

# Change and Continuity in Japanese Grand Strategy<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Change has been a dominant theme in Japanese grand strategy. In fact, the study of grand strategies from the Meiji to Heisei eras is in itself an exposition of Japan's management and response to change. Nevertheless, it would be remiss to over-emphasise the elements of change without highlighting the resilience and fortitude that enabled Japan to maintain its cultural heritage and traditions. The "heart and soul" of Japan had survived waves of modernization and Americanization. Consequently, contemporary Japan is a collage of modernity and tradition co-existing to form the backbone of its social and political tapestry. The delicate balance between change and continuity is, however, under stress. The age-old tussle between the forces of change and conservatism continues to dominate the national agenda. This paper traces the evolution of Japanese grand strategy since the Meiji Restoration to the contemporary period and examines the main elements of change and continuity.

## The Meiji and "Early Shōwa"<sup>2</sup> Grand Strategy: *Fukoku Kyōhei*

Meiji Japan faced immediate and long-term threats to its sovereignty. The immediate threat came in the form of the unequal trade treaties signed with Western powers. These treaties were considered an affront to Japanese political and economic integrity. Politically, it put Japan in an inferior position as the Western powers obtained permission to establish missions with accompanying extra-territorial rights within Japan, but these rights were not reciprocated. Furthermore, Japan had to institute low tariffs, affecting an influx of foreign goods and putting a strain on the economy through the outflow of gold. Thus, reversing the externalities of the trade treaties was a prime objective of Japanese foreign policy. With regard to the long-term threat, Japan was concerned with what could come its way if it failed to address the one-sided trade treaties. These treaties were seen as a Trojan horse that, if unchecked, would provide the Western powers an avenue to expand their influence in Japan on non-trade issues. Moreover, the relentless bombardment of Kagoshima, the Satsuma capital, in September 1863 by British warships provided additional impetus for Japan to rethink its relations with the West. It was in these contexts that *fukoku kyōhei* emerged as the paradigmatic panacea for Japan's woes.

*Fukoku kyōhei* is not an indigenous concept.<sup>3</sup> It was formed from four Chinese characters: *fu* (rich) *kokū* (nation), *kyō* (strong) *hei* (army). According to Richard Samuels, this phrase can be traced to a Qin dynasty political leader and philosopher, Shang Yang, who counseled: "Governing a country lies in consolidating power; doing so [the ruler should] enrich the nation and strengthen

1 The author acknowledges the generous support of the Japan Foundation for funding a dissertation fellowship at Hitotsubashi University where the bulk of the research for this paper was conducted.

2 This study divides the Shōwa reign into two conceptual periods. The "early" period covers 1912 to 1945, while the "late" Shōwa period stretches from 1945 to 1989. The Heisei period is from 1989 to the present.

3 For a detailed analysis of the concept, see Samuels, 1994, pp. 34–42.

the army.”<sup>4</sup> In Japan, Mito scholar Aizawa Seishisai writing in *Shinron* (New Proposals) reformulated the Chinese concept from a national development focus to one that highlighted the modalities of national survival. He explains:

In order to defend Japan, that is, to expel the barbarian (*jōi*), it was necessary that the country’s ruling class be united through a structure of loyalty, of which the highest level was loyalty to the emperor (*sonnō*). Unity was also a condition for successfully promoting national wealth and strength: first, by restoring health to agriculture, so as to enrich the country (*fukoku*); second, by reviving samurai discipline and morale, in order to increase military potential (*kyōhei*).<sup>5</sup>

Aizawa sought to galvanize the Japanese spirit and to revive *bushidō* (way of the warrior) as a means to defend the nation from the flood of foreign influence. He believed that “Edo’s proper course was to issue a clarion call for war, even if it had no intention of acting on it.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he adds that this was the only way “to preserve morale and offer resistance to the West.”<sup>7</sup> Aizawa’s unbending and confrontational stance against the West—very much like China’s behavior in dealing with the West—would have set Japan on a collision course with the Western powers. Fortunately, his influence and that of his political thoughts waned in tandem with the political fortunes of his patron, Tokugawa Nariaki.

There were other adherents of *fukoku kyōhei*<sup>8</sup> besides Aizawa. One of its earliest proponents was Dazai Shundai who wrote in his *Treatise on the Economy* (*Keizairoku*) that “national wealth (*fukoku*) is the basis of national strength (*kyōhei*) but that national welfare (literally ‘food and money,’ *shokka*) is the basis of national wealth.”<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, Ōkubo Takusui, argued that “*fukoku kyōhei* is the grand foundation, maintaining the world,” while emphasizing “that the country would be in danger unless its wealth was assured.”<sup>10</sup> By the time the Meiji Restoration took root, *fukoku kyōhei* was a topical subject among the elite searching for a new paradigm to guide Japan out of *sakoku* (isolationism) and into an internationalized community of nations. Yano Fumio captures the spirit and essence of *fukoku kyōhei* in the following words:

If people are rich, the country is also rich; if people are poor, the country is also poor. If army and navy are the body, national wealth is the food we consume. Without food, it is impossible to maintain the body. In this situation, however independent a country may be, the lack of wealth will extinguish it.<sup>11</sup>

*Fukoku kyōhei* began as an abstract philosophical idea about the relations between wealth and power. Through time, it has evolved into an ideology that captured the hearts and imaginations of the Meiji oligarchs, who adopted it as their blueprint for political and economic reform in the post-Tokugawa period.

The base principles of *fukoku kyōhei*—national wealth and military might—were widely held. “Except for a few recalcitrant loyalists, most political leaders and activists were committed to a policy of building a ‘rich country, strong army’ (*fukoku kyōhei*) in order to meet the Western

4 Samuels 1994, p. 35.

5 Beasley 1990, p. 24.

6 Ibid. p. 32

7 Ibid.

8 Samuels 1994, pp. 35–36.

9 Ibid. p. 36.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. p. 37.

challenge.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Aizawa’s exhortations, the Meiji reformers agreed that the catalyst for economic development and military modernization lies beyond the shores of Japan. The prominent royalist and early internationalist, Sakuma Shōzan “introduced the idea of combining foreign technology with Japanese values (*tōyō dōtoku seiyō gijutsu*) to strengthen the nation.”<sup>13</sup> Sakuma’s ideas gave rise to the concept of *wakon yōsai* (Japanese spirit, Western technology), which made it politically palatable to adopt Western ideas without compromising Japanese values and culture. The Meiji oligarchs shrewdly concluded that peaceful relations with the West must be maintained at all costs until such times when Japan could adequately provide for its own defense.

### The Grand Strategic Goals of *Fukoku Kyōhei*

*Fukoku kyōhei*, which literally means “rich nation, strong army,” encompassed the broad policy imperatives of the Meiji government. The search for material wealth and the building of a powerful military were not, in themselves, the goals of the *fukoku kyōhei* grand strategy. They were the organizing principles on which the grand strategy revolved. *Fukoku kyōhei* consists of three grand strategic goals: (a) to regain and protect Japan’s sovereignty, (b) the abolishment of unequal treaties, and (c) the pursuit of political and diplomatic equality with the West. The first two goals evolved out of Japan’s instinctive will for national survival. In contrast, the goal of political and diplomatic equality with the West was incorporated into *fukoku kyōhei* only after substantive progress was achieved.

#### *Regaining Sovereignty*

Sovereignty, as with all nations, was Japan’s prime national objective. Nevertheless, at no point did Meiji Japan think that the West was attempting to colonize Japan. The perceived threat to sovereignty came in the form of “piecemeal imperialism.” The Chinese loss of Hong Kong to Great Britain following the conclusion of the Anglo-Chinese War (1839–42)<sup>14</sup> greatly alarmed Japan of the possibility that the Western powers might sought to establish an autonomous foothold on Japanese soil. Thus, the main national objective of *fukoku kyōhei* was to protect and enhance Japan’s territorial sovereignty.

#### *Abolish Unequal Treaties*

The second objective of *fukoku kyōhei* was for Japan to regain its foreign economic policy autonomy, which it had lost when signing the Harris treaty. This treaty set the parameters and conditions of foreign trade that Japan could not unilaterally amend. Kenneth Pyle argues that “[f]rom 1868 to 1894 the prime goal of Japanese foreign policy was revision of the unequal treaties, so as to stand on equal footing with the Western countries and escape the semi-colonial status to which extraterritoriality and tariff control had relegated Japan.”<sup>15</sup> The goal was not to expel foreign traders or to revert to the Tokugawa *sakoku* policy but rather to bring about a new trading regime that was more equitable.

#### *The Quest for Equality*

12 Duus 1976, p. 73.

13 Samuels 1994, p. 36.

14 Also known as the First Opium War.

15 Pyle 1996b, p. 87.

The third grand strategic goal of *fukoku kyōhei* was to achieve equality with the West. Equality, in contrast to the previous goals, was a subsequent addition to the framework of *fukoku kyōhei*. It was not an immediate concern for the Meiji oligarchs. It is difficult to pinpoint when the quest for equality became part of the Meiji grand strategy. Nevertheless, one could consider the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) an important point of departure that sparked Japan's crusade to seek equality with the Western powers. In the war, Japan was victorious and gained territorial control of Taiwan, the Liaodong Peninsula and the Pescadore islands through the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). Japan was appalled when France, Germany and Russia delivered an ultimatum demanding the return of the Liaodong Peninsula to China or risk war with the three powers. Reading out the collective demands of the three powers, the German minister to Tokyo, in a very strong statement, reminded the Japanese vice-minister for foreign affairs, Hayashi Tadasu, "Japan cannot defeat the united strength of Russia, France and Germany."<sup>16</sup> This incident—known as the Triple Intervention—reminded Japan of its second-class status and Japan begrudgingly returned the Liaodong Peninsula to ward off a military showdown. This incident impressed upon Japan that it had to achieve military parity with the West if it were to expect to play any role in international politics. Thus, began Japan's quest for political and diplomatic equality with the great powers. It follows that a by-product of equality is the attainment of great power status or acceptance of Japan as a "first-class" actor among the international community.

The grand strategic goals of sovereignty and the quest to abolish the unequal treaties are linked. The revision of the treaties would return policy autonomy to the Japanese government and would hence, enable the state to exercise its sovereign right to regulate trade. From a conceptual angle, however, the prime national objective of protecting Japan's sovereignty refers to the imperative of maintaining the nation's territorial integrity. On the other hand, the second national objective concerns the political and economic spheres where the Japanese government regains its policymaking autonomy. In short, the national objectives of *fukoku kyōhei* refers to the imperative of keeping Japanese territory from falling into Western control, and to efforts in abolishing the unequal trade treaties that would allow Japan to set its own terms and conditions on foreign trade.

### The "Late Shōwa" Grand Strategy: The Yoshida Doctrine

The "Yoshida Doctrine" was named after Yoshida Shigeru who was prime minister from 1946–7 and 1948–54. A diplomat by profession, Yoshida was one of the most influential politicians of postwar Japan. He successfully concluded the San Francisco Peace Treaty that restored Japan's sovereignty. His vision, with a blend of pragmatism and realism, was a pivotal factor in Japan's reemergence as a great power. Nevertheless, it is ironic that for all the success associated with the doctrine, Yoshida chose to distance himself from his namesake.<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Pyle acknowledges that Yoshida had "never spoke of a 'Yoshida Doctrine.'" Nevertheless, the doctrine became a defining factor in his long and illustrious political career.

The Yoshida doctrine gained wide currency and support. After Yoshida left office in 1954, his disciples—collectively known as the Yoshida *gakkō* (school) at Nagatachō<sup>18</sup> kept his legacy alive. Among the "honors students" of the school were Prime Ministers Ikeda Hayato (1960–64), Satō Eisaku (1964–72) and Miyazawa Kiichi (1991–93). Yoshida's influence on Japanese politics

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 138.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion on the genesis and use of the concept, see Pyle, 1996, pp. 25–26

<sup>18</sup> Nagatachō is the seat of Japan's political power where the national assembly—the Diet—is located.

was unquestioned. Over the years, succeeding administrations had fine-tuned the doctrine to reflect the exigencies of the moment with the inclusion of notable corollaries such as the non-nuclear policy and the ban on weapons export. Critics like Nakasone Yasuhiro found their efforts to rearm and expand Japan's international security commitment dashed by the entrenched doctrine.

The three tenets of the Yoshida doctrine are as follows:

- (a) Japan's economic rehabilitation must be the prime national goal. Political-economic cooperation with the United States was necessary for this purpose.
- (b) Japan should remain lightly armed and avoid involvement in international political-strategic issues. Not only would this low posture free the energies of its people for productive industrial development, it would avoid divisive internal struggles.
- (c) To gain a long-term guarantee for its own security, Japan would provide bases for the U.S. army, navy and air force.<sup>19</sup>

This paper reformulates the Yoshida doctrine into two grand strategic goals: economic recovery/growth and minimal defense.

### **Grand Strategic Goals of the Yoshida Doctrine**

Following the diplomatic ceremonies associated with the surrender to the Allied Forces, Japanese leaders had to grapple with the realities of rebuilding a war-torn nation and to soothe the souls of a society marred by deprivation and suffering. The immediate challenge for Japan was less an issue of regaining its power and status in the international community, but more toward the mundane concerns of clothing, feeding and securing its citizens. It was these ends that the grand strategic goals of the Yoshida doctrine sought to achieve.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Economic Reconstruction and Growth*

The prime focus of the Yoshida doctrine was economics. In the first years of the postwar period, Japan was surviving from hand to mouth from the benevolence of the U.S. which provided vast amounts of food and monetary aid. The resources of the state were also taxed by the burden of having to provide for the six million troops and civilians returning from Asia. Jobs needed to be found for them, as well as the other seven million unemployed citizens. This put tremendous social and political pressure on the government. The solution to these woes was economic reconstruction. Other than the obvious benefits of creating new jobs and to shore up Japan's fiscal standing, economic reconstruction was a positive diversion that channeled the nation's energies to productive endeavors.

<sup>19</sup> Pyle 1996b, p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> The preservation of the national polity (kokutai)—read the Imperial system—was a major political goal in the closing stages of WWII. There were indications that the Japanese government prolonged the war by months because national leaders read the Potsdam Declaration as a threat to the Imperial Throne. Thus, the governing elite breathed a sigh of relief when MacArthur agreed to maintain the monarchy system and did not charge the Emperor for war crimes. In an attempt to defuse criticisms of the Emperor from the Allied powers, Prime Minister Shidehara Kijūrō “arranged for the emperor to issue a New Year's statement denying divine attributes” (Reischauer 1977, p. 378). The “humanization” of the Emperor was enshrined in the new constitution promulgated on November 3, 1946. Article I declares the Emperor's role as symbolic and affirms sovereign power resides with the people. The Emperor, whose lineage dates back to the sixth century BC, commands high respect among the Japanese people and remains an important national institution but wields limited political influence compared to past monarchs under the Meiji constitution.

There were two facets to the economic goals of the Yoshida doctrine grand strategy: recovery and growth. The focus on economic recovery refers to, on the one hand, efforts directed toward rebuilding the nation's infrastructure and support facilities, and to policies initiated to reestablish Japan's industrial and manufacturing capacities on the other. Japan's vast military-industrial complex was also retooled for civilian production. From a political angle, recovery meant achieving and surpassing the pre-war economic achievements. In 1956, the government published its *Economic White Paper* declaring, "It is no longer postwar." In fact, "by 1955 most key economic indicators had already risen higher than prewar levels. Real GNP had accomplished this in 1951 and per capita GNP by 1955. Real per capita consumption returned to prewar levels in 1953...."<sup>21</sup> When the goals of economic recovery were attained in 1955, the focus shifted to growth and development. While this objective was no different from other nations, Japan's single-mindedness set it apart from the norm.

### *Minimal Defense*

The second goal of the Yoshida doctrine was to keep Japan as a lightly armed nation. This rationale was the result of the convergence of several factors. The first of two important factors is the age-old "guns and butter" debate. Japan surmised that "guns" were a waste of resources and opted to focus on economic development. The second factor concerns Japan's war legacy. Memories of WWII made it difficult for Japan to undertake full-scale rearmament. The constant cries of Japanese revival of militarism from Beijing and Seoul, and strong domestic pacifist sentiments worked in tandem to keep Japanese remilitarization in check. These two factors helped shape the discourse on security and defense issues in Japan, contributing to the institutionalization of the "minimal defense" posture. The goal of "minimal defense" was to keep Japan's defense expenditure to the lowest level without compromising the nation's security. In summary, the net result of the Yoshida doctrine grand strategy was to harness the nation's resources toward economic growth while maintaining a defense structure that is cost-effective and non-threatening in nature (i.e., defensive posture).

### **The Heisei Grand Strategy: The Koizumi Doctrine**

The Koizumi doctrine—named after the Japanese premier—is a new diplomatic initiative but encompasses strands of ideas that were widely held in Japan since the 1990s. The doctrine, christened by the premier's aides, is based on Koizumi Jun'ichirō's January 14, 2002 speech in Singapore. In his address entitled, "Japan and ASEAN in East Asia: A Sincere and Open Partnership," Koizumi outlined the importance of cooperation between Japan and ASEAN, and reiterated his government's commitment to further Japan's ties with the region based on the Fukuda Doctrine. Continuing his mentor's legacy, Koizumi stated that "Japan and ASEAN should strengthen their cooperation under the basic concept of 'acting together, advancing together.'"<sup>22</sup> He also proposed closer security cooperation noting that Japan "realizes that one's own security is at stake when a neighbor's wall is ablaze."<sup>23</sup> Underlining his commitment to economic reform at home and the inescapable phenomenon of economic interdependence, Koizumi noted that "when it comes to

21 Uchino 1983, p. 83.

22 Koizumi 2002.

23 Ibid.

the global economy, rain does not fall on one roof alone.”<sup>24</sup>

The Koizumi doctrine breaks new ground in that it is less “insular” in its orientation. In contrast to the Yoshida doctrine’s domestic focus that puts national development and growth above all other considerations, the new doctrine stakes Japan’s future with its neighbors. This shift compels Tokyo to take on an active regional, if not global role. Japan realizes that as a trading nation, its boundaries extend beyond its shores. The Koizumi doctrine revolves around three grand strategic goals. The first goal centers on institutionalizing Japan’s position in the international system by transforming its economic influence into structural power. The second goal of “national tranquility” serves to ensure social stability in the wake of reforms and change. The last strategic goal—maintaining “economic distance”—focuses on Japanese efforts to preserve their technological edge vis-à-vis their competitors in order to sustain Japan’s competitive edge.

### Grand Strategic Goals of the Koizumi Doctrine

#### *The Quest for Structural Power*

Japan’s economic power is respected and feared. But Japan’s presence in the international system is muted as it behaves, in the words of Funabashi Yoichi, “like an automatic teller machine (ATM).” A former high ranking International Monetary Fund (IMF) official commented that he has “never seen Japan speak up before others do. Even when Japan did, it was simply in support of a majority opinion.”<sup>25</sup> This observation is attributed, in part, to Japan’s “non-confrontational culture,” but closer examination would reveal an endemic weakness in *structural power*. Susan Strange defines this concept as “the power to decide how things shall be done, [and] the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other. . . .”<sup>26</sup> Structural power could be attained through several means. One way is to diversify Japan’s power base in light of Joseph Nye’s contention that “[t]he fragmented structure of world politics among different issues has made power resources less fungible.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, it is important to possess an array of capabilities to respond effectively to any contingencies. Second, structural power results through the exercise of “power conversion capabilities.”<sup>28</sup>

If Japan aspires for a more participatory and visible role in international affairs, it needs to boost its personnel commitment to international organizations. There is an acute shortage of Japanese international civil servants. For example, Japan has 112 professional staffers in the UN, well short of the “desirable range” of 251–339 recommended by that body.<sup>29</sup> With the notable exception of Akashi Yasushi, Matsuura Kōichirō, Nakajima Hiroshi and Ogata Sadako,<sup>30</sup> there are few Japa-

24 Ibid.

25 Pyle 1996a, p. 66.

26 Strange 1994, p. 25.

27 Nye 1990, p. 189.

28 Nye defines “power conversion capabilities as the “gap between a country’s potential power—measured by its resources—and its actual or realized power.” (Ibid. p. 198.)

29 Asahi Shimbun 2005, p. 60. Figures are for June 2003.

30 Akashi served as UN special representative for Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia, and Under-Secretary General for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Matsuura was director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Nakajima headed the World Health Organization (WHO), while Ogata was UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This list does not include past and present presidents of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), who by tradition is always a Japanese. The other notable Japanese international servant is Owada Hisashi, who is currently a judge at the

nese nationals at the helm of international organizations. The low participatory rate of Japanese nationals in the UN holding professional and leadership positions amplifies Japan's reputation of "invisibility" on the international stage, and constitutes a serious impediment to achieving structural power.

The problem of power conversion is not limited to the area of human resources but is also institutional. Japan's 19.468 percent share<sup>31</sup> of the UN regular budget is higher than the combined total of all permanent members of the Security Council—except the U.S.—yet it does not have a seat on the world's highest international security body. Analysts like Reinhard Drifte observe that Japan's campaign for a permanent seat on the UNSC is fueled by "considerations of prestige."<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, beneath Japan's penchant for recognition lies a deep-seated craving for structural power. The president of the Gakushuin Women's College and former ambassador to the UN, Hatano Yoshio quips that "[n]o one will pay attention to you unless you speak your mind as a permanent council member."<sup>33</sup> Koizumi underlined the importance of structural power by renewing Japan's quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council at the Fifty-Ninth Session of the General Assembly.<sup>34</sup> Japan is also "structurally weak" in the IMF: its allotted quota under the eleventh review of 6.279 percent falls short of the "calculated quota" of 10.204 percent.<sup>35</sup> Encouraging more Japanese to become international servants would increase Japan's physical presence internationally, while enhancing its electoral power in key international institutions gives Japan greater access and influence in decision-making. Both elements are important toward the goal of structural power.

Many analysts, including Edward Newman, associate Japan's weak international leadership with its inability to "readily mobilize a substantial military force with global reach. . . ."<sup>36</sup> This, however, is changing. The Koizumi administration moved to improve Japan's battered image in the wake of the Gulf War debacle by acting swiftly and unequivocally to "show the flag." Heightening the SDF's visibility is an indicator that Japan is moving away from its unidimensional mold. Recalling his experience in the Gulf War, Ambassador Hatano recounted that despite Japan's substantial financial contribution to the war effort, he "was not permitted to attend *unofficial* [em-

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International Court of Justice.

31 The assessment rate is revised every three years. The current rate applies from 2004 to 2006. Japan has announced that it would seek to "revise the methodology used to calculate assessment rates to create a fairer system that reflects the true economic strength, and responsibility within the United Nations, of every Member State." (Permanent Mission of Japan to the United States.)

32 Drifte 1998, p. 137.

33 Daily Yomiuri 2003.

34 In contrast to Japan's past bids, the 2004 Koizumi initiative was part of a "joint" effort that included Brazil, Germany and India. Although Japan enjoys immense support and popularity in the UN, having been elected to the UNSC as a rotating member the most number of times (1958, 1966, 1971, 1975, 1981, 1987, 1992 and 1997), reactions to its ambitions for permanent membership are mixed. The U.S. had consistently been very supportive of Japan's efforts but reactions from China and the two Koreas are lukewarm at best. For the full text of Koizumi's UN speech, see Koizumi, Jun'ichirō, "A New United Nations for the New Era," Address delivered at the Fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, September 21, 2004 (Prime Minister's Office).

35 Rapkin and Strand 2003, p. 20. (Size of quota matters because they determine the voting power in the IMF.)

36 Newman 2000, p. 59.



phasis added] Security Council meetings on the war.”<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Japan was often sidelined in G-7 summits in deliberations on international security. Japan was snubbed because of its self-declared “international military exemption.” Hence, allowing the SDF to undertake limited security roles would likely improve Japan’s standing and enhance its structural power. Yamamoto Takehiko of Waseda University also raises the specter of PKO as a “diplomatic card to get concessions from the U.S.”<sup>38</sup>

If Japan can sustain the momentum in pulling its weight to perform security functions, coupled with its traditional financial generosity, there is no reason why Japan should not aspire and indeed, be accorded structural power commensurate with its commitment and resources. The motivation for structural power is not for national aggrandizement but rather a means to secure the long-term security and future of the nation. Nations such as France and the UK continue to enjoy international recognition well into their twilight years owing to their success in having institutionalized their positions in the international structure (i.e., the UN and IMF). As such the grand strategic goal of achieving structural power is a defensive measure against the imminent erosion of its *relative* economic power and to anchor Japan within the inner circle of global decision-making.

### *National Tranquility*

Koizumi set the tone for reform by declaring that no sector is sacred and pleaded to the nation to endure pain in order for changes to be successful. When reform tsar, Takenaka Heizō announced that no bank is “too big to fail,” it created a stir among those concerned about the cost of structural reform. After more than a decade of what Darren Whitten calls the “Heisei malaise,” Japanese have come around to accepting change as inevitable. However, change is unsettling as it creates a new pool of winners and losers. The grand strategic goal of national tranquility puts paramount importance on ensuring societal stability in the wake of change and reform.

Japan is conflicted between the prospects of a declining standard of living and opening its doors to foreigners to make up for its dwindling workforce. The migrant labor issue generates passionate debate centering on the threat posed by foreigners to the nation’s “cultural purity” and cohesion. In an age where human resources are increasingly mobile, Japan could not afford to be xenophobic. Post-industrial economies rely on the fermentation of ideas and knowledge to grow, and thus slamming the door on immigration is a setback for the economy. It is, thus, in the nation’s best interest to embrace the issue of diversity in a positive and welcoming manner. The ability of Japanese society to coexist with other nationals and cultures is central to the preservation of national tranquility.

Reform is destabilizing, even more so when the cost is borne disproportionately by different segments of society. Reforming the national curriculum affects the society in ways that tests existing norms and traditions to the limits. Although the object of the new curriculum is to maintain and further Japan’s achievements in critical subjects such as science and mathematics, as well as to produce individuals fitting Fukushima Sakie’s model of “global executives,” the ramifications of these reforms are more pronounced. The new national curriculum encourages individuality and personal achievement, pitting it against the long-held norms of consensus and collective interest. This gives rise to new patterns of social relations that would, among others, transform interpersonal ties, industrial and labor relations.

Reforms are seldom pain-free. Rationalization programs by industrial giants such as Nissan,

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37 Daily Yomiuri 2003.

38 Takehiko Yamamoto, with author, tape recording, Tokyo, Japan, December 10, 2001.

Fujitsu and Sony have been successful in returning these corporate giants to profitability, but they have also helped push the unemployment rate to post-war highs. Sony's Transformation 60 revitalization strategy, for example, would shed 20,000 jobs by 2006. The pace and extent of reforms in the fifteen years of the Heisei period is unparalleled except for two epochal events in modern Japanese history—the Meiji Restoration and the U.S. Occupation. If reforms are implemented without putting in place safety nets to cushion the externalities of change, social harmony and stability might be in peril. National tranquility goes beyond pulling disparate groups to live and work together in harmony and involves creating the economic, political and social space for stakeholders to function effectively. In the end, the goal of national tranquility centers on the issue of how to manage change in a society with a stoic reputation for conservatism and risk-averse preferences.

### *Maintaining Economic Distance*

Japanese firms producing a wide array of products ranging from trucks to electrical components scattered throughout the region are important growth engines for their host nations. Matsushita Electrical Co., for example, accounts for about five percent of Malaysia's GDP. Although Japan is undoubtedly the *economic* leader in the region, its position is by no means secure. A 2000 RAND report argues that "Japan's relative economic power [...] in the region diminishes appreciably from 2000 to 2015, vis-à-vis both China and [South] Korea."<sup>39</sup> The Chinese economy, buoyed by domestic capital spending and foreign investment, is expected to trot along its high growth trajectory while Japan remains laggard. The expansion of the Chinese economy—with its relatively untapped market of more than one billion consumers and its new role as the world's factory—is a phenomenon not lost on the world. In fact, some members of the G-8 have spoken favorably of China's membership, which is in itself a testament to the growing Chinese influence and power. Thus, the grand strategic goal of maintaining economic distance is a reaction against the *relative* decline of the Japanese economy, and aims to arrest the erosion of Japan's economic power. The following analogy by Tessa Morris-Suzuki captures the conceptual underpinnings of "economic distance":

The evolution of economic relations between Japan and South-East Asia, in short, is not so much a process in which the Asian 'new Japans' are catching up with Japan itself, but rather a process which may be pictured as resembling the movement of an escalator: as South-East Asian economies moved first from agriculture to labor-intensive light-industry, and later from light industry to more capital- and technology-intensive forms of manufacturing, so the Japanese economy itself has shifted its own industrial and technological frontiers forward, thus maintaining its economic dominance of the region.<sup>40</sup>

Controlling the outflow of technology and industrial expertise allows Japanese firms to maintain their competitive edge and to perpetuate the divide between Japan and its neighbors. It is, however, harder to rely on "deprivation" to maintain economic distance. The gap between Japan and Asia—albeit substantial—is narrowing due to endogenous and exogenous factors.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Ja-

39 Wolf et al. 2000, p. 65. This study using the indexing method pegs China's GDP (PPP) in 2015 at 1,672, South Korea at 225 and Japan at 488. These figures are indexed on South Korea's 2000 GDP forecast at \$788 billion in PPP 1998 U.S. dollars.

40 Morris-Suzuki 1991, p. 149.

41 Endogenous factors, among other, refer to improved literacy rates and greater accessibility to technical and higher education. Exogenous factors include (a) increased FDI and international cooperation, and (b) reverse brain drain.

pan has to take proactive steps to stay ahead. Reforms already underway in the education system had an eye toward maintaining Japan as a technological superpower. After decades of deliberation and stalling, Japan has taken crucial steps to remedy its structural weaknesses. Joint research between university and industry researchers—which had been traditionally low—is on the rise. The number of cases of joint research rose appreciably from 705 in FY1989 to 5,264 in FY2001.<sup>42</sup> Education reform builds on Japan's high scholastic achievements while simultaneously preparing the products of the system to be more effective in trans-national activities. Researchers, engineers and scientists with a global outlook as well as the linguistic ability are indispensable assets to enhance Japan's technological competitiveness. It is no accident that the Toyota Formula One racing team is based in France to accrue synergistic benefits of working with European engineers and crew.

Japan's niche in the international system is its ability to produce innovative and high quality products. In the words of Kōsaka Masataka, Japan “live[s] by purchasing primary products and semi-finished products and processing them.” In other words, Japan “live[s] by utilizing other people's production.”<sup>43</sup> What made Japan the economic superpower that it is today was its engineering superiority, i.e., the ability to produce quality goods at competitive prices. Thus, technology itself is a priceless resource. The future of Japan depends, immeasurably, on its ability to maintain and further its technological edge.

### *Change and Continuity in Japanese Grand Strategy*

The Meiji Restoration and the events following the “birth” of modern Japan was one of the most successful social, economic and political changes of its time. Ninety years later, Japan would again transform itself. Only this time, the Imperial Japanese Navy ensign was nowhere to be seen, and in its place were the ubiquitous Sony, Toyota, Panasonic, NEC and Fuji neon signs. The Heisei period marks the third time in modern Japanese history where conditions were ripe for change. From Meiji to Heisei, the Japanese had demonstrated “bamboo-like” characteristics—strong but at the same time, nimble to bend to the prevailing winds. This section presents a comparative discussion of the Koizumi doctrine and Japan's past grand strategies. It highlights elements of change and continuity. The most visible departures of the Koizumi doctrine from its immediate predecessor (the Yoshida doctrine) are (a) Japan's increasingly visible and high profile in global affairs, (b) the “rehabilitation” of military power, and (c) Japan's drive toward attaining structural power. These changes are, however, tempered by the endurance of (a) ambivalent internationalization, (b) dependency on the outside world, and (c) Japan's struggle with identity.

### *ELEMENTS OF CHANGE*

To posit that Japan is undergoing change is almost a cliché. Koizumi's opponents attack the prime minister for dragging his foot at substantive change. They argue that Koizumi's reform program is superficial and tantamount to “one step forward, two steps back.” There is also a school of thought that Japan's current economic rebound took place precisely because Koizumi *failed* to deliver on his reform pledges. Nevertheless, there is no denying that Koizumi is presiding over the most robust growth in more than a decade. Japan's rebound, however, originated in the boardrooms of Japan's multinationals. This is not surprising considering the interests tied to the export economy has traditionally been Japan's most innovative and far-sighted. Koizumi's imprints in

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42 MEXT 2003.

43 Pyle 1998, p. 266.

other fields were, nevertheless, more visible and productive. Just as Yoshida did in his time, Koizumi re-wrote Japan's foreign policy playbook by increasing the nation's visibility on the world stage, and by taking the political plunge to "rehabilitate" the SDF and make it an integral part of foreign policy. The grand strategic focus of the Heisei period is also notable for its efforts to expand Japan's power beyond economics.

### *High Profile/Visibility*

Japan's increasingly prominent international political-strategic profile is a new development as Japan previously hid behind its constitutional shield and public opinion. Koizumi, however, successfully cajoled the nation to abandon its myopic worldview and nudged a skeptical nation to join the "coalition of the willing." This move was far from popular and was opposed by sectors within and outside the premier's party. The March 2004 kidnapping of three Japanese nationals by anti-U.S. forces in Iraq highlighted the dangers of this policy shift. Critics argued that the SDF's Samawah (Iraq) deployment made Japan a target for terrorist attacks. Al-Qaeda's 500 grams of gold bounty offer for every Japanese national killed in Iraq raises the specter of Tokyo's re-initiation into the world of power politics.<sup>44</sup> Having been described by al-Qaeda as an "enemy" was shocking to say the least, and is contrary to Japan's penchant to be well-liked by everyone. Nevertheless, as the chairman of Mitsubishi Corp. Makihara Minoru explains, "[t]o overcome global barriers and engender trust, one cannot remain faceless."<sup>45</sup> Koizumi's rejection of the kidnappers' demand to withdraw the SDF from Iraq was an affirmation of Japan's resolve and commitment to international causes. It demonstrated that Japan was ready to step out of its "political pygmy" shadow and its willingness to take active and direct steps toward the maintenance of the international order.

### *Rehabilitating Military Power*

The most radical departure of the Koizumi doctrine grand strategy was the "de-tabooization" of security issues. Hitherto, military issues had been taboo, while the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) was regarded as a political backwater. Under the Yoshida doctrine, the government successfully shrouded the Self-Defense Force's (SDF) war fighting capabilities, and instead marketed the SDF as a disaster relief outfit. This charade was part of the larger design to harmonize the SDF with the constitution's pacifist spirit. The end of the Cold War and the September 11 terrorist attacks changed Japan's security vision. Security policy was openly debated and resumed its rightful place on the national agenda. The launch of Japan's first spy satellite, the Anti-Terrorism Law and its anti-missile defense program were manifestations of a society coming to grips with the precarious nature of international politics. This does not mean, however, the abandonment of pacifism, which continues to enjoy wide appeal in contemporary Japan. What it does show is that the idealism of one-country pacifism<sup>46</sup> is now tempered with a touch of pragmatism. Japan's changing strategic outlook, coupled with the erosion of pacifism enabled the Hashimoto and Koizumi administrations to reexamine Japan's strategic posture. These reviews resulted in assigning a new mission—peace-keeping—for the SDF, which indirectly lowers the threshold for Japan to participate in limited

44 The placement of the bounty was purportedly made by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden on May 6, 2004. Al-Qaeda also made an offer for the "head" of UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, US top military officials in Iraq and Italian nationals.

45 Ito 2002.

46 Defined by Susumu Takahashi as "the policy of simply acting in order to keep Japan's own peace, without taking action in order to promote international peace." (Takahashi 2001, p. 32.)

overseas missions. It is clear that the SDF had been rehabilitated and regained some of its legitimacy as a policy option.

### *The “New Agenda for Power”*

Japan had been floundering in trying to find its niche in global leadership. It takes pride in furthering the non-proliferation agenda but appears unwilling to go beyond rhetoric to contain the spread of nuclear weapons. Former premier Hosokawa Morihiro’s proposal to turn Japan into a cultural power<sup>47</sup> has merits. Analysts point to Japan’s “gross national cool” (GNC) as an indication of its emergence as a “cultural superpower.”<sup>48</sup> The popularity of *Hello Kitty*, *Ultraman* and *Pokemon* should not be, however, taken as the bellwether of the global embrace of Japanese culture. The notion of Japan as a cultural power is problematic. Samuel Huntington explains: “[Japanese] culture is highly particularistic and does not involve a potentially universal religion (Christianity, Islam) or ideology (liberalism, communism) that could be exported to other societies.”<sup>49</sup> Japanese culture lacks the global appeal of its American or French counterpart. Although the search for Japan’s identity in the world continues and its soft power grows,<sup>50</sup> priority is on institutionalizing its material power. In other words, Japan is shifting its focus from economic growth toward converting its economic power into forms of structural power that would bestow upon Japan a larger voice in international affairs. Japan’s persistent hope for the coveted UNSC permanent seat demonstrates its desire for structural power in the emerging Japanese grand strategy.

### *ELEMENTS OF CONTINUITY*

From Meiji to Shōwa to Heisei, grand strategies were proxies on how Japan defined, reacted to and managed change. They were also a barometer on how Japan saw itself and the world. The image of a swaying bamboo represents Japan’s adaptability and political acumen to the changing times, while its ability to withstand strong winds is indicative of its strength. Similarly, although the goals of grand strategy change from one incarnation to another, there were some constant fundamentals. One such constant is Japan’s ambivalence toward internationalization. It seems to be caught between, on the one hand, the longing to embrace the world, and a sense of uniqueness bordering xenophobia on the other. Second, Japan’s sense of dependency—politically and economically—had been a marked feature of its modern history. The third element of continuity in Japanese grand strategy is Japan’s struggle to “locate” itself in Asia. It has a tendency to vacillate between an Asian and Western identity.

### *Ambivalent Internationalization*

Japan is ambivalent toward the outside world. In pre-Meiji times, the Bakufu’s *sakoku* policy kept Japan’s contact with foreigners to a minimum. Trade was tightly regulated and controlled. Strict laws governing the size and construction of sea-going vessels kept Japanese maritime activities to littoral areas. The “bamboo curtain” was subsequently removed by the Meiji oligarchs who set Japan on a course to embrace all things western. This pattern of rejection and acceptance was repeated in the twentieth century. The *fukoku kyōhei* grand strategy transformed Japan into a “western” nation and the militarization of the Greater Co-prosperity Sphere saw the expansion

47 Hosokawa 1993, p. 6.

48 McGray 2002. See also, Frederick 2003.

49 Huntington 1997, p. 137.

50 Kojima 2003, pp. 3–10.

of Japanese power throughout the region. In contrast, after Japan's defeat in WWII, the Yoshida doctrine of the late Shōwa period saw Japan limit its external relations and focus all its energies on the domestic agenda.

Nothing exposes Japan's sense of ambivalence more than the "internationalization" program. The internationalization agenda sought to change and broaden the Japanese mindset so that, among others, they could function effectively in multicultural settings and to be more accepting of foreigners in their midst. While efforts were taken to make Japan more inviting and comfortable for foreign workers, the Tokyo Immigration Bureau launched a campaign to invite Tokyo residents to spy and report on their foreign neighbors. This McCarthy-like action reveals the Japanese psyche toward migrant labor: we need them but we do not like or trust them. This ambivalence had characterized Japanese grand strategy since the Tokugawa period. Japanese grand strategy, in large measure, had been a struggle to strike a balance between the need to engage the world and to insulate Japan from such engagements.

#### *Dependency*

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 was a revolutionary event. Among other changes, the Meiji oligarchs diversified the economy, branching into manufacturing and industrial production. Sectors such as steel production that had military applications were particularly favored and obtained state patronage. This shift was significant because it marked the end of autarky, plunging Japan into a state of dependency that had since shadowed the Japanese economy. Modernization efforts also led Meiji Japan to rely on western expertise and technology. As the foreign *o-yatoi* and enterprising locals helped lay the groundwork that would make Japan an industrial powerhouse in the late Shōwa period, it became apparent that Japan's demand for raw materials and energy supplies outstripped domestic supply. Being resource poor, Japan turned to imports to keep its factories in operation. In fact, Shōwa imperialism was, to a large degree, driven by the need to secure raw materials. This state of dependency continued into the Heisei period. For example, Japan imported 83.7 percent of its energy supplies, with crude oil accounting for 40.5 percent in the FY2003.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, the nation's food self-sufficiency ratio continues to decline in tandem with the diminishing farming community. Currently, the Japanese rely on imports for sixty percent of their calorie intake.

The state of dependency extends to other areas. Except for a 30-year lull (1922–51),<sup>52</sup> Japan had some form of collaborative arrangement with an external power. The first such venture was the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance, which lasted for twenty years before it was scrapped in accordance to the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty. Japan, then, formalized its second alliance relationship in 1951 with the signing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. These alliances provided Japan with immense political and strategic benefits. The British refusal—citing its alliance with Japan—to allow the Russian fleet to use the Suez Canal in the run up to the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese war delayed the arrival of the Russian fleet, giving the Japanese additional time to solidify their preparations. It also stretched Russian resources to the limit as its fleet had to endure additional months of navigating around the African coast. At the same time, the alliance nullified British threats to Japan. The second alliance with the U.S. in the postwar years allowed Japan to concentrate on economic growth under the protective aegis of U.S. military power. In addition, the U.S. provided political

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51 Asahi Shimbun 2006, p. 174.

52 Japan formed the Axis alliance with Germany (1936). Italy joined the pact in 1937. The Axis pact was borne out of strategic convenience and effectively carved out a sphere of influence among the parties, allowing Japan unimpeded freedom in Asia. There was little coordination or strategic collusion between the members.

patronage, enabling Japan to rejoin the international community and hasten its rehabilitation. The compulsion to seek out alliances with a stronger party is an inherent characteristic in Japanese grand strategy. Japan had also shown its discriminating “taste” in selecting potential allies. It was not a coincidence that the “chosen” partners happened to be the hegemonic power of the day. Thus, whether by design or happenstance, Japan is highly dependent on the good graces of external actors to keep the nation as a viable social, economic and political entity.

### *The Struggle for Identity*

Japan is a nation with “two faces.” It has more in common with the West than with the developing countries of East Asia. Judging from the material and development divide between Japan and the rest of Asia,<sup>53</sup> it is safe to assert that Japan is a “Western” country which happens to be geographically located in Asia. In the early days of modern Japan, Fukuzawa Yukichi had earnestly argued for Japan to shed its Asian ways to embrace all things western. In this regard, Japan had succeeded beyond Fukuzawa’s imagination and became the bastion of westernization in Asia. However, try as it may, Japan could not shed its Asian roots, as Japan does not fall within the normal acceptance of what it means to be Occidental. For example, notwithstanding Japan’s meteoric rise in economic rankings over the last sixty years, no Japanese national was ever nominated, much less served as the chairman of the World Bank or the IMF.

Nevertheless, Japan has belatedly come around to accepting its Asian identity. “Japan’s embrace of [its] East Asian identity can be seen in Miyazawa attempting to give the 1993 Tokyo G-7 Summit an East Asian feel by announcing an official tour of Southeast Asia”<sup>54</sup> to solicit views from the region. The *watashiyaku* (bridging role) policy was an important diplomatic initiative to deepen regional ties. However, it is questionable to what extent East Asia accepts Japan as its spokesperson. There are several forums, namely APEC, ARF, ASEM and ASEAN+3, where members of the region could directly engage G-7 members. Furthermore, China would certainly object to Tokyo speaking on its behalf. In sum, Japan is “Asian” in the geographical and cultural sense, but “Western” in terms of its developmental status and economic achievements. Throughout its modern history, Japan has vacillated between the West and Asia. Under the *fukoku kyōhei* grand strategy, Japan literally abandoned Asia and embraced westernization in earnest, while in the late Shōwa and Heisei periods, it sought to “return to Asia.” Having come full circle, Japan finds itself in an awkward position of not gaining full acceptance by either side. Huntington, in his penetrating analysis, categorized Japan as a “lone country.” This “loneliness” stems not only from the cultural elements but politically as well. The search to (re)define the nation had been an underlining feature of Japanese grand strategies in the last two millennia, and had resulted in contemporary Japan having to deal with the twin burdens of simultaneously being western *and* Asian.

### **Conclusion**

Studying the Meiji and Shōwa grand strategies was easier with the benefit of hindsight. In contrast, understanding the Heisei grand strategy was a more complex and daunting undertaking

53 With the exception of South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.

54 Hook et al. 2001, p. 355.

due to the fact that it is still evolving. Japan is at a unique juncture in history. The Japanese are prone to accept the conditions in which they operate as a given. There is wisdom in this fatalistic worldview considering that the bifurcated situation during the Shōwa era allowed Japan little maneuvering room and few options. This changed as the “end of history” liberated Japan from ideological and political constraints, allowing Tokyo a greater degree of freedom to pursue its national interests. Although Japan has the wherewithal to influence and condition the external environment, it opted for the cooperative approach of “acting together, advancing together.” This vision, laden with undertones of inclusiveness and partnership, is a masterstroke as it addresses Japan’s current and future strategic interests. Its immediate goal to legitimize Japanese regional leadership and establishing cooperative linkages among regional members is a prelude to keeping China from establishing regional hegemony. In sum, the Koizumi doctrine is a grand strategy for the present and has a firm eye on the future. However, the uncertainties surrounding Japan’s domestic political stability and regional balance of power suggest that the years ahead will be fraught with challenges and opportunities. This highlights the dominant theme in Japanese grand strategies since the Meiji era which deals with Japan’s management and response to change.

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