

**Kyoto Peacebuilding Center**  
**In association with**  
**Global Peacebuilding Association of Japan**  
**and**  
**ACUNS Tokyo**  
**Presents**

**Future of Liberal Democracy in Southeast Asia**  
**Indonesia and Malaysia**

**By**  
**Professor Yuji SUZUKI**

**President**  
**National Federation of UNESCO Association of Japan**

- 20:00 Opening remarks  
20:05 Keynote presentation  
Professor Yuji SUZUKI, President, National Federation of UNESCO Association of  
Japan  
20:30 Discussion - Questions and Answers  
21:25 Announcement of future events  
21:30 End

## Keynote Speaker



Professor Emeritus of Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan. After graduating from the doctoral program at the University of Tokyo, he worked as a lecturer at Monash University (Australia), Indonesia University, and Malaya University (Malaysia). Visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University, Councilor of the National Council of Social Sciences, Chairperson of the Japan Peace Society, Director of the Japanese Political Science Association, Japan International Political Science Association.

### Summary Report

Compiled by Arbenita Sopaj

Following the opening remarks were given by Ms. Sopaj. Following her remarks, Professor. Suzuki began his presentation by defining liberal democracy. There are six points identified by sociology: the democratic system that protects individual rights and freedoms. His discussion went on to explain how the concept applies to Indonesia and Malaysia. In his presentation, he covered three points:

- Is Liberal Democracy surviving in both “Plural Societies”? And if so, why? If not, why not?
- What would be their position in ASEAN, where rising “Illiberal democracy” if not “Competitive Authoritarian Regimes”?
- Is there any room for Japan to play a role?

As Prof. Suzuki pointed out, Indonesia is a country with over 700 official languages under a unitary presidential system. The country gained independence from Holland through violent resistance and diplomatic maneuvering in 1949. Nevertheless, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there was a historical "reformasi" that followed Suharto's fall in 1998. His resignation led to the holding of free and fair elections with 48 political parties in 1999. Moreover, Prof. Suzuki outlined Malaysia's status as a federal constitutional monarchy with Malay as the official language. Having gained independence from Singapore in 1965, there was a predominant alliance among three groups: the Malays, the Indians, and the Chinese. The federal system of Malaysia was established in 1957 with nine states of traditional rulers, sultans, and modern government, a so-called "consortia democratic" system. Up until 1969, the Malaysian Federal Government had jurisdiction over nine states. In addition, Prof. Suzuki highlighted that the 2004 elections won by Clean Abdullah changed the context from a "procedural" to a "consortial democracy". According to him, Indonesia and Malaysia have made strides towards liberal democracy. They remain committed to liberal democracy, but one thing is certain: they will never return to the authoritarian system. In his view, the basic factors for achieving liberal democracy are political reforms, rather than political stability, and multi-party systems rather than the mono-party rule. Being ASEAN members since 1967, both countries are in an advantageous position. In part due to their colonial legacy, Indonesia has advocated an active, non-aligned stance, and Malaysia has neutralized, both escaping Cold War entanglements.

Prof. Suzuki further stated that dual economies and structural dependency have defined their economies, but liberal economic policies will enable them to escape the "trap of middle-income economies". Where does Japan fit in both of these countries? Japan has historically had a dominant role in economics, but recent developments, including the growth in China's role as a major trade and investment partner, make it difficult for Japan to remain competitive in both countries. However, Professor Suzuki stated that Japan can still participate in the promotion of multilateral agreements in a liberal economic order. In addition, Japan's efficiency is crucial for several reasons, including security, marital freedom, etc.

## **Commentators**



**Elizabeth GAMARRA**



**Takahiro SHINYO**



**Akio NAKAYAMA**



**Kae YANAGISAWA**



**Kazuhide KURODA**

## **Commentators**

**Ms. Gamarra addressed a question related to the religious intolerance and legal system (House of Worship regulations, and the Bismillah Law) of Indonesia in 2016. To what degree do the racial and ethnic groups and factors in both countries contribute to maintaining racial and ethnic diversity?**

**Ambassador Shinyo posed the following questions: What is the relationship between democracy and Islam? Is Indonesia still in a state of uncertainty after the Bahri Forum? In your opinion, does the Summit of Democracy held recently in Washington divide ASEAN states in terms of democracy?**

**Mr. Nakayama pointed out that Indonesia and Malaysia can play a crucial role by contributing to the solution on how to handle the present Myanmar crisis, which can help the region to revert to democracy.**

**Ambassador Yanagisawa addressed a question on dictatorships that had strong institutions, such as Bappenas in Indonesia and JPJ in Malaysia. How did democracy follow these dictatorships? In a liberal democracy, public participation in democracy is essential, so what is the current state of public engagement in politics in Indonesia and Malaysia?**