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THE PHENOMENON OF THE LIBERAL PARTY (*JIYŪ-TŌ*) IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF JAPAN: THE POLITICAL BRAND EVOLUTION AND ITS IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT

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The title of the party is a political brand, which reflects its ideological focus. In Japanese political history, the party brand of the Liberal party (Jiyū-tō) repeatedly changed its ideological content. The problem and chronological method of analysis of existing historical factology allows to comprehend the tendencies of ideological and organizational evolution of Jiyū-tō party brand, which have appeared over the last century and a half, as well as to provide a forecast of future fate of the Japanese Liberal Party. This makes the final subject of this research.

Before World War I in Imperial Japan, the first three Jiyū-tō projects focused on liberal values. However, they quickly faded away: either due to self-removal of the leader from the party leadership and subsequent radicalization (1881–1884); or self-liquidation and joining the party coalition for the formation of the first party government (1891–1898); or due to marginalization because of the lack of enthusiasm of voters (1903–1905). The two initial post-war ideologically and personally deeply conservative Jiyū-tō projects (1945–1948 and 1950–1955) were liberal only in titles and at first joined the right-wing conservative Democratic Liberal Party (Minshujiyū-tō), then the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (Jiyūminshu-tō). In 1998, there was an attempt to restore the project of Jiyū-tō as an ideological liberal party. It ended in 2003 due to the split and marginalization, authorized by the political adventurism of its leader Ozawa Ichirō. Up today there was the eighth renewal of Jiyū-tō, headed again by Ozawa Ichirō in 2016. It was based on the centre-left liberalism, but the presence in today's Japan of several centrist parties with similar programs does not allow the Jiyū-tō to succeed in political competition. It has led to the loss of representation in the Parliament and the self-dissolution on April 27, 2019. From that moment the liberal niche in Japan's political system again became vacant, which preserves the possibility of renewal of Jiyū-tō party project in future.

Keywords: Japan; Liberal Party (Jiyū-tō); Ozawa Ichirō; party brand; political history

Introduction

The title of a political party is usually perceived as a kind of political brand, in which the strategic ideological orientation of this party project is displayed in several words. However, Japan is a country with a very peculiar political culture, within the framework of which some party brands not only arose several times but also carried different ideological contents. Ignoring this fact creates confusion in understanding of party component in politics of Japan and leads to a distorted assessment of past and current realities of its state evolution. All those allegations fully apply to the party brand *Jiyū-tō* (自由党), which in European Japanese studies is usually translated as the Liberal Party.

In historiography, the problem of ideological evolution of Jiyu party project has not been studied and has not been even posed. In the available works of historians and political

scientists (among which the following deserve a particular attention: Anzai K., Sanabe M. and Arafune Sн. [安在, 真边, 荒船 2009], V. N. Yeryomin [Ерёмин 1993], Ibuki K. [伊吹 2005], Ito A. [伊藤 2003], Kamiwaki H. [上脇 1999], Kyogoku J. [京極 1983], Kitake Y. [季武 1998], Kitamura K. and Ito D. [北村, 伊藤 2004], Kuboya M. [久保谷 2016], Murakawa I. [村川 1998], Naraoka S. [奈良岡 2006], A. I. Senatorov [Сенаторов 1995], R. A. Skalapino [Scalapino 1975], Fukui H. [Fukui 1985], I. A. Tsvetova [Цветова 2003], Chang P. [Chang 1958] and others), the ideological and organizational evolution of Japanese liberal parties appearing at different times is considered either as a set of political phenomena that are self-sufficient from a research point of view – that is, in isolation from the same "liberal" party projects that existed before and after them. In addition, it is considered to be in the context of Japanese liberal parties' rivalry with other parties of different ideological orientation of that period of time. The evolution of Jiyu-to party phenomenon throughout its almost one and a half century history still remains undeveloped in historiography, which makes our understanding of processes and trends of ideological transformation of entire political system of Japan clearly incomplete from the era of the great Meiji reforms to the present day. The author of this publication hopes that the problem and chronological method of the existing historical factology analysis would allow not only to comprehend the tendencies of ideological and organizational evolution of Jiyu-to party brand, which had manifested itself over the previous century and a half, but also to formulate a reasonable forecast regarding the nearest future of political project of Japanese Liberal Party. It makes the subject of this research.

The rise of Liberal Party in Japan

For the first time, public activists of corresponding ideological orientation raised the need to create a liberal party in Japan in 1880, amid the petition campaign for public appeals to Emperor Mutsuhito (1852–1912) with a request to issue the Imperial Edict of the establishment of the Parliament. As part of this campaign, back in March 1880, at the IV Congress of Japanese *"The Society of Patriots"* (*Aikoku-sha*) in Ōsaka, a decision was made to transform this society into the *League for the Establishment of a National Assembly* (*Kokkai Kisei Dōmei*) [林 1991, *759*]. On April 17 [安在, 真辺, 荒船 2009, *9*] it appealed to the emperor with written *Petition Requesting the Establishment of a National Assembly*. However, it received no official response from the authorities. Then, in November 1880, at the second conference of the League (which had a strong representation in composition – 64 deputies from 24 local prefectural branches of the League representing 130 thousand members of this organization) [福島県民百科 1980, *448*], its delegates, firstly, called on the population to come out for demonstrations demanding the establishment of a parliament in Japan. Secondly, they declared their readiness to begin immediately the independent development of a draft constitution. However, the League was not a political party and it did not have the mechanisms and bodies that would coordinate this work. Thus, the delegates engaged in the creation of a draft constitution [大日方 2002, *103–104*] departed for their regions. As a result, a number of drafts was developed and presented to the public quickly and it became clear that it was impossible to engage in political activity in the form of the League as a poorly coordinated social movement. Parliamentary system supporters in Japan needed a more clear political organization, which could only be provided by a political party ideologically outlined in the appropriate manner. Therefore, in December 1880, members of the *Kokkai Kisei Dōmei*, who perceived this simple idea, formed the Liberal Party Preparation Committee [林 1991, *759*]. Its most active members were the descendants of the middle-class samurai: professional journalist Ueki Emori (1857–1892) and military veteran Kōno Hironaka (1849–1923), who had already left the army for politics under the impression of the suppression of the samurai anti-government actions of the late 1870s, in which he participated in person.

The energy of the Committee members quickly produced results. The III Congress of the League was open in Tokyo on October 18, 1881. It took several hours for delegates to make a historic decision to create the first complete political party based on the League, which declared the strategic goal of its existence – the struggle for civil rights and freedoms, the improvement of social relations, and the multiplication of national welfare. The main tactical task of the party proclaimed the swiftest adoption of the constitution and the convening of parliament as an organ of representative legislative power, formed on an electoral basis. Such political ideas were fully consistent with the doctrine of liberalism, which reflected in the title of the party – Liberal (*Jiyū-tō*, 自由党).

Over the next ten days after the congress, the delegates adopted the party's charter, including the text of the oath that everyone who joined the Liberal Party was supposed to take, as well as elected leadership of Jiyū-tō, headed by another former high-ranking military man Itagaki Taisuke (1837–1919). In 1874, he took part in the first attempt to create a complete political party in Japan *Public Party of Patriots* (*Aikokukō-tō*), on behalf of which he was already proposing to the government with an appeal to immediately begin development of a constitution and form in Japan through the election mechanism the first parliament in Asia as a representative body. He even came up with an official name *Minsengiin* [山村 2013, *97*] for such an institution, the *Parliament created by the people*. Since the immediate political goal of the Liberal Party proclaimed adoption of a constitution and convening National Assembly, Itagaki Taisuke became the first Jiyū-tō chairman.

Liberal parties in the Empire of Japan

After the official formation of the Liberal Party it was immediately and actively involved in political life. Fortunately, Jiyū-tō quickly got a generous financial donor – *Mitsui* Company [Chang 1958, *16*]. Local branches of Jiyū-tō were created throughout the country, and in June 1882, the liberals had their party press – the *Liberal Newspaper* (*Jiyū-shimbun*) [絵画史料を読む 1993, *146*]. It got to the point that some particularly enthusiastic liberal activists began to raise the question of possible transformation of Japan on the French model into a republic [Chang 1958, *3*], alluding to the right of the people for a revolution to protect their civil rights in face of power despotism. The situation clearly became explosive, and the government had to respond to it promptly, which was done very competently.

In November 1882, it was announced that the Imperial Government, led by the Chief-Minister Sanjō Sanetomi (1837–1891), sensitively listening to the aspirations of his subjects, undertook to draft a constitution. However, for such serious legislative work to be successful it needed a careful study of progressive countries' experience. To do this, a representative delegation of the most responsible and competent political experts in state-building will be sent to a long overseas voyage at the state expense, and Itagaki Taisuke, who was also very ambitious (as everyone knew), was invited to join. The authorities' plan turned out to be accurate: Itagaki Taisuke accepted such a prestigious offer; liberals who disagreed with such a decision were promptly expelled from the party for violation of the charter and party discipline. After that, there was an assassination attempt of Itagaki, which was very suspicious because of extremely low professionalism and therefore it turned to be unsuccessful. It is still unclear who organized and tried to execute it (the killer was murdered by security guards). However, after a murder attempt, Itagaki's rating among liberals naturally grew, and Japanese newspapers were quoting a phrase, which reportedly the leader of Jiyū-tō spoke immediately after the attack: "Liberty will not die even if Itagaki dies" [梶山 1995, *61*].

In November 1882, the chief liberal of Japan set off with a delegation abroad, which had extremely unpleasant consequences for still a very loose party organization of Jiyū-tō. Some liberals supported their leader; others accused him of criminal compromise with

the authorities and even committed several prominent attacks in Eastern regions of the country. Authorities responded with repression, many Jiyū-tō branches were closed, and some of the most violent activists were sent to jail [The Cambridge History of Japan 1989, *416–418*]. The rest of moderate liberals turned out to be demoralized and ideologically disoriented. When Itagaki Taisuke returned with a delegation to Japan in June 1883, it turned out that the party that he supposedly headed virtually ceased to exist and was almost banned. Itagaki was full of fresh constitutional ideas, so he did not play the opposition with the authorities. On October 29, 1884, the dissolution of the Liberal Party was officially announced. At that time, the party had only 101 persons [日本大百科全書 1986, *589*]. It ended the story of the first Liberal Party in Japan, although many of the ideas voiced by the party were reflected in the *Constitution of the Great Japanese Empire*, "promulgated" on February 11, 1889 [Японцы о Японіи 1906, *8*]. It guaranteed Japanese citizens class equality, freedom of movement and place of residence, protection of personal rights and freedoms "within the law", including home inviolability, personal and private property, freedom creeds, "words, letters, press, public gatherings and unions" [Японцы о Японіи 1906, *531*]. Most importantly, it determined that the two-house *Imperial Parliament* (*Teikoku Gikai*) would be formed in Japan. Its lower house would be formed following the results of the all-Japanese, although not all-popular, election (a very substantial property qualification was put up for participation in the election).

The response of moderate liberals to the adoption of the constitution was their migration from opposition to full support of the government, a symbol of which was the formation of the *Constitutional Liberal Party* (*Rikkenjiyū-tō*) in August 1890, headed by the same Itagaki Taisuke. He stated that the rights and freedoms prescribed in the 1889 constitution were sufficient for the successful development of the country and people. Therefore, the party he leaded was not so oppositional and was ready to work closely with the government.

However, far not all convinced liberals appreciated Itagaki's readiness positively. In the ranks of Rikkenjiyū-tō, it constantly gave rise to heated discussions that led this party to the actual split in March 1891 (at the congress in Ōsaka) [小山, 芝村 1991, *133*] and the restoration in the party spectrum of Japan of the Jiyū-tō project again as an opposition to the party's power. Despite the fact that formally most of the demands made by the liberals of the second wave were purely social and economic (for example, the establishment of guaranteed weekends for the workers), the second Liberal Party in the history of Japan was unable to get away from the political component of state life. It was advocating the reduction in spending on government officials to raise living standards of all other layers of the Japanese.

The dissenters who disagreed with such reckless opposition restored in the former party brand of Jiyū-tō were led by Ōi Kentarō (1843–1922), a well-known lawyer and active participant of the civil rights movement. He initiated the departure of his supporters from the Liberal Party in May 1891 and formed with them a new party project – the *Eastern Liberal Party* (*Tōyōjiyū-tō*) [日本近代史辞典 1968, *420*]. The program of this party proposed full support of the government in matters of external expansion, which, according to the ideologists of Tōyōjiyū-tō, was supposed to turn Japan into a pan-Asian hegemon [中村, 伊藤, 武田 1982, *102*], which could expel Europeans from the region and turn into a rich metropolis similar to the Western colonial powers. However, Itagaki Taisuke did not support the excessive radicalism of the newly minted "liberal hawks", although he agreed that the new Liberal Party should actively support the government in its positive endeavours, confirming this thesis with a personal example over time. In 1896, he accepted the relevant proposal of the Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909) and entered the government as Home Minister [The Cambridge History of Japan 2005, *66*].

The new tactics of the *constructive opposition* the head of the liberals Itagaki Taisuke believed in yielded certain results. Following the results of the parliamentary election of

1892, Jiyū-tō turned out to be the most popular party among voters (it held 94 representatives in the Parliament with a total number of deputies – 300), and its representative Hoshi Tōru (1850–1901) became the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Then immediately a conflict with the government began. It got to the point that the emperor had to dismiss the Home Minister, Shinagawa Yajirō (1843–1900), for excesses committed by the authorities at the election.

The 1892 election was indeed accompanied by numerous irregularities (including the killing of opposition candidates and their proxies) and retaliatory protests, in which more than two dozen people died [伊吹 2005, *23*].

In reaction, in December 1892 the authorities gathered up and made public a corrupt compromising evidence of Hoshi Tōru himself, who as a result was forced to resign from his Speaker post and leave Jiyū-tō. In the several subsequent elections (1894 and 1898), liberals remained the country's most popular party among voters, but firstly, pro-government forces in the parliament formed coalitions, and liberals were not allowed into the speaker's chair anymore. On the other hand, not a single party had a stable majority in the parliament then. Therefore, there was no discussion under the creating a party cabinet and the country was run by a government, not of politicians, but officials and military personnel. However, politicians of Japan had corresponding ambitions. The result of these contradictory processes was the peculiar suicide of the Liberal Party, framed in June 1898 in the form of the union of the two most numerically represented party projects of the Liberal (*Jiyū-tō*) and Progressive (*Shimpo-tō*) parties into a single *Constitutional Party* (*Kensei-tō*) [伊吹 2005, *41*].

The reason for this union was understandable: the leaders of all Japanese parties had been dreaming of strengthening their positions in the political alignment to form the first party cabinet in the history of the country. To achieve such an ambitious goal, former irreconcilable rivals: the main liberal leader Itagaki Taisuke and the main progressive leader Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922) launched a bold experiment to merge their two parties into one. It ultimately won a complete majority in the parliament (244 deputies out of 300) [The Cambridge History of Japan 2005, *68*] and on June 30, 1898 formed the first party government in the history of Japan, headed by Ōkuma [伊吹 2005, *42*]. However, the cost of such a party politics breakthrough to the levers of government power was actual self-destruction of Jiyū-tō party, which temporarily disappeared from the political map of Japan.

For the third time, the Liberal Party was revived in Japan only in 1903, when part of the parliamentary fraction of the main pro-government party, the *Constitutional Association of Political Friendship* (*Rikkenseiyū-kai / Seiyū-kai*), refused to support Prime Minister Katsura Tarō (1848–1913), initiated by the Seiyū-kai government another increase in the tax burden on citizens.

Nevertheless, the government was easy to understand then: Japan was preparing for war against Russia and the army and navy needed large and immediate investments.

The crisis of 1903 for the Seiyū-kai faction ended with withdrawal of 20 pro-government party deputies from the Constitutional Association of Political Friendship. They declared restoration of an independent Liberal Party project in Japan and even developed a full-sized election program for the next parliamentary election of 1904 with a clear bias towards left-liberal values [Fukui 1985, *568*]. The program included the requirements for the immediate introduction of suffrages without any property qualifications, a comprehensive reduction in all taxes and greater social protection of ordinary people in Japan. The leaders of the third Liberal Party in the history of Japan were politicians of a slightly adventurous outlook. Among them were influential businessmen Hayashi Yūzō (1842–1921) and Asano Jumpei (1856–1925), former high-ranking official Matsumoto Gokichi (1862–1929), an original thinker and public activist Oda Kan'ichi (1856–1909), and a former senior functionary of the Liberal Party of the previous generation Yamamoto

Yukihiko (1845–1913). The election slogans of the revived liberals looked attractive, but the voters remembered how the leadership of the former liberal parties consigned their own slogans to oblivion before outright bribing the authorities, so they did not really believe in the sincerity of current Jiyu-to leaders. In addition, sections of society that already had the right to vote, the exclusivity of which was guaranteed by a high property qualification, were not eager to share this right with the "rabble". All this made Jiyu-to project unpromising from the voters' sympathies point of view of the time.

Following the results of the 1904 election, the liberals were able to include only 25 of their representatives to the parliament (then parliament consisted of 379 deputies). The scantiness of the fraction turned the liberals into a frank political marginal party, which was not at all in the plans of their ambitious leaders. In December 1905, the Jiyū-tō once again vanished by merging with another two failed political parties – *Kōshin Club* (*Kōsin-kurabu*) and the *Imperial Party* (*Teikoku-tō*). They formed a political bloc with a prominent title *Like-Minded Thinkers' Club* (*Daidō-kurabu*) [伊吹 2005, *72*]. This title symbolized the main political point of the club – the requirement of a complete legal equation for all Japanese citizens by introducing suffrages in the country. It was an idea that the Daidō-kurabu leaders hoped to win over the next election, but the price for such union was the third disappearance of the liberal party phenomenon as an element of Japanese political life.

Jiyu-to project in the period of post-war disordered multi-party system (1945–1955)

The consecutive collapse of the three projects of Jiyū-tō seriously compromised the political brand of the Liberal Party in the eyes of voters. Therefore, it took a very long time to wait for its new revival. Only after the defeat of Japan in World War II, the horrors of which overshadowed all the previous claims of voters to the political idea of liberalism, this project again got a chance for a revival. Its chief initiator was the former Minister of Education Hatoyama Ichirō (1883–1959), who called on deputies of the Japanese parliament who shared right-wing liberal values to consolidate within the framework of the restored *Japan Liberal Party* (*Nihon Jiyū-tō*) [The Cambridge History of Japan 2005, *161*]. He did it after the dismantling of a single-party system of the totalitarian type under the control of the occupying American administration. However, the main participants in this project were mainly former members of the *Constitutional Association of Political Friendship* (*Rikkenseiyū-kai*), one of the leading pro-government parties in Japan from 1900 to 1940, which has always positioned itself as a right-wing conservative. Nihon Jiyū-tō [前田 1996, *89*], formally revived on November 9, 1945, was not much liberal in fact. It is not surprising that in the first post-war parliamentary election of 1946, Hatoyama-led Japanese liberals, despite they were formally the country's leading party (gaining about a quarter of the vote), joined the coalition with progressive in name, but ideologically amorphous *Japan Progressive Party* (*Nihon Shimpo-tō*) [伊吹 2005, *257*]. As a result, the head of the occupation administration General D. MacArthur (1880–1964) appointed a new Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967), formally non-partisan, former Minister of Military Construction. At the time of the election, Yoshida was imprisoned as he was a suspect of war crimes under the future International Tokyo Tribunal. However, he became a man that the Americans suddenly released from custody and put in charge of the head of the government to the formation of which the Nihon Jiyū-tō pseudo-liberals had a hand.

Another thing was that under the watchful eye of the American curators, the formally coalitional, but essentially technical puppet government of Yoshida completed several truly radical and openly liberal acts. It renamed Japan from the Great Japanese Empire (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku*) to simply the State of Japan (*Nippon Koku*), completed the forced fragmentation of monopolies, gave the land to the farmers working on it, and proclaimed

consistent pacifism to be the basis of its foreign policy. On October 7, 1946, the Japanese parliament, in which the Japanese liberals were the prominent fractions, adopted the new edition of the Constitution, on which Japan renounced the right to their armed forces and wage war, a two-house parliament became fully elected, and the government – accountable to it and formed by it. As for the Nihon Jiyū-tō itself, as the payment for the presence in power, it was Yoshida's nomination to the post of Chairman of the Japan Liberal Party [The Cambridge History of Japan 2005, *162*], which finally convinced voters that in terms of their ideological orientation, Nihon Jiyū-tō was not liberal, but a conservative political force.

The 1947 election confirmed it, as a centre-left coalition government was formed in Japan, headed by a socialist Katayama Tetsu (1887–1978). Upon the formation of government, the liberals with openly conservative views refused to participate in it. Moreover, on March 12, 1948, Nihon Jiyū-tō, led by Yoshida Shigeru, once again abandoned the party brand of the Liberal Party itself, after it accepted some of the democrats and progressives, who had broken up with their former parties. It was transformed into the *Democratic Liberal Party* (*Minshujiyū-tō*), which, since its founding, declared its centre-right ideological orientation and opposition to the existing centre-left government. Only after the 1949 election, Yoshida returned as the Prime Minister [渡辺 2003, *176*] and decided to draw the sympathy of the liberal-minded part of the population of the formal restoration of the party with the vivid title for many voters – "The Liberal". On March 1, 1950, it completely absorbed the party of Japanese democrats, the Minshujiyū-tō again changed its name to the brand of Jiyū-tō [前田 1996, *89*]. That party was the main pillar of the government of Yoshida Shigeru, which ruled Japan unchallenged under Americans' control until 1954.

However, the party did not have any liberal ideology. On the one hand, it led to a marked strengthening in then Japanese liberal party projects not by title, but by their ideological orientation (the Green Breeze Society, *Ryokufū-kai*; the People's Democratic Party, *Kokuminminshu-tō*; the Farmers' Cooperative Party, *Nominkyōdō-tō*, etc.). On the other hand, the socialists were becoming more and more popular among voters. They failed to take power again only because they were split. In Japan, there were several parties of socialist orientation – the *Workers and Farmers Party* (*Rōdōshanōmin-tō*), and the *Japan Socialist Party* (*Nihon Shakai-tō*), which in 1951 managed to disintegrate for another two – the *Rightist Social Democratic Party* and the *Leftist Socialist Party*. Existing parties continued to split up, disintegrate and merge, as a result in 1952 the centrist *Reformist Party* (*Kaishin-tō*) arose. In addition, there were radicals, both left (communists) and right (Great Japan Patriotic Party, *Dai-Nippon Aikoku-tō*). It all signified that it was impossible to build a classic two-party system of the American model in Japan, which the overseas curators of Japanese post-war democratization clearly sought. The last blow to the vitality of Jiyū-tō as the leading conservative party in post-war Japan was the crisis in the Liberal Party itself, which ended in its split in early 1953.

The first post-war recovery leader of Nihon Jiyū-tō Hatoyama Ichirō, who had been removed from politics under the conditions of the American military occupation in 1946 for "active cooperation with the criminal totalitarian regime in the past" [副島 2014, *327*], proved to be the main troublemaker. In 1952, after the termination of the American occupation administration and the restoration of the state sovereignty of Japan, Hatoyama returned to politics. In February 1953, he joined to the Liberal Party, led by Yoshida [伊藤 正次 2003, *239*]. In March 1953, he created his group in it, the members of which criticized the liberal government of Yoshida for excessive compliance with the United States. Hatoyama's group advocated that Japan pursue a more independent domestic and foreign policy even restore diplomatic relations with the USSR to gain the opportunity to enter the UN as an equal independent state. On March 14, this party formation was officially called the *Secessionist Liberal Party* (*Bumpajiyū-tō*) [京極 1983, *212*], although

taking into account the peculiarities of its appearance, this party was immediately called by the name of its founder simply *Hatoyama Liberal Party* (*Hatoyama Jiyū-tō*) [宮崎 1985, *197*].

All this completely confused the party life of Japan, especially since in November 1954, the Hatoyama Liberal Party abandoned their liberal brand and merged with the reformists into the *Japan Democratic Party* (*Nihon Minshu-tō*). As a result, the liberal party government of Yoshida lost a majority in parliament and was not able to effectively rule the country anymore [国会議員の構成と変化 1980, *32*].

The crisis ended on December 10, 1954 with a forced resignation of the liberal Yoshida cabinet. He took personal responsibility for the political degradation of Jiyū-tō and resigned from his post of the Chairman of the Liberal Party. Ogata Taketora (1888–1956), another ex-minister of the imperial government, former head of the Japanese Intelligence Service at the final stage of World War II, who had been removed from politics in the first post-war years by the Americans, was elected the new Chairman of Jiyū-tō [Colton 1956, *47*].

However, the democratic government of Hatoyama, which succeeded the liberals, also did not have a stable majority in the parliament and could not effectively rule the country. The situation became a stalemate. The way out was found in the mutual self-dissolution of the Liberal and Democratic parties as independent political projects by merging them on November 15, 1955 into the *Liberal Democratic Party* (*Jiyūminshu-tō*). This party was extremely conservative and represented interests of big capitalists and top officials. Liberalism remained in it only in title. The former democrat Hatoyama Ichirō became the first elected Chairman of the LDP. In other words, in the ideological and personnel terms, the formation of Jiyūminshu-tō was not so much a merger of liberals and democrats as a takeover of the former by the latter. So once again, a party project under the brand title of the Liberal Party ceased to exist.

Jiyu-to party project at the turn of the third millennium: attempts of restoration

The next attempt to return the liberal brand of Jiyū-tō to the political life of Japan was an unexpected appearance of a party with this title after the collapse of the centre-right *New Frontier Party* (*Shinshin-tō*). The resumption of the Liberal Party in Japan was announced on January 1, 1998, and on January 5, there was the constituent congress of the newly formed Jiyū-tō [上脇 1999, *23*]. The main restorer of the liberal party project and the first Chairman was Ozawa Ichirō (born 1942), a politician with a difficult fate, whose record was full of various party projects.

Until 1993, Ozawa was a very successful functionary of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, in the framework of which in April 1991 he grew to one of the key party positions of the LDP General-Secretary [Mulgan 2015, *14*]. He became somewhere the second or third person in the party hierarchy, and in the framework of the distribution of powers, the LDP Secretary-General traditionally oversaw all financial issues related to the party's work, which added particular importance to the figure of Ozawa in the party elite of Jiyūminshu-tō. However, at the turn of the 1980s–90s, many influential politicians from the highest echelon of the liberal democrats became involved in major corruption scandals. LDP was rapidly losing face in the eyes of voters. It got to the point that in 1989, the leader of the liberal democrats, Kaifu Toshiki (born 1931), became the Prime Minister against the will of the upper House of Parliament, and one of the predecessors of Ozawa Ichirō as LDP Secretary General, Abe Fumio (1922–2006) was sentenced to three years in prison for bribery. In such circumstances, on June 23, 1993, 44 deputies from the LDP, trying to rebuild themselves from the liberal democrats' party, which were mired in corruption, defiantly left Jiyūminshu-tō and formed the centrist *Renewal Party* (*Shinsei-tō*) [Mulgan 2015, *16*]. The former LDP General Secretary Ozawa Ichirō [細川 2010, *531*] also joined the *Shinsei-tō*.

The Renewal Party initially received a good credit of trust from voters (1993 election – 10 % of the vote) and joined the ruling seven-party coalition, supporting the government of Hosokawa Morihiro (born 1938). In 1994, the leader of the renewalists Hata Tsutomu (1935–2017) even headed the Japanese coalition government for some time. But the Shinsei-tō didn't do anything further: the coalition broke up, Hata resigned, the "renewalists" were in opposition and merged with two other centrist parties. In December 1994, they formed the aforementioned New Frontier Party, which Ozawa officially headed in December 1995.

The Shinshin-tō approached the upcoming 1996 election with an ambitious program of changes, which included lowering the consumption tax, improving the pension system, reducing 20–50 % of all utility bills, and tightening public control over politicians to curb corruption and bureaucracy. Those slogans found favour with voters, and Shinshin-tō, led by Ozawa Ichirō, received 18 % of the vote at the election in 1996, having become the second-largest party in the country. However, the New Frontier Party remained in opposition, and it was impossible to transfer the campaign slogans into action without participating in the government. Gradual appeals to an abstract progress no longer looked attractive, opinion polls showed a sharp drop in popularity of Shinshin-tō, Thus, in December 1997, it was divided into several independent party groups, one of which was led by Ozawa project with purpose of the Liberal Party revival [久保谷 2016, *184*]. Ozawa's idea was obvious: the program developed under his leadership in the framework of the New Frontier Party was essentially liberal, which meant that the party he founded on the ruins of Shinshin-tō was supposed to have a corresponding, ideologically understandable title Jiyū-tō.

In January 1999, the liberals entered into a coalition with the ruling liberal democrats to get into government and try to put into practice their reform initiatives. The representative of Jiyū-tō, Noda Takeshi (born in 1941), was appointed Home Minister in the cabinet of ministers of Prime Minister Obuchi Keizō (1937–2000). However, before the next parliamentary election of 2000, liberal leader Ozawa Ichirō had outdone himself: he decided that for the liberals it was profitable to be the opposition party for the election, and initiated rupture of the Jiyū-tō – Jiyūminshu-tō coalition agreement [Mulgan 2015, *21*]. However, far not everyone in Jiyū-tō liked this idea. Dissenters were led by a former actress of theatre and cinematic musicals, and a deputy Ōgi Chikage (born 1933, real name Hayashi Hiroko), who had previously been close to the LDP's conservative values (she even criticized the current Japanese Constitution for excessive pacifism). On April 3, 2000, she announced her withdrawal from Jiyū-tō and the creation of the *New Conservative Party* (*Hoshushin-tō*) based on her fraction of 26 deputies [北村, 伊藤 2004, *237*], which stayed in the ruling coalition with the liberal democrats [伊藤　惇夫 2003, *13*]. Despite the fact that at the parliamentary election of 2000 the liberals got a good result (11 % of votes), after leaving the ruling coalition Jiyū-tō failed to fulfill its election program promises. All that remained was to form new blocks with other opposition parties and criticize government with no chance to fulfill anything politically. It ended sadly for the liberals: on September 26, 2003, judging by opinion polls, the party lost the support of voters. The Liberal Party was absorbed by more powerful Democratic Party (*Minshu-tō*) [Hoover 2018, *212*].

Ozawa Ichirō did not reconcile himself with such an end of liberalism in Japanese politics. He did not remain the party's General Secretary in the ranks of the democrats for a long time, so he again took up independent party building. At first, he organized his comrades into a permanent fraction in the ranks of the democrats (in the party history of the democrats this source of permanent political debate was called the Ozawa factor) [Funabashi, Nakano 2017, *120*]. Then Ozawa tried several times to form parties with poetic titles: the *People's Life First* (*Kokumin-no Seikatsu ga Daiichi*, "*the citizens' livelihood is paramount*"), the *Tomorrow Party of Japan* (*Nippon Mirai-no-tō*), the *Life Party* (*Seikatsu-no-tō*). Nevertheless, not all these formally unprincipled party projects by title

brought him success, and in October 2016 Ozawa Ichirō again tried to bring the old known brand of the Liberal Party back to Japanese politics. Its program was based on a centre-left ideology [Hoover 2018, *212*] and provided for the accessibility of medicine, decent wages, pensions and unemployment benefits, empowerment of local governments, the foreign policy of pacifism and preservation of non-nuclear status of Japan as well as a lot more for establishing true democracy in Japan [続 2019]. There were already many centrist parties with similar programs in Japan at that time, and Ozawa was unable to collect all of them under one wing. As a result, Jiyū-tō led by Ozawa failed at the parliamentary election in 2017, having received less than one per cent of the vote and left without representation in Parliament. It was a failure, followed by much expected consequences: on April 27, 2019, the last Liberal Party, led by Ozawa Ichirō, officially disbanded itself, and its activists almost wholly joined the centre-left *People's Democratic Party* (*Kokuminminshu-tō*).

Conclusions

Thus, despite the fact that in the framework of the party evolution of Japan, a political project under the same title of the Liberal Party (*Jiyū-tō*) arose repeatedly (the author counted at least eight liberal parties in Japanese history), its essential ideological content did change. Although the title of all those parties was the same, in their ideological orientation they differed by not only the leaders and time of existence but also the base of party ideology.

First Jiyū-tō in Japanese history, which existed in 1881–1884 and was led by Itagaki Taisuke, appeared on the crest of social movement for civil rights, parliamentary system and constitution, so it matched its official title. However, after Itagaki's disengagement from the party leadership, its radicalization and disintegration began and it officially self-dissolved by the decision of its leader.

The second Japanese Jiyū-tō, formed in 1891 and headed by the same Itagaki Taisuke, was different from the first one with loyalty toward the authorities and the doctrine of "constructive opposition". Its representatives were members of the government and even headed the lower House of Parliament. However, the very first attempt of the second Jiyū-tō to get the dominance in parliament and government displeased the court and the Imperial Government, which initiated blocking the pro-government coalition in parliament and suspended second Jiyū-tō from real participation in political life of the country. In such a situation, the only option was the organizational merger in 1898 with the Progressive Party (*Shimpo-tō*) into a single Constitutional Party (*Kensei-tō*), which for the first time in Japanese history gained an absolute majority in parliament and was able to form the first party government. The cost of such an increase in the role of party politicians in the balance of power was the actual self-liquidation of Jiyū-tō as a political project of a truly liberal orientation.

The third Jiyū-tō arose in 1903 as a result of the withdrawal of some deputies from the pro-government party – the Constitutional Association of Political Friendship (*Rikken-seiyū-kai*), to preserve the sympathy of their voters. These deputies, protesting against the next increase in the tax burden on citizens, consolidated within the framework of the next political project of the Liberal Party and made the main pre-election idea of their existence the requirement of an immediate introduction of universal suffrage in Japan. However, the already rightful strata of society took part in the election and a high property qualification guaranteed its exclusivity. Such voters did not want to share the right with others. That is why Jiyū-tō project turned out to be extremely unsuccessful in terms of voters' sympathies. The third Liberal Party in the history of Japan quickly fell under influence of the marginal party and in 1905 it self-destructed, having merged into the project of the large centrist party *Daidō-kurabu*, which insisted on the need to introduce suffrage for men in Japan.

For the fourth time, the party project with the title of Japan Liberal Party (*Nihon Jiyū-tō*) resumed its existence in the political alignment of the country only in 1945 under the conditions of American military occupation. In its staff composition, this party looked liberal in title only, as all its leaders had been conservatives before. The occupational regime persistently gave the law for Japanese extensive liberalization and de-monopolization of the internal policy and pacification of foreign policy. The fourth Japan Liberal Party led by Yoshida Shigeru in their practice, dominating the government or even forming it, implemented a system of reforms, mostly liberal. However, uncovered personnel conservatism of Nihon Jiyū-tō did not allow their leaders to position itself ideologically as liberal. It led to a temporary loss of power and the next reformation of the Japan Liberal Party into the right-conservative Democratic Liberal Party (*Minshujiyū-tō*) in 1948.

In 1950, under the control of the American occupation administration, the project of the Jiyū-tō (the fifth one), conservative in essence and liberal in title, was restored to build the classic two-party system of the Anglo-American model in Japan. The chaotic emergence in Japan of several left, centrist and right parties at once buried those plans. After the end of American occupation and restoration of state independence of Japan, the situation was aggravated by the 1953 split in the Liberal Party due to its leaders ambitiously struggling for power. The two liberal parties that emerged as a result of this split differed not only in leaders' personalities but also in their approaches to the strategy of political development of Japan. The Liberal Party of Yoshida Shigeru advocated that Japan's policy occurs exclusively in the wake of the US strategy, while the Hatoyama Liberal Party, a year later transformed in the course of the merger with the Reformist Party into the Japan Democratic Party (*Nihon Minshu-tō*), considered the necessity to return to greater independence of Japanese policy. The crisis in the liberal party camp resulted in a partial rotation of leadership and the self-liquidation of Jiyū-tō as an independent political project as a result of its merger in 1955 with Nihon Minshu-tō, into only a decorative semi-liberal, but conservative in fact Liberal Democratic Party (*Jiyūminshu-tō*).

Another party recovery of Jiyū-tō happened in 1998 as a result of the collapse of the centre-right New Frontier Party (*Shinshin-tō*), the program of which contained a lot of liberal ideas, promoted by its leader Ozawa Ichirō. However, the restored (the seventh) Jiyū-tō entered a coalition with the ruling conservative Liberal Democratic Party, then left it and joined the opposition. It led the party to a crisis, split, and political marginalization, which ended in 2003 with another disappearance of the Liberal Party (*Jiyū-tō*), as a result of its absorption by more powerful centrist Democratic Party (*Minshu-tō*).

The last (to date) eighth Liberal Party in Japanese history was the next renewal of the Jiyū-tō project, initiated by the Ozawa Ichirō again in October 2016. Its program was distinguished with extreme centre-left radicalism of liberal ideas regarding both domestic and foreign policy. However, the presence in modern Japan of a large number of other centrist parties with similar programs did not allow the eighth Jiyū-tō to isolate effectively itself from political competitors in the eyes of voters. As a result, that Liberal Party lost its places in the Parliament after 2017 parliamentary election, and on April 27, 2019, disbanded. Its members joined a more successful party – People's Democratic Party (*Kokuminminshu-tō*). From that moment on, the liberal niche in the political system of Japan again became vacant, which preserves the likelihood of the resumption of the Jiyū-tō party project in future. However, it is a moot point whether such a party would be truly liberal in its ideological orientation. Firstly, given the party background of the Jiyū-tō political project, far not all Japanese parties called Liberal were actually liberal in their ideological guidelines. Secondly, the niche of liberalism in the existing party system of today's Japan is already taken by the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (*Rikkenminshu-tō*), led by Izumi Kenta (born 1974), and "the constitutional democrats" would unlikely agree to give its segment of political influence to the next "liberals" in name.

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В. А. Рубель
Феномен "Ліберальної партії" (Джію-то) в політичній системі Японії: еволюція політичного бренду та ідейного змісту

Назва партії є політичним брендом, у якому відбивається її ідеологічна спрямованість, але в політичній історії Японії партійний бренд "Ліберальної партії" (Джію-то) неодноразово міняв свій ідейний зміст. Проблемно-хронологічний метод аналізу наявної історичної фактології дає можливість осмислити тенденції ідейної та організаційної еволюції партійного бренду Джію-то, що проявилися за минулі півтора століття, а також сформулювати прогноз стосовно подальшої долі політичного проєкту японської "Ліберальної партії", що в підсумку являє собою предмет представленого дослідження.

Перші три проєкти Джію-то в довоєнній імператорській Японії справді орієнтувалися на ліберальні цінності, проте швидко затухали через або самоусунення лідера від партійного керівництва і подальшої радикалізації (1881–1884 рр.), або самоліквідацію в результаті вступу в коаліційний проєкт заради формування першого партійного уряду (1891–1898 рр.), або внаслідок маргіналізації через небажання виборців, удостоєних права голосу завдяки високому майновому цензу, ділитися цим правом з незаможними прошарками суспільства (1903–1905 рр.). Перші повоєнні Джію-то (1945–1948 і 1950–1955 рр.), бувши ідейно і кадрово глибоко консервативними, виявилися "ліберальними" тільки за назвою та очікувано влилися спочатку у правоконсервативну "Демократично-ліберальну партію" (Міншюджію-то), потім у консервативну "Ліберально-демократичну партію" (Джіюміншю-то). Спроба відновлення проєкту Джію-то в 1998 р. як ідейно "ліберальної" партії завершилася 2003 р. розколом і маргіналізацією через допущений її лідером Одзавою Ічіро політичний авантюризм, що проявився спочатку в ідейно невиправданому приєднанні лібералів до керівної коаліції з консервативними ліберал-демократами, потім у непродуманому виході з неї. Останнє (на сьогодні) восьме відновлення проєкту Джію-то, очолене Одзавою Ічіро у 2016 р., спиралося на лівоцентристський лібералізм, проте наявність у нинішній Японії кількох центристських партій зі схожими програмами не дала змоги восьмій Джію-то ефективно відмежуватися від політичних конкурентів, що завершилося для неї втратою представництва в парламенті та саморозпуском 27 квітня 2019 р. Відтоді ліберальна ніша в політичній системі Японії знову стала вакантною, що зберігає ймовірність відновлення партійного проєкту Джію-то в майбутньому.

Ключові слова: "Ліберальна партія" (Джію-то); Одзава Ічіро; партійний бренд; політична історія; Японія