

Japan Desperately Needs Grand Strategy

by Takashi Inoguchi

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In these times of great upheaval, Japan urgently needs to create and announce a grand strategy. Such a vision would help it to navigate between two kinds of difficulties for the next decades.

One concerns the rapidly shifting configuration of forces and ideas in its vicinity and beyond. The other revolves around the robust mindset of its citizens that yearns for stability and continuity. The disharmony that exists between them is painfully clear. In developing a grand strategy, Japan would need to focus on its traditional strength while embracing changing global ideas and forces.

What is Japan's tradition? It is Japan's ability to adapt to changing circumstances in a well-calculated manner and its steadfast endeavor of self-strengthening.

In the twilight of China's glorious Tang dynasty (618~907), Japan focused on borrowing Chinese ideas and institutions, then tinkering with them and making them its own. This brought about the distinctive nature of the Japanese state and society, prompting the late professor Samuel P. Huntington, for one, to label Japan as one of the eight civilizations that are distinctly different from China's.

When the Manchu-led coalition of peoples replaced the Han-dominated Ming dynasty (1368~1644), Japan steadily restricted its external interactions to selected peoples and places. In the meantime, Japan's economy and society enjoyed two and a half centuries of peace thereafter.

Japan's defeat in World War II led the United States to implement widespread reforms in Japan. Since then, Japan has steadfastly followed a policy line which came to be known as the Yoshida doctrine after the prime minister of the time. By "delegating" its security to the United States, Japan was able to focus on economic stability and prosperity.

What situation does Japan face now? The United States, the ally into whose basket Japan has placed nearly all its eggs, has been confronted with simultaneous difficulties: military abyss and economic chaos.

In developing a grand strategy, I propose that Japan should create a policy line that would highlight the following six directions of sustained endeavor:

(1) The fundamental importance of home defense and having deterrent capability mean there should be no need to

dispatch military forces far from home. As long as China's rise brings about enormous waves of prosperity to neighbors near and afar, Japan's grand strategy should not include sending its troops en masse afar from home. As long as North Korea's behavior continues to cause unease for its neighbors, Japan's grand strategy should focus on the Korean Peninsula and its self-defense. The Constitution reinforces this priority.

A linchpin of this strategy is the steadfast commitment to the alliance with the United States. A renewed declaration of the importance of the alliance should be pronounced as soon as possible.

(2) Yet, Japan cannot afford to remain an insular power, nor can it afford to ignore its duties as a global citizen to help keep, build, and sustain peace at the grassroots level. Inward-looking self-defense is not a strategy that Japan should embrace. Rather, Japan should be globally proactive in the cause for peace. Islands of anarchy and disorder that are filled with injustices must be transformed into islands of peace and order backed by justice. The use of military force for U.N.-sanctioned operations must be approved by Japan as well. A global-oriented Japan must become a global-oriented ordinary power.

(3) In a similar vein, Japan should enhance its human developmentalism on a global scale. What it means is that development must aim to advance the freedom to choose and consolidate its infrastructure like hygiene, nutrition, medical care, education, and gender equality on the basis of solid endogenous economic foundations. Japan should become a global Japan solidly armed by human developmentalism. As a matter of urgency, Japan should help the bottom billion people in the world with its self-sustainable course of endogenous human development.

(4) Japan must be able to create more soft power. Despite its economic size, Japan's soft power – communicative power, skill of presentation and persuasion, skill of putting things together through negotiations in multilateral settings – still needs to be substantially improved.

Two lines of directions with which Japan can advance its soft power may be called bi-multilateralism and aggressive legalism, both of which must be enhanced significantly. Bi-multilateralism means a deft mix of bilateralism and multilateralism in multilateral settings. Japan has heretofore focused on the former with the latter remaining poorly used.

Aggressive legalism means that Japan should be astute, articulate, and adroit in international negotiations in the multilateral process of making rules and coding norms. A global power should become a creative and vigorous rule-maker and a norm-shaper along with similarly minded nations.

(5) A host of technological and organizational innovations must be enhanced if only because Japan can survive among

competing nations. For that purpose, bigger budgets wouldn't suffice. Bringing in new ideas and new institutions should be encouraged. Japan's propensity to maintain stability and continuity, to which it so closely adheres, should not prevent innovative and creative minds to grow and develop innovations, despite the risks attached to such endeavors.

Risk-adversity cannot be a canon of survival in the 21st century. To bring about change in this respect, education must be geared for innovations at all levels. Gone forever are the days of standardized educational menus for a massive number of students that can advance the development of nations. Education much more tailored to individual students' aspirations and apprehensions should be vigorously designed and implemented. For that purpose, a sizable number of its citizens should be able to use the English language. The lingua franca for the 21st century should be acquired and used at ease in Japan. For that purpose, immigration must be encouraged. The two Achilles' tendons of Japan must be swiftly overcome.

(6) Japan should wave the banner of the nonnuclear world. While power generation through nuclear energy is rapidly becoming the wave of the future in many parts of the world, Japan should wave the banner of the nonnuclear world as well.

Unprecedented disasters associated with the use of nuclear weapons or misuse thereof should be eliminated with a multiple range of safeguarding measures that should be discussed, designed, and implemented with global accord.

Japan should join the banner of former U.S. secretaries of state George Schultz and Henry A. Kissinger in this regard. Japan should be admitted to the United Nations Security Council as a nonnuclear power representative that sits alongside the five permanent members, all of which are nuclear powers. The 21st century should move step by step toward a nonnuclear world.

Business enterprises churn their innovations at times of economic downturn. After all, necessity is mother of invention. Japan needs a grand strategy. Drifting and sinking is not the course Japan wants. Japan should act creatively and vigorously now. The above six commandments should help Japan to shape and act on its grand strategy at a time of global upheaval.