': Japan would not manufacture or possess nuclear weapons, nor allow their introduction into Japanese territory. That policy garnered him a Nobel Peace Prize seven years later, and many believe that the principles he formulated remain in force to this day. Well, they largely did. However, in a secret agreement Satō signed with Washington in 1969, he agreed that nuclear weapons could be brought back to Okinawa, also after Japan would regain control of it, whenever the United States decided there was 'a great emergency' (Hattori 2021: 183-85; see also Wakaizumi 2002; Rabson 2021 and 2022).

Abe recognized the importance of nuclear deterrence and was ready, toward the end of

his term, and seemed willing, to breach Satō's framework and host American nuclear weapons on the Japanese mainland. Kishida Fumio, the current prime minister and President of the LDP, is a native of Hiroshima. This background may explain his firm opposition against the idea of Japan's acquiring nuclear weapons. Kishida has not hesitated to sound a clear warning, including in the United Nations, about the urgent need for worldwide nuclear disarmament (Nihon Keizai Shimbun 2023).

Kase, for his part, was unhesitating in his reply when asked about the need for Japan to arm itself with nuclear weapons. 'By all means. We are the only victims of nuclear weapons,' he stated, overlooking other victims, such as the inhabitants of the Bikini Atoll as well as many others residing in the vicinity of test sites throughout the world. Japan was, of course, the only country to be attacked by nuclear weapons in war. But does this fact give it any right to acquire nuclear weapons? Kase believed it did: 'We have every right to possess such a weapon. According to a government study, it would take us two years to acquire nuclear capability. The Ukrainians should have kept a portion of the nuclear weapons that were in their hands. A nation needs nuclear arms for security. Furthermore, if India and Pakistan did not have nuclear arms today, they would be at war.'

Domestically, Japan is coping with multiple challenges. A turning point in its demography occurred in 2007, when, after 150 years of growth, the Japanese population began to shrink. Initially the decline was slow, but it gradually picked up speed, and in 2021 alone the population decreased by half a million people to around 124 million. In far-flung areas, whole villages have been emptied out and are now akin to ghost villages. Fearful of social shocks, the country's leadership is not opening its gates to significant immigration, especially of refugees. Still, the demographic future of the Japanese islands is causing widespread concern: Without immigration and



with a very low birthrate, the population continues to dwindle and age—already today the median age in Japan is 48.4. Kase had a clear opinion about the subject.

‘The decline of the population is not unique to Japan,’ he observed. ‘You can see it, for example, also in China, Korea, Germany and France. The fact that abortions are not perceived as a crime is bad. As for immigration, I suggest not allowing in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indonesians. Who to admit? Ukrainians. I am not completely against immigration, but I am for letting in people with needed professions. One hundred thousand, even 200,000 a year, is reasonable. People from Myanmar who know how to behave should come. Koreans are very welcome—my wife is Korean.’

In recent years, and especially during the coronavirus pandemic, when the country’s gates were shut almost hermetically, voices have been heard in Japan advocating a permanent state of partial isolation and a reduction of foreign influences. From within, the outside world is seen as violent and threatening. Kase did not share that right-wing outlook. ‘Japan cannot shut itself off from the world,’ Kase said. ‘How can we feed the whole population? Japan needs the world [for food and energy resources]. Our most important contribution is bringing about peace and stability in the world. This, Kase believed, could be done through the propagation of Japan’s indigenous religion: ‘Shinto can become one of the great contributions to humanity. I am happy that many Europeans are abandoning Christianity. The Christian period is about to end, and all the cathedrals in Europe are becoming tourist sites.’

Whatever the current spiritual situation in Europe, it is difficult to see in what way Shinto may contribute to the world. Even in Japan, Shinto’s growing influence recently worries mainstream Buddhism and religious minorities

alike (Mullins 2021: 181–83). After all, the current Shinto agenda is very inward looking and has no interest in foreign expansion. Prospering during Abe’s premiership, Shinto nationalism has not lost its momentum in Kishida’s cabinet. No less than 18 out of 19 members of his second cabinet belong to the parliamentary association linked to the Shinseiren (Shintō Seiji Renmei), the political arm of the country’s largest Shinto organization (Shinbun Akahata 2022).

Shinto and Japanese nationalism seem inseparable. It was only two decades ago, when Mori Yoshirō, the then prime minister (in office from April 2000 to April 2001) and later the Shinseiren president, caused a sensation by declaring that ‘this land of Japan’ was a divine country (神の国) with the imperial institution at its core, and he and his colleagues were striving toward that goal (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 151). Current association members seem no less determined. They seek to implement the organization’s agenda, including the restoration of moral education in public schools, the re-nationalization of Yasukuni Shrine, and the strengthening of the Imperial Household (Mullins 2022). In other words, neo-Shinto politics today go hand in hand with many of Kase’s tenets, emphasizing conservatism and revisionism alongside nationalism.

Abe’s failure to revise the constitution did not let Kase down. Ever the optimist, his conviction about Japan’s strengths seemed unshakeable even though the country has been coping in the last two decades with a deep social and demographic crisis, declining living standards, and a slump in its status worldwide and in Asia in particular. This is not to say that Kase was not entirely content with the direction Japan is heading toward. Nonetheless one obituary lamented, ‘his supporters may take comfort in the fact that the Japan he departed is inching closer to the vision he tirelessly propagated’ (McNeill and Hornyak 2022).

There is little doubt, indeed, that Japan has turned to the right recently, whether it means more conservative, nationalist, or xenophobic than before (see Oguma and Higuchi 2020; Higuchi et al. 2019). But as the heated public debate over Abe's state funeral suggests (McCormack 2022), the struggle over Japan's future is far from over. In the coming years it will become clear whether the (ultra) conservative and hawkish approach Kase espoused will be adopted widely, or whether more liberal and less belligerent currents supporting values of global civil society will continue to rule the roost.

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