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## On the So-called “Middle-Class Citizens” as the Power of Changing Capitalist System

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### Abstract

The so-called “middle-class citizens”, including that of newly appearing in East/South Asia, as the mass-producers of goods and services necessary for capitalist society on the one hand and as the mass-consumers of such goods and services on the other, seem to play the vital role to support and function the capitalist system. Nevertheless, they can, sooner or later, be betrayed by the system itself and can become aware of the contradictions of capitalism through just their activities as supporters of capitalism, including their experiences of defeats in the severe competitions, heavy debts or unexpected unemployment, etc. They also seem to stand very delicate position: they have both possibilities either going to be the gigantic supporters for conservatism, sometimes even a new fashioned fascism, or going to be the wide extensive collaborators for a kind of socialist movements. Besides, on the investigation into this characteristic of middle-class citizens, the widespread utility-value biased way of thinking might be extraordinary important to discuss about the real figure of them. In these meanings, the inquiry of the middle-class citizens in the contemporary society might have enough value as to be set up at the core of studies of social sciences as a whole.

### Contents

1. Introduction: The peculiar meaning of the middle-class citizens
2. The Great East Japan Earthquake brought up enormous citizens' discussion for consumption reduction
3. The remarkable inclinations of middle-class citizens in Asia, Arab and America
4. The utility-value biased way of thinking for the middle-class citizens
5. Conclusion: The middle-class citizens as standing at a delicate but an important position

### Keywords

Changing Capitalist System; Consumption Reduction; Great East Japan Earthquake; Middle-class Citizens; Labor-value Theory and Utility-value Theory

#### 1. Introduction: The peculiar meaning of the middle-class citizens

In the 19th century, as many theorists after Karl Marx argue, those who change the social system and create a new system were

considered to be workers' class, selling their own labor force in exchange for exceedingly low price wages with very long working hours and remarkably wrong working conditions. Accordingly, the class struggles between capitalists and workers were believed to be

decisively important on the process of social change.

Since the early days of capitalism, *i.e.* already one and half century has passed, however, there seems to have appeared new type of citizens. They are, in fact, still working and yet selling their own labor force in exchange for salary with very long stressful working hours. But those citizens, relatively highly educated and generally living in the big cities or the vicinities, consume far more than the workers in 19th century as far as everything in the business cycle is seemingly going well. And also, they support capitalism by mass-purchase of mountainous commodities and services produced by capitalist system, and still more the good large part of them often play politically important role as voters for the Government party and actually support capitalist system, too. Besides, the population of such citizens is not only overwhelming majority in the developed countries, but also is now rapidly growing especially in the successfully developing countries. Moreover, what is far more curiously sound is that the citizens themselves sometimes resist against their government when they feel they are betrayed by their social system by any reasons else. Accordingly, they are sometimes very fatal for the ruling power because such citizens' population as well as their influence is extraordinary large. On the other hand, the traditional working class needs such citizens' cooperation if the class desires the social change.

So, we cannot ignore those citizens when we discuss the social change. For, any type of social change will go on just only when those citizens' recognize and participate to the social revolution process. Therefore the investigation into those people should be set up now to be the core of study in social sciences.

## **2. The Great East Japan Earthquake brought up enormous citizens' discussion for consumption reduction**

After the Great Earthquake of 2011 in East Japan (magnitude 9.0, one of the biggest earthquakes that may occur on this planet) with great tsunami (sweeping hundreds of communities and dragging more than 30 thousands people with houses and cars into the ocean) attacked eastern coast of Japan on March 11, 2011, a big problem concerning our topics arose up. That is concerning on the ordinary citizens' habit of mass consumption, especially of electric power, even relying on the nuclear power generation.

As well known already all over the world, the biggest point of discussion derived from the Great Earthquake was what concerning just about the gigantic risk of nuclear power generation. Coping with the overwhelming mass demands for electric power from ordinary people as well as manufacturing factories and business firms on the one hand, and meeting the world-wide necessity for cutting off the discharge of carbonic acid gas on the other, Japan, like other countries, have proceeded the way for the nuclear power generation. And now, after the great tsunami, 15~20 meters high wave caused by the Great Earthquake, attacked the nuclear power generation plants just on the Pacific coast, wide influential discussions have risen up all over the nation; the biggest one among them is that whether it is correct or not to rely upon the nuclear power generation as the way of supplying increased demand of electric power with relatively low cost, and one more is that how to reduce the consumption including electric power in case we choose the way not rely upon the nuclear power generation.

As for Tokyo area, the population is 40 million, The Tokyo Electric Power Company, Inc. (TEPCO) supplies all the demand of electric power in this area. Business firms, industrial factories and individual persons are consuming each by each one third electric power supplied by this company, which, in total, equal to all the electric power demand in the UK. Just such huge demand as that in the relatively big developed Western single country inevitably causes the requirement to the nuclear power generation. Actually, around 30% of electric demand in Tokyo area is met by three nuclear generation plants (tens of nuclear reactors). It seems to be already too late to return back to supply all the electric power demands without nuclear generation.

Nevertheless, once an extraordinary dangerous accident happens on the nuclear generation plant, incredible damage covers not only on all over the nation but also on the other countries. The damages are not limited on the foods and water inevitable for human health but also on economic activities and foreign trades and finally the damages will lead to the drastic decline of whole the national economy. The rotational planned shut-off of electric power supply enforced by TEPCO affected on plenty of public utilities, business enterprises, hospitals, schools, etc. The traffic lights' shut-down by planned shut-off of electric power supply urged cars and industrial trucks to stop to drive, too, to avoid unexpected traffic accidents. The damages caused by the accident are never limited only on the inferior influences of radioactive substances but on immeasurable wide spheres. <sup>(1)</sup>

The important point here we can hit watching the drastic spectacle since just after the Great Earthquake is that the gigantic society as a whole is working by the ordinary citizens and for the ordinary citizens as far as

the development of capitalism has proceeded on a considerable level. Business firms, manufacturing factories, transportation facilities and communication systems, public utilities and all other institutions are day by day to be inevitable apparatus for the ordinary citizens' everyday life. Besides, such social institutions as picked up here are all operated daily by the ordinary individual citizens, even though each of them has not the decisive power to control the institutions. Moreover, the social institutions as a whole require more energy including electric power for themselves to continue to exist and function. As for the enormous demand for electric power, it is deeply connected with the brisk business works and vigorous consumption by ordinary citizens as well as business firms and manufacturing factories. Therefore the consciousnesses and behaviors of the ordinary citizens are decisively influential for the problem how this present society in the relatively developed country should be.

In this meaning, it would be greatly worthwhile that citizens in Japan, after experience of the Great Earthquake, the Great Tsunami and the great disaster of nuclear plant accident, have begun to consider and discuss how should be the style of citizens' consumption including electric power (more concretely, the consumption reduction) and the style of national economy (for example, instead of mass consumption with mass production and mass transportation, but small consumption with local production). For, Japan is a country that the most part of the population is consisted with middle-class citizens (even though someone is under serious conditions on their employment and/or incomes), and just their consciousnesses and behaviors fundamentally decide the style and direction of this country.

The role of ordinary citizens in the

contemporary stage of world history is day by day magnifying. Ordinary people in any developed or at least relatively satisfactory developing countries are going to play more and more important role. As Japanese case indicates, it is ordinary people's task to choose which one way for continuing to exist on this planet, *i.e.* either affluent consumption lives with the huge risk or diminished ordinary consumption lives with lesser risk especially that of nuclear power generation.

Capital has also such a characteristic as bow to those who get used to capital, *i.e.* those who working for capital accumulation, those who consuming products of capitalist industry, and still those who investing for capitalist financial activities. Such tasks as to meet mountainous demands for ordinary people and as to make jobs for ordinary people require the huge supply of electric power, in another word, the more opportunities for capital accumulation. Although not a few ordinary people in Japan are now strictly criticize the giant corporation, TEPCO, but we should know, too, that TEPCO itself have grown, to some extent, by the enormous demand of electric power from no other than the ordinary people. The nuclear plants accident tells us the great but delicate meaning on the relation between giant corporations and ordinary people in the developed capitalist countries.

### 3. The remarkable inclinations of middle-class citizens in Asia, Arab and America

As far as concerning ordinary people, the task to choose their own countries' style and direction is not only for the Japanese people's problem but also for the people in many countries, of course including European countries as well as North American countries. What noteworthy to refer here is the newly

raising people in the newly emerging countries. There appearing billions of new working and much consuming citizens in contemporary world, mainly in the East Asia and then in the South Asia. They, so-called "the new middle-class citizens", are the producers of goods and services which are necessary for modernized society on the one hand, and the consumers of such goods and services on the other. Moreover as the population of such working and consuming power grows, the capital accumulation, too, goes on. Farther more, such citizens as growing in these countries are believed to be the important partner for maintain and develop their social system, and therefore the inevitably vital element for stable their society. So, such power seems to have become the very important component of supporters of the global capitalist system, too, together with the Western financial and corporate powers as well as citizens in the developed countries.

The distinctiveness seen in such Asian emerging countries is that dissatisfactions in younger generation mainly living in the cities or industrial areas are glowing rapidly. This appears conspicuously in China. Not a few younger people, even though graduated from universities and colleges after hard work, can hardly find suitable job so long time. So, they look as if the proletariat who has nothing but chain. The joiners in rebellions that broke out often in China recently were mainly by such younger generations.

Such a trend is much clear in Arabian countries in these months. The good many part of joiners in the recent revolts in such Arabian countries as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, etc. is younger people. The essential reason that brought them to turmoil is in the facts that the percentage of younger generation (25 years old or less) in the total population in

these countries is around 50% and the job hunting for them is quite difficult. But we can investigate more fundamental reasons, *i.e.* the improvement of economic circumstances, even though not so satisfactory, enabled also the change of people's daily life styles and as the result such change caused the increase of population in these decades.

From the very macroscopic point of view, the worldwide development of capitalism bears those who belong to middle-class or at least those who have some expectations of improvement for their income and life styles in the future, and the situation gives the younger generation somewhat bright expectations. But the expectations actually are often to be betrayed, and people, especially younger generation, rouse themselves at last.

Now, things seem to appear somewhat different way in the case in the United States. President Obama have been obtaining such various results as to pass "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act", to cope severe recession immediately, to cut taxes for 95% of working families, to relieve small businesses, to start the strategy to stabilize the financial system, to strengthen Medicare system and to proceed healthcare reform, to conclude the new START with Russia, and even get the Nobel Prize for Peace, too. In spite of such good many fruits, he and his Democrats lost never ignorable number of seats in the Congress of both the Senate and the House of Representatives in the off-year election of 2010.

The reason is, frankly, in the serious economic circumstances, *i.e.* such 9.6% at the time of the election as high rate of the unemployment, the uncertainty of employment, the high pressure of debts, the endless ill condition of business circumstances, etc. Not a few electorates felt uneasy as if they have betrayed by President Obama and the

Democrats although they had expected to them in the election of two years before.

The core who abandoned President Obama is the middle-class citizens, who may be considered to be the extraordinarily important part of contemporary developed capitalist societies to orientate the direction of each country. The middle-class citizens in the United States, constituted mainly with white people (excluding Latinos), have approximately two third of all U. S. population, *i.e.* 200 millions. They are the important participants of market economy, the important electorates in the political fields, and the important customers for media. They take rather advantage jobs and let non-white people (including Latinos) do such relatively disadvantage jobs as dirty, severe and dangerous works. Therefore those middle-class citizens feel themselves, even unconsciously, to be substantially the "citizens" (overwhelming majority of whites and only few succeeded non-whites), the real heroes responsible to American democracy and American capitalism. On the contrary, overwhelming number of non-whites including Latinos with very few abandoned whites feels themselves, either consciously or not, to be substantially out of category of actual "citizens", in other words, the only subordinate servants for the substantial "citizens".

The important matter here is that those white people who do not possess private assets or have fallen into poor should never strictly be confounded with those who are substantially out of category of "citizens". Substantial "citizens" are, even though they feel themselves to be at the critical point of decreasing incomes or losing their private assets or means of earnings and drop down into poor, they often reappear as to be sometimes a huge number of conservatives. As mentioned above, the rising middle-class people, especially younger

generations, in even Arabian countries, India or China, who seem to have got some expectations in the near future, rouse when their expectations confront crucial situation, and resist against their government power. Likewise in the United States, the middle-class citizens, including losing now and already lost people in this group, tend to have antipathy. The difference in the United States compared with Asian and Arabian cases is in the point that the former is more complicated than the latter, *i.e.*, their antipathy directed against politically and financially powerful persons like President Obama and insurance companies on the one hand, and, at the same time, against poor people like non-insurant and/or minorities like so-called illegal immigrants on the other (*e.g.* cases in Arizona).

This trend was appeared typically on the issue of the reformation of medical insurance system, as follows. Many of middle-class citizens like those who joined the Tea Party Movement insists that not a few of the middle class citizens opposed to president Obama for the reason that this reformation will give 32 million of low income people for the insurance company as their new customers using taxes paid by diligent working people, and for the reason, too, that the reformation transfer money of honest and diligent citizens to those who not help themselves.

This case suggests us that the losing middle-class citizens, even though they have some possibilities for the collaborators for social revolution, have strong tendency to become supporters for conservatism, sometimes for something like fascism. From this case, therefore, the discussion for the middle-class citizens should be set up at the core of social sciences now and hereafter.

#### 4. The utility-value biased way of thinking for the middle-class citizens

Why the middle-class citizens in the United States, typically the participants of the Tea Party Movement, would return to the ideal of national foundation, namely a remarkably conservative way at a glance? Of course, there are so adequate reasons as concerning to the fundamental thoughts of the American political and social ideal. As for the American ideal, the individualism, the theory of social contract and the liberalism as the Western essential products of social thoughts since hundreds or more years finally introduced and united into the fundamental idea of Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The actual image of American ideal may suggest a universe consisted of mild communities of independent citizens without any political power. This ideal is so idealistic that it seems as if to lead American communities finally to something resemblance of communist society. But, of course, it is actually not realistic in the real American society if we watch its political, economic and social affairs today. Why?

The reason may be supposed that the utility-value biased way of thinking (academically "utility value theory") have been and is now affecting on every phase of this country, *i.e.* on the federal, state and local governments, business enterprises, financial institutions, and individuals.

The evidences are found at every dimension of the society. In the individual level, as far as my observation, there found overwhelming mass consumption, mass waste, game with money (speculative investment), fat caused by taking too much calories, etc. on the one hand.<sup>(2)</sup> On the other, their anxieties, compared with that of originally lower class,

are rather large because they have been relatively not so poor or not oppressed as those who are seemed as substantially out of "citizens". It would be still stronger, especially after their incomes and/or ranks are degraded. And their obliged solution would be more consumption (rather waste), relying amusement (even this would be good opportunity for money-making for Hollywood, Disneyland or Las Vegas), or asking for help of churches. These trends have been intensified particularly after the neo-liberalism was introduced as the government policy. As far as the middle-class citizens lead their life on the utility-value biased way of thinking, they cannot feel themselves be respected as an individual under the principle of individualism.

It is needless to say that those who acting under the utility-value biased way are not only individual persons but also business enterprises and even national economy as well as nationwide money flow. And under these circumstances, American nation can obtain too many materials and money from all over the world, and therefore American citizens can enjoy a good many fortunes and ordinary wealthy lives. And, this state of things itself affect individual citizens, firms and financial institutions and even government to be forced to fear something so-called "terrorism". Not a few citizens keep foods and drinking water to prepare for the terrorism, take lessons to handle guns, and firms strengthen securities, and all the airports, as everyone experiences when taking airplanes, enforce severe security checks. The situation is just like exclusive society which Jock Young writes critically.

As same as individual level, also business level and besides nation level, every institution relies upon the utility-value biased way of thinking and, as the consequence, fear the appropriate counter effects not ignorable.

As well-known, the utility-value theory was academically systemized in Wien after 1870s, *i.e.* several decades after the utility-value biased way of thinking in the United States had popularized. Notwithstanding American utility-value biased way of thinking seems to have slight relation with academic utility-value theory born in Wien, it has enough roots. I dare say this is the very American experience of the age of "Gold Rush". In the relatively long history of it in the beginning period of this country, a plenty of greedy men rushed to search for gold ores without regard to human life of their own. Besides those who could find gold understood it to be as his own good fruit of endeavor, and did not consider as it should be shared with others. And after the gold ores disappeared, the spirit of greedy men remained and fixed in the widespread business persons in the United States, converting gold ores into money and capital. The fundamental idea, *i.e.* not to regard to human life in order to get money or to accumulate capital, took over as it was. Thus the idea, which understands the most valuable matter in the world is utility (material goods, money or capital) not human life itself, has covered over the continental America.

As the financial crisis begun in 2007 should be understand to be a consequence of the government strategy to Wall-street-biased financial policy, and the Wall-street-biased financial policy should be understand to be a consequence of the neo-liberalism, and after all the neo-liberalism should be understand to be a consequence of the utility-value theory. We can understand there lay the utility-value biased way of thinking under the very basis of all the problems we are now embarrassed.

## 5. Conclusion: The middle-class citizens as standing at a delicate but an important position

As mentioned at the first page of this paper, the development of capitalism has, once, understood to bear a plenty of workers who would be able to become the power of changing capitalist system. However, it seems already a common sense not to understand that the manual labors might straightly transform themselves into the actors to revolutionize the capitalist system. The modern world history, including Bolshevik experiences, has been clearly showing that it is impossible for only such painful physical workers in unity to carry out the great historical tasks completely.

The important point here is that the development of capitalism creates not only a mass of manual labors but also much more numbers of office workers and/or service workers and much consuming citizens after the long process of class struggles of workers. Such citizens usually have rather higher education and have higher skills and experiences to their jobs and moreover not a few of them have abilities to handle management. Farther more they have higher self-consciousness and morals as residents in the modernized society. However, some of them can, sooner or later coping some recessions, be betrayed by the capitalist system itself, because they have not much without their own labor force to sell to capital, even though they look apparently as if they possess something relatively useful as capital, *i.e.*, some money, some stocks, small flat to live, sometimes a car, etc.

Faced such a situation, although not a few of working and consuming citizens will be able to become a large power of reactionary force of the society, some other part of them will be

able, too, to aware of the contradictions of capitalism through just their activities as supporters of capitalism, including their experiences of defeats in the severe competitions, heavy debts or unexpected unemployment, etc. Moreover, the experiences of wars, related with activities of keeping and spreading capitalist system, sometimes strongly awake citizens about the problematic issues of capitalism. In the developed or successfully developing countries in this new century, just those who apparently look relatively fortunate people, compared with apparent lower class people, have rather big possibility to transform themselves into heroes of changing the social system.

Here, the experience in Europe might be referable. Such European historical challenges as for the EU integration and for the construction of welfare society with protection movements for environment and moderate lesser consumption, are all considered to be as the fruits of ordinary middle-class citizens' movements, especially the experience during war-time. Japan's case is referable, too. In recent Japan, there appeared formerly unbelievable phenomena, *i.e.* younger generation do not consume much, do not wish to study in the United States, do not desire to become rich and/or powerful person. As for girls and younger ladies, they do not make up too much! Those phenomena may be also judged to be a result of the maturity as consumers and, in much wider meaning, as citizens in the post modern society.

As far as the utility-value biased way of thinking is generally popular, however, even an ideal society, of course including a society in the American ideal, inevitably turns into just only phantom. Moreover, it might play quite different role at last. For example, after the Policy of Great Society in 1960s intended to



readjust the inequality of incomes and racial unfairness, there appeared citizens' reactionary movement requesting for more competitive society. The reason is that more competitive society is greatly effective to kick down the upstarts and/or successful new riches (mainly of non-white people) under the condition of freedom, democracy, American ideal of national foundation, and still more the fruits of the movement for Public Rights in 1960s, and as the result, it is greatly effective, too, to recover and maintain original citizens' properties as well as statuses. Thus, the widespread requests for the neo-liberalism after 1970s have largely expanded.

We should not ignore the fact that neo-liberalism is not the only business circles' request but supported by very wide-extensive citizens' expectations. The reason why the neo-liberalism keeps yet wide and powerful reliance by electorates even under such severe economic situation as contemporary great depression should be understood just in this manner.

The middle-class citizens have very delicate position: they have both possibilities either going to be the gigantic supporters for conservatism and even a new fashioned fascism or going to be the wide extensive collaborators for a kind of socialist revolution. As far as both fascists and socialists cannot realize for themselves alone what they intend, either of them need those who support or collaborate together, *i.e.* the middle-class citizens. As the 20th century history tells us, any fascist movement in any country could never expand all over the nation unless they could get nation-wide supporters, much less be able to get government power. As for the socialist movement, it might be needless to be mentioned.

Accordingly, such discussion as active in

Japan after the Great Earthquake may be quite suggestive for the middle-class citizens to have lessons for changing the social system. As for the points under discussion now in Japan are, first of all, to reexamine about the justice of such society as of mass consumption with mass production, and secondly, to reexamine about the way for consumption reduction provided such society have no more justice as based upon mass consumption with mass production.

### Notes

(1) Unexpectedly, citizens in Tokyo area realized the fact how vital the electric power supply either for business or for individual activities in this area when the Tokyo Electric Power Company enforced the rotational planned shut-off of electric power supply for this area after the Great Earthquake. Coping the planned shut-off, almost all cars, industrial trucks and individual persons disappeared from the streets (as for the vehicles, the traffic lights' shut-off urged many drivers to stop to drive), almost all electric lights and machines in the office buildings shut down, and every activities stopped during the time of rotational planned shut-off (around three hours per once for each district). The view was, in a word, as if Tokyo area has died. And then, just after the relief of the shut-off, all the vehicles, office buildings, stores as well as individual persons begin fiercely each activity again. Watching the spectacle before, in the midst and after the rotational shut-off of electric power, whoever working and/or living in the district inevitably realized how the electric power is vital to keep contemporary social energetic activities either for business enterprises or for individual persons.

(2) For example, by my watching and observation in the United States, not a few citizens use air-conditioning unit all day long in

summer season, even when they leave their home, and express without feeling any sin his/her mercies that he/she have ability to pay electric charge.

If some customers, looking at mass sales at large supermarkets like Costco, would ask to shop staffs about the mountainous waist of foods, the answer would be “you may throw away the rest in case you cannot consume all, because the prices are such cheap as you are looking at”.

Some citizens enjoy investment as if they enjoy games. According to an experience of mine in the United States, a retired employee got stocks spending almost all his retiring allowance. The reason why investment banks could overpower commercial banks might be that there exist such citizens together with greedy financial institutions, and that even each citizen's investing money is small, the number of such citizens is too many, and therefore the United States rose up a huge financial state.

On the streets, where located buildings of investment banks, fat men as well as stupid young men walk consuming much without considering the value of either labor or money and goods. In a word, the measure of behavior is the utility which is useful to get and increase material goods, money or capital.

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