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Iran's War Within

Ebrahim Raisi and the Triumph of the Hard-Liners

Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a state divided against itself. Since its inception in 1979, it has been defined by tension between the president, who heads its elected government, and the supreme leader, who leads the parallel state institutions that embody modern Iran's revolutionary Islamist ideals. The current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, served as president from 1981 to 1989. During his tenure as president, he clashed over matters of policy, personnel, and ideology with the supreme leader at the time, Ruhollah Khomeini, the charismatic cleric who had spearheaded the Iranian Revolution. After Khomeini died, in 1989, Khamenei was appointed supreme leader and went on to do battle with a long line of presidents more moderate than himself.

Iran's recent presidents have not been radicals by the standards of the country's political establishment. But despite their differing worldviews and social bases, all of them pursued domestic and foreign policies that the parallel state labeled as secular, liberal, antirevolutionary, and subversive. In each case, Khamenei and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which answers directly to the supreme leader, moved aggressively and at times brutally to contain and control the elected government. The battles left the government bureaucracy depleted and paralyzed.

With the election of Iran's new president, this struggle may have finally been decided in favor of the parallel state. Ebrahim Raisi, who captured the presidency in a meticulously engineered election in June, is a loyal functionary of Iran's theocratic system. For decades, he served as a low-profile prosecutor and judge, including two

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years as the head of Iran's judiciary. Over the course of his career, Raisi became notorious for his alleged role in the summary execution of thousands of political prisoners and members of leftist armed groups in the late 1980s. His eagerness to stamp out any perceived threat to the parallel state clearly endeared him to Khamenei, and there is little doubt that as president, one of his priorities will be to tighten the supreme leader's control over the administrative agencies of the elected government.

The context in which Raisi assumed the presidency will also require a break from the past. Iran has been impoverished by the stranglehold of U.S. sanctions and the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. The democratic aspirations of the devastated middle class are waning, and a collective sense of isolation and victimhood is rising in their place. The surrounding region remains threatening, strengthening those who pose as guardians of national security. Amid all this turmoil, Iran will soon need a new supreme leader—a transition in which the new president is set to play a critical role, and which could potentially result in his own rise to head of the Islamic Republic.

These changes promise to usher in a new era in the Islamic Republic's history. The turmoil created by a divided system could give way to an Iran that is more cohesive and more assertive in trying to shape the region in its own image. As many of the leaders and movements that defined Iranian politics for the past three decades fade away, a faction of right-wing leaders has the opportunity to reshape Iran's politics and society in ways that will expand the IRGC's control over the country's economy, further diminish political freedoms, and yet display limited tolerance on religious and social issues. It will champion Iranian nationalism to widen its popular base domestically, while relying on Shiite and anti-American ideologies to project power regionally.

These changes could also reshape Iran's relationship with the world, and particularly with the United States. With the backing of a self-assured IRGC and no fear of domestic sabotage, the new government will not shy away from confronting perceived existential threats from the United States. Although it may compromise on the nuclear issue to mitigate mounting economic and environmental crises at home, the incoming foreign policy team will shelve previous presidents' aspirations of a rapprochement with the West and instead pursue strategic alliances with China and Russia. Its primary focus will be the Middle East, where it will seek bilateral security and trade agreements with its neighbors and dou-

ble down on strengthening its “axis of resistance,” a sprawling network of proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and the rest of the region.

U.S.-Iranian relations will be transactional and revolve around immediate security concerns. The alluring promise of a broader rapprochement will no longer find fertile ground in Tehran. The window of opportunity for a “grand bargain” between the two countries has likely closed.

BORN IN STRUGGLE

The political order that Khomeini ushered into being in 1979 emerged in struggle. Removing the shah, the dictator who had ruled Iran since 1941, was a relatively peaceful affair, but the contest between Islamists and their rivals was bloody and protracted. Khomeini's acolytes battled traditional clergy, nationalists, and Marxists for power. The 1979 takeover of the U.S. embassy by students loyal to Khomeini consolidated the Islamists' grip on power, as did the war that Iran fought against its neighbor Iraq from 1980 to 1988, which helped expand their paramilitary force, the IRGC, as a counterweight to the U.S.-trained Iranian army.

The victorious Islamist forces established parallel institutions that collectively they call *nezam*, or “the system,” which is designed to neuter any threats from the secular state. Iran soon found itself riven by fault lines, however: between the supreme leader and the president, between the commanders of the IRGC and the army, and between the religious jurists of the Guardian Council (the body that holds a veto power over legislation) and members of parliament. The fissures deepened after Khomeini died, when the Islamists' conservative wing took over and removed its leftist brethren from power. The ruling faction soon split between the parallel state and the government, headed by the new supreme leader and the president, respectively.

The supreme leader is constitutionally the ultimate decision-maker in Iran, but the president and the government bureaucracy can occasionally exploit popular sentiment to outmaneuver him. Elections have highlighted polarizing issues such as civil rights, mandatory dress codes, corruption, and relations with the United States, spurring social movements and protests that the parallel state cannot ignore. The 1997 presidential election gave birth to a formidable reform movement whose “religious democratic” aspirations altered even the supreme leader's lexicon.

But for Iran's recent presidents, efforts to exploit popular sentiment to push for reform usually ended in frustration and failure. As

candidates, all the men who have served as Iran's president during the past three decades—Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Hassan Rouhani—promised to chart an independent course and open the country up to the world. Once in office, however, they inevitably fell short, constrained by the supreme leader's active opposition. All these men also began their careers as fervent loyalists of the parallel state, and indeed they helped build the foundations of the Islamic Republic.

Rafsanjani made the first attempt to weaken the parallel state. He was himself one of the founders of the theocratic establishment, as well as an instrumental backer of Khamenei's appointment as supreme leader. But as Iran's president from 1989 to 1997, Rafsanjani tried to shepherd the country out of its revolutionary phase and rebuild its fractured economy by strengthening ties with the United States and Europe. Before long, he was locked in a power struggle with Khamenei, as he sought to subsume the IRGC into the army or at least reduce it to a small, elite division. His objective was to centralize decision-making within the government and prevent the parallel state's interests from determining national security.

Khamenei foiled that plan and nixed a proposed constitutional amendment that would have allowed Rafsanjani to run for a third consecutive term. But when Rafsanjani left office in 1997, he did not exit the political scene. Instead, the competition between him and Khamenei introduced an element of volatility into Iranian electoral politics that lasted for a quarter century.

Khatami owed his stunning landslide electoral victory in 1997 in part to Rafsanjani, who used his control over the political machine to back the unlikely reformist candidate. Khatami's progressive platform appealed to disgruntled youth, women, and a middle class that had swelled because of Rafsanjani's economic reforms. As president, Khatami presided over a brief moment of liberalization: hundreds of new media outlets emerged, and intellectuals put forward ideas about religious pluralism that threatened the supreme leader's monopoly on divine truth. Khamenei and the IRGC moved aggressively to thwart Khatami's reformist agenda and head off any rapprochement with the United States, arresting hundreds of journalists, intellectuals, and students.

Following this crackdown, the parallel state seemed to be on the verge of winning its power struggle with the government. Ahmadinejad ran a populist campaign in the 2005 election and defeated Rafsanjani, whom

he portrayed as the symbol of a corrupt system. Throughout Ahmadinejad's presidency, the IRGC penetrated state institutions, accelerated the country's nuclear program, and exploited Iran's international isolation under sanctions to bolster its own economic activities. When millions of Iranians protested Ahmadinejad's contested reelection in 2009, the IRGC violently crushed the demonstrations. The parallel state imprisoned many reformist leaders and placed others under house arrest. Among the dead and detained were children and relatives of senior conservative officials. For a moment, even the parallel state cracked: IRGC commanders had to travel around the country to brief rank-and-file members and other conservative figures to justify their excessive use of violence against the protesters.

But even Ahmadinejad eventually clashed with Khamenei and the IRGC. In his second term, he dropped his anti-American stance in favor of overtures toward Washington and replaced his earlier Islamist rhetoric with appeals to Persian nationalism. He accused the IRGC and the intelligence agencies of smuggling luxury commodities such as cigarettes and women's makeup products (and other goods) disguised as sensitive items into and out of Iran. In an effort to bypass the very religious establishment that had brought him to power, he intimated that he enjoyed a connection of some sort to the "Hidden Imam," a messianic figure revered by the Shiites.

After eight years with a loose cannon as president, Iranians began to support reformists who promised a return to normalcy. Rafsanjani was disqualified from running in the 2013 election by the Guardian Council, which is charged with assessing whether candidates hold loyalty to the supreme leader, and so he rallied support for his protégé, Rouhani, a former national security adviser to and nuclear negotiator for Rafsanjani and Khatami. Rouhani campaigned on an ambitious platform, pledging to defend citizens against the militarism of the IRGC and the religious extremism that restricted citizens' daily lives, secure the release of reformist leaders from house arrest, and improve the economy by resolving the nuclear impasse. He linked economic growth to the nuclear negotiations by declaring, "It's good to have centrifuges running, but people's lives also have to run; our factories have to run."

With Rafsanjani and the reformists behind him, Rouhani was elected president in 2013 and reelected in 2017. Technocrats returned to senior positions and resumed the nuclear negotiations they had started a decade earlier under Khatami, but this time, they spoke not only with European

powers but also directly with the United States. Preliminary nuclear talks between Iran and the United States had started secretly in Oman, with Khamenei's blessing, a few months before Rouhani's election. But the new team used its popular mandate to pressure the supreme leader to show more flexibility in the negotiations than he would have liked. After two years, Rouhani's negotiators concluded an agreement with six world powers, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which offered Iran some relief from sanctions in return for agreeing to allow inspections of its nuclear facilities and to limit its uranium enrichment, at least for a time.

LEAKED SECRETS

The parallel state struck back hard to dampen the euphoria that greeted the 2015 nuclear deal. In doing so, it provided graphic evidence of the internal struggles within the Iranian state. In April of this year, a three-hour audio file that was part of a classified oral history commissioned by an arm of the president's office was anonymously leaked to the media. In it, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif can be heard bluntly stating that Iran's foreign policy has consistently been at the service of the IRGC.

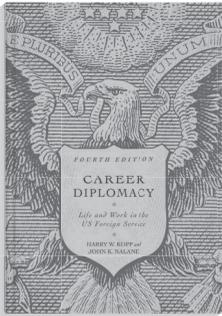
This leak confirms that the Rouhani administration viewed Iran's nuclear program as an IRGC project not entirely in the interests of the state. In the taped conversation, Zarif says that he told Khatami and Rouhani that "a group [presumably the IRGC] has thrown the country down into a well, and that well is a nuclear well."

Zarif even accuses the IRGC of collaborating with Russia to sabotage his diplomatic efforts on the nuclear issue. The Russians feared that a nonproliferation agreement could bring Iran closer to the United States. According to Zarif, immediately after the JCPOA was announced, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, to discuss the Syrian conflict. Russian missiles and planes then began intentionally flying a longer route through Iranian skies to attack forces battling the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Zarif implies that Putin intended to lock Iran into a collaboration with Russia in a regional battle as a way to keep Tehran in conflict with Washington.

In the leaked audio, Zarif howls that the parallel state spent the six months before the nuclear agreement went into effect trying to sabotage it. The IRGC's "firing a missile with 'Israel must be wiped out' inscribed on it, those affairs with Russia and the following regional events, raiding



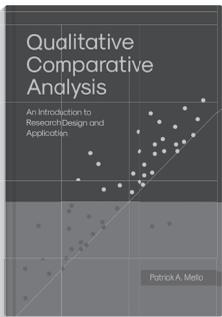
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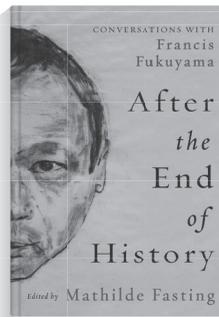
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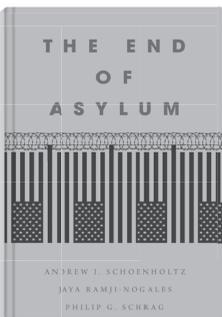
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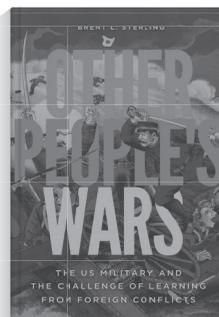
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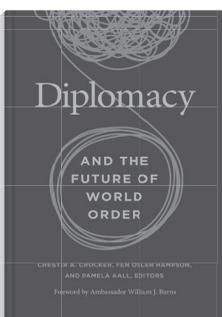
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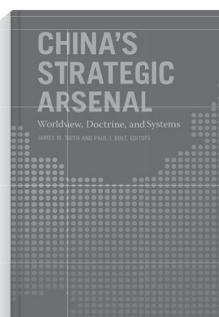
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—**Anne-Marie Slaughter, CEO, New America**



"An insightful assessment of all important facets of China's growing, and increasingly capable, nuclear arsenal."
—**Thomas G. Mahnken, senior research professor at the Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Johns Hopkins**



the Saudi embassy [in Tehran], seizing U.S. ships—they were all done to prevent the JCPOA from implementation,” he says on the tape.

In the years after the JCPOA was adopted, Zarif found himself constantly scrambling to repair the IRGC’s damage to his careful diplomacy. Soleimani told Zarif little about his plans. For instance, in January 2016, U.S. sanctions on Iran’s flagship airline, Iran Air, were relaxed as part of the nuclear deal. But five months later, Zarif learned from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that Iran Air not only had resumed the use of putatively civilian flights to funnel weapons to Hezbollah in Syria, the action that had gotten it sanctioned in the first place, but also had increased those flights sixfold on Soleimani’s direct orders.

The flights put Iran Air’s aging fleet at risk and courted new sanctions. Zarif furiously summarizes the IRGC’s view of the matter—that if using Iran Air for this purpose conferred a two percent advantage over the alternatives, “even if it cost the country’s diplomacy 200 percent, it was worth using it!” (Soleimani’s risk acceptance and willingness to provoke the United States may have contributed to his own demise; in early 2020, he was targeted and killed by an armed U.S. drone in Baghdad.)

Zarif bemoans the fact that his popularity among Iranians dropped from 88 percent to 60 percent in the years after the JCPOA was finalized. Meanwhile, Soleimani’s approval jumped to 90 percent thanks to his heroic portrayal in the IRGC-backed media.

Throughout his time in office, Rouhani found himself at war with the parallel state, just like predecessors. Back in the 1980s, Rouhani had helped expand the IRGC from a small volunteer organization into a full-fledged army, with ground, naval, and air forces. Three decades later, he publicly accused the IRGC of sprawling interference. In a 2014 anticorruption conference with the heads of the judiciary and the parliament, he demonstrated his frustration with the IRGC’s nonmilitary activities. Without explicitly naming the IRGC, he stated, “If guns, money, newspapers, and propaganda all gather in one place, one can be confident of corruption there.”

DEUS EX MACHINA

This familiar struggle between Iran’s elected government, under Rouhani, and its parallel state institutions, under Khamenei, could have ended as inconclusively as previous clashes. But an impetus from outside—namely, Donald Trump’s election as president of the United States in 2016—tipped the balance decisively toward the parallel state. The

Rouhani government had assured Iranians that it would be impossible for the United States to unilaterally abrogate the nuclear deal, because it was an international agreement negotiated among six world powers and further endorsed by the UN Security Council. But the IRGC made a different wager, as it trusted neither U.S. promises nor international agreements. No sooner had Trump won the U.S. presidency than the IRGC's front companies lined up at Iran's central bank, its Ministry of Petroleum, and other state agencies to bid for contracts to circumvent likely U.S. financial and energy sanctions.

When Trump formally withdrew from the agreement in May 2018, these "sanctions profiteers" stood poised to take over Iran's financial sector. Due to the reimposition of U.S. sanctions, Iran now had to rely on the IRGC's network to circumvent international banking networks to sell its oil and bring revenues back into the country. According to the former head of Iran's central bank, Abdolnaser Hemmati, the IRGC's takeover of these financial transactions resulted in the equivalent of a 20 percent commission on every transfer the government makes. U.S. policies had effectively empowered the IRGC to deepen its economic influence.

The Trump administration denied the existence of meaningful political divisions within the Islamic Republic. It adopted a "maximum pressure" policy designed to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero and strangle its economy. Inside the White House, there was no agreement on the endgame. While Trump's goal was to force Iran to negotiate a new agreement, his then secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and his national security adviser at the time, John Bolton, pushed for regime change. Regardless of its ultimate objective, the new approach did not spare even those Iranian officials who opposed the IRGC from within: the Trump administration sanctioned Zarif in July 2019.

The Trump administration's insistence that Iran's elite was monolithic became something like a self-fulfilling prophecy: Trump's actions pushed Iranian politics in a more extreme direction. Under the existential threat of a draconian U.S. sanctions policy, internal divisions abated. The White House's policies helped forge a broad agreement among Iran's elites that the only way to protect the country's national interests was to secure the regime,

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for a "grand bargain"
between Iran and the United
States has likely closed.*

which allowed the IRGC to present itself, for the first time in its existence, as the champion of Iranian nationalism.

The IRGC had long claimed that its advanced ballistic missiles and network of proxies across the Middle East protected Iran's territorial integrity. In 2019, after it became clear that Iran's policy of "strategic patience" in upholding the JCPOA was not paying off, the IRGC sprang into action to establish deterrence against further pressure from the United States. It began carrying out brazen attacks, launching a startling, precise drone strike on an oil-processing facility in Saudi Arabia and shooting down a U.S. drone over the Persian Gulf. In January 2020, the IRGC launched ballistic missiles against American forces in Iraq in response to Soleimani's assassination. These operations also served to silence the IRGC's opponents within the state and society.

For decades, the parallel state had feared that Iranian society would unite with the elected government to overpower it. The parallel state had acted, nimbly and often violently, to forestall that possibility. Now it could envision a new future, one in which both Iranian society and the government united behind the parallel state, making the supreme leader and the IRGC the vehicles for their aspirations.

CO-OPTING THE FIELD

By this year's election, Iran's political and social landscape had been transformed. Rafsanjani, for decades a powerful force in elite politics, had died suddenly from a heart attack in 2017. Khatami remains under virtual house arrest, and the government forbids Iranian media from mentioning him or publishing his photograph. Ahmadinejad is still an outspoken critic: former advisers have described in Iranian media how he envisions himself as an Iranian Boris Yeltsin, destined to ride mass protests to power to save the nation. But Ahmadinejad's faction has been purged from every important institution.

The reformist bloc was the biggest loser of the 2021 campaign, during which its aging leadership failed to present a united front or a coherent plan of action. The movement had once mobilized enough public support to propel Khatami to the presidency and later formed a crucial part of the coalition behind Rouhani. Now, however, it seems out of touch. The inflation rate in Iran soared to 40 percent after Trump withdrew from the JCPOA, and the country is plunging into poverty. According to Iran's Social Security Organization, the absolute poverty rate doubled within only two years, from 15 percent in 2017 to 30 per-

cent in 2019. The efforts by student groups and women's organizations to organize protests against political repression and human rights violations have tailed off, replaced by impromptu violent riots over economic grievances, water shortages, and power outages. The rioters' angry slogan—"Reformists, conservatives, your time is up"—suggests that they view the reformists as accomplices in their misery.

In the past, reformists succeeded in elections by polarizing the political landscape. Khatami ran on a platform of promoting civil society and democracy, and Rouhani promised the resolution of the nuclear issue and improved ties with the United States. These qualify as wedge issues in Iran, and invoking them transformed those candidates' campaigns into social movements, thus increasing voter turnout, particularly among women and young people. That strategy doomed Raisi's first bid for the presidency, in 2017, when he lost badly to Rouhani.

In this year's election, however, Khamenei and the IRGC found little resistance on their way to choreographing Raisi's win. The Guardian Council disqualified all the candidates who could have potentially energized the electorate, barring not only all the reformists and Ahmadinejad but also Ali Larijani, a relatively moderate former Speaker of the parliament and chief nuclear negotiator. The only moderate candidate left in the game was Rouhani's head of the central bank, Hemmati.

In the end, the reformists' supporters fractured into three camps: those who boycotted the election, those who cast blank ballots, and those who voted for Hemmati. Turnout came in at 49 percent, the lowest for a presidential election in the Islamic Republic's history. In the reformist stronghold of Tehran, only 26 percent of eligible voters participated. According to official figures, Raisi won 62 percent of the vote, and Hemmati only eight percent.

The hard-line campaign succeeded not solely due to repression but also by stealing a page from its opponents' playbook. Raisi's background is almost entirely in the theocratic judiciary, but as a presidential candidate, he emphasized security and prosperity rather than religion and ideology. He ran on a platform devoted to building a "strong Iran," promising to tackle government corruption and neutralize the effect of sanctions by replicating the IRGC's self-reliance in the defense industry in nonmilitary arenas, too. When he campaigned at bazaars, factories, and Tehran's stock market, IRGC-affiliated media showed him talking to workers and technocrats about reopening bankrupt businesses and reviving the economy.

Raisi not only posed as a centrist technocrat but appropriated the reformists' secular discourse, as well. He promised to fight domestic violence and pledged to discourage the much-despised morality police from harassing ordinary people and to encourage them to instead go after economic and bureaucratic corruption. Images released by his campaign suggested that his supporters included women who did not follow the strict official dress code.

Other hard-liners have struck a similar tone. In a debate between reformists and hard-liners held on the chat app Clubhouse during the campaign, Masoud Dehnamaki, a notorious vigilante and militia leader who since the 1990s has physically attacked intellectuals, students, and ordinary people for "un-Islamic" behavior, ridiculed the reformists for focusing on social restrictions. In a telling moment, he said that compulsory veiling was no longer a serious concern for the regime.

Raisi has also repeatedly said that he advocates engagement with the world. This represents a significant shift from the confrontational approach that hard-liners have traditionally taken. He also has made clear that he does not object to the nuclear deal as such, only to the specific aspects of the agreement that allowed the United States to violate it with impunity. The most dramatic shift has come among Raisi's hard-line supporters, who were adamantly opposed to the JCPOA until a few weeks before his campaign began but have since made a U-turn, pledging compliance with the agreement. Mojtaba Zonnour, a senior member of parliament, once led a group of conservatives to the podium and set a copy of the JCPOA on fire after Trump withdrew from the agreement. After criticizing the JCPOA for years, he is now backing Raisi's adherence to it, as long as the United States honors its obligations.

THE PARALLEL STATE AS UNITARY STATE

This time, those who anticipate a repetition of the familiar conflict between the president and the supreme leader may be disappointed. The impending transition to the next supreme leader will loom over Raisi's presidency. There is limited information on the 82-year-old leader's health, except for a much-publicized prostate surgery in 2014. But it is widely expected that the decision to replace Khamenei will have to be made during the new president's tenure.

The forces that engineered Raisi's victory are purging the highest echelons of the Islamic Republic to smooth this succession process. If

he is not himself named Khamenei's successor, Raisi will play a key role in determining who is. He is thus unlikely to spend his presidency challenging the current occupant of the nation's highest office.

Raisi is simply part of a larger political project that Khamenei is pursuing in his final years. The new president may tactically moderate his positions, but any real policy shift will occur in close coordination with the supreme leader. The parallel state is widening its social base beyond Islamists to nonreligious nationalists, in an attempt to co-opt the growing influence of those who despise the official and selective imposition of Islamic law. Many veiled women have joined the anti-veiling campaign, since they see the dress code as divisive, generating resentment toward them in the street. Raisi's selective and reversible appropriation of the reformists' social and foreign policy agendas is designed to further undermine their ability to return to the political scene at this critical moment in Iranian history.

Despite its smooth start, this high-stakes gambit could quickly fall apart. Raisi and his team of young, right-wing technocrats will need to use state patronage to co-opt resentful elites, particularly the faction of marginalized conservatives. They also must address the needs of the impoverished population, a portion of which backed Raisi because of his economic promises.

On foreign policy, Raisi will attempt to turn the failed globalist aspirations of his predecessors on their head. Previous presidents came to believe that the best way to forge a safe and secure Iran was to make the country a prosperous part of the global economy. Raisi believes that, on the contrary, only a strong Iran with undisputed regional leverage can deter external forces and achieve economic prosperity. Therefore, he is expected to enhance the IRGC's military capabilities in order to counter U.S. pressure. That means bolstering the corps's network of proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and beyond, all in the service of protecting the original parallel state in Iran.

The new administration will also deepen Iran's security and economic ties with both China and Russia. Putin issued one of the first and strongest congratulations to the new president, expressing his confidence that Raisi's election will lead to "further development of constructive bilateral cooperation between our countries." Tehran also recently signed a 25-year trade and military partnership with Beijing, which was initially delayed in 2016 because Iran hoped to improve ties with the United States and Europe.

Paradoxically, the elimination of any potential rapprochement with the United States has brought coherence to Iran's foreign policy. There is now a general consensus across Iran's political spectrum that their country's hostile relationship with the United States will persist indefinitely. Consequently, Iran's competing factions are no longer obsessed with the domestic ramifications of improved ties with Washington. This means that neither the JCPOA's success nor its failure can dramatically upset the internal balance of power. This new dynamic has reduced the likelihood of domestic sabotage in the event a diplomatic breakthrough is achieved—but it has also hardened Iran's bargaining position in the ongoing negotiations.

Raisi needs a diplomatic success on the nuclear front to deal with a sea of internal problems. But unlike Rouhani, he is not betting his political fortune on it. His hawkish foreign policy team perceives the United States as ideologically committed to destroying the Islamic Republic. Its assumption is that Washington will attempt to renege on any agreement either bluntly, as Trump did, or subtly, as the Obama administration did, by not properly removing financial sanctions on Iran. The political forces that propelled Raisi to the presidency are therefore preparing step-by-step retaliatory measures in case a revived JCPOA falters. They are also committed to preserving Iran's nuclear infrastructure, to maintain the option to weaponize the program rapidly if the agreement falls apart. At the same time, the signing of a new nuclear deal could inadvertently create a more combustible region: Tehran fears that it would give the United States a free hand to go after its regional influence, and Tehran's enemies are concerned that it would provide Iran with more resources to bolster its proxies and missile program.

The resulting security dilemma appears poised to escalate tensions between Iran and the United States. The two countries are already embroiled in a low-level but continuous conflict in Iraq, where U.S. forces and pro-Iranian militias clash sporadically. Although Raisi has held out the prospect of talks with regional powers to lower tensions, the emerging unified leadership in Iran sees itself in a win-win position. It is confident in its military and has long known how to thrive on conflicts and expand its nonstate allies. Thanks to the new domestic political transformation, it can also make tactical compromises with its adversaries without the risk of exacerbating internal divisions. As a new era of the Islamic Republic begins, Iran and the United States are on a collision course. 🌐



ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continues to bear down on economies and disrupt the lives of billions of people around the world, Japan's universities and schools have remained vigilant about safeguarding the health of their students, faculty and staff. While most classes are still conducted remotely, all schools are preparing to reopen classrooms once the pandemic is contained.

The country's most renowned universities have exhibited much resilience during this prolonged health crisis. With their reputations intact, Japanese schools have stayed top-of-mind, judging from the number of international applicants to the country's most prestigious universities.

"We currently provide online courses to foreign students who, according to our survey, were very happy that we provided them with that opportunity. They would have been happier if they got to study in the campus, but the situation didn't allow us to do so. We thought we wouldn't get the same number of students this year, but our graduate school enrollment actually increased," said **Tohoku University President Hideo Ohno**.

Unfortunately, some universities were not prepared to handle the disruption caused by the global pandemic. Due to sudden international travel restrictions, they saw a slow-down in their student exchanges.

For Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, the situation might have been daunting. But it boldly faced difficulties and looks to the future with confidence and optimism.

"It was especially challenging for an international university like us because we recruit around 50 percent of our students from outside the country and want to have all domestic students spend their time abroad during their time at APU. So you can imagine that during this pandemic, when travelling is severely restricted, it was a huge challenge for us. But one of our strengths, as a university, is resilience," said **Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Vice President Marian Beise-Zee**.

Despite the challenges, Japanese universities have proven their resilience by quickly adapting and creating opportunities to strengthen their current systems.

"Although the Japanese government restricted receiving foreigners and sending students to foreign countries because of COVID-19, we succeeded to operate through an online system. We are using this online system to have some sort of student exchange program. This is only a substitute, but we must utilize the system because most of the students won't get the chance to go abroad. That's how we have made the most out of the situation," said **Kanagawa University Vice President Akihiro Matoba**.

On the practical level, many universities faced the challenge to create effective connections with its students thousands of miles away and building a community of

students located in different places and even different countries.

"Last March, I sent a message to students of TIU around the world, stating that although some of our students were not able to enter Japan, we were all connected and linked to the university and that we would do our best to still provide opportunities and education, albeit remotely. I felt it was a very important message to send: that we were not abandoning our international students or leaving them

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

**Foresight
for the Next 100 years**

Chairman and President
KAWAZOE Takayoshi

- Philanthropy and Public Interest
- Advanced Knowledge and Technology in Science
- Empathy in Patient Care
- Small Group Learning
Organized by the Center of Innovation in Dental Education
- A Global University
Promoting International Exchange

OSAKA DENTAL UNIVERSITY

大阪歯科大学

behind just because they could not enter Japan," **Tokyo International University Chancellor Nobuyasu Kurata** said.

"Another challenge for our international students in particular was how they could support their cost of living because they were away from their families. We were one of the first universities to respond by providing financial assistance to those students in need," Kurata added.

Others, like **Hitotsubashi University**, used the disruption to build stronger and wider connections with international partners during a time when travel is restricted and student exchange programs are suspended.

"Hitotsubashi University, Singapore Management University and Renmin University in China are members of SIGMA (Societal Impact and Global Management Alliance), together with top European business universities, like Copenhagen Business School and WU Wien (Austria). It is very important for us to develop this kind of alliances with SIGMA and other universities," **Hitotsubashi President Satoshi Nakano** stressed.

In the last 40 years, Japan has stayed committed to internationalize its higher education system. The wider use of the English language has allowed Japanese students to adapt more easily when they go abroad and has attracted more international applicants wishing to study in the country. With regards to economic development and demographic terms, it is a win-win policy.

The internationalization of the Japanese higher education system has also nurtured a new breed of Japanese, one with a more globalized outlook and a wider perspective of the world. Working closely with the government, the Japan Association of National Universities (JANU) has taken the lead in promoting student exchange programs.

"JANU, has several important agreements with similar groups in the UK, France, Australia, the US, like the American Council of Education. Those agreements allow us to encourage national universities to send students abroad and recruit international students to Japan. At the same time, the government is also preparing to make competitive study grants available," said **JANU President Dr. Kyosuke Nagata**.

Fully supportive of the efforts of the Hyogo prefectural government and its colleagues, **University of Hyogo** hopes to increase enrollment of students from around the world.

"We want to take in students from around the world, particularly from developing countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America, rather than those only in Europe and the United States. That's because we want, from the first year, to develop intellectuals who understand Japanese culture and consequently, develop human resources who will be bridges between Japan or Hyogo and their home countries in the future. This will lead not only to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also, by extension, contribute to world peace," **University of Hyogo President Isao Ohta** said.

Among its peers, **International University of Japan** stands out for its initiative to internationalize. Not only has IUJ taken in more international students, a significant part from developing countries, (Only 10 percent of its student body is Japanese), it also conducts all its classes in English.

"We have been welcoming students from many developing countries. We are also developing new programs, like the International Public Policy program, which will bring together students, diplomats, and government officials from Japan and western Pacific countries here in our campus. They



Students of the Global Business Course (GBC) in the School of Economics and Management attend classes in English and receive their Bachelor of Economics degree upon graduation. All first-year international and Japanese students live in Global House, the on-campus, international dormitory, where they learn about one another's cultures by communicating in English.

GBC's international students come from more than 20 countries and regions all over the world, mostly from Southeast and South Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. They receive a wide variety of financial support, including the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship. The Department of Global Business also offers a master's degree in the Graduate School of Social Sciences, wherein students carry out research in English and earn an MBA upon completion.

Furthermore, because University of Hyogo is a research university, there are opportunities for international students in the other Graduate Schools (such as Engineering, Science, and Information Science) to conduct education and advanced research in cooperation with the world-renowned large-scale research facilities such as "SPring-8" and Supercomputer "Fugaku," among others.



www.u-hyogo.ac.jp/english/index.html



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ASAHI UNIVERSITY

www.asahi-u.ac.jp

will be able to build a network for the future and hopefully, help build better diplomatic relations in the Western Pacific," **International University of Japan President Hiroyuki Itami** said.

Meanwhile, **International Christian University (ICU)** plans to send its students abroad again in the near future, and is working with key partners to resurrect the various Study Abroad programs that have been largely on hold for the past eighteen months.

At the same time, for those who are not able to travel abroad, ICU is also committed to offering virtual study abroad opportunities to all students who remain on campus.

"With our commitment to provide a global experience to each and every student here, we are seeking to build on our current percentage of approximately 60% of students participating in one of our Study Abroad opportunities during their four years here at ICU. To this end, we are committed to developing new partnerships and to expanding the extent of our collaborations with existing partners. We are also looking to increase the scope of the activities initiated by our service learning center and using this to develop new ventures in regions such as Africa and Southeast Asia", said **ICU President Shoichiro Iwakiri**.

Reflective of the close ties between Japan and the United States, many Japanese universities have formed partnerships with several prestigious American universities.

Since 1993, the cooperation between **Asahi University** and University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) continues to benefit both sides in terms of research, knowledge sharing and cultural understanding.

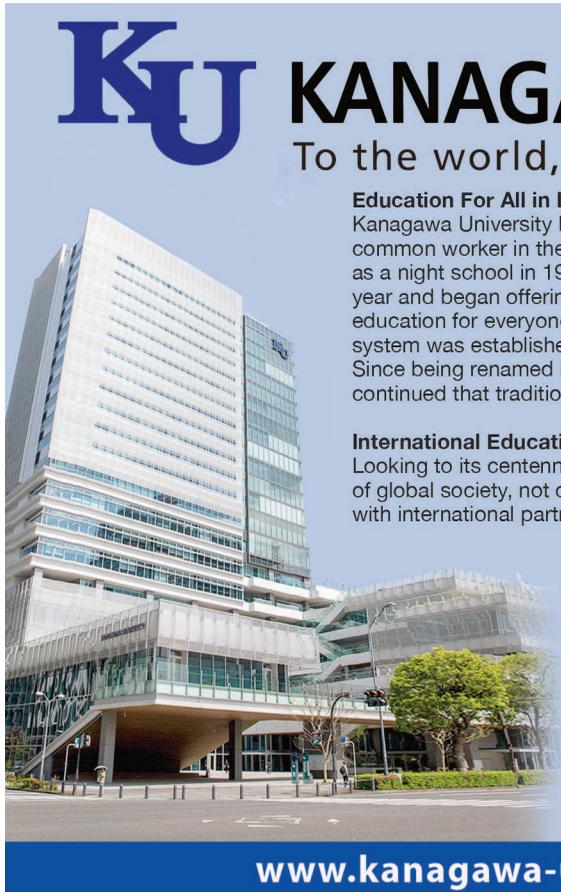
"When I was little, my parents took me to an English school.

It was the first time I met a teacher from another country. I was nervous because I couldn't speak the language. But through time, I learned that the language itself wasn't the only thing needed in order to communicate with non-Japanese. I learned there were differences in body language, expressions, and culture that came along with it. It was then that I realized that partnerships and face-to-face interactions played an important role in becoming an individual who is globally aware. That is something I have been doing ever since," **Asahi University President Katsuyuki Ohtomo** said.

"Asahi University provides unique experiences to both international and local students through its face-to-face interactions. From the start, internationalization was at the core of the university and we remain committed to fostering partnerships. We train our students to contribute to the future of society through their knowledge and ability. We look to develop their intelligence and creative spirit in line with that," Ohtomo also said.

With the growing awareness and increasing importance of sustainable development around the world, several Japanese universities have wholeheartedly integrated SDGs into their programs.

"Okayama Region is one of the best places in the world to see how education for sustainable development (ESD) is integrated in advancing the SDGs in a multi-stakeholder partnership manner. As the first UNESCO Chair in ESD across Asia and the only national university that received a special prize at the Japan SDGs Award from the Government of Japan, we led a profound cultural shift for higher education institutions and they implemented SDG-based management systems," **Okayama University President Hirofumi Makino** said. ■



KU KANAGAWA UNIVERSITY

To the world, to the future

Education For All in International Port City – Yokohama
 Kanagawa University began as a humble but ambitious project to establish a school for the common worker in the international port city of Yokohama in Kanagawa Prefecture. Starting as a night school in 1928, Yokohama Academy became Yokohama College the following year and began offering both day and night classes, keeping its commitment to provide education for everyone, including the economically disadvantaged. A fellowship scholarship system was established in 1933, one of the first of its kind and a source of deep pride. Since being renamed in 1949 after post-war educational reform, Kanagawa University has continued that tradition and its alumni can be found hard at work around the world.

International Education and Research
 Looking to its centennial in 2028, Kanagawa University continues to be a proactive member of global society, not only by sending out students and graduates but also by collaborating with international partners in education and research.

Minato Mirai Campus Established in 2021
 Aside from returning to roots in the Port of Yokohama, the university's new Minato Mirai Campus established in April 2021 is a symbol of its efforts to look to the future and to the outside world.

Comprehensive University
 Founder Yoneda Yoshimori believed the purpose of education was to form students that contributed to the betterment of society and were independent, reliable, forward-thinking, international and open-minded. Those principles have remained the foundation of what has become the international comprehensive university with 8 faculties and 8 graduate schools that we see today.

www.kanagawa-u.ac.jp/english/welcome

Acting locally, thinking globally

A mere mention of Japan conjures up images of its sprawling, densely populated, ultramodern urban centers, like Tokyo and Osaka. Apart from those well-known hubs, the country boasts other regions and cities that play an important part in the country's development and its engagement with the wider world.

University of Nagasaki has contributed to efforts to strengthen Japan's links with the rest of the world. It was among the first universities in the country to set up an information security department, which has since attracted the attention of Japanese multinationals like Fujitsu.

"Because of positive reviews and a growing demand for its graduates from several other companies, the Department of Information Security has doubled its enrollment for its courses in the field this year. Other initiatives of the university include partnerships with local and international organizations, like lectures arranged by the Department of International Management, which aims to provide students with a more globalized outlook. One lecture, delivered by the U.S. chief consul, was so popular we had to also broadcast it online because the venue could not accommodate all the participants," said **University of Nagasaki President Tsutomu Kimura**.

The lecture series, Kimura added, has also encouraged a significant number of students to seek further studies in the United States and thus prompted him to eagerly widen its U.S. partnerships.

In Yamanashi prefecture, **Tsuru University** has built strong partnerships with the local government and the community. The prefecture is the largest local producer of grapes, plums, peaches, and wines in Japan, as well as a major source of bottled mineral water. The university, located at the foot of Mt. Fuji, maintains a particularly distinguished record in teacher education.

"Our university was founded and continues to be supported by the city of Tsuru. As a public institution, we value regionality, internationality, and a distinctive learning environment extremely highly. The university's Regional Exchange Center provides many educational, cultural and sports programs for the people of the community, also promoting and managing regular field work initiatives," said **Tsuru University President Hidenori Fujita**.

"Exchange programs are also critical. They help us improve our students' cultural knowledge and sensitivity, and allow them to open up their future. We want to use our resources to develop both our university and our city. These efforts will consequently benefit the university, local communities, society and the world," Fujita added.

Located in the subtropical region of Japan, Okinawa boasts of a rich history and distinct qualities that no other part of the country holds. Sharing similar characteristics to Pacific islands like, Hawaii, the Ryuku islands play an important position in international collaboration and knowledge exchange regarding

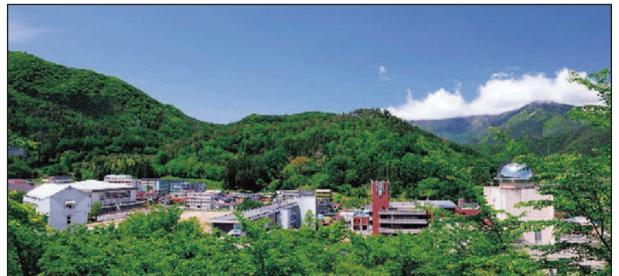


University of Nagasaki was one of the first universities in Japan to establish a department that specializes in information security. The photo on the left shows the dedicated training room. In this room with high-spec hardware, students are exposed to sophisticated and persistent attacks in cyberspace. In this way, the students learn effective defense methods. The Department of Information Security has attracted the attention of many companies, and requests for joint research are pouring in. For this reason, it decided to build an industry-university joint research center. The construction of the center is being carried out at a rapid pace on campus.

University of Nagasaki focuses on the development of global human resources. Some of its initiatives include overseas training and seminars by American diplomats. The Diplomats' Seminar is a Nagasaki Prefecture-wide initiative co-sponsored by the U.S. Consulate in Fukuoka and attended by many high schools in Nagasaki Prefecture. The photo on the right shows Principal Officer John C. Taylor delivering the keynote address. He spoke to a group of college and high school students about what it takes to be a good leader in his talk entitled "Enrichment through International Experiences."



University of Nagasaki



<https://www.tsuru.ac.jp/>



the preservation of local ecosystems.

"In the country, our university is ranked 6th in the promotion of the preservation of underwater life, aside from being classified No. 1 in the promotion of quality education. This is quite significant as it certainly shows our strength in being able to give back and develop the local community," said **University of the Ryukyus President Mutsumi Nishida**.

With its reputation as an excellent research institute, the university not only commits its efforts towards academics, but also caters to the revival of local heritage sites such as the Shurijo Castle.

"The castle was burned down in 2019 and was a cultural icon and symbol of the independence of Okinawa. We wanted to take the initiative to use our expertise and academic network to reconstruct and revive an important part of our history," Nishida added. ■

Keepers of Japanese culture

The Japanese aesthetic possesses a singular status in the world. Because of its long period of isolation, art forms in the country developed virtually absent of Western influence and planted very deep roots among the Japanese.

With the end of Japan's isolation, Japanese art reached the West and reignited the creativity of several artists there. More than a century after, the influence of Japanese art and design is very visible in the buildings we inhabit, the products we use, the pictures we hang on our walls, and the clothes we wear.

Through their international partnerships, Japan's art universities have served as bridges with the global community, guardians of the country's culture and promoters of its art and design. One such school is **Musashino Art University (MAU)** in Tokyo.

Founded in 1929 as Teikoku Art School, the university has grown to become one of Japan's most prestigious art schools. In addition to encompassing all the existing areas of an art university, MAU established the College of Creative Thinking for Social Innovation in 2019 to develop new disciplines in the field.

With two undergraduate and two post-graduate schools, MAU is now one of the largest art universities in Japan. Its groundbreaking educational innovations for the next generation have attracted a great deal of attention both in

Japan and overseas as unprecedented forms of instruction.

"With agreements with 37 major art universities around the world, and MAU's tradition of global educational development, it was recognized by MEXT as the first Japanese art university to develop global human resources. Global programs are offered in both classes and as projects on a daily basis. Its achievements and scale have long led Japanese art universities," **Musashino Art University President Tadanori Nagasawa** said.

For more than 120 years, **Joshi University of Art and Design** has trained female artists, many of whom have achieved success not only in Japan, but also in New York, Paris, London and Milan. It was the first women-only fine arts institution and the oldest private art school in the country.

"We are proud of our graduates. It's interesting to see that applicants come to us because they look up to our graduates. We have this strength in training these students and passing them along to the wider world," said **Joshi University of Art and Design President Fumiko Ogura**.

"We are also proud to have bred many artists that have received the Order of Culture as well as artists that have been selected as Persons of Cultural Merit in the field of Japanese paintings, and Western paintings and crafts. We have the most number of these awards among other art schools and universities," she added. ■



The Tokyo International University Pledge

Tokyo International University is strongly committed to "nurturing truly internationally-minded individuals" who harbor a sense of Kotokushin (公德心) or "unbiased harmony".

This spring we launched the Faculty of Health Sciences with the aim of further contributing to society. In the fall 2023, we will open the "Ikebukuro Campus" in metropolitan Tokyo.

We continue to strive to improve the university in both academic and athletic activities and to play a role as a leading institution of higher education in the world community.



Nobuyasu Kurata
Chancellor and Chair,
Tokyo International University

Partners in social development

Among Japan's most serious and longest running demographic challenges is its rapidly ageing population. Despite incentives from the government to reverse the trend, population growth remains negative, while the number of marriages has decreased since the early 1970s.

To address this protracted problem, successive governments have relaxed immigration laws and have encouraged non-Japanese to study, work and live in the country. To further ease assimilation, Japanese universities have instituted English-only degree programs.

At the same time, Japan has needed to strengthen government programs to support its elderly population and look after their health. Playing a key role in this mission are the country's many medical and dental universities and schools.

"Even though we are small now, we are focused on spreading awareness of the importance of dental health, which is not only about our teeth but about oral health as a whole. That is one of Fukuoka Dental College's main goals. We want to change people's perception of dentistry, given that Japan already targets a large global market for general medicine," said **Fukuoka Dental College Chairperson Dr. Sachiyo Suita**.

Osaka Dental University shares the same goal, which is to educate more people about the huge role of dental health in one's general wellbeing and improve the quality of dental education in the country by gathering information from around

the world and incorporating the latest knowledge and breakthroughs into its programs.

"We believe deeply the founding spirit of our university – Philanthropy and Public Interest – will save countless lives, not only through dentistry but also through medicine as a profession. Looking towards the future, we aim for sustainable expansion and development as a comprehensive medical university by nurturing medical professionals that will look after patients closely and live out our founding spirit," said **Osaka Dental University President and Chairman Takayoshi Kawazoe**.

A deeply patriarchal society, Japan has not fared as well in terms of gender equality as other highly advanced economies. Reflective of its very conservative values, the country has many all-female universities and educational institutions which, while they differ in terms of style of instruction and focus, have not compromised on quality of education.

"We are a private school. Compared to some others, we are relatively small. But, we look at our students as individuals, not as a group. We have a more human-centered or individual-centered approach. The most important thing for us is that each faculty consults with each student to know if they have any problems and know what we need to improve. Those are very important things we focus on," **Kobe Women's University President Nobutaka Kurihara**. ■



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- To nurture advanced technicians and engineers who will become industry leaders.
- To contribute to the development of a sustainable society through education and research activities.

Sendai, Japan

<https://www.tohtech.ac.jp>



MAU Musashino Art University

<https://www.musabi.ac.jp/english/>



Founded in 1900

The oldest private art university in Japan.
The first higher educational institution in the arts that accepted female students.



JOSHIBI UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN



Society 5.0: Building smarter, living better

Consistently a trailblazer, Japan has led the world in imagining the future, starting with the high-speed bullet train, pocket calculators, the Sony Walkman and android robots. The country has always found solutions to do things faster with less cumbersome equipment and ideally, with fewer people involved.

Dubbed Society 5.0, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first mentioned this ambitious initiative in 2017. This vision for a “super smart” society aims to bring together technologies, like big data, Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and robots, and incorporate them into every industry and across all social segments, resulting in solutions to difficult problems and in more comfortable lives.

While this vision for the future directly involves infrastructure, finance technology, healthcare, logistics and AI, it will have significant implications on the education sector, as well. After all, Japan’s schools and universities are the training grounds of the country’s future workforce, business leaders, engineers and entrepreneurs.

Already, several universities have expressed their full support for Society 5.0 and have begun to institute changes to support the initiative.

“Our goal is to equip our students with new ideas and resources that will benefit society in the long-term future. We hope they convey this message to the wider world and demonstrate, in their future endeavors, how the things they learned here, along with the techniques and technologies

they mastered, can support all people and their communities,” said **Tohoku Institute of Technology President Hironori Watanabe**.

Meanwhile, Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology continues to step up efforts to advance Society 5.0 and revise the country’s education model to adopt technological innovation and utilize them to build a more intelligent environment. Should they succeed, the government hopes it will provide the world with a model on how to teach and fully capitalize on advanced technology.

“We want to collaborate more with world-leading industries and organizations, in addition to acquiring national grants, creating new businesses and improving our education system. As diversity and inclusion are very important for our university, we will accept more international professors and students. It should be important as a university to stimulate our Japanese and international students to become more active and globalized,” said **Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (Tokyo NoKo University) President Kazuhiro Chiba**.

As digital technology and artificial intelligence become more developed and more present in our daily lives, the Japanese government believes Society 5.0 allows the country’s schools and universities to adopt a flexible approach in their task to strengthen communication, leadership, as well as reading and comprehension skills.

Many universities strongly agree and strive to comply with

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Tokyo NoKo University

Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology

Maximizing Human Value on a Foundation of Science

Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology or Tokyo NoKo University (Japanese stands for Agriculture and Technology) has evolved with the development of industrial society. Furthermore, it continues to develop into a world-leading research university that intellectually and socially maximizes human value based on science. We pave the way for sustainable development in collaboration with the international community, local communities and other institutions. We ignite students’ creativity. And we acquire the power to play an active role in the world of science, technology and business. We will continue to work toward the important goal of “building the foundation of the earth” where people can flourish and we will always focus on people, who create future values.



CHIBA Kazuhiro

President
Tokyo University of Agriculture
and Technology



Tokyo University of
Agriculture and Technology

Faculty of Agriculture / Faculty of Engineering / Graduate School of Engineering / Graduate School of Agriculture /
Graduate School of Bio-Applications and Systems Engineering / United Graduate School of Agricultural Science



the vision the government has presented for the country's education system. Meanwhile, **Kyoto University of Advanced Science** has worked actively to establish its own vision for the future and nurture the kind of graduates that society needs today and will need in the centuries to come.

"KUAS is a new university. We've been around for only three years. However, we built a university from the ground up, producing the kind of top tier talent and professionals that business leaders and business owners want for their companies and organizations," said **Kyoto University of Advanced Science President Masafumi Maeda**.

Other universities have focused on practical training for their students ahead of their entry into the workplace.

"In Hakodate, we talk directly to local people to find out the challenges they face. That gives us an idea of where

technology should be heading. That's how we can contribute to Society 5.0. We have a lot of technology-minded faculty members and many excellent students who can use their skills and know-how into designing this new model," said **Future University Hakodate President Yasuhiro Katagiri**.

Under this new education regime, schools will require a mastery of basic skills from students starting from the 5th year until the 7th year at the elementary level. Underperforming students will not be promoted to the next year until they gain a satisfactory mastery of those basic skills. Also, to prepare students for a "super smart" society, schools will focus less on subjects and more on skills proficiency.

Because of the ever-changing needs of society, there has been a significant increase in the number of smaller, more specialized schools in Japan over recent years. In line with government guidelines and societal trends, **Kobe Institute of Computing Graduate School of Information Technology (KIC)** has focused on developing and preparing individuals for roles in the IT industry regardless of their previous background.

"Our main mission is to improve society through the application of technology. As a professional graduate school, our purpose is to not only give lectures but to also monitor and encourage our graduates to make an impact," said **KIC President Toshiki Sumitani**.

As Japan leads Society 5.0, there is an opportunity for schools not only to make a local impact but also to serve as an example globally, specifically to developing countries.

"Our distinct feature is that we have more international students than Japanese students. That said, we highly encourage and invite individuals from all over the world, including those in the smaller regions of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East," Sumitani added. ■



Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

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International Christian University

Ranked **1st**
Among Private Universities
2019-2021

 Bilingual

 Liberal Arts **31** Majors

 Diversity





ICU
Tokyo, Japan

 Website



Aiming to be a global frontrunner in oral medicine

Fukuoka Dental College IMAGINES THE FUTURE

Celebrating its 50th anniversary next year, Fukuoka Dental College was founded in 1972 with the approval from the Ministry of Education, now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. It received its first batch of students the following year.

Nearly half a century later, the college has not waned in its commitment to form competent dentists and develop pioneers in oral medicine. So far, more than 4,700 graduates have made successful careers in the medical field, the academe and in their own local communities.

From dentistry to oral medicine

Dental medicine does not cover only lesions of the teeth and surrounding tissues. The field covers a wide range of diseases affecting the oral cavity, including the lips, palate, tongue, salivary glands, jawbone, and temporomandibular joint.

This widened coverage came as a response to expanded knowledge about the structure of diseases, the demographic changes due to the declining birthrate and ageing population in Japan, the increasing prevalence of general medical diseases among dental patients and the improvement of dental technology.

In addition, oral care contributes greatly to the prevention of aspiration pneumonia and improves the quality of life of the elderly among in Japan's ageing population. Thus, the relationship between dentistry and general

medical care has grown even closer.

In order to promote "patient-centered medicine," Fukuoka Dental College believes it is essential for their students to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of systemic medicine. It incorporates elements of general medicine and welfare into conventional dentistry, with the aim of training dentists who will "protect the health of the whole body through oral health".

"To reflect the college's new approach to the outside world, in 2013, we changed the name of our faculty from 'Faculty of Dentistry' and 'Division of Dentistry' to 'Faculty of Oral Dentistry' and 'Division of Oral Dentistry,' said Chairperson Dr. Sachiyo Suita.

Practiced-oriented research

In 2020, Fukuoka Dental College ranked 11th among 802 Japanese universities in terms of the ratio of students and researchers under 40 years old selected for the grants-in-aid for scientific research administered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

"As a place that cultivates excellent personnel, we will continue to make further progress in education, research, and in our contribution to society, with all students, faculty, and staff working together to provide happiness to people," Suita said. ■



Sachiyo Suita, M.D., Ph.D., MACS (Hon), FAAP (Hon), Chairperson of Board of Trustees of the educational institution Fukuoka Gakuen



Faculty and students of Fukuoka Dental College and their international partners benefit mutually from their exchange programs.



The educational institution Fukuoka Gakuen is made up of Fukuoka Dental College, Fukuoka Nursing College and Fukuoka College of Health Sciences, all of which collaborate closely to provide excellent education and pioneering research.



Fukuoka Nursing College



Fukuoka Dental College Medical and Dental Hospital

Tohoku University:

Wireless, Borderless, Limitless

Located in the cosmopolitan city of Sendai in Japan's Northeast region, Tohoku University is renowned for its innovative research and dynamic global network.

It was among the first to be conferred the status of a Designated National University by the government in 2017, and is currently ranked number one on Times Higher Education's list of top Japanese Universities for a second year in a row.



Progressive Education

A trailblazer since its founding in 1907, Tohoku University was the first university in Japan to admit female students, and also one of the first to welcome foreigners. These days, 10 percent of its 18,000 students are international, spread across 10 faculties, 15 graduate schools and six research institutes.



The diversity on campus is best reflected in University House, the largest student housing complex to be built at a Japanese national university. There, international and Japanese students share apartments, in a multicultural living environment that is both supportive and inclusive.

In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Tohoku University took immediate action, moving all classes online to protect its students and staff. By leveraging its strengths in information technology and by utilizing the benefits of digital connections and resources, it was able to complete the academic year without significant disruption.

A year and a half into the pandemic, Tohoku University is adjusting its activities to incorporate a combination of real and virtual interactions. International exchange programmes have also had to adapt. To accommodate travel restrictions, the university established the Be Global Project, which offers joint academic courses and co-curricular cultural programmes online.

Innovative Research

Among the early inventions that were born at Tohoku University are the split-anode magnetron used in microwave ovens, the steel-wire recorder and the Yagi-Uda antenna, the university's first foray into a wireless world that put it well ahead of its time.

With a vision to "collaborate, innovate and activate," the university takes an interdisciplinary approach to research. Its large campus includes a science park that is conducive to in-development tests and experiments, as well as industry co-creation of production-grade new materials and technology.

Tohoku University is also focused on developing new academic fields. For example, in the aftermath of the 2011 Great East Japan

Earthquake, it pioneered research in disaster science, giving local and global communities the tools and knowledge to be better prepared for natural disasters. At the same time, the Tohoku Medical Megabank Organization began the world's first large scale three-generation cohort survey, to develop more effective medical treatment and personalized healthcare for the future.

More recently, Tohoku University has been all-in in the fight against COVID-19. Its Clinical Skills Lab has been providing ECMO simulation training to medical personnel from around the region to help them treat COVID-19 patients, as well as research projects that cover a range of topics, from medicine, testing and public health to the various technologies that support the search for treatments and a cure. International research collaborations have also been stepped up.

Present Future

But COVID-19 is not the only challenge the world is currently facing. With climate change and widening social disparities also a perennial threat, Tohoku University recognizes the importance of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Under the umbrella of a Green Goals Initiative, it is committed to developing green technology, and putting in place actions that focus on recovery and resilience, as well as social innovation and inclusion.

And the university's vision forward extends beyond the familiarities of Earth. Through partnerships with JAXA and other space agencies, the Space Robotics Lab at the Department of Aerospace Engineering has already contributed to critical domestic and international space projects, such as the Hayabusa2 asteroid sample-return mission, and the Google Lunar XPRIZE race to the moon. It is now planning to launch university-based microsatellite missions from Earth into lunar orbits; and developing a multi-limbed climbing robot capable of reaching challenging locations, such as lunar caves and asteroid surfaces.

At Tohoku University, the story of innovation never ends, and the next step in its journey of discovery is already wireless, borderless... and limitless. ■

