

## Preface

This report represents the distillation of ten months of intensive discussion and debate by the Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century. Our aim was to elucidate Japan's challenges and policies as it moves into the next century from a medium- to long-term viewpoint.

Everyone recognizes that Japan is at a major turning point—one might even say a critical point. Based on that awareness, the report sets forth the new ideals and organizational principles with which Japan should equip itself for the twenty-first century, the qualities it is hoped the Japanese people will possess fifteen or twenty years hence, and the way to get there.

After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Japan, while working assiduously to catch up with and overtake the West, managed to retain at least some of its quintessentially Japanese qualities. Thanks to its efforts, Japan today is the only developed country from a non-Western cultural sphere. This is an achievement we can justly be proud of. But when we contemplate the power of globalization, which will envelop the whole world in the next century, we realize that Japan cannot afford to rest on its laurels.

It is fine for the Japanese to be proud of their nation's good qualities, but that does not mean wrapping a mantle of exclusivity around themselves; this pride must be open and expansive, oriented toward universality. If so, rather than stand still and pontificate on Japan's good qualities, should we not face the future of the world and engage with it body and soul? By so doing, even if sometimes we wrestle with contradictions, surely the good qualities of the Japanese—including latent strengths we ourselves are yet unaware of—will be honed into qualities possessing universality. If we live with such an attitude, we will come to see that Japan's frontier lies within.

On the basis of this way of thinking, the Commission has done its best to delineate the direction in which we should proceed and propose the policies we believe necessary. The report comprises six chapters. The first chapter, an overview, is the work of the commission as a whole. Chapters two through six represent the reports of the five subcommittees. We hope people will read the entire report, since doing so is important for grasping our vision for Japan in the twenty-first century as a whole.

Today, when diversity is valued, there is no single "right answer." This being so, we have considered Japan's direction and offered proposals in our own way, but of course this report represents just one way of thinking. We strongly hope that the report will serve as the catalyst of lively national debate and that a vision for Japan in the twenty-first century will steadily take shape among the people.

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