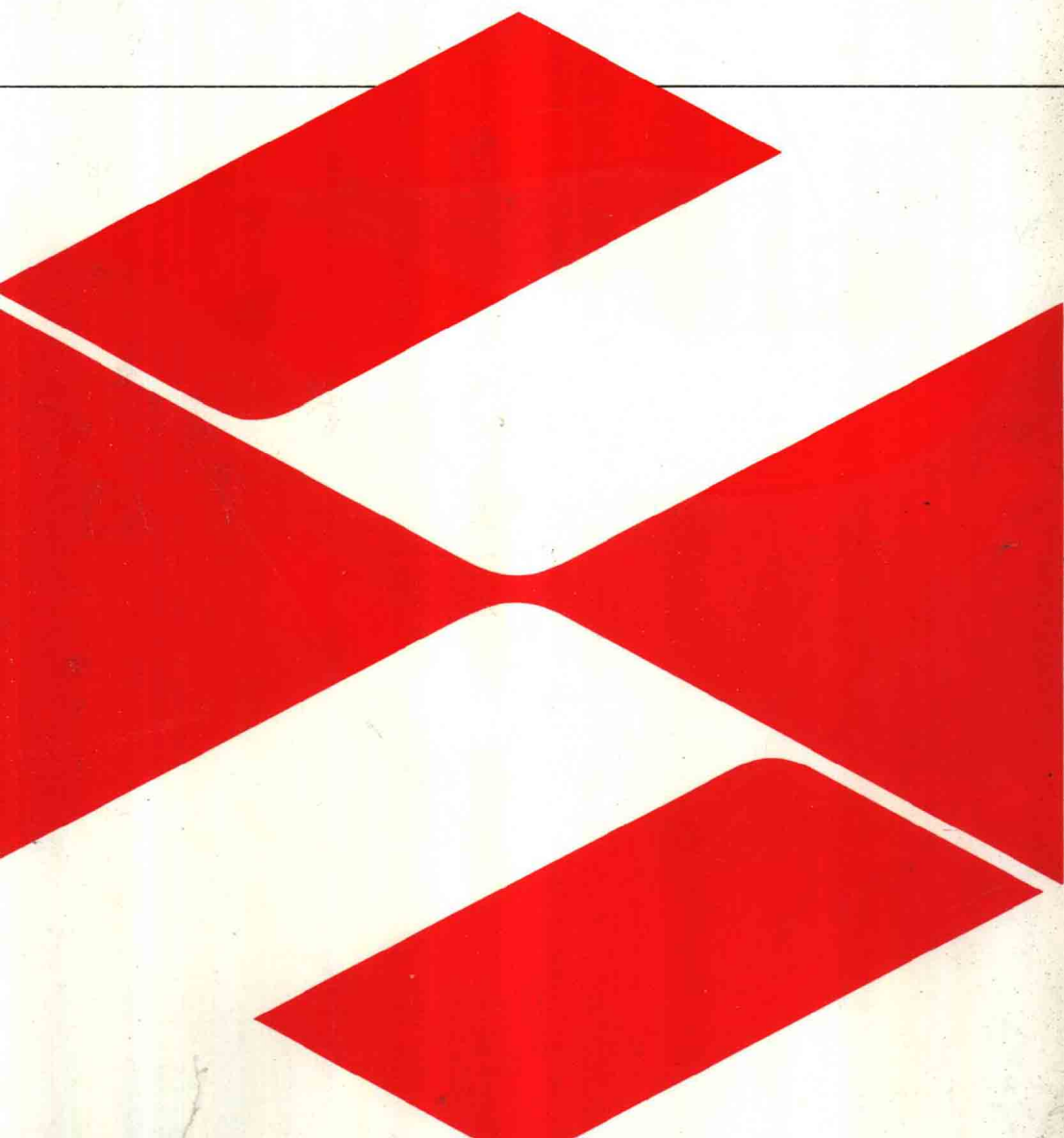


MITI AND THE JAPANESE MIRACLE

The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975

CHALMERS JOHNSON



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To the memory of
WILLIAM W. LOCKWOOD
(1906–1978)
who pioneered this subject

PREFACE

PERHAPS the oldest and most basic subject in the study of political economy is the relationship between governmental institutions and economic activity. The distinctions in this field lie at the heart of all modern political analysis: free trade versus mercantilism, socialism versus capitalism, laissez faire versus social goal setting, the public sector versus the private sector—and, ultimately, a concern with procedures (liberty) versus a concern with outcomes (equality). Japan occupies a preeminent place in this discussion as both a model and a case. Japan's postwar economic triumph—that is, the unprecedented economic growth that has made Japan the second most productive open economy that has ever existed—is the best example of a state-guided market system currently available; and Japan has itself become a model, in whole or in part, for many other developing or advanced industrial systems.

The focus of this book is on the Japanese economic bureaucracy, particularly on the famous Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), as the leading state actor in the economy. Although MITI was not the only important agent affecting the economy, nor was the state as a whole always predominant, I do not want to be overly modest about the importance of this subject. The particular speed, form, and consequences of Japanese economic growth are not intelligible without reference to the contributions of MITI. Collaboration between the state and big business has long been acknowledged as the defining characteristic of the Japanese economic system, but for too long the state's role in this collaboration has been either condemned as overweening or dismissed as merely supportive, without anyone's

ever analyzing the matter. With this book I hope to contribute to such an analysis.

The history of MITI is central to the economic and political history of modern Japan. Equally important, however, the methods and achievements of the Japanese economic bureaucracy are central to the continuing debate between advocates of the communist-type command economies and advocates of the Western-type mixed market economies. The fully bureaucratized command economies misallocate resources and stifle initiative; in order to function at all, they must lock up their populations behind iron curtains or other more or less impermeable barriers. The mixed market economies struggle to find ways to intrude politically determined priorities into their market systems without catching a bad case of the “English disease” or being frustrated by the American-type legal sprawl. The Japanese, of course, do not have all the answers. But given the fact that virtually all solutions to any of the critical problems of the late twentieth century—energy supply, environmental protection, technological innovation, and so forth—involve an expansion of official bureaucracy, the particular Japanese priorities and procedures are instructive. At the very least they should forewarn a foreign observer that the Japanese achievements were not won without a price being paid.

As a particular pattern of late development, the Japanese case differs from the Western market economies, the communist dictatorships of development, or the new states of the postwar world. The most significant difference is that in Japan the state’s role in the economy is shared with the private sector, and both the public and private sectors have perfected means to make the market work for developmental goals. This pattern has proved to be the most successful strategy of intentional development among the historical cases. It is being repeated today in newly industrializing states of East Asia—Taiwan and South Korea—and in Singapore and other South and Southeast Asian countries. As a response to the original beneficiaries of the industrial revolution, the Japanese pattern has proved incomparably more successful than the purely state-dominated command economies of the communist world. Since the death of Mao Tse-tung even China has come to acknowledge, if not yet emulate, the achievements of the capitalist developmental state.

This study proceeds historically for reasons that are elaborated in Chapter 1. Its time frame of 1925 to 1975 is significant in that it begins with the creation of the official industrial-policy bureaucracy, covers the period in which the main issues of industrial policy were dis-

covered and debated, and reflects the direct continuity that exists between the prewar and postwar periods in terms of personnel and organizations. As a prologue to this history, the first two chapters are devoted to an explication of the controversies surrounding industrial policy itself and Japan's bureaucratically dominated government. In a final chapter I sketch some of the broader themes raised throughout the book and attempt to abstract a model of the Japanese political economy.

In this history and analysis I attempt also to reveal some of the Japanese language of bureaucracy—its concepts, euphemisms, and slogans. For readers who do not know Japanese, the parenthetical recurrence of Japanese terms in romanization may be annoying. If so, I apologize, but it must be stressed that the language of all bureaucracy is euphemistic and often opaque; students of Japan who have mastered the language will want to know precisely what I have translated, particularly since titles of laws and organizations in Japan are often rendered in English in several different ways. At the same time, for the reader who is interested in Japan but does not read Japanese, all terms, laws, book titles, and names of associations have been translated into English. Japanese personal names are given in the Japanese manner, surname followed by given name. A full list of cabinets and of ministers and vice-ministers of MITI for the period 1925 to 1975 is presented in Appendix A. Some readers may also have difficulties in distinguishing among the numerous names of Japanese people that occur in this book. Nakamura, Nagamura, Nakayama, and Nagayama are all quite distinctive names when written in Japanese, but in English they tend to blur. I do not apologize for this. Too many studies of bureaucracies and state policies read as if they were dealing with disembodied abstractions with little reference to the way things actually happened. This book is in part about working bureaucrats, and their names naturally occur often.

Numerous individuals and organizations have helped me with this study. In Japan my primary debts are to Professors Masumi Junnosuke and Akagi Suruki of Tokyo Metropolitan University, who have guided me to materials, discussed the subject with me extensively, and indicated which topics were of greater and lesser significance. Yokokawa Hiroshi of MITI studied at Berkeley during the year 1978–79 and made many important contributions to my seminar on Japanese politics. In obtaining the sometimes fugitive materials on MITI's past, I have received invaluable assistance from Yutani Eiji of the East

Asiatic Library, University of California, Berkeley, and Murata Shirō of the Murata Bookstore, Takaban 3-9-8, Meguro-ku, Tokyo. The Center for Japanese studies of the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, has supported my research with funds, a travel grant to Japan, and a superb collegial setting in which to try out some of my ideas. Since beginning this study in 1972, I have had the research assistance of several graduate students at Berkeley, including Fujimoto Tetsuya, Yasuda Ryūji, Kawamoto Chizuko, Gotoda Teruo, Mikumo Akiko, Matsumoto Yoko, and Chang Dal-joong. My thanks also to Pauline D. Fox of Palm Springs, California, for her eight years of clipping the *Los Angeles Times* for me.

My greatest debt is to Sheila K. Johnson for her professional editing of my prose and her typing of the entire manuscript.

Despite all the generous assistance I have received, I remain responsible for all matters of fact or interpretation in this analysis of MITI and the Shōwa era in Japan.

Berkeley
December 1980

C.J.

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MITI AND THE JAPANESE MIRACLE

ONE

The Japanese “Miracle”

BY COMMON agreement among the Japanese, the “miracle” first appeared to them during 1962. In its issues of September 1 and 8, 1962, the *Economist* of London published a long two-part essay entitled “Consider Japan,” which it later brought out as a book that was promptly translated and published in Tokyo as *Odorokubeki Nihon* (Amazing Japan). Up to this time most Japanese simply did not believe the rate of economic growth they were achieving—a rate unprecedented in Japanese history—and their pundits and economists were writing cautionary articles about how the boom would fail, about the crises to come, and about the irrationality of government policy.¹ Yet where the Japanese had been seeing irresponsible budgets, “overloans,” and tremendous domestic needs, the *Economist* saw expansion of demand, high productivity, comparatively serene labor relations, and a very high rate of savings. Thus began the praise, domestic and foreign, of the postwar Japanese economy—and the search for the cause of the “miracle.”

First, some details on the miracle itself. Table 1 presents indices of industrial production for the entire period of this study, 1925 to 1975, with 1975 as 100. It reveals several interesting things. The miracle was actually only beginning in 1962, when production was just a third of what it would be by 1975. Fully half of Japan’s amazing economic strength was to be manifested after 1966. The table also shows clearly the “recessions” of 1954, 1965, and 1974 that spurred the government to new and even more creative economic initiatives; and it demonstrates the ability of the Japanese economy to come back even more strongly from these periods of adversity. Intersectoral shifts are also recorded: the decline of mining as coal gave way to oil and the move-

TABLE 1
Indices of Japanese Mining and Manufacturing Production, 1926-1978
(1975 = 100)

Year	Manufacturing industries															
	All industry	Public utilities	Mining and manufacturing	Mining	All manufacturing	Iron and steel	Non-ferrous metals	Metal finished goods	Machinery	Ceramics and cement	Chemicals	Petroleum and coal products	Pulp and paper	Textiles	Wood and wood products	Food
1926		2.5		54.5		1.5	4.0				1.5	0.7	4.9	17.4		
1927		2.8		59.7		1.7	4.1				1.7	0.8	5.3	18.8		
1928		3.3		62.0		2.0	4.6				1.8	1.0	5.8	18.1		
1929		3.6		63.2		2.2	4.6				2.2	1.0	6.4	18.9		
1930	5.5	3.9	5.8	62.0	5.3	2.1	4.8		1.4	8.4	2.5	1.0	5.5	21.8	15.8	21.0
1931	5.0	4.0	5.2	58.8	4.7	1.8	4.4		1.1	8.5	2.6	1.1	5.3	23.0	15.2	19.0
1932	5.3	4.3	5.5	60.0	5.0	2.3	4.9		1.0	9.2	3.2	1.2	5.3	24.9	16.0	20.8
1933	6.4	4.9	6.7	68.6	6.1	3.1	5.7		1.4	10.3	3.7	1.4	5.8	28.6	18.8	22.3
1934	6.9	5.3	7.2	75.1	6.5	3.7	5.6		1.4	10.0	4.3	1.7	5.4	31.5	24.0	22.5
1935	7.3	6.0	7.6	81.0	6.9	4.4	6.7		1.4	11.6	5.2	1.8	5.9	33.4	26.4	22.5
1936	8.2	6.5	8.6	89.6	7.8	4.9	7.4		1.7	12.0	6.2	2.1	7.0	35.8	27.6	23.0
1937	9.6	7.1	10.0	97.5	9.2	5.7	8.7		2.3	12.7	7.1	2.5	8.0	40.8	27.9	25.2
1938	9.9	7.7	10.3	103.8	9.4	6.5	9.1		2.5	13.5	8.1	2.7	7.2	33.6	27.5	25.5
1939	10.9	8.1	11.4	108.8	10.5	7.2	10.3		3.1	14.2	8.6	3.2	8.3	33.6	32.2	26.1
1940	11.4	8.3	12.0	116.7	11.0	7.3	10.1		3.8	14.7	8.5	3.4	8.3	30.4	26.8	22.7
1941	11.8	9.1	12.4	117.1	11.3	7.5	9.6		4.4	13.1	8.5	4.0	8.5	24.6	33.5	19.7
1942	11.5	9.1	12.0	114.4	11.0	7.9	10.9		4.5	10.8	7.1	4.0	6.7	19.5	31.7	17.5
1943	11.7	9.2	12.1	115.5	11.1	8.9	13.3		5.0	9.6	6.1	4.0	5.7	12.7	28.0	14.5
1944	11.9	9.0	12.4	105.1	11.4	8.3	14.7		5.8	7.5	5.7	3.2	3.3	6.8	24.8	11.9
1945	5.2	5.4	5.3	55.5	4.8	2.9	5.5		2.5	2.9	2.3	0.9	1.6	2.6	14.8	7.9
1946	2.3	6.9	2.2	40.9	1.8	1.0	2.9		0.8	3.1	1.4	0.4	1.7	4.3	22.7	7.0
1947	2.9	7.8	2.7	54.0	2.3	1.3	4.0		0.9	3.8	1.9	0.5	2.4	5.8	29.9	6.3
1948	3.8	8.5	3.6	66.2	3.0	2.1	5.5		1.4	5.8	2.5	0.8	3.5	6.6	34.7	7.7

1949	4.8	9.6	4.6	75.7	4.0	3.7	6.3	1.7	7.6	3.5	0.9	4.9	8.9	34.8	11.7
1950	5.9	10.3	5.7	80.0	5.1	5.1	7.3	1.8	9.0	4.7	1.7	6.7	12.6	36.5	13.1
1951	8.0	11.0	7.8	91.4	7.1	6.9	8.8	2.9	12.5	6.3	2.8	9.1	17.9	54.7	16.8
1952	8.6	11.9	8.4	94.4	7.7	7.1	9.3	3.0	13.0	6.9	3.6	10.4	20.3	58.2	17.2
1953	10.4	12.7	10.2	101.2	9.5	8.4	9.9	3.8	15.4	8.6	4.6	13.3	24.4	55.7	26.3
1954	11.2	13.5	11.1	97.5	10.4	8.8	11.5	4.3	17.5	9.8	5.4	14.5	26.5	54.6	28.5
1955	12.1	14.5	11.9	98.0	11.3	9.8	12.2	4.3	17.7	11.3	6.2	16.6	29.6	54.4	30.3
1956	14.9	16.7	14.6	108.3	13.9	12.0	14.7	6.2	21.5	13.6	8.0	19.2	35.2	60.8	32.0
1957	17.3	18.6	17.3	119.3	16.5	13.6	16.4	8.7	25.3	16.0	9.6	21.7	38.9	64.1	30.7
1958	17.4	19.7	17.3	115.7	16.6	12.8	16.0	9.3	23.9	16.0	10.0	21.3	34.8	61.8	35.6
1959	20.9	22.6	20.8	114.6	20.1	17.0	21.0	15.6	28.3	18.5	12.4	27.9	40.6	65.9	37.7
1960	26.0	26.5	25.9	125.2	25.3	22.4	27.8	16.5	25.7	22.3	15.8	33.6	47.9	73.2	39.9
1961	31.0	30.8	31.0	134.0	30.4	28.3	33.3	21.4	41.5	25.5	19.0	40.5	51.7	77.5	43.1
1962	33.5	32.9	33.6	137.0	32.9	28.3	32.5	30.3	45.3	29.2	21.4	43.4	54.5	79.3	46.6
1963	37.3	36.0	37.4	135.9	36.7	31.9	37.2	34.0	48.1	32.2	25.6	48.0	58.6	83.8	57.8
1964	43.2	40.6	43.3	137.1	42.6	39.7	45.6	39.6	55.5	36.6	30.3	54.5	64.8	88.9	62.7
1965	44.9	43.3	44.9	135.2	44.3	40.8	45.3	40.5	57.1	40.1	34.8	55.7	69.4	90.0	66.7
1966	50.7	47.6	50.8	143.1	50.2	47.2	51.0	48.0	62.2	45.3	40.0	62.5	76.4	95.4	73.1
1967	60.5	54.0	60.7	141.0	60.2	61.1	61.6	58.6	72.8	53.0	48.1	69.6	83.3	102.5	76.8
1968	69.7	59.6	70.1	142.1	69.6	68.4	74.3	71.0	81.4	62.6	56.9	76.9	88.4	107.0	78.7
1969	80.7	67.0	81.3	142.9	80.9	82.6	86.6	84.0	90.3	73.7	67.9	86.6	97.0	113.9	83.6
1970	91.8	75.9	92.5	139.2	92.2	94.2	93.8	96.9	101.0	86.8	79.8	98.2	105.2	118.7	89.9
1971	94.3	80.6	94.9	131.6	94.6	91.2	95.7	100.1	102.6	91.6	87.4	100.6	109.4	117.1	92.6
1972	101.1	87.4	101.8	121.9	101.6	98.7	108.4	111.0	109.5	97.2	91.5	106.7	110.8	120.7	97.8
1973	116.2	97.4	117.0	112.8	117.0	118.8	128.6	133.4	126.5	110.2	106.6	119.3	118.5	122.1	98.6
1974	111.7	97.3	112.3	105.8	112.4	116.9	112.6	123.0	117.0	109.9	104.4	113.7	106.1	109.1	97.5
1975	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1976	111.0	108.5	111.1	100.0	111.2	109.5	119.3	116.8	110.4	111.5	102.7	113.3	108.4	106.8	101.1
1977	115.6	113.7	115.7	103.1	115.7	108.1	125.0	124.9	115.2	117.2	104.7	115.3	106.7	104.4	104.6
1978	122.7	119.9	122.8	105.9	123.0	110.1	135.0	134.9	121.0	131.0	104.0	120.8	107.7	107.0	106.1

SOURCE: Mainichi Shimbun Sha. ed., *Shōwa shi jiten* (Dictionary of Showa History). Tokyo, 1980, p. 457.

ment from textiles to machinery and finished metal products, a movement the Japanese call heavy and chemical industrialization (*jūkagaku kōgyōka*).

If we use a slightly different base line—for example, if we take 1951–53 to be 100—then the index of gross national product for 1934–36 is 90; for 1961–63, 248; and for 1971–73, 664; and the index of manufacturing production for 1934–36 is 87; for 1961–63, 400; and for 1971–73, 1,350. Over the whole postwar era, 1946 to 1976, the Japanese economy increased 55-fold.² By the end of our period Japan accounted for about 10 percent of the world's economic activity though occupying only 0.3 percent of the world's surface and supporting about 3 percent of the world's population. Regardless of whether or not one wants to call this achievement a "miracle," it is certainly a development worth exploring.

Many voyagers have navigated these waters before me, and a survey of their soundings is a necessary introduction to this study and to my particular point of view. The task of explaining Japanese economic growth—and its repeated renewals after one or another set of temporary advantages had been exhausted or removed—is not easy, as the frequent use of the term "miracle" suggests; and the term cannot be isolated and applied only to the high-speed growth that began in 1955. As early as 1937 a much younger Prof. Arisawa Hiromi (b. 1896), one of the people who must be included on any list of the two or three dozen leading formulators of postwar industrial policy, used the phrase "Japanese miracle" to describe the increase of 81.5 percent in Japanese industrial output from 1931 to 1934.³ Today we know why that particular miracle occurred: it resulted from the reflationary deficit financing of Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo, who at 81 was assassinated by young military officers on the morning of February 26, 1936, for trying to apply the brakes to the process he had started.

This earlier miracle is nonetheless problematic for scholars because of what Charles Kindleberger refers to as "the riddle" of how Japan "produced Keynesian policies as early as 1932 without a Keynes."⁴ Some Japanese have not been overly exercised by this riddle; they have simply settled for calling Takahashi the "Keynes of Japan."⁵ As I hope to make clear in this book, this kind of sleight of hand will not do; there was more to state intervention in the thirties than Keynesianism, and Arisawa and his colleagues in the government learned lessons in their formative years that are quite different from those that make up what has come to be known in the West as mainstream governmental fiscal policy.

Kindleberger's "riddle" does serve to draw attention to the projec-

tionists, one major category among modern explorers of the Japanese economic miracle. These are writers who project onto the Japanese case Western—chiefly Anglo-American—concepts, problems, and norms of economic behavior. Whatever the value of such studies for the countries in which they were written, they need not detain us long here. This type of work is not so much aimed at explaining the Japanese case (although it may abstract a few principles of Japanese political economy) as it is at revealing home-country failings in light of Japan's achievements, or at issuing warnings about the possible effects of Japan's growth on other parts of the world. Even the *Economist's* brilliant little tract of 1962 might better have been called *Consider Britain in Light of What the Japanese Are Doing*, which was in any case its true purpose. Successors to the *Economist* include Ralph Hewins, *The Japanese Miracle Men* (1967), P. B. Stone, *Japan Surges Ahead: The Story of an Economic Miracle* (1969), Robert Guillain, *The Japanese Challenge* (1970), Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate* (1970), and Hakan Hedberg, *Japan's Revenge* (1972). Perhaps the most prominent work in this genre, because it is so clearly hortatory about what Americans might learn from Japan rather than analytical about what has caused the phenomenal Japanese growth, is Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One: Lessons for Americans* (1979). My study does not follow these earlier works in advocating the adoption of Japanese institutions outside of Japan. It does, however, try to lay out in their full complexity some of the main Japanese institutions in the economic field so that those who are interested in adopting them will have an idea of what they are buying in terms of the Japanese system's consequences—intended, unintended, and even unwanted.

A second and entirely different set of explanations of the Japanese miracle belongs to the socioeconomic school, or what I have sometimes called the "anything-but-politics" approach to "miracle" research. This broad school includes four major types of analysis that often overlap with each other but that are clearly isolable for purposes of identification, although they rarely appear in pure form. These are the "national character—basic values—consensus" analysis favored by humanists in general and the anthropologically oriented in particular; the "no-miracle-occurred" analysis, chiefly the work of economists; the "unique-structural-features" analysis promoted by students of labor relations, the savings ratio, corporate management, the banking system, the welfare system, general trading corporations, and other institutions of modern Japan; and the various forms of the "free-ride" analysis, that is, the approach that stresses Japan's real but transitory advantages in launching high-speed growth in the postwar world.

Before proceeding to sketch the qualities of these types of analysis, let me say that to a certain extent I can agree with all of them. My interest is not in disputing the facts that they have revealed nor in questioning their relevance to the miracle. However, I believe it can be shown that many of them should be reduced to more basic categories of analysis, particularly to the effects of state policy, and that they need to be weighed according to standards different from those used in the past, thereby giving greater weight to the state and its industrial policy.

The national-character explanation argues that the economic miracle occurred because the Japanese possess a unique, culturally derived capacity to cooperate with each other. This capacity to cooperate reveals itself in many ways—lower crime rates than in other, less homogeneous societies; subordination of the individual to the group; intense group loyalties and patriotism; and, last but not least, economic performance. The most important contribution of the culture to economic life is said to be Japan's famous "consensus," meaning virtual agreement among government, ruling political party, leaders of industry, and people on the primacy of economic objectives for the society as a whole—and on the means to obtain those objectives. Some of the terms invented to refer to this cultural capability of the Japanese are "rolling consensus,"⁶ "private collectivism,"⁷ "inbred collectivism,"⁸ "spiderless cobweb,"⁹ and "Japan, Inc."¹⁰

My reservations about the value of this explanation are basically that it is overgeneralized and tends to cut off rather than advance serious research. Consensus and group solidarity have been important in Japan's economic growth, but they are less likely to derive from the basic values of the Japanese than from what Ruth Benedict once called Japan's "situational" motivations: late development, lack of resources, the need to trade, balance of payments constraints, and so forth.¹¹ Positing some "special capacity to cooperate" as an irreducible Japanese cultural trait leads inquiry away from the question of *why* Japanese cooperate when they do (they did not cooperate during almost half of the period under study here), and away from the probability that this cooperation can be, and on occasion has been, quite deliberately engineered by the government and others. David Titus's research into the use of the Imperial institution in prewar Japan to "privatize" rather than to "socialize" societal conflict is one creative way to look at this problem of consensus.¹²

Many instances to be discussed later in this study illustrate how the government has consciously induced cooperation among its clients—with much better results than during the Pacific War, when it sought to control them. In the final analysis it is indeed probable that Jap-