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**Panel:** (Post)-Modern Japan? (G1)

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**Talking Points for:** Park Cheol-Hee, Seoul National University

Japan under Abe shows mixed reality, which might be called as new Mediterranean Japan as Tanaka Akihiko suggested before. Tanaka applied this term to a situation in East Asia where pre-modern, modern, and post-modern countries co-exist. This term, however, can also be applied to contemporary Japan where pre-modern, modern, and post-modern ways of thinking exist altogether.

Abe cabinet aims at changing Japan toward a normal country, which he calls the disintegration of the postwar regime. The essence of this political endeavor is comprised of two major elements: One is defense revisionism; and the other is history revisionism.

Defense revisionism, which takes a form of neither resistant nor reluctant but proactive realism, emerged in the context of rising China. In the face of assertive maritime strategy of rising China, Japan under Abe is pursuing a proactive posture for defending Japan, which might be called as a balancing China strategy. This is a normal practice of a nation state acknowledged by modern norms of international society. This is a part of efforts to make Japan a normal military power. Upgrading defense capability in the face of potentially threatening neighbors, strengthening defensive capability in alliance with a friendly partner, extending defensive diplomatic and military arms to potential allies and friends are not unusual by modern standard. Japan is not the only country that can be blamed for this.

History revisionism, however, is highly controversial, especially in the East Asian context. History revisionism, pursued particularly by right wingers in Japan under Abe, has even pre-modern elements that can hardly be accepted in the post-modern era. History revisionism is composed of nurturing pride and confidence of Japan as a nation, which is not unusual at all. Unusual parts of this claim is that significant historical truth is disguised, distorted, and glorified, especially seen from the perspective of the victimized nations in the modern era. Denying the element of enforcement in the process of mobilizing comfort women, or sex

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slaves, visiting Yasukuni shrine where 14 A-class war criminals are shrined, and efforts to revise Peace Constitution with the excuse that it was enforced by the American occupation are such examples. Japanese psychological frustrations are understandable, but return to the norm of pre-modern era can hardly be acceptable to modern or post-modern civilization.

Japanese people on the ground are mostly post-modern by Ronald Inglehart’s conception. As a member of advanced democracy, Japanese citizens are enjoying post-modern cultural traits. This does not deny the fact that noisy right-winged minorities in Japan are advocating pre-modern ideology such as exclusive nationalism, national hatred, even chauvinism that resembles those of the 19th century or before.

This is why current Japan might be described as being new Mediterranean, where pre-modern, modern, and post-modern elements are complexly mixed.

Under this volatile situation in East Asia, the future of history is what we make of it rather than fixed or predestined.

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