

Chapter 4

A Beautiful Country and a Safe Society

I. Preserving the Environment and Ensuring Safety in an Open Society

Japan is prone to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods, and tsunami. In Japan's unceasing attempts to ensure its safety in the face of these natural threats, it has enlisted the support of science and technology. It is, however, impossible to completely escape natural calamities. Furthermore, human-generated calamities must also be borne in mind. Constant progress in science and technology is spawning new perils and altering the very nature of danger. Anxiety in the face of the unknown is increasing. Society around the world, not just in Japan, is enjoying the fruits of dazzling progress in science and technology. Examples include advances in medical treatment, the growing convenience offered by aircraft and other forms of transportation, and rapidly evolving telecommunications technologies. But this progress also has a dark side, represented by environmental problems, endocrine disruptors, and numerous other factors that threaten our safety. Moreover, the rapid development of information technology, such as the Internet, has opened up the possibility of networking on a global scale but has also introduced unprecedented new hazards, ranging from invasion of privacy to cyberterrorism. We live in an age when we are more vulnerable than ever to threats arising from human activities, not just natural disasters. Clearly, it is time we seriously reconsidered the meaning of affluence in our daily lives.

The diversity of nature is mirrored by the diversity of human society and of the values held by people living in different locations. Globalization, the information revolution, and progress in transportation have triggered a massive increase in the number of people on the move (the mobile population). As a result, the number of foreigners living in Japan will likely continue to increase. In the twenty-first century, many different sets of values will coexist in Japan, transforming it into an open society that respects diversity. The process is almost certain to revitalize Japanese society at the same time.

We must make unprecedented efforts to preserve our beautiful country and our safety, efforts that will include cooperation with people of other nationalities. This is particularly true when new dangers, such as environmental damage, arise from human activity. Unless the government, companies, individuals, and other key actors in society review their roles and develop new relationships, it will be impossible to preserve the environment and our safety while respecting human diversity. In short, we must reform Japan's traditional vertically segmented society.

To realize a beautiful country and a safe society, we must (1) question anew our idea of the meaning of affluence in our daily lives, (2) create a new relationship between the individual and society in order to preserve the environment and ensure safety, (3) allow regions greater self-determination to enable this new relationship to function in practice, and (4) formulate crisis-management strategies for the new age. For most people, an ideal lifestyle is one that enables them to take natural pride in the fact that the community in which they live is beautiful and safe. Surely everyone on earth desires to build a safe society that boasts a beautiful natural and living environment. The various transportation and telecommunications networks that increasingly link the four corners of the earth are steadily making us more interdependent as the world becomes a smaller place. As a developed country, Japan has a duty to contribute to global society. Creating a beautiful country and a safe society in Japan will not only

benefit the communities in which we live but can also contribute to global society through various networks.

II. A Materially Affluent and Spiritually Rich Lifestyle

1. Creating an attractive culture

When asked whence they derive their pride in their country, the Japanese people always commend its natural beauty, its law and order, and its long history and traditions. There is a feeling, however, that many of these elements fell by the wayside as Japan focused single-mindedly on development through economic growth. The Japanese identity is rooted in Japanese culture. When examining the problems of the environment and safety, therefore, it is first necessary to take a new look at Japanese culture from the viewpoint of its relationship with the economy.

As many as 20 years ago, the Masayoshi Ohira administration recognized that the age of striving to catch up with the developed economies was coming to an end and attempted to switch Japan's focus away from economic growth and toward culture. In subsequent years, companies became active in supporting cultural and artistic activities as part of corporate philanthropy. This trend was warmly welcomed by the Japanese people and demonstrated just how far corporate understanding of culture had evolved. Following the bursting of the economic bubble at the beginning of the 1990s, however, the overall scale of this support shrank, although some companies with a strong sense of mission continued with their cultural activities. To ensure that the "age of culture" becomes solidly established, it is necessary to return to the starting point and use our ingenuity to the maximum.

When we use the word *culture*, we are usually referring to art, entertainment, scholarship, and cultural artifacts such as the tea ceremony, Noh theater, Kabuki, museums, art galleries, concerts, lectures, festivals, and similar activities. Of course, all these fall under the rubric of culture. If we take plants as an analogy, however, this is equivalent to looking only at the flowers and ignoring the leaves, stems, roots, soil, and other elements that support them. Japanese culture is not simply a matter of the activities associated with the "flowers" in our daily lives. It covers the behaviors, daily creature comforts, values, and lifestyles of people born and bred in the ethos of Japan.

Scholars define culture as "lifestyle." Culture defined as lifestyle means "mode of living" and "way of life." Japanese culture really is a generic expression of the way of life of each individual. In other words, the age of culture values the mode of living and way of life of each individual and enhances the quality of each individual's life. As individuals improve their quality of life, they are actually raising the level of culture as well.

We must also not forget that culture is inseparably related to economic activities. Until now, there has been a tendency to think of the economy and culture in separate terms. This is probably because of a bias toward equating economic activities with production activities. But economic activities comprise both production and consumption. Of course, Japan has a splendid culture of making things, but consumption patterns also determine our way of life, mode of living, and lifestyle. Consumption is both economic behavior and cultural behavior. When it comes to taking a new look at our culture, it is important for the government and each individual to pay attention to the quality of consumption.

As we face the twenty-first century, the curtain has lifted on an age of great cultural interchange. Six hundred million people, one-tenth of the world population of 6 billion people, are moving around the world for all sorts of reasons, ranging from work to tourism to overseas study. This mobile population has generated an economy worth one-tenth of the global gross domestic product. Current estimates suggest that by 2010 the mobile population will have reached 1 billion people, demonstrating that global interchange is accelerating. The other side of the coin is that this interchange inevitably triggers

friction, confrontation, and even outright conflict in some cases.

Yet in today's global society, interchange is evolving on an infinitely larger scale than confrontation. If we bear this in mind, we realize that we should not only respect the diversity of lifestyles around the world but also accustom ourselves to enjoying it. It is against moral law for the people of one country to force their culture on people who have a different culture. Ideally, interchange among people of different cultures should be based not on exclusion or coercion but on mutual attraction. The basic stance of society in the process of entering an era in which it steadily opens up to the outside is to develop a culture that attracts people with different cultural backgrounds and shuns exclusion or coercion.

For that to happen, it is most important that the various strata of society feel pride in their way of life. It is important that the Japanese mode of living (lifestyle and natural beauty) impresses visitors of other nationalities and cultures as beautiful and inspires their respect. This will promote interchange and widen the circle of trust. It will also become a guarantee of security through cultural exchange.

To repeat, culture is nothing less than the way of life of each individual. The mode of living that constitutes the totality of these ways of life acquires centripetal force by becoming something beautiful and safe. An appealing culture with the power to attract spreads to other regional communities. As it spreads, it becomes what can be described as a civilization. Surely, the key issue for Japan in the twenty-first century is to make the mode of life enjoyed by the Japanese strikingly attractive. Rather than ushering in an age of culture, this means carving out an outstanding new age of civilization.

2. Rediscovering the value of things

If the economy is interwoven with culture and if economic growth is a means of improving the quality of each individual's life, that is, of enhancing culture, then it is necessary to reflect on the pursuit of economic growth for its own sake. More specifically, we should take an entirely new look at the nature of affluence and wealth. If we regard wealth in purely monetary terms, Japan's GDP ranks second in the world. This is a sign of Japan's remarkable achievements in the twentieth century. Yet material affluence is not necessarily the same as spiritual richness. In reality, the number of people in Japanese society yearning for spiritual richness since the end of the high-growth era has exceeded the number yearning for material affluence. Spiritual impoverishment encourages people to turn to wrongdoing, making society less safe. Likewise, shortages of material goods lead quickly to a hardening of hearts. Poverty is a breeding ground for evil. Thanks to its own efforts, Japan abounds in material goods and has avoided the poverty that afflicts so many countries around the world. The challenge facing the Japanese people today is surely the creation of an equilibrium between material affluence and spiritual richness.

There is a tendency to separate the material and the spiritual. The dichotomy between the two is a feature of modern Western thought. In the Japanese language, however, there are expressions that actually unite the two concepts. For example, *monogokoro*, combining the characters for "thing" and "mind," describes the time when a child reaches the age of reason. We also speak of the spirit inhering in land. Japan thus has concepts that do not separate the two. Let us, then, reexamine affluence and wealth, which tend to be tied to economic indices, from the point of view of culture, that is, ways of life and modes of living.

Clearly, material affluence cannot be measured purely in terms of the monetary value of goods that are manufactured and consumed. Townscapes, landscapes, and seascapes cannot be converted into cash. Yet they undoubtedly have value. As a general concept, all material things have a value. Garbage may not have a monetary value in itself, but even it has potential value as recycled materials.

People and things have potential value that cannot be measured in monetary terms. Finding this value and assimilating it into one's mode of life to give it greater substance will provide the momentum to reform society into a cyclical economy that functions in harmony with the environment. So far,

Japan has pursued macroeconomic volume based on a socioeconomic system rooted in mass production, mass consumption, and mass disposal rather than an affluent mode of living. In the process, it has accumulated a host of unresolved environmental problems that threaten our mode of living. These include the environmental burden of waste products and pollution of the environment by toxic chemical compounds. Moreover, there are few grounds for optimism even though the will to recycle waste products is there. The infrastructure necessary for recycling—the systems, the way industries are structured, the science and technology—is not yet in place. Currently, measures to reduce waste generation and encourage waste recycling cost a great deal of money. It will take enormous effort and ingenuity to reduce these costs and create a society that generates minimal waste.

Science and art have a vital role to play in discovering the innate values of things and incorporating them into our mode of living. We need to use all our ingenuity to encourage people of all generations living in any given region to make the fullest possible use of their local museums, art galleries, concert halls, and other cultural facilities, thus ensuring that they promote communication and assist in lifelong learning. It is also desirable to establish frameworks facilitating the education of children and young people and use outdoor activities and fieldwork to nurture a deeper understanding of the natural and living environments throughout Japan. Science and art thus have a responsibility to help people develop their capabilities and discover the innate value of things. There is no doubt that scientific inquiry and a love of art enrich our spiritual lives.

III. Creating a Mutually Energizing Society: A New Relationship between the Individual and Public Space

1. The interaction of tough yet flexible people

Preserving the environment and ensuring safety are the most fundamental things that people seek in their daily lives. They are also unattainable unless people cooperate. How can individuals associate themselves with public demands to preserve the environment and ensure safety, and how can society coordinate this cooperation?

No matter how carefully a nation strives to preserve the environment and ensure safety, it will never be able to eliminate the fragility of the national land or dispel concerns about safety in the community. Disasters and accidents are bound to occur. The consequences of disasters, accidents, and environmental deterioration are felt most intensely in the region where they occur. They therefore test the responsiveness not only of the central and local governments but also of the entire local community. As the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995 so amply demonstrated, the regional community plays an enormous role in an emergency. The time when the government alone was responsible for preserving the environment and ensuring safety has passed. Leaving these tasks entirely to the government will simply weaken the overall ability to cope. Nonprofit organizations, volunteer groups, and the residents of the regional community, as well as the national government, must cooperate as autonomous entities in tackling problems.

Japan, however, where modernization was government led, also let the government take care of matters of the public interest, such as preserving the national land and ensuring safety. The assumption that the government was in charge of the public interest encouraged indifference among the people. This led to a vertically segmented administrative system and preferential treatment of certain sectors, strengthening dependency on the government and generating moral hazard within the entire system. We must return to the basics, reclaim the self-reliance and self-responsibility that we are losing, and rethink our public roles as individuals.

After World War II, the rapid growth of the Japanese economy was accompanied by massive

changes in human relationships within Japanese society. The traditional ties that bound families and local communities broke down. As people sought freedom and increasingly asserted themselves, they became more solitary. The tendency to behave in a self-centered manner strengthened. Because modern Japanese society sought to establish a sense of self based on the concept of individualism, traditional human relationships came to be viewed negatively as constraints and people strove to become strong individuals. The severing of family and community ties led to a growing disregard for customs and traditions. It also eroded people's empathy with others' spiritual pain, weakening the role of traditional social relationships as a safety valve. Indifference to others and to society strengthened the tendency to rely on the government to deal with matters of the public interest, encouraging people to evade responsibility by claiming that any accidents that occurred were the government's responsibility.

When children are born they are often referred to as a blessing, but it is also understood that they are born with a public role. For people to regain their original public spirit, mutual energizing of the sort that is epitomized by the gentle gaze that passes between parent and child is essential. From the family to society as a whole, we should not exclude those who hold different opinions, as has tended to happen in Japanese society. Instead, we should value relationships based on mutual energies.

From the outset, people possess dignity as individuals. Individuals, however, cannot ensure their safety against natural or human-generated disasters on their own. Cooperation is essential. This is the essence of our nature as social beings and the basis for demonstrating our public spirit. Individuals should not just be self-reliant. They should also be tough yet flexible people who help others become self-reliant too. This means not severing relationships with others and isolating oneself but being committed to other people and things. The tougher a person is, the more he or she can be relied on in an emergency. Awareness of self-responsibility emerges naturally from a lifestyle that involves commitment to other people and to society. People who are both self-reliant and committed to society can be described as tough yet flexible. People have the right to exist and to pursue freedom and happiness provided that the public welfare is also realized in the process. Once individuals realize that the sovereignty of the people is founded on self-responsibility, they will be prepared to involve themselves actively in improving the natural and the living environments, that is, in accepting a public role. This is the key to securing the preservation of the national land and the safety of society.

2. Mutually energizing, transparent systems

What kinds of social frameworks make it easier for individuals to remain self-reliant while committing themselves to preserving the environment and ensuring safety? Regulations that are imposed from above are unsuited to a society that respects human diversity. The government can no longer give directions from on high and force people to obey. Ideally, the government and the people should form a partnership, in the full understanding that perfect safety can never be guaranteed and that the government cannot maintain the environment and safety on its own. A mature society is one in which all sides acknowledge their own and others' strong and weak points and work to complement one another. The decision-making process in regard to policies involving different interests should be made transparent, and once the understanding of all strata of the people has been gained the burden should be distributed in an appropriate manner.

In addition to having their diversity respected and enjoying freedom, individuals will be expected to show greater self-determination and self-responsibility. Access to information is an absolute prerequisite if self-responsibility is to work. The concept of informed consent should be applied much more widely, not just in medicine, where patients give or withhold their consent to a particular procedure after a doctor has explained it. For example, mechanisms should be established whereby disclosure of safety-level evaluations allows market prices to reflect such factors as building safety.

If initiative is respected and the principle of self-responsibility is shared, the government's role will

change. Instead of forcing its decisions on people, it will take on the function of harmonizing various values and interests so that it can formulate cohesive policies. To create a society grounded in the principle of self-responsibility, it is desirable to establish mechanisms that enable individuals to give full rein to their abilities in self-motivated efforts to preserve the environment and ensure safety. Voluntary participation is the basic premise of self-responsibility.

Society thus has no choice but to build public spirit from the diversified opinions of such individuals. There may be cases in which individual freedoms and private rights have to be curbed for the public good, including the preservation of land and the environment and the safety of society. In implementing such curbs, systems must be completely transparent. This requires the creation of a highly public-spirited society that allows various differing opinions to be forged into unified, achievable objectives. To create such a society, mechanisms must be established to allow the disclosure of information and make it easier to build a consensus by juggling people's varying degrees of expectation and tolerance vis-à-vis issues of safety and the environment. The government must not balk at disclosing information, and the policy-making process must not be opaque in any way. Policy makers must be held accountable and should be obliged to guarantee that policies are always transparent. Unless this is done, such evils as favoritism and free riding will arise, damaging the public trust. This is extremely dangerous when it comes to issues that cannot be resolved on the initiative of an individual but absolutely require the government to play a role, such as preservation of the national land and environmental protection. When the government is compelled to act in such situations, both the effectiveness of its policies and its ability to execute them is seriously undermined. There is also a need to change the manner in which regulatory mechanisms are activated. The current system of applying ex ante regulations should be replaced by an ex post facto system of clear rules with punishments for infractions.

IV. Regional Self-Determination: Creating Communities Run by Residents

1. Regions as spaces for living

Regions are spaces for living, or "regional life centers." To achieve a beautiful country and a safe national land, we must fashion a new relationship between the individual and public space in regional development. A region is a unit of global society and is delineated according to such criteria as politics, economics, climate, and lifestyle. It is also an index of how a particular lifestyle has spread. Regional societies in their totality constitute the global society. To date, we have tended to think in macro terms based on economic volumes at the state level, but as we enter the twenty-first century, it is more essential than ever to think in micro terms, turning our attention to affluence at the level of our daily lives. We then need to create new mechanisms that are desirable for regional societies within the context of our daily lives.

There are many different kinds of regions, each with its own distinguishing features. These features are the treasures that create the charm of each region and attract people to it. They generate a sense of values and can be described as distinctive regional assets. The inhabitants of each region have the ability to discover these assets and make the most of them. If a region's riches are discovered by science and built up through art into distinctive regional assets that appeal to the heart, there is no doubt that these riches will take on added significance.

In addition to bequeathing a beautiful environment and valuable resources to subsequent generations, the present generation is obliged to achieve sustainable economic growth. To do so, it is important to ground oneself in the region in which one lives. As spaces for living, regions must provide producers, consumers, administrators, and other actors with incentives to consciously and effectively fulfill their obligations. If people are able to enjoy art and assimilate the fruits of science and technology in their

region, the strengths and charms of the region will be enhanced. Cooperative work on improving regions as spaces for living will likely dissipate the dissociation of material affluence and spiritual richness. It will also likely lead to demands for structural reform of institutions to enable the government administration, companies, individuals, and other actors that constitute regions to participate in regional development.

2. Toward regional governance led by local residents

Incorporating their distinctive regional assets into the local mode of life should revitalize regions. It is essential, of course, to ensure that the policy-making process is transparent. It is also important for people to improve their self-governing capabilities by becoming interested in this process and participating in developing the region as a living space.

After World War II, Japan focused on its economy, which became a “distribution-type” economy in which the government distributed wealth to the people. The most rational way to distribute wealth fairly was to adopt a centralized system. National land development and the building of social infrastructure functioned as forms of income security for the regions. This approach also robbed the regions of their individuality, however, and created cities that varied little in character. Because of the soul searching that followed, the overall trend today is steadily away from centralized, top-down controls and restrictions and toward the creation by local residents of horizontal “network societies” based on regions of varying size. This trend is nullifying the hierarchical relationship that has existed to date between the center and the regions, putting the regions on an equal footing.

The shift from centralization to decentralization has long been discussed. In an age of highly transparent horizontal networks, the unit of decentralization is the region, which constitutes a space that is closely linked with people’s lives. In the units of decentralization known as regional societies, the key issue is governance. A region is a space for living, and its inhabitants are the key actors. Signature campaigns, local referendums, and other initiatives give them the power of self-determination. A regionally decentralized system is more suitable than a centralized system if regional governance is to work successfully because regional governance enables local residents to participate more directly.

As mentioned above, the central government is not capable of identifying distinctive regional assets and incorporating them into regional development projects on its own. The cooperation of residents is essential. If anything, residents should decide on the most suitable plans for their region according to its characteristics. This, in turn, should nurture their pride in their region. The role of government administration is to harmonize the various conflicting interests that will almost certainly emerge within the region. For this reason, the focus should shift toward a horizontal, open system in which information is actively disclosed as a means of creating a consensus among those concerned, allowing government administration, residents, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) involved in community development, and companies to participate.

Regional development that respects the independence of residents and makes the most of their diversity will greatly alter the relationship between the central government and the regions. This means a dramatic shift away from the national land planning imposed from above that has prevailed so far, which has encouraged balanced development across the board. Instead, regional communities will be able to maximize their historical and geographical characteristics through their own decisions and efforts.

If this is to happen, nothing is more important than enhancing the self-governing capabilities of regional communities. One indispensable condition is that they wean themselves from their dependence on government subsidies and assume substantial authority over revenue sources. To enable them to shake off their habitual reliance on subsidies, the central government will have to correct its own tendency to use subsidies as a means of controlling the regions.

Establishing a transparent decision-making system that involves regional residents will make policies more effective. Residents will independently set targets for their own regional communities and be fully aware of the burdens involved in meeting those targets. This and the aspiration to achieve objectives, along with acceptance of the obligations arising in the process of implementation and of ex post facto responsibilities, are fundamental elements of regional governance. Regional communities that intend to fulfill all these conditions will need to seek the opinions of experts and create fair and transparent systems for harmonizing conflicting interests and making decisions based on broadly based knowledge.

In developing comfortable regional life centers, it is essential to understand the multifaceted roles played by beautiful townscapes and landscapes and by nature itself. Architecture and land use are fundamental aspects of living in regions, and formulating policies governing them requires the participation of specialists and systemic changes enabling projects to reflect residents' intentions. To allow the swift implementation of such policies, it will be necessary to establish regulations to prevent opposing minorities or administrative discretion from obstructing implementation. The grounds and rationales for these regulations must be open. In particular, when it comes to land use, building restrictions, road construction, and other matters relating to regional development, one possible approach is for expert consultants to offer various alternatives so that residents can select regulations for themselves. Meanwhile, it is important to allow market mechanisms to function as freely as possible.

Urban renewal is a problem of vital significance as the twenty-first century begins. Crowded city blocks of wooden dwellings present major difficulties from the point of view of disaster prevention. It is important that residents are voluntarily motivated to improve their neighborhoods and lives. They should make the most of expert know-how in such areas as urban planning, civil engineering, and architecture to lay the groundwork for regenerating their neighborhoods as safe and comfortable places that blend parks, green belts, and walkways with residential areas. To do this, the residents need frameworks that encourage lateral policy planning and proposals. Powerful leadership is essential to ensure that the lateral approach works effectively.

When it comes to urban development, interregional cooperation, including that between cities and areas with a great deal of greenery, must also be borne in mind. In the twenty-first century, networks for interregional interchange should not be confined to one's own country but should extend overseas. If we look at the trend toward greater regional exchange, it becomes apparent that it will be important to go beyond national borders to deepen understanding of regions around the world. We should set our sights on establishing think tanks that can take a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to providing specialized knowledge concerning the exchange of information necessary for cooperation between regions at home and abroad. Based on solid information concerning the regions of the world, we should establish a framework for interregional cooperation from a global perspective.

V. Building a Country That Can Withstand Crises

1. Thinking strategically

After World War II, both the public and the private sectors tended to leave the question of security to others and, intentionally or not, were inclined to avoid strategic thinking. Japan was fortunate in being able to enjoy peace and safety, but its fragility became apparent following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The Japanese people's sensitivity to such dangers as natural disasters, accidents, and intentional attacks has clearly been dulled, and their inability to cope with emergencies has frequently been exposed. Safety checks should be carried out strategically on the assumption that a crisis will eventually occur.

For example, it was feared that discussions of safety in areas such as medicine and power plants

would show them to be unsafe. As a result, there was a tendency to avoid searching debate on accident-prevention measures. This meant that when accidents actually occurred, the measures in place were woefully inadequate. Because information disclosure was not accepted as the norm and specialized, technical areas were hard to understand, the Japanese were inclined simply to take the authorities at their word after compelling them to declare that this or that was completely safe. We cannot emphasize enough that there is no such thing as perfect safety. Science can minimize the probability of accidents but can never reduce it to zero. No matter how careful people are, they make mistakes and cause accidents. Of course, it is necessary to make preparations, formulating thoroughgoing safety measures in an attempt to prevent disasters and accidents. The primary emphasis, however, should be on measures to minimize damage when a disaster or accident does occur and on backup systems to restore things to normal as quickly as possible.

Safety systems change in response to changes in the social environment. Systems that have been effective so far will not remain so forever. It is time we gave our imaginations full rein where danger is involved. This will enable us to put together preventive measures and engage in strategic thinking that envisages in advance the best approach to minimizing damage and getting things back to normal as soon as possible after a crisis.

2. Learning to use science and information effectively

In addressing the question of safety in the twenty-first century, we cannot ignore the impact of science and information. Progress in science and technology has made life infinitely more convenient. At times, however, the use of science and technology is also fraught with peril. The dangers arising from the evolution of information technology include hacking and unlawful access, invasion of privacy, intimidation and extortion via networks, cyberterrorism, and even the risk of “information wars.” We are entering an era in which the development of information technology makes it impracticable to differentiate between maintaining law and order in society and ensuring national security.

We no longer have a choice: We cannot avoid using science and technology, including information technology. When it comes to the safety of waste products and nuclear power, we all obtain benefits in exchange for accepting the inherent dangers. Each of us is therefore in a sense responsible for creating these dangers. The important thing is neither to overaccentuate the positive aspects of science, technology, and information nor to exaggerate their negative aspects. Science and technology may invite danger but can also be expected to play a key role in preventing it. Science and technology are essential components of our daily lives. We must look at both their dark and bright sides. Unless we have a basic understanding of science and technology, we may develop unrealistic expectations of safety on one hand and excessive fears of danger on the other.

When it comes to problems such as the global environment and bioethics, we need to create mechanisms whereby we can familiarize ourselves with the scientific arguments involved, understand their implications calmly and rationally, and share the relevant information. Some people assert that scientific arguments can only be discussed in terms of probability. We need to train people who can talk about specialized scientific knowledge in a manner that is easy for the rest of us to understand. In education, we should no longer simply separate the arts and sciences mechanically. Because advances in medical treatment deeply affect human dignity, for example, it is important to establish branches of learning that combine the humanities and sciences. We should establish networks that transcend specialties and expect scientists to fulfill a wide range of roles in communicating specialized knowledge in terms that are easy to understand, pointing out the ripple effects that science has on society, ethical problems, and the possibility of interdisciplinary cooperation. At the same time, we should create frameworks that encourage individuals to attempt to understand all this of their own accord.

As for the dangers inherent in progress in information technology, in many cases the sheer speed of

change makes it impossible to respond. As information networking spreads, security is transformed from a matter for the state into one that intimately concerns the general populace. On the premise that there is no such thing as perfect safety, we must be able to maintain control even when various kinds of information are available. Although individuals are becoming increasingly autonomous, they will be required to develop cooperative relationships with the state and regions in order to avoid being confounded by information. International cooperation on cyberterrorism will also be necessary.

3. Cooperating to control danger

In emergencies such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, vertical, bottom-up decision-making systems do not function effectively. The decision-making process takes too long and may fail altogether if a single link in the chain of communication breaks and prevents information from being passed upward. It is essential to create a framework whereby bottom-up systems can be supplemented by systems that make it possible to make decisions on the spot, coordinate matters laterally, and issue top-down instructions and orders.

In some cases, a sudden explosive need to help an area stricken by disaster makes it impossible to set priorities immediately or causes governmental functions to deteriorate. The government cannot be expected to provide all necessary services. Companies, regional communities, NPOs, and other actors must establish cooperative relationships that enable them to manage crises when the government is unable to gather information, reach decisions quickly, or provide the necessary services. It is important to establish lateral crisis-management frameworks that involve the police, fire departments, the Self-Defense Forces, and other administrative entities, along with companies that provide supplies and lifeline utilities (water, electricity, and gas), regional communities, NPOs, and volunteer groups. This will enable the parties concerned to formulate and practice crisis-management procedures when things are normal, then join forces and put them into practice during emergencies.

Emergencies test the crisis-management abilities of all concerned. In situations where administrative entities are unable to provide the expected services, the ability of individuals to protect themselves will play an extremely important role in preventing the damage from spreading. For this reason, it will, of course, be necessary to incorporate crisis-management systems into our daily lives and education and to learn as much as possible for ourselves. It is also important to prepare for actual crises by establishing special holidays for large-scale disaster drills. Because dealing with disasters costs huge amounts of money, the funding necessary for handling large-scale disasters should be secured in advance. Rules must also be established for allocating among the parties concerned the cost of restoring private-sector apartment blocks and other communal housing complexes that are damaged by earthquakes and the like. These are just a few examples of what should be done. The important thing is to become familiar with local circumstances and strengthen cooperation among the government, companies, NPOs, individuals, and other actors with a view to dealing with possible disasters.

VI. Conclusion: Creating New “Soft Power”

We are in transition from the modern era of competition for hegemony to an era of competition based on “culture power.” There is also an ongoing shift away from mass production, mass consumption, and mass destruction to recycling and the cyclical use of resources. To put it another way, we are moving away from an era of competition in “hard power” that flaunted the violence and intimidation of the “rich nation and strong military” policy, and toward an era of competition in “soft power,” when nations compete to convey their charms and make a good impression. More than anything else, people living in such an era will take pride in their culture—their way of life and mode of living—and look for ways of giving a natural impression that their culture is comfortable, safe, and beautiful. Valuing both

people and things is synonymous with building a “prosperous and civilized country”—a nation that is both materially affluent and spiritually rich.

Japan first appeared on the stage of world history when it emerged from isolation and opened up to the world in the transition from the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867) to the Meiji Restoration (1868). At that time, Japan struck visiting foreigners as a beautiful country with a safe society. Edo (present-day Tokyo) and other castle towns throughout the country possessed enough greenery to deserve the description “garden towns,” rural communities were likened to the Garden of Eden and the “Arcadia of the East,” and mountain ranges were even given the name “Japan Alps” after the Alps so greatly admired by Westerners. Japan looked like a picturebook paradise.

Back when Japan was closed to the outside world and had no geographical frontiers, the economy was managed in such a way as to promote the efficient and cyclical use of the country’s sparse resources. That pushed productivity per unit of land to the highest level in the world and created a cyclical society in which thoroughgoing recycling and reuse ensured that resources were used with a minimum of waste. This conveyed an image of simple beauty and cleanliness. Japanese agriculture gave the impression of clean and tidy gardens, so much so that it was referred to as “horticulture” to contrast it with the large-scale agriculture of the West. The Japanese were viewed as a civilized people who were courteous and respected discipline. Because the Westerners of the time tended to see themselves as civilized and the rest of the world as barbarians, the use of “civilized” in connection with Japan signified their regard for Japan. Regrettably, the Japanese were unable to make comparisons with foreign countries in those days because they had been isolated for so long. As a result, they were unaware of the beauty of their land, their courtesy and good manners, and the safety of their society.

There is no turning back to the closed world of that time, however. In its deepening relationship with the rest of the world, an open Japan must consider the problems of the environment and safety. The entire global society must endeavor to discover the values intrinsic in the things of daily life. Our task is to elevate our awareness of beautiful natural and living environments into a common perception of a beautiful earth and consciously present to the world an image of harmony with nature and safety in society.

Regional societies are not intrinsically closed. At the micro level, they consist of the family. At the macro level, they extend across the world. The cycling of goods and networking among people encompass the globe. Although Japan’s geographical situation as an island nation tends to be associated with a negative image of insularity, history shows that the ocean was Japan’s link to the rest of the world. It is important to be aware of the relationship between the small systems known as regions and the huge system known as the earth, and to recognize that making regional life safe and beautiful can contribute to the welfare of global society.