Effective Leadership in Japan: the Case of Shibusawa Eiichi, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

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The examination of lessons from the Meiji Era (1868-1912) that may have potential applicability to contemporary Japan can be explored by drawing attention to the role of prominent individuals in shaping national policy and in setting direction for a country in transition. The presentation reviews the remarkable career of Shibusawa Eiichi (1840-1931), a key leader in the modernization of Japan. I argue that the spiritual, social, and commercial ideas of Shibusawa Eiichi provide valuable insights into the qualities needed to lead Japan in the 21st century. Specifically, by introducing ideas related to individual empowerment and better governance, as well as venture philanthropy, I identify the elements that might comprise new international and regional development thinking that creatively address various challenges and opportunities facing Japan.

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