Minorities and Electoral Reform in Japan

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Until now, I did not know what to say to our little kids who get bullied with hurled words of “Ainu! Ainu!” From now, I would like to reassure them by saying “Oh, yes, you ARE Ainu. There aren’t many Ainus around. That’s why you are worthy to be.”

Kayano Shigeru

I. Introduction

Discussions on electoral reforms in Japan rarely, if ever, revolves around the issue of minorities in the Japanese society. The issue of representation of minorities such as the indigenous people of Japan, the Ainu, or ethnic-Koreans and other long-term residents of foreign nationals, and even women are almost never debated among policy-makers and media in the context of the reforms of electoral systems.

As such, the electoral reform referred to in my paper is broader than the one in others. Normally the electoral reform indicates the purposeful changes in electoral systems, and the electoral system usually means changes in the methods of translating votes into seats. But this paper deals with much broader aspect of the electoral system, including the reserved seats, the gender quota, and the right to vote.

This essay deals with issues of electoral reforms related to three minorities in Japan: ethnic minorities, specifically, Japan’s indigenous population, the Ainu, women, and resident foreigners. Minorities here are defined not only by the real numbers and their proportion to the entire population. They are groups of people who are in a numerically disadvantaged position in the society, due to certain ascriptive elements, such as ethnicity, gender, and citizenship status, which are generally difficult to change at will.

II. Minorities in Japan

1. Ethnic Minorities

The ethnic composition of Japan whose total population amounts to 122 million is highly “homogenous”. It comprises almost exclusively, or so the Japanese believe, with ethnic Japanese, even with increased movement of people across the border. Since no official census is conducted on the ethnic composition of Japan, one can only extrapolate it from the foreigners registry. But this act itself implies that only foreigners are non-ethnic-Japanese, and that all foreigners are non-ethnic-Japanese. There is no way of knowing exactly which ethnicity each foreign resident has. Chinese national may or may not be an ethnic Han. A Japanese Brazilian is usually counted as a foreigner as if they are outsiders to the ethnic Japanese, but one may arguably say he/she is an ethnic Japanese. Around 15,000 foreign nationals acquire Japanese nationality every year recently, but their ethnic background all but disappears, at least on official record, once they become Japanese nationals. These situations themselves are a reflection of Japan’s high homogeneity or the belief in it on the part of the Japanese.

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1 Asahi Newspaper, July 30, 1995.
Some non-ethnic-Japanese population includes ethnic Koreans and Chinese, which include the people who migrated to Japan during the colonial rule and their descendants. There are around 540,000 ethnic Koreans and they are decreasing, due to ageing. Their numbers in the statistics decrease also as a certain number of them acquire the Japanese nationality and given away their original nationality as Japan does not allow dual nationality. They may or may not retain “Korean ethnicity” in the Japanese society. More than 300,000 have acquired Japanese nationality so far, with some thousands every year.

Another important ethnic group, which is the chief example of minorities in this paper, is the indigenous population of the Ainu, who have been discriminated against throughout the modern history of Japan. Presumably roughly 50,000 Ainus live in Japan today. There is no official figure due partly to the fact that the Japanese census never asks ethnicity of the respondents. "A little less than 50,000 " is an educated guess put forward by some knowledgable personalities like late Kayano Shigeru, a former, and the only, Ainu national assembly member and scholar (Kayano 1997: 15). Anthropologist Sasaki Koumei also stated the size of the Ainu population to be “not more than 50,000” (Sasaki 1998: 217). The most circulated figure of 20 some thousand is never accurate, because it is based on the survey conducted by Hokkaido government in association with the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, which does not include the Ainu who either does not cooperate with the association and/or the survey, who does not belong to the association, and who lives outside of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of four main islands in Japan where the Ainu mainly reside. We also need to take into account that we can reasonably assume that there are many Ainus who do not come forward to identify themselves as Ainu, still today, out of fear of being discriminated against.

2. Women in Politics

Women in Japan are a serious minority, when it comes to politics. Women of course are not the minority in the society as a whole. But the female politicians are so small in number in Japan that it justifies to discuss the issue as a minority problem. The underrepresentation of women in Japanese politics is well known by now. A Japanese specialist of gender politics laments it by putting it that Japan now is overtaken by “not only other advanced countries but also many developing countries” (Eto 2010: 177). Indeed even with the gradual increase of the number of female lawmakers throughout the democracy years after the WWII, the figures remain conspicuously lower than other countries. Its proportion of female lawmakers in the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet is currently meagre 8%, and 16% in the House

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2 The Mindan, or the Korean Residents Union in Japan, has good data on there website. <http://www.mindan.org/shokai/toukei.html>

3 Cabinet Office seems to have flirted with the idea of including the question which asks whether the respondent was of Ainu background. Interestingly, the officials did not seem to consider the possibility of asking all respondents their ethnicity. They still don’t see the need to ask “Japanese” respondents whether they are “ethnic Japanese” or not.

4 Kayano referres to this figure in the Diet session too. The Cabinet Committee, The House of Councilors, April 4, 1997.

5 The association was established in 1946. They changed its name to the Utari Association of Hokkaido, mainly out of fear of discriminatory connotation of the word, Ainu in the Japanese society. The word Utari was replaced and reversed to Ainu again in 2009. To avoid confusion, the association is referred to the Ainu Association throughout this paper.
of Councilors. Japan ranks 129th according to the data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Excluding non-democratic countries and the countries whose population is less than one million, it ranks around 59th. The proportion of female members in local assemblies remains also stagnant. Even though it has increased somewhat since the late 1980s, it is still meager 11%.

Figure 1

![Proportion of Female Candidates and Elected Candidates in the House of Representative Elections since 1946](image)

Figure 2

![Proportion of Female Candidates and Elected Candidates in the House of Councilors Elections since 1946](image)

3. Resident Foreigners

Foreign population in Japan at the end of the year 2013 was about 2 million. It consisted of around 1.59% of the total population, one of the lowest among the OECD countries. As Japan practices *jus sanguinis* principle of citizenship and does not allow dual citizenship, this includes persons who were born and raised in Japan but without Japanese nationality.

Among these, resident foreigners, loosely defined, are roughly 1.35 million. This includes foreign nationals with status residences, such as the Special Permanent Resident, the

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6 Women in National Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.
7 The author’s calculation.
Permanent Resident, the Spouse or Child of Japanese National, and the Long-Term Resident. The Special Permanent Resident is the status given, based on the treaties with the concerned governments, to the people who were under the Japanese colonial rule until the end of World War II. The vast majority of them are Koreans.

Foreign nationals with Permanent Resident Status come closest to the general concept of resident foreigners. While the number of people with the Special Permanent Resident is decreasing due to aging and naturalization of the younger generation, the number of the people with the Permanent Resident, which currently stands at about 625,000, is on the constant rise in recent years, with the average annual increase of nearly 30,000.

III. Minorities and Electoral Reform

1. The Special Seats for the Ainu

The majority of the Japanese has not taken seriously the demand of the Ainu to introduce the special seats, or *Tokubetsu Giseki*, a form of reserved seats in the national and local assemblies to guarantee their representation. It is now not uncommon in the world to give preferential treatment of some kind in the political representation for the ethnic minorities. More than 30 state and state-like entities have established group based, ethnic quotas (Krook and O’Brie 2010). Cases such as New Zealand, Taiwan, Venezuela are the examples of reserved seats aimed at securing the representation of the indigenous population (Reynolds 2006).

Given the population size of the Ainu, it has been, and is, almost impossible to elect an Ainu candidate to the Diet. Only one Ainu has been elected to the office of the Diet member in the history of Japan’s parliamentary democracy, and that is late Kayano Shigeru. Even in the electoral district of Hokkaido No.9 single-member constituency, which includes Biratori Town where many Ainus reside, a candidate from the Ainu Party which was formed in 2012 could obtain only 7,495 votes, or just 3.4% of the total. In 1993, then-chairperson of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, Akibe Tokuhei ran for a seat in the electoral district of Hokkaido No.5 of the Lower House election when the electoral system was still the SNTV. He garnered only 5,686 votes out of 820,000 eligible voters, or mere 0.9%. He had run for the Upper House seat in 1977 in the nation-wide constituency district and had gained 53,682 votes. The candidate who came in the first spot got more than 1.5 million votes, and the lowest to be elected got more than 580 thousand in that election. These of course do not necessarily reflect the voting behaviors of the entire Ainu voters as the Ainus have significant internal divisions. But they do show the difficulty they face when it comes to getting elected to the national Diet, under the plurality method, even in the form of the SNTV which could favor minor parties and candidates.

The absolute minorities such as the Ainu cannot benefit from the PR system. The proportion of the Ainu to the entire Japanese would be mere 0.0004%. Even in the Hokkaido Island, it does not reach 0.01%. This makes it irrelevant in case of the Ainu to discuss the fairness.

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and/or the legitimacy of the electoral system from the point of view of the statistical or descriptive representation.

The Ainu has been the target of harsh assimilation policy by the modern state of Japan since the beginning of the modern era in the 1870s. They had to endure severe discrimination even long after the World War II. The Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act which was enacted in 1899 was not abolished until 1997. The purpose of the law was to assimilate the Ainu into Japanese by forcing them to live on agriculture. The word for the “former Aborigines,” or Kyuudojin, had a terrible connotation in the Japanese language, giving the impression that the designated people were extremely backward and savage. Some discussions on the need to abolish the law started in the 1970s. The Ainu desire for the law to be abolished surfaced since the beginning of 1980s (Emori 2007: 559-560).

In order to put pressure on the Japanese government to enact a new ethnic law for the Ainu, the Ainu Association drafted a proposal for the bill which was to replace the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act. Having spent five years on intense research effort, they unanimously approved the proposal for the New Ainu Law in the general assembly of the Ainu Association in 1984. It included such clauses as measures to eradicate prejudices and respect basic human rights of the Ainu, the establishment of indigenous rights of the Ainu, the creation for the fund for the autonomous life for the Ainu, as well as the special seats for the Ainu.

The special seats was one of the core parts of the demands to the government by the Ainu. “Special seats” meant the reserved seats for the Ainu both in the national as well as local assemblies. Apparently the idea was inspired by the knowledge that indigenous Maori people in New Zealand had the special electoral arrangement to guarantee their representation in the New Zealand parliament (Nomura 1997: 280-281). In the preamble of the proposal read:

“In order to redress the humiliating historical treatment in the past, it is indispensable to secure seats in the national Diet and local assemblies, and thereby reflect the demands made by the Ainu to the national and local policies. The government (should) implement the concrete measures to achieve it as soon as possible.”

But the idea of special seats in the assemblies was turned down when it came to the official arena. With the publication of 1984 proposal, the Ainu Association lobbied actively to various political actors to have them consider the New Ainu Law. This led to the establishment of a private advisory council to the Governor of Hokkaido called the Urari Affairs Council, or Utari Konwakai. The council included seven Ainu members among 15, later 20, members. It conducted research on diverse aspects of the Ainu claims, including the policies on indigenous peoples in the USA, Australia, and New Zealand. In 1988, the Utari Affairs Council submitted the final report to the governor of Hokkaido which in essence acknowledged the need for the New Ainu Law. However, as for the special seats, the Council could not reach an agreement. It instead mentioned the idea of special seats in the addendum, not in the main text, of the final report, and stated that treating the Ainu differently from the general public and giving special seats to the Ainu was likely to be unconstitutional because the Japanese

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11 In the statement made on May 17, 1995 in the session of the Urari Affairs Council.
12 The full report can be read in (Kayano et al eds, 1995: 248-251).
Constitution stipulated that the voting right had to be equal, and that the Diet members must represent the whole nation. It was reportedly a constitutional specialist of law professor at the Hokkaido University who indicated this point in the Council.\(^\text{13}\)

But the active Ainus were never convinced with this line of argument and kept demanding the special seats. Nomura commented that he personally did not change his mind, even after the idea of the special seats was rejected in the Council, that, had there been the special seats for the Ainu, the Ainu would have been better off (Nomura 1997: 281). It was not simply the electoral arrangements, but an integral part of the indigenous rights for them. As an active Ainu put it in 1995: “of course we have the political right even now, but virtually we are deprived of it because it is practically impossible to elect Ainu candidates to the assemblies”\(^\text{14}\)

One of the rare occasions to hear the Ainu voice in the Diet happened in 2003 in a session of the Constitution Research Council of the House of Councilors. Then chairperson of the Ainu Association, Akibe Tokuhei, was called as a witness. Of his remark, regarding the special seats, it was read:

“This idea (of special allocation of the seats in national as well as local assemblies were rejected by the idea of a law specialist that it could constitute an infringement of the Constitution. Therefore, under the Japanese Constitution, it was completely negated that the Ainu as a minority ethnic group could secure specially allocated seats. But unless (the Japanese) accept us, the Ainu, by even amending the Constitution, we have to say that, we, the Ainu, can never accept that the basic condition is met to make it possible for us to live together as Japanese nationals. So we sincerely ask to prepare necessary legislation if it is possible under the current Constitution.”\(^\text{15}\)

When the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy was discussing the content of the the final report, the Ainu members in the council reportedly again demanded the special seats only to find the idea being sidelined in the final report of the Council which was published in July, 2009. Even though the final report did refer to the special seats for the Ainu, it described it as the possible mid to long-term measure which would require amending of the Constitution.\(^\text{16}\)

Considering the fact that already nearly 30 yeas had passed since the Ainu first expressed the demand, and that the Japanese Constitution was so hard to be amended (it has never been amended since its promulgation in 1947), this virtually meant the demand was again turned down.

Late Kayano Shigeru is the only Ainu who has ever served as a member of the Japanese Diet member. Kayano was elected a member of House of Councilors in 1994. He was listed as a candidate in the proportional representation segment of the Japan Socialist Party in the Hokkaido District. Kayano was ranked 11th on the list, and was the runner-up in the 1992 Upper House election. The Socialists just missed the enough votes to get him elected.

\(^\text{13}\) Asahi Newspaper, October 23, 1992
\(^\text{14}\) From comments of Sawai Aku which appeared in Asahi Newspaper, January 12, 1995.
\(^\text{16}\) Mainichi Newspaper, June 28, 2009. See also, p. 31 of the final report which is available in English at <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/ainu/dai10/siryou1_en.pdf>
However, Kayano obtained the seat in 1994, due to the death of a Socialist lawmaker who was on the original list. Socialists had been motivated to include in their list minority candidates before 1992 election. Kayano, who already had served five terms as a member in the municipal assembly of Biratori Town, and was a respected scholar and an activist, was a suitable candidate.

During his term, the long-pending questions such as the abolishment of the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act and the enactment of the Ainu Cultural Promotion Law came into reality. He made the first ever deliberation in the Ainu language in the Diet in November, 1994.\(^{17}\) His presence in the Diet paved the way for the other developments in the Ainu-related policies later. Along with the international factors which coincided with his term such as the First International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People (1995-2004) and the G8 Summit held in Hokkaido, his presence made a lot of difference in the policy making, suggesting the importance of symbolic representation. But even with Kayno’s presence, indigenous rights of the Ainu was not recognized by the Japanese government, leaving the demand for the special seats in limbo.

2. The Gender Quota

The gender quota has come to be used worldwide in recent years. More than 100 countries use some form of gender quota.\(^{18}\) Scholars and policy makers as well as activists now regard it as an effective measure to increase the portion of female members in parliaments.

Despite this trend and the persistently low percentage of women in Japanese national and local assemblies, there have been little debates on the gender quota in Japan. Electoral reforms have constantly been on the agenda in the Japanese politics, especially since mid 1990s when the major reform replaced the SNTV with the parallel system with an emphasis on the single-member FPTP system. But the political actors rarely refer to the issue of minorities in general including women.

According to Miura, there have been three occasions when the gender quota was brought up in the national Diet (Miura 2014: 245-250). The first was the mid 1990s when the major electoral reform was discussed. The second was around the year 2000. And the third was when the Democratic Party of Japan came into power in 2009.

On the first occasion, the Prime Minister Hosokawa who ousted the long-ruling LDP from power for the first time in nearly 40 years responded to the question on women by saying we needed to consider the introduction of the quota system in order to make it possible for women to actively participate in politics and society (Miura, 2014: 245). But on this occasion, this exchange practically was all. During the same period, the debate on the electoral reform which resulted in the major change took place. There were some discussions on the effect of the SNTV on women candidacy (Miura, 2014: 245-246). But there was no discussions on the gender quota. The PR segment was introduced to the lower house electoral system as a result


\(^{18}\) From Quota Project website. <http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutquotas.cfm>
of this electoral reform, but this was intended to be the guarantee for the minor parties, rather than women and other minorities.

The second occasion was in the year 2000 when the members in the Research Committee on the Coexistence in the Society\textsuperscript{19} in the Upper House took up the issue of the gender quota in the session on the participation of women in the policy making process (Miura, 2014: 247). This committee, consisted of about two dozen Upper House lawmakers, freely discussed such various issues as gender equality in general, sexual harassment, violence against women including domestic violence, situations of the single-mother household. They spent the whole session on the forth meeting discussing the participation of women in the political decision making which took place on March 8, 2000. In this session, while some advocated the gender quota, others were reluctant to do so despite the fact that they recognized the necessity to increase the female lawmakers. A female veteran LDP lawmaker who admitted that women needed to increase in the parliament and that it would make a significant difference, pointed out the gender quota was probably unconstitutional as it would violate the equality before the law, and that it was not desirable as the election was to be based on the free competition. A New Komeito lawmaker touched on the advantage of the PR for female candidate and the necessity to keep the PR segment of the existing parallel electoral system when she referred to the electoral system reform. A member from the Japan Communist Party also mentioned the importance of the PR as well as the voluntary effort on the part of political parties. But neither of them did not mention the gender quota. Only the Social Democratic Party member, Mie, explicitly stressed the need to introduce the gender quota, citing the recent case of its adoption in South Korea. Some other members did touched upon the gender quota, but generally in a skeptical tone.

The third occasion was the period after the LDP was ousted and the DPJ came into power with overwhelming majority (Miura, 2014: 249-250). Two prime ministers of the DPJ, Hatoyama in 2010, and Kan in 2011, responded to the questions from the fellow DPJ female lawmakers regarding the gender quota. But both simply said women should be able to play important roles and failed to go into any detail as to the possibility or the suitability of the gender quota, and thus without giving any impact in the Diet discussion. Another example from the era of the DPJ-led government is from 2010. Then opposition female LDP member, Abe (not to be confused with the current Prime Minister) asked then Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Katayama in the session of the committee on the political ethics and public office electoral law in the Lower House in 2012 whether he had the knowledge of the gender quota. In response, Katayama alluded to the unconstitutionality of the gender quota and questioned the feasibility of the legally binding gender quota, though he acknowledged the necessity of certain measures to increase female lawmakers and told his difficult experiences as governor of Tottori Prefecture, which is one of the most rural prefecture in Japan, when he attempted to encourage women to run for the elections by providing lessons sponsored by the prefecture\textsuperscript{20}.

Interesting exchanges occurred in 2013 after the LDP came back into power. An ardent advocate of the gender quota, a social democrat, Fukushima asked an expert witness about the gender quota and the PR from the point of view of the representation of women and

\textsuperscript{19} In Japanese, Kyousei Shakai ni Kansuru Chousakai.

\textsuperscript{20} The session of the committee on the political ethics and public office electoral law in the Lower House in November 26, 2012
minorities. The expert witness responded by saying that until 10 years ago she had not thought the gender quota was a good idea but she then thought that it was necessary, and that the PR was effective in increasing the women and minority representation.\textsuperscript{21}

Political actors, if not the public, are much better aware of the concept of the gender quota today than, say, 1990s. There are other cases where the gender quota was mentioned in the Diet sessions in the past decade. However references are usually as brief as they used to be. Supporters among the Diet members do not seem to have increased. The only obvious advocate as a party, the Social Democrats, are now so a small in number that they cannot give impact on the issue.

A recent incident regarding the gender quota was the debate, on a TV show, between the two high-profile female politicians of the ruling LDP, Noda and Takaichi. The Abe’s LDP had named Noda as chairperson of the General Council, and Takaichi as Policy Research Council chief, two of the most important positions within the LDP organization. This came after the general election of December 16, 2012, which gave the majority to the LDP. Among the campaign pledges of the LDP was its intent to increase the proportion of women in important decision making positions to 30%, though this never was an issue and attracted no serious attention from the voters. Both Noda and Takaichi are conservatives, but Noda is a strong advocate of the gender quota, and Takaichi is firmly against it. Noda believes that disadvantages that women have to endure in Japan can only be amended with preferential treatments, while Takaichi is of the opinion that competitions have to be on the equal basis without quotas. Whether the presence of these two and their disagreement over the issue would spark serious debates on the gender quota within the LDP and thus in the current government remains to be seen. As of today, it has yet to occur.

Instead of the gender quota, the government as well as lawmakers increasingly rely on the discourse of “the numerical target” regarding the gender equality, often without mentioning specific actions to achieve those targets. The government has decided in 2003 that it would “expect” to reach the numerical target of “30%” as women’s shares in the leading positions of the every sphere in the society by the year 2020.\textsuperscript{22} The expression, “positive actions,” has come to be commonly used today. The target proportions of 30% include female members in the national and local assemblies. The government has been “asking” the political parties to take actions to increase female candidates based on these official targets.\textsuperscript{23} But it has not resulted in much increase. Failing short of employing the gender quota, the concrete actions to achieve the targets for the female assembly members remain unclear.

3. The Voting Rights of Resident Foreigners

Debates on the voting rights of resident foreigners have become visible in Japan since the 1990s but it has not turned into reality. In the early 1990s, the public has come to be aware of the issue as some parties, such as the New Harbinger Party, Komeito Party, the Social Democrats, allowed resident foreigners to become party members. In 1995, on the case filed by the ethnic Koreans regarding the constitutionality of their ineligibility to vote in local elections, the Supreme Court issued a ruling that it was not unconstitutional to not allow them

\textsuperscript{21} The Cabinet Committee, the House of Councilors, May 22nd, 2013
\textsuperscript{22} The decision by the Headquarters for the Promotion of Gender Equality on June 20, 2003. \url{<http://www.gender.go.jp/kaigi/honbu/150620.html>}
\textsuperscript{23} The Third Basic Plan for the Gender Equality, the Cabinet Decision on December 17, 2010, p.8
vote in national or local elections. But it stated also that the Japanese Constitution did not prohibit the voting rights of resident foreigners and that it was a matter to be decided by the legislature.  

At some points, it looked highly likely that the voting rights of resident foreigners was to be enacted. The time seemed especially ripe, from 1999 to 2000, when New Komeito Party which was a strong advocate of the voting rights of resident foreigners, came into the governing coalition with the LDP, with the coalition agreement which included the voting rights. Another occasion was in the year 2009, when the Democratic Party of Japan ousted the LDP led government with the landslide victory. The DPJ had in its election manifesto that it would implement the voting rights of resident foreigners.

But on both occasions, the voting rights of resident foreigners never materialized. Every time proponents brought the voting rights to the fore, there emerged strong backlashes. The LDP had always had a sizable group of lawmakers who staunchly opposed to the voting rights of resident foreigners. They have successfully prevented the bill which was put on table in the Diet. The DPJ had its own members who were determined to resist the voting rights of resident foreigners. Despite the election pledge, the DPJ could not even submit a bill to the Diet during its rule. As many as 1703 local assemblies nationwide (out of more than 3300 municipalities at the time) passed the resolutions by 1998 calling for the adoption of the voting rights. This started in 1993 when Kishiwada City Assembly in Osaka Prefecture passed a resolution calling for the national government to establish voting rights. The Mindan actively lobbied to the various local assemblies. But since around the end of 2009, due to the lobbying by the conservatives who were vehemently opposed to giving foreigners, especially Korean nationals and Chinese nationals the local right to vote, a series of resolutions against the idea emerged in many local assemblies. Consequently, the DPJ-led Hatoyama government failed to put the bill onto the table. Now that the LDP came back into power again with the comfortable majority, even with New Komeito Party in coalition, the issue would not be given high priority.

The voting rights of resident foreigners discussed in Japan has many variations and there are opposing arguments to each. Most of them are attempts to give the voting rights to the residents with Special Permanent Status. As this status is given to mostly ethnic Koreans who were originally from the former colonies of the Imperial Japan before and during the World War II and their descendants, this type of idea is practically the voting rights justified on the colonial ties. Some who oppose voting rights of resident foreigners support easing of naturalization process specifically for the residents with Special Resident Status. The ideas such as these basically try to deal with the past history of Japanese imperial colonialism, rather than citizenship issues of the resident foreigners in general.

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26 According to the Mindan, by the end of 2010, 1531 municipality and prefectural assemblies have adopted resolutions of the same purposes. Figure accessible at the website of the Right of Foreigners to Vote.com.<http://www.gaikokujinsanseiken.com/research/toukei_local.html>.
27 Asahi Newspaper, April 12, 1995.  
The voting rights of other type of resident foreigners is rarely discussed. Considering the population projection, Japan obviously needs the immigration policy, and therefore, especially the integration policy of immigrants. From the point of view of democracy, it is a serious problem that increasing number of members of the society are not allowed to participate in the process of making political decisions which bind them. Indeed, the population with Permanent Resident Status have been on the rise in recent years, with almost around 30,000 every year, Its total has increased from 180,000 in 2001 to around 655,000 in 2013. The number of residents with Special Permanent Status had been constantly decreasing in the mean time. The figure is now down to around 37,000. The need for the integration, possibly giving them voting rights in local elections will increase from now. It may even need to consider the political integration of the long-term residents with status other than permanent residents who are also on the rise.

Debates on the voting rights of resident foreigners in Japan have centered around the desirability of giving votes to the ethnic Koreans, and the Chinese nationals who make up of about one third of the Permanent Residents. They either become issues of the treatment of residents from former colonies and their decedents, or the concerns about the security and the sovereignty in the East Asia region. The latter has especially dominated the debates recently because the rivalry from the Cold War era has yet to end in the East Asia and the Japan’s relationship with China and South Korea deteriorated further in recent years (Higuchi, 2014). Both issues have become the target of criticisms from the historical revisionists and exclusive extremists who despise foreigners. They attract to a certain extent the general public of the majority, which makes them less interested in the voting rights.

But in fact the need to address the issue of the voting rights of resident foreigners will only increase as Japan likely needs to rely on more foreigners to tackle problems of its aging population and its rapidly shrinking work force. This will increase two kinds of gaps: the gap between the concept of mono-ethnic nation which the Japanese tend to believe in and the actual diversity found among members of the society, and the gap between the nation who participate in democratic decision making process and the residents who are bound by the decision making but are not allowed to participate in the process of making those decisions.

Japan at the moment has chosen to tackle the problems which arise out of these gaps by holding on to the prototype ideal of the nation-state. It seeks to fill the gaps without allowing dual citizenship, nor practicing jus soli principle of nationality. It instead requires those who want to vote to acquire Japanese nationality, meaning in reality to require them to assimilate. This has left unresolved the citizenship problem of even the fourth generation ethnic Koreans (Chung, 2010). This reflects the sensitivity only to the endangered homogeneity of the nation, but not to the increasingly undemocratic reality of the nation.

IV. Discussion

The majority in Japan does not have any incentive to change the current electoral systems in favor of the any of the minorities discussed here. Against three minorities, the majority has the absolute dominance. Thus, changes never occur from the majority’s fear of becoming

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<http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri04_00040.html>
minorities in the near future, which is one of the typical cases of reform initiative from the dominant side. Electoral reforms, as the changes in the method of translating votes into seats, comes into being mainly through two types of processes: elite majority imposition, and elite-mass interaction (Renwick 2010). But when it comes to the electoral reform for the minorities of ethnicity, gender, or resident foreigners, neither of these processes would occur as neither the elite nor the mass have any incentive in terms of the competition for the power to change the election rules to meet the demands of the minorities.

Timings

The electoral systems reforms which minorities in Japan demand vary. The Ainu is demanding the special seats, reserved seats as part of their political rights inherent in the indigenous rights. The gender quota, and possibly the PR, are what may be needed to increase female members in parliaments. Resident foreigners need to be able to vote, or allowed to have dual nationalities. The obstacles and political challenges they face vary, and political actors on the majority side have different policies on each issue.

But the timings these seemingly unrelated minority issues came to the fore in Japan roughly overlap, suggesting that some underlining common factors at work. The first juncture could be characterized with electoral turmoil with the split of the LDP and its fall from power. This is the collapse of the so-called 1955 system in which the conservative LDP had the constant and relatively comfortable majority and the Japan Socialist Party was the main but perpetual opposition party. The second juncture could be marked as the party system change which ushered in the era of the alliance between the LDP and New Komeito Party as a junior partner which until that time had been an opponent to the LDP. The LDP returned to power which was made possible only with coalition partners, with no more one-party dominance. The third is the period when yet another change of government from the LDP to the DPJ occurred. But the DPJ failed quickly mainly due to the US military base issues in Okinawa.

Miura (2014) has identified these three junctures regarding references to the gender quota in the Diet sessions. They almost exactly coincide with the three peaks of the debates on the voting rights in the newspaper media, namely, the year around 1994, 2000, and 2008 (Higuchi, 2014: 61-62). The Ainu issue can be put into similar perspective, though the second juncture may not exactly fit. The abolishment of the old law and enactment of new law came in the first juncture. The second timing for the Ainu issue is some years later than the other two. The renewed momentum was observed on the third juncture when Hatoyama became prime minister. He referred in his policy speech to the Ainu as an indigenous population. But on none of the occasions, the Ainu demand for the special seats was seriously discussed in public or in the Diet.

Three factors were possibly at work during these threes occasions: namely, the change in the party system, social movements, and international norms.

Party System

Party system changes in the three junctures stirred up debates to a limited degree but not enough to make the electoral reforms for the minorities to happen. Under the series of the one-party dominant governments of the LDP until the early 1990s, not just the ruling LDP but also the opposition parties did not take up any of the minority related electoral issues
seriously. Only in 1994, the actors deemed them worth referring to when changes seemed possible. The Ainu issues became salient with the collapse of the 55-year party system of the LDP dominance, especially with Kayano’s election to the Upper House.

The party system which are characterized by the long dominance of the conservative LDP and the weak social democratic force is one of the factors which runs counter to the development of the gender quota. The emergence of the party which took hold on the left of the social democratic party, such as an environmentalist party, could trigger the policy in favor of the gender quota (Miura, 2014: 238-239). This has not happened in Japan. But as the dominance of the LDP loosened and competitiveness of the party system increased, some political opportunities and space have been created at least to touch upon the issue of the gender quota in the Diet. As we saw earlier, some exchanges in the Diet, albeit in superficial mode, took place either when changes of government occurred or the LDP had to go into coalition.

Same goes for the voting rights of resident foreigners. Some newly formed parties in the opposition, such as the Harbinger Party, the New Japan Party, in the early 90s had brought in new ideas and values into Japanese politics, and they brought up the issue of the voting rights of resident foreigners. The competitiveness of the party system gave advantage to the small but well organized New Komeito Party, whose constituency was mainly composed of the followers of a Buddhist sect, Soka Gakkai, which included a significant number of the ethnic Koreans with special resident status. The fact that the dwindling LDP had decided to ally itself with New Komeito Party helped to activate the debate on the issue of the voting rights of resident foreigners.

The relative weakness of the left has affected the situations of the minorities in general, eroding the ideological ground to the minority rights including electoral reforms. The Social Democrats are the only party which at least has established a measure similar to the gender quota within their organization (Miura, 2014: 243-245). Late Kayano became an Upper House election candidate in the Socialist list. The Social Democrats are supporters of the voting rights of resident foreigners. But the share of seats in the Lower House of Socialists or Social Democrats have gone down from 27% in 1990 to a mere 1% in 2003. Some of those who splited from the Social Democrats are stuck in the DPJ along with the conservatives who are not sympathetic to the minorities cause. Their notable weakness deprived the changing party system of the last push to realize electoral reforms for the minorities.

The fall of the DPJ-led Hatoyama government in June 2010 was a major blow for the minority issues in general. It left minority issues halfway, inviting substantial backlash against minority issues from the conservatives. The subsequent LDP-led Abe government, since December 2012 is building momentum on it.

Social Movements

Social movements of minorities in Japan are active but do not extend wide enough in the society at large to make electoral system changes possible. The weakness of the feminist movement is one of the reasons of the failure of the gender quota in Japan (Miura 2014: 237-238). The Ainu movement became more visible since the 1980s. Their cause has been supported by NGOs such as the Shimin Gaiko Center (the Center for the Diplomacy by the

\[31\] The Japan Socialist Party renamed itself as the Social Democratic Party in 1996.
Citizens). But it is known to be fragmented. The Ainu Association of Hokkaido has been criticized by the Ainu in Tokyo region for neglecting their needs, and there are different groupings in Tokyo region. Ethnic Koreans who belong to the Mindan were active in promoting the VRs. But another influential organization of ethnic Koreans, the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan or the Souren, which is affiliated with North Korea, has been strongly opposed to demand the VRs. It reckons that acquiring the VRs means ethnic Koreans would be assimilated into the Japanese society. In addition to this division, the Mindan has not effectively allied itself with any of the civil society movements in Japan concerning the voting rights.

**International norms**

International factors have been made significant difference for the minorities in Japan, but not to the extent that the electoral systems get changed in their favor. International factors, such as formation of norms in the international society, holding of international meetings and conferences, encourage the minorities who are otherwise in disadvantageous positions domestically, and provide resources and tools to improve the situations of the minorities.

International norms have affected the situation of women in politics and the Ainu issues, less so with the case of the resident foreigners. Women’s case is especially evident with regard to the situation around the year 2000. Japan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 and since then it was under constant pressure to make improvements with the status of women in Japan, including the political decision-making arena. The Beijing Declaration at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 accelerated the trend. Active lawmakers capitalized on these international circumstances to address some of the long-pending matters related especially to women. A series of laws were passed in the second juncture, such as the Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society in 1999, the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims in 2001, the Anti-Stalking Act in 2000.\(^{32}\) The Gender Equality Bureau in the Cabinet Office was established in 2001 (by reorganizing the Gender Equality Office established in 1994) which now is required to publish White Paper on Gender Equality every year and report the progress in various areas and methods, including numerical targets and positive actions.

The Ainu movement was considerably empowered by the international movement towards establishment of the indigenous peoples’ rights. This was made possible by a tenacious effort on the part of the small but dedicated Japanese NGO, the Shimin Gaiko Center.\(^{33}\) It has empowered the Ainu leaders with the knowledge on the international human rights law and the rights of indigenous peoples. It paved the way for the Ainu organization to go to the UN and appeal to the international community their plight in Japan. The most symbolic one was the address by Nomura Giichi, then chairperson of the Ainu Association, at the General Assembly of the UN in 1992, commemorating the beginning of the International Year of World's Indigenous Peoples. The international attention it gained compelled the Japanese government, which had denied any existence of discriminated ethnic minorities, to change its

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\(^{32}\) Eto analyses the activity of female legislators in the Diet around this era, especially the concept of “the gender equality” (Eto, 2012).

\(^{33}\) Activities of the Shimin Gaiko Center are compiled in (Uemura et al 2013), especially chapter 5.
attitude and policy toward the Ainu. The Ainu has since negotiated with the Japanese government successfully to a certain extent thanks to these efforts. Foreign attention works rather effectively with the Ainu issue. The G8 summit meeting in Hokkaido in 2008 apparently created an opportunity. The resolution in the Diet which calls for the government to recognize the Ainu as indigenous people was unanimously passed just a month before the G8 summit was held.

We can observe much less influence of international norms on the discussion on the voting rights of resident foreigners because the international norm is yet to take form in this area. However, diplomatic interaction with South Korea did influence the debate in Japan. The South Korean government had hinted on some occasions that they expect the ethnic Koreans be given voting rights. In 2001, for example, then President Kim expressed his expectation to then Prime Minister Mori. These in fact gave opponents even more reason to negate the idea of voting rights from the point of view of national sovereignty.

Had these factors been stronger and/or the combination of them better timed, their might have been different outcome. The gender quota missed the opportunity maybe precisely because the second juncture saw female representation rising. This gave the impression that the gender quota was not necessary just at the time when political actors became aware of the gender quota as an instrument for the change. The voting rights for resident foreigners could have come to reality had it not been for the choice of New Komeito Party at the turn of the century. Admittedly, the Ainu demand for the special seats was still difficult even with these.

Mass support

Two other factors to be considered are mass support and modernization.

There was not enough public support or interest for the change in the electoral system. Even with these international factors, electoral reforms for the minorities have not materialized. Although some progress has been made, for none of the three minorities, there have been no mass pressure, which is an important source of electoral reform.

The public in general do not believe that the gender equality exits in politics. According to a government sponsored survey in 2012, only around 20% of respondents said there exited gender equality in politics. This has not changes for about a decade. But on the other hand, the public may not have accurate picture of the situation. One of the surveys by political scientists showed that while nearly half of the respondents answered the current level of proportion of women in the Diet was “appropriate,” the average desirable level from respondents was about 33% when in reality the proportion was around 10% (Kawato, 2007). Positive actions are not necessarily well received by the public. Government sponsored surveys in 2004 and 2002 showed that only about 20% of respondents said they were in favor the gender quota by political parties to increase the female candidate. Online survey by Sankei Newspaper, a nationalistic conservative paper, conducted in 2013 showed more than 70% of the people who participated in the poll were of the opinion that there should be more

34 Asahi Newspaper, September 24.
female politicians, but only around 18% of those participated favored the idea of the legally binding gender quota.\(^{37}\)

The Ainu demand for the special seats is not known to the public. The government has conducted a survey on the Ainu affairs in 2013 (which itself is a major progress).\(^{38}\) 68.3% reported that they knew the Ainu is an indigenous people of Japan though whether they were aware of the accurate definition is not known. Roughly half of the respondents answered there were no discrimination and equality was secured for the Ainu. In general the survey included many questions concerning the Ainu cultures. But it did not include a single question regarding the indigenous rights of the Ainu, not to mention the special seats. This mirrors the situation of the public as well as the attitude of the government.

Currently there is little public interest in the voting rights. There have been many opinion polls on the voting rights of resident foreigners by the print media. Polls conducted in the 1990s, generally showed that relative majority of 40% or more were in favor of the voting rights.\(^{39}\) More recent poll by the liberal Asahi Newspaper reported 60% of the respondents said they favored the voting rights for permanent residents, while the nationalistic Sankei conducted the online poll based on non representative participants and claimed that 95% of the participants opposed to voting rights.\(^{40}\) All these results are probably not relevant today, considering the worsening relationships between Japan, and China and South Korea which have come to be deeply entangled with the voting rights issue. Diplomatic situations marred the sentiments of the public so much that even polls of this kind are not conducted by the media lately.

**Modernization**

The modernization as a structural factor have not brought about the electoral reforms for the minorities. The modernization theory fails to explain Japan’s situation of minorities, including women (Kitamura 2008). The structural explanation of the modernization theory would posit that modernization would finally bring about the respect for the multicultural nature of our society and the positive attitude towards the diversity.

To gauge the effect of the modernization is difficult, but it did have some effect even since the age of 1960s and 70s, or even the 1990s. The Japanese public today does not support outright prejudices and discriminatory policies toward these minorities which had exited until around 1960s and 70s. Prejudices of vulgar level have been disappearing. Outright contempt on the Ainu, women, foreigners especially ethnic Koreans cannot be found today, and at least certainly they are not used in the discourses against the minority-claim electoral reforms. These change could be interpreted as the result of the structural effect of the modernization which produced changes in the attitudes, norms of the political actors, rather than their rational calculation of interests.

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\(^{37}\) The survey is not based on the representative samples, and there is an obvious bias towards conservative position. The Sankei Newspaper website. The Epoll on the Gender Quota, February 7, 2013. \(<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/life/news/130207/trd13020722580016-n1.htm>\)


\(^{39}\) The Asahi Newspaper, March 9, 1994; The Mainichi Newspaper, March 29, 1995; The Yomiuri Newspaper, March 5, 1999.

\(^{40}\) The Asahi Newspaper, January 19, 2010; The Sankei Newspaper, August 27, 2009.
But the modernization theory fails to explain Japan’s situation of minorities. Japan remains a glaring deviant case for the modernization theory with regard to minority issues. According to the modernization theory, economic growth brings about the shift in values and results in the consolidation of democratic institutions and the higher portion of women in parliament (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Japan did see the former result as predicted, but remains way off the prediction of the theory as for the latter. Persistent prejudices and discriminations which are not acceptable by the standards today exist in Japan and backlashes have been sometimes harsh. As we see in the next section, rights-based approach for the minorities is conspicuously lacking. The public shows no strong support for the rights for these minorities, either.

**Lack of rights-based approach**

We can discern also from the way these minority-related electoral reforms have been rejected and/or not realized two features of in the minority issues in Japan. That is the lack of rights-based approach and the group-based conception without group rights.

Rights-based approach is conspicuously missing in the policy-making in Japan. Uemura Hideaki, a long-term activist and a leading expert on the indigenous peoples’ rights for the Ainu, criticizes the Japanese government for its lack of the rights-based approach (Uemura 2008:268-269). Indeed, the government has carefully, and deliberately, avoided to introduce the concept of the rights for the Ainu, either as an ethnic group or as an indigenous peoples. It had denied even the existence of the minority ethnic group in Japan until 1980. Though finally admitted it in 1981, even after the Ainu Association clearly demanded the indigenous rights, it has firmly rejected it. When the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act was abolished, the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act was formulated without referring to the ethnic rights or the indigenous rights. It basically turned out as the cultural promotion tool, and the newly introduced policies related to the Ainu have predominantly been for cultural matters. This firm policy determination on the part of the Japanese state continues to this day with no sign of changing.

This makes it close to impossible, even to discuss the Ainu demand of the special seats in the Diet and the local assemblies, as it is part of the political rights as the group rights, which is an integral part of the indigenous rights for the Ainu. Japan voted in favor for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. It still remains to be seen if the Declaration would have any effect on the Japanese policy making to change the tone of the debate, so as to incorporate the concept of indigenous peoples’ rights in their policies and laws.

The rights-based discourse is noticeably lacking in the discussions on the gender quota in Japan. The gender quota has both pros and cons in any society. But even when the Upper House members discussed the gender quota in 2000, which was arguably the most comprehensive discussion so far on the gender quota in the Diet, they did not focus and analyze thoroughly on the exact reasons why the increase of the female members of the Diet was essential (Miura 2014: 251). They avoided discussing the lack of equal opportunities for women in politics and the society of Japan, and thus did not discuss the women’s rights. A renowned feminist scholar, Ueno Chizuko, dismissed recent policy preference by the Abe government to let “all women can shine” by encouraging more women to come into rapidly
shrinking workforce, by pointing out that the Abe government just wants to take advantage of women and never mean to protect the rights of women.41

The lack of the rights-based approach is evident in the way the voting rights is discussed. The glimpse of the rights-based approach appeared when the voting rights first caught the wide attention in the early to mid 1990s. Behind the debates on the voting rights was the awareness among political actors that significant portion of residents in the communities in Japan were disenfranchised. But, soon after the 1995 court ruling, it quickly gave way to the discussions regarding the voting rights of the ethnic Koreans, turning the issue into that of dealing with the colonization history instead of the democratic citizenship of the resident foreigners in general. During the early period, in 1993 and 1994, political actors and media used the expression, “Teijyuu Gaikokujin” (literally, settled foreigners), in their discussions, to refer to resident foreigners. This expression denotes all long-term residents from any foreign country, not just ethnic Koreans with colonial history background. But it started to be replaced by “Eijyuu Gaikokujin” (permanent resident foreigners), which evokes ethnic Korean residents, after 1995 (see Figure 3). From 2001 on, Teijyuu Gaikokujin has rarely been used in the debates of voting rights for resident foreigners. This also is the reason why it easily gave way to the negative developments and tensions between Japan and neighboring countries in the East Asia. Now that territorial disputes among Japan, China, and South Korea have become more salient, mainstream politicians want to avoid the issue of the voting rights for resident foreigners.

Figure 3

Without electoral reforms for the minorities and the rights-based approach, the majority increasingly rely on the unrepresentative councils to claim that they take into considerations the concerns and the interests of the minorities. Rejecting the idea of the special seats for the Ainu, the report by the Advisory Council for Future Ainu Policy in 2009 recommends to utilize government councils which includes the Ainu as members to represent the Ainu. The government appoints more women as members of governments councils and boasts that it has reached nearly 30%. Starting from Kawasaki City, some prefectures and municipalities established non-formal councils for foreign residents. These councils, however, could amount to the paternalism. The posts allocated to the minorities in the councils are special, often exceptional treatment by the majority, as if these are dispensation that minorities should thankfully receive. The statements from specialists that their demand cannot be met because

41 The Asahi Newspaper, January 10, 2014.
they are unconstitutional silence the debate, as if they are supreme judgements. Why minorities are demanding those rights in the first place does not get enough attention.

**Groupism without group rights**

For all the emphasis on the groups in the Japanese society, when it comes to the issue of minority representation and/or minority rights, the discourse in Japanese politics turn highly individualistic. The logic to deny the Ainu demand for the special seats which some members expressed during the sessions in the councils was that the idea would be incompatible with the principle of equality enshrined in the Japanese Constitution. But this equality is based on individuals. The response by the Japanese government to the criticisms from the international community regarding the situation of the Ainu was that every Japanese national including the Ainu was equal before the law in Japan and the Constitution guaranteed that. The logic which denies the Ainu demand for the rights as an indigenous group, including the special seats, has been, and still is, basically the same.

Discussions on the gender quota tend to emphasize that women should not rely on the gender quota and should be able to compete individually in elections. The logic is that the Japanese, both women and men, enjoy free and fair democratic elections under the present Constitution, so women are supposed to be perfectly possible to run and get elected. One major logic in the discourse against the voting rights is that resident foreigners can always and are free to become Japanese citizens and thus be able both to vote and run for offices by acquiring Japanese nationality. It is assumed that, by accepting the nationality of Japan, one has accepted to become Japanese, ethnically, too, so there is no need to make provision for any ethnic group or groups of other kind.

On certain issues, especially when it comes to rights for the minorities, Japanese find the individualistic reasoning highly convincing. And in turn this leads to the difficulty for the minorities to make claims about the problems which are caused by the dynamic which marginalize them on group bases in the society. Groups as units are used when it comes to exclusion. Individuals with certain attributes are inflicted with various discriminations, unfair treatments, and social and economic inequality, in groups. But their remedy is not discussed with groups as units. It is not a fair experience for the people who have to suffer from disadvantages because of their groups. This provides less prospect for the electoral reforms which remedy their under- or no- representation. The Japanese find it difficult to realize that there are problems to be solved by entitling rights to groups.

The Japanese on the dominant side are so dominant that they are unable to perceive that their dominance actually rests on the groupism: theirs is a huge and dominant group which go unchallenged in the state. They fail to understand that this groupism is the source of plights of minorities in Japan. This tendency is enforced by the lack of the ethnic self-consciousness among the dominant Japanese. The ethnically Japanese majority in Japan are too dominant to be aware of even the fact that they themselves belong to an ethnic group. For them, the term for ethnic group, Minzoku, is used for only for others, non-Japanese, not to themselves. Many ethnic Japanese would turn a bewildered expression if one asks them their ethnicity. This non-conscious ethnocentric notion obscures the fact that the nation is defined by the ethnic logic and make the majority insensitive to the demand of the others based on ethnic groups.
V. Conclusion: Another Japan is possible. Or is it?

In the debates on the electoral reforms in Japan, political actors as well as academics, rarely address the reforms for the minorities, such as the reserved seats for the ethnic minorities, the gender quota, or the voting rights for resident foreigners. The Ainu demand for the special seats is dismissed as unconstitutional in the councils and not formally discussed in the Diet. The gender quota gets more attention these days, but still rarely discussed in the context of electoral reforms. The voting rights for resident foreigners has become a security issue instead of an electoral systems issue. The paternalistic tendency persists.

The way the electoral reforms for the minorities have been treated in Japan indicates that there is something inherent about its idea of nation that is holding back the progress. Behind the paternalistic tendency, one could detect a proto-nation-state conception which lingers in Japan. It is an idea that the state of Japan should continue to be in the control of a nation of ethnically homogeneous single group of males, which is special enough not to be regarded as just like any other ethnic group. Even with post-industrial development, this conception has not broken down or transformed enough yet in Japan. Factors such as party system, social movements, international norms, mass pressure, modernization have all been either weak, or absent. Or they have not had enough conjunctural causal effect.

There are those who actively trying to make “Another Japan” possible (Chan ed. 2008). Some of their effort should aim for the electoral reforms for the minorities as well. To the question, “Would the minorities have to be represented by the minorities themselves?”, for those who observes the situations in Japan, the answer would not cautionary but definite yes. Unless
electoral reforms for the minorities become possible, their concerns and interests would not be represented in the policy making in Japan.

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