Constitutional Revisionism in the 1950s and 60s:
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Part II, Chapter 1 “The Era of Restorationist Constitutional Revisionism, 1950s-1964)

I. The promotion of a restorationist constitutional revisionism

1. Background and special characteristics of constitutional revisionism in the 1950s

- The emergence of the constitutional revision debate after the San Francisco Peace Treaty
Before Japan regained its sovereignty with the Peace Treaty, constitutional revision was not an agenda of the conservative political platform but emerged rather among liberal circles such as the Tokyo University Constitutional Study Group, which recommended revision in 1949. GHQ actually assumed that Japan would revise its constitution and the Far Eastern Commission clearly stated that Japan had the right to do so, but Yoshida brushed this possibility off as unnecessary. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the establishment of the Police Reserve Force made constitutional revision an issue of left-wing politics against the conservative Right because of the apparent contradictions with Article 9. In effect, though, it created a rift among conservative politicians exemplified by the emerging rivalry between Yoshida and Hatoyama.

- Yoshida Shigeru’s opposition stance and the rise of the revisionism faction
Yoshida aimed at reconciling these contradictions with the constitution in an effort to ward off criticism of American bases in Japan with a statement entitled “The united opinion of the cabinet” in 1952. Despite Yoshida’s majority backing in the Diet, the LDP established a Constitutional Revision Committee in November 1953 with Kishi Nobusuke as head, in conjunction with a Foreign Relations Committee. In response, the Kaishinto established its own constitutional revision committee and issued a statement “On the assumptions of the New Constitution for the Japanese People.” These dynamics continued until the end of the Yoshida premiership in 1954, whereupon his opponents on the revisionism issue took office.

- The political predominance of the revisionism movement
The main characteristic of the constitutional revision issue in the 1950s is that it was completely wrapped up in LDP power politics. The so-called military-industrial complex hadn’t developed yet, and although economic recovery was central to politics, the financial world had not yet come into its own as an independent force but was entirely wrapped up in conservative politics.

- Public demands of military rearmament by revising Article 9
- Labor unions and the liberal Left in general opposed moves toward rearmament citing irreconcilable contradictions with Article 9 which in turn strengthened public demands to remove these contradictions (see Watanabe keizai kenkyūjo no kaiken an). Editorials by the Asahi and Mainichi shinbun on 3 May 1953 both argued that such contradictions could only be resolved by revising the constitution, which shows that the mass media was also signing on to the idea of revision, opposing Yoshida. But this was certainly not the only, not even the biggest reason why the revisionist
movement gained such force. Indeed, conservative politicians felt threatened by the constitutional system as a whole, not Article 9 in particular, and argued for revisionism on pragmatic political grounds of creating a situation more favorable to them.

- Restoring a concept of the state modeled on the prewar imperial state
  They (the Hatoyama-Kishi group) in effect wanted to achieve a revision of the occupation reforms and restore the prewar tennōsei kokka. First, they wanted specifically to change the symbol emperor and restore the status of the emperor under the Meiji constitution. Second, they aimed at reviving the military class, military ranks, and the military code of the Meiji constitution. Third, they wanted to add to the postwar constitution specific obligations/duties of the people along the lines of the Meiji constitution. Fourth, they insisted on the allowance of extra-legal (extra-constitutional) measures to deal with emergencies. Fifth, they aimed at getting rid of direct election rules thereby weakening local self-government and strengthening the Interior Ministry. There was, however, also a kaikenron that did not condone such unabashed reconstruction of Meiji constitutionalism, foremost represented by Nakasone Yasuhiro, who clearly opposed going back to Meiji. The Youth League to Independently Realize Constitutional Revision (Jishu kenpō kisei seinen dômei) organized to campaign for revision without restoring the Meiji tennōsei. Both Nakasone and the Youth League were in favor of revisionism to create a “welfare state.” Yet another conservative approach was represented by Ōnishi Kunitoshi’s first draft for a new constitution, which was a mix of Meiji restoration and welfare state models, but it is fair to say that the vision of Meiji was alive and well among all.

- The rise of the postwar democracy movement
  The third characteristic of 1950s revisionism was the resistance of the Left to conservative revisionism or the “protect-the-constitution movement.” In Sept. 1953, the Heiwa kenpō yōgo no kai was established; with Sōhyō’s help, the Kenpō yōgō kokumin rengo (Gōgen rengo) was established in Jan 1954. Gōken rengo broke with the JCP in order to get Sodomei and the right wing of the Socialist Party to participate. The constitutional protection movement had its base in the anti-bases movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the Teachers’ Union movement, and the peace movement. It was in order to realize constitutional revision in light of such opposition that the two main conservative parties merged in 1955. Hatoyama tried to revise local election rules with the help of pro-revisionists in the Lower House, but this move was adamantly opposed both by the opposition and the mass media, and the “Kenpō chosakai hôan” acknowledged that an early revisionism was going to be difficult.

- Concern for the democracy movement and popular consciousness
  Conservatives had to counter popular concern that revisionism would restore militarism, so the LDP put out a paper (Kenpō kaisei no mondaiten) addressing those concerns, toning down their demands (emperor’s status as essence of state to be “taken into consideration”, rationalized Article 9 by taking out possibility of sending troops abroad, etc.). When Kishi became prime minister, Azuma Sakae became head of the Chosakai (he was a scholar from the constitutional protection faction), tried to include the Shakaito, but this didn’t work out, so Takayanagi Kenzan, a UK/US law scholar at Todai, became head and the Socialist Party refused to be included.
2. Special features of constitutional revision proposals in the 1950s

Ten different drafts for an entire revision of the constitution were presented in the 1950s: The 渡辺経済研究所案; the Kaishintô’s 現行憲法の問題点の概要; the LDP’s Kenpô chosakai’s 日本国憲法改正案要綱; the Kenpô kenkyûkai’s 日本国自主憲法試案, Nakasone Yasuhiro’s 自主憲法のための改正要綱試案, the LDP’s Kenpô chosakai’s 憲法改正の問題点, Onishi Kunitoshi’s 新日本国憲法草案, Hirose Hisetada’s 日本憲法改正試案, the Jishu kenpô kisei seinen kômei’s 青年憲法草案, and Satomi Kishio’s 大日本憲法案.  All drafts proposed a full revision of the constitution.

- Revising Article 9
  All dealt with Article 9, all implied rearmament, and all took up the issue of dealing with US pressure.  But no concrete ideas about how to handle the problem of sending troops abroad were put forth except for the drafts by Hirosei Hisatada and the Youth League, which clearly stated that the jieigun was entitled to engage in military activity abroad either to defend Japan or in cooperation with international peace keeping missions under the UN.  This line of thinking came out prominently in the early 1990s, when it was revived within a different context.

- Revising imperial sovereignty and the structure of government
  In many ways, this was the heart of 1950s revisionism, namely the attempt to restore important aspects of the Meiji imperial system.  The use of the term genshu for sovereign implied this restorationism, taking issue above all with the emperor as a “representative” or a “symbol” of the nation.

- Revising the principle of people’s rights
  All drafts except for the Youth League’s insisted on human rights for maintaining the social order, and on limiting individual rights.  The importance of the family needed to be strengthened, calling for added clauses in the postwar constitution.  At the same time, in the latter 1950s, the Welfare state structure gained importance with the goal was to expand social rights legislation.

II. Problems and failure of the restorationist line of revisionism

1. The climax of the anti-Anpo movement and the transformation of conservative politics

- Militarist aspirations in the Kishi Administration
  Instead of reviving prewar militarism, Kishi made the constitution issue part of a new militarized Japan under the Cold War system.  On the one hand, Kishi tried to bring Japan more firmly in the US dominated system and rely on America while trying to build Japan into a military country; on the other hand, he turned away from East Asia and towards Southeast Asia focusing on economic development and prosperity.

Development of the Anpo struggle

- The climax of the Anpo struggle
- Conservative politics and anti-constitutional revision policies
- Change of the kenpo chosakai
  June 1963 statement by Takayanagi (kaicho) kenpo no mondaiten nit suite no iken:  Urged that the chosakai was not an organization for revisionism but a neutral group, claimed that the constitution was not just made by Americans but actually a collaborative document and one that should be kept the way it was until a new situation makes it necessary to revisit.  Furthermore, Article 9 ought to be seen as a
“political manifest” instead of a strict rule, it expresses an ideal, or ideology, how it is implemented depends on policy. Likewise, about the tennō, the symbol emperor is part of the sovereign emperor, so there is no need to change it Yabe and Shinno added a negative evaluation of revisionism
Second wave of change in the chosakai: proponents of revisionism including Nakasone focused on direct public election of the prime minister and only then got around to minding Article 9
Others in chosakai were against both Takayanagi and Nakasone, especially the Restorationists (fukkoha) such as Kagawa Hikomatsu, Hirose Hisatada, Oishi Yoshio; there were others still in the group with different ideas
Third change: how chōsakai was divided: kaikenha (dentōteki kaikenha—with own statement p. 437 referenced; shingata kaikenha) kaiken shokyokuha
• Activation of the movement to protect the constitution

2. The transition period of the 1960s revision proposals
• Continuation of the traditional revision debate
• Restricting public election of the prime minister, juridical system
Factionalism within conservative forces great, mass media picked that up, in the end constitutional revisionism was seen as a liability; the ultra right felt stabbed in the back by people like Nakasone. Extreme rightist groups came up with their own proposal 全日本愛国者団体会議の憲法案
• Transformation of conservative politics and the revisionism debate
Ikeda put the economy first and steered away from contentious politics