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CARMEN SCHMIDT / RALF KLEINFELD (EDS), *The Crisis of Democracy? Chances, Risks and Challenges in Japan (Asia) and Germany (Europe)*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2020. 499 pages, £87.99. ISBN 978-1-5275-4108-5

This volume is the outcome of a conference by the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences in March 2018 at the University of Osnabrück. It contains 25 contributions as well as the preface and the introduction. The scope of Europe comprises Italy and Spain as well as the host country Germany, and also one piece on the Netherlands. With regard to Asia, both the People's Republic of China and South Korea are represented in addition to Japan. There are nine articles on Germany, twelve on Japan and numerous helpful figures and tables.

The book is divided into five chapters: 1) Theoretical Considerations: Democracy and Social Change; 2) Democracy, Citizenship, Values, and Citizen Participation; 3) National, Sub-National, and Global Democracy; 4) Education, Social Order, and Democracy; and 5) Democracy, Public Policies, and Consensus Building. As can be imagined, the boundaries between these divisions are sometimes blurred. Interestingly, only four articles are concerned with a direct comparison between Germany and Japan: those written by Hans-Joachim Kornadt, Yoshinori Nishijima, Takashi Namba and Bernhard Mann. A selection of a few of the contributions in the volume will be presented below.

Without a doubt the question of the crisis of democracy is highly relevant not only to Germany and Japan. The number of publications on this topic over the last several years – covering various aspects and diverse countries – is nearly uncountable. But the crisis of democracy is as old as democracy herself: Athenian democracy, which is regarded as the mother of all democracies and actually gave us the original term, itself lasted only one century. In 1975 a book with the same title as this volume – though without the question mark – was published by Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington and Joji Watanuki. And as Huntington elaborated in his 1991 book, *The Third Wave*, there were as many failures in democracy as there were success stories over the preceding decades all over the world: while some twenty dictatorships were transformed into more or less democratic governments, just as many democracies became authoritarian governments over the same period. Further developments have confirmed this result. It becomes evident that there is not a binary structure but rather a continuum from full democracy to dictatorship and vice versa. Elections are just one indicator out of many. Recent research on mass dictatorships confirms this finding (see e.g. Paul Corner / Jie-Hyun Lim (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Mass Dictatorship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; or György Széll, *Mass Dictatorship in the Twentieth Century*. *Sozialwissenschaftliche Literatur Rundschau* 77, 2018, pp. 83–94).

But let us have a brief look at today's situation of democracy worldwide. According to the Democracy Index 2019 by The Economist Intelligence Unit there exist only 22 full democracies out of 167 surveyed states; among them Germany ranks at the 13th position, with the top places occupied by the Scandinavian countries and New Zealand. Japan, in contrast, is ranked at number 24, categorised as a "flawed democracy". Both Germany and Japan managed to rise like phoenixes out of the ashes after World War II and to achieve recognition as stable democracies. The structural democratic deficits in Japan – especially the dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party and a high level of corruption – are examined in several articles, such as in the introduction by the editors or in the contributions of Carmen Schmidt, Shujiro Yazawa and Momoyo Hüstebeck. But Germany as well, especially when considering the recent successes of the extreme right-wing party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), has faced more or less successful neo-fascist groups throughout the entire history of the Federal Republic of Germany and has encountered destabilising tendencies.

Japan and Germany are confronted with quite different challenges, despite numerous parallel developments. Though the environmental crisis – particularly since the catastrophe of Fukushima – is of highest importance for both countries, their reactions have been quite different (cf. the article by Akira Tokuyasu). Germany decided to close down all nuclear power stations by 2022 at the latest, whereas Japan tries to continue as before. The so-called refugee crisis, especially since 2015, fragilises a great number of European democracies. Nothing comparable can be found in Japan, although the permanent frictions in North East Asia are very risky for all nations concerned. Valuable contributions in this regard are those from South Korea (Kwang-Yeong Shin) and China (Chung Huang and Dinghong Yi). Mototaki Mori and Hiroshi Murakami arrive in separate contributions at the same conclusion: that the on-going political crises have led to a further strengthening of conservative forces in Japan. The articles of Takemitsu Morikawa and Akira Tokuyasu both extensively cite Niklas Luhmann – a questionable choice, given his lack of published scholarship in the field of democracy research.

The definitely interesting article by Yuichiro Minami on the independence movement in Okinawa starts with a misunderstanding in regard to the modernisation of Japan. The author argues that Japan "is an exceptional country which achieved government-led modernization rapidly and without being colonized (p. 237)". However, Prussia started before Japan its top-down modernization, sticking to traditional values and structures, and by that became the model to follow for Japan. In this context it might be recalled that Lorenz von Stein played an important role in both countries with regard to establishing a strong state.

Wolfgang Pape in his article “From Pure Quantity to Broader Quality in Multi-Level Governance” pleads with good reason for more quality within multi-level governance and with regard to referenda on very specific and limited issues in general. The Federal Republic of Germany – against the background of the experiences during the Republic of Weimar – had drawn the conclusion that referenda at the federal level should be prohibited. On the other hand, in his argumentation for a participatory democracy the experience of the participative budget, as practiced quite successfully in many places, fits quite well all over the world. The participatory budget, invented in Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, permits the citizens on the local and regional level to decide about priorities within the budget. Therefore it is a useful tool for basic democracy. Finally, Matthias Pilz and Peter-Jörg Alexander give a good assessment of the Japanese vocational training system, yet neglect the subcontractors that employ the majority of the workforce. As the vocational training has no direct link to democratic decision-making, the reader may wonder what this has to do with democracy.

Altogether the volume offers beyond Germany and Japan a broad and useful overview of the discussion concerning the future of democracy in its divergent facets and can thus be recommended without any reservations for academic specialists as well as for the larger public.

György Széll

JEMMA PURDEY / ANTJE MISSBACH / DAVE McRAE, *Indonesia: State and Society in Transition*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2020. 261 pages, \$29.95. ISBN 978-1-62637-852-0

Indonesia: State and Society in Transition offers a dense and refreshing new perspective on a topic that has already received a great deal of scholarly attention: Indonesia’s history, politics and society. Indonesia’s shift from authoritarianism under the former president Suharto to democracy started some two decades ago. However, Indonesia, a nation with 270 million people and the world’s largest Muslim population, remains a country in transition even now, which is the main focus of the book. Jemma Purdey, Antje Missbach and Dave McRae argue that in the Reformation period new spaces evolved where the public could formulate criticism against the political and economic elite and exert pressure. However, the nepotism, cronyism and corruption that emerged under Suharto still permeate business and politics, and despite rapid economic growth the gap between rich and poor is widening instead of shrinking. The authors also examine the failure of the state to deal with past crimes against