

## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: PM Kishida Has Opened Can Of Worms

Knut Holdhus  
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*Pandora trying to close the box that she had opened out of curiosity. At left, the evils of the world escape. Based on a work by Frederick Stuart Church (1842-1924)*

**Award-winning author reveals how the Japanese Prime Minister without even realizing it opened a veritable can of worms**

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The Prime Minister Has Opened a Pandora's Box

Part 5 of an interview with Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), author of "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church"

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)



- Various media polls show that 70 to 80 percent of the public supports the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's request for an order to disband the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)).

This is probably the result of the mass media's incitement of hatred

against the former [Unification Church](#). Even though people have not been harmed or had any unpleasant experiences, they believe media reports and have an image of the [religious organisation](#) as "horrible". As I have already pointed out, the people in the media who are involved in reporting, cover neither the [religious organisation](#) nor its active believers properly. There is a problem with the provider of the information.



*Fumio Kishida 14th July 2022*

In addition, Japanese people are now very serious about money issues, and there is strong opposition to tax increases. A growing number of people insist that religious corporations that receive preferential tax treatment, should be made to pay taxes, and that their privileged position should be removed.

The dissolution order is however not a palatable deal that simply means paying taxes one was previously exempted from. For a religious corporation, it's a "death sentence". The public supports it without considering that it infringes on the freedom of religion.

**- In addition to the media, politics is also largely to blame.**

The person who bears the heaviest responsibility for it is Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Even in capacity of being the "leader of the Liberal Democratic Party", and certainly for a prime

minister, it was unbecoming to declare that the [religious organization](#) was "anti-social" and announce that he would "sever ties" with it. This gave the go-ahead to apply for a dissolution order.

When my book-publishing project was proposed, many executives of publishing companies expressed

concerns and declined. This was because the state had requested the dissolution of the [Unification Church](#) on the grounds that it was an "antisocial group". Even the book "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church" is not being advertised. The trigger for this series of events was not so much the media, but Prime Minister Kishida, who, fearing criticism from the media, rashly declared to have "cut ties".

When Shinzo Abe was Prime Minister, the media took an anti-authorities stance, saying "We will continue to pursue the Moritomo Gakuen (森友学園) and Kake Gakuen (加計学園) issues (the Morikake problem - モリカケ問題)" [Scandals where it was claimed that government officials had given preferential treatment to school operators with ties to the prime minister]. In reality, the media should also take an anti-authorities stance against Prime Minister Kishida and verify his declaration of having severed ties, but they depend on information from officials, so they cannot complain about the policy decided by the government.

**- Did Prime Minister Kishida make a "declaration of cutting all ties" without understanding what it meant, and initially not consider requesting a dissolution order?**

He probably didn't think deeply about it. I think the worst disaster that came from doing it on the spur of the moment was the request for a dissolution order. I don't know if he did it because he was told to by those around him, but I think it's not possible that he had any strong intention to dissolve [the [Family Federation](#)]. However, the declaration of having cut all ties and the request for a dissolution order left behind a huge negative legacy. The believers have been reduced to beings who do not need to be heard.



*Yasuhiro Nakasone (1918-2019), Japanese Prime Minister 1982-1987*

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC) fought elections together for over 50 years. When the LDP was pressed by a Communist Party member in the Diet in 1987 to cut ties with the IFVOC because "[Sun Myung Moon](#) (the founder of the former [Unification Church](#)) is behind the movement to enact the Anti-Espionage Law", Yasuhiro Nakasone (中曾根康), prime minister at the time, firmly defended the line of "respecting freedom of thought and religion to the fullest".

Interacting with people from religious organizations is not a bad thing. However, when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) broke that line by "cutting ties", it landed itself in trouble. While receiving support from various religious organizations and groups, Prime Minister Kishida, without even realizing it, opened a Pandora's Box by declaring a severing of ties with a specific religious organisation without any legal basis.

Interviewer: Seisaku Morita

To be continued. Part 6 coming soon.

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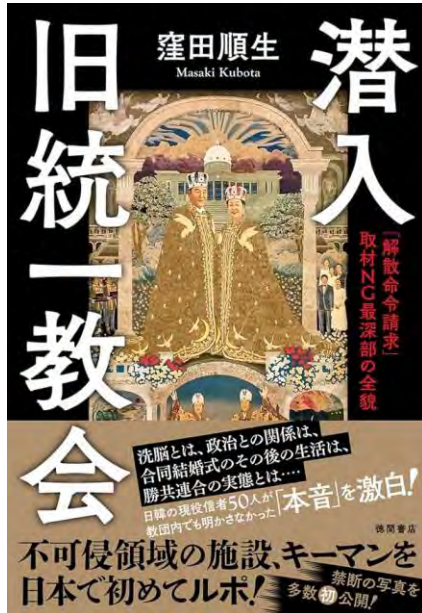
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The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' - Tankobon Softcover, (Nov. 2023), by Masaki Kubota

Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. He has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is a journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine. In addition, he works as a media consultant, having conducted over 200 public relations consultations and media training sessions (training on how to handle interviews).

His books include

"Spin Doctor - Techniques of Information Manipulation Used by Professionals Who 'Hush up Bad Information'" (Kodansha Alpha Bunko - 2009), which deals with Japan's political and corporate public relations strategies, and

"14 Stairs - Reportage on the Niigata Girl's 9 Years and 2 Months Confinement Case" (Shogakukan - 2006), which won the 12th Shogakukan Non-fiction Award for Excellence.

His new book, "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church - the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'", is currently on sale.





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## Anti-Family Federation minister central in seeking court order

Several Japanese papers reported 12<sup>th</sup> October that the Japanese authorities will seek a court order to dissolve the Family Federation. If the court rules as the government wishes, the Family Federation would lose its religious corporation status. It is expected that the Tokyo District Court will receive the court order already on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October. Although the district court will reach a verdict within months, the entire legal process could last for several years.



The Japan Times reports 12<sup>th</sup> October that members of the [Family Federation](#) made a last minute appeal to the authorities by submitting signatures from 53,499 members urging the Japanese leadership not to go for a dissolution order. The paper quotes a statement from the petitioners,

"If an actual order is issued (by the court), all assets, including real estate such as church worship facilities and training centers, will be confiscated and liquidated, resulting in a significant limitation on the freedom of religious activities for followers."



Kunihiko Shibnuma, initiator of [Family Federation](#) signature campaign. Photo (2021): Screenshot from [FFWPU YouTube](#) video.



The logo of the *Mainichi Shimbun*

Journalist Makoto Fukatsu wrote in the *Mainichi Shimbun*, Japan's oldest paper and one of its largest, on 11<sup>th</sup> October that

"from the perspective of ensuring the legitimacy of the request, the ministry would like to proceed with the procedure after obtaining the approval of the council members [Council of Religious Corporations]."

And the ministry did consult with the council before making its decision. But not everyone on the council agreed that the request to the court is legitimate. In another article the same day, the *Mainichi* published a statement by one of the members of the *Council of Religious Corporations*, who expressed his concern that purely political motives may well be behind the current process initiated by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The council member points out, "the dissolution order is a 'death sentence' against a religious corporation, and the request for dissolution should follow a careful procedure."

He emphasized that political intentions could be involved, saying,

"We do not want to be influenced by the political agenda. Politics tries to use what it can"

*Mainichi* explains that the obvious reason for Kishida's actions against the [Family Federation](#) is that the government is hoping that the dissolution request will lead to an increase in support.

Many are in fact wondering why Prime Minister Kishida is in a hurry to get the dissolution order. Little has been written about that in the Japanese media. One who has made a good analysis of the situation, is Kazuhiro Aoyama, political journalist and part-time lecturer at the private distance learning university Seisa. In an article in the weekly business and finance magazine *Toyo Keizai* (Oriental Economist) 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022, he asks the question,



"Why did Prime Minister Kishida, who remained cautious about the dissolution order from the viewpoint of 'freedom of religion', change his policy in a hurry?"

The answer, according to Aoyama, is connected to one leading politician within the Kishida administration. Taro Kono.

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Minister for Digital Transformation and Minister for Consumer Affairs and Food Safety since August 2022, just after the Abe assassination. Aoyama explains,

“On August 8, at his first press conference since taking office as minister, Kono announced the establishment of a study group on the issue of the former Unification Church in the Consumer Affairs Agency. Two days after the Cabinet reshuffle, it was a lightning-fast move without instructions from Prime Minister Kishida.”

The Toyo Keizai article points out that Kishida considered Kono a key player to win over public opinion in the aftermath of the terror attack on Shinzo Abe. But Prime Minister Kishida “had concerns about his arbitrary and exclusive actions. When Prime Minister Kishida heard about the launch of the study group, he asked the people around Kono if they were okay with it.”



Masaki Kito. Photo: Screenshot / [Bitter Winter](#)

One worrying point for Kishida and members of the Consumer Affairs Agency, was the fact that Kono appointed Masaki Kito, an activist radical leftwing lawyer who had been campaigning against the [Family Federation / Unification Church](#) since a long time. But Taro Kono insisted on Kito's inclusion in the agency and did not want to reconsider it when faced with criticism.

Although Aoyama does not mention it, it turns out that Kito and Kono have a long history together. Taro Kono himself, along with his father Yohei Kono, a leading LDP politician for many years, and leftwing Masaki Kito – all friendly towards China – were vehemently fighting the espionage prevention bill that Abe and other LDP politicians had tried to introduce. An organization founded by [Sun Myung Moon](#) called *Victory over communism* (VOC) was actively supporting the introduction of the anti-espionage legislation. Since then, Kono has had a rather cold relationship to the [Family Federation](#).

Taro Kono is a contender for the LDP leadership, but is by many considered a political maverick, even eccentric.

Featured image above: Taro Kono 15th August 2022. Photo: デジタル庁. License: [CC Attr 4.0 Int](#). Cropped

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