Report of

Japan's Values and Foreign Policy:
Intangible Power in International Relations

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Policy Recommendations
from the “Values-Oriented Diplomacy” Project

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Since his inauguration, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has employed a “globe diplomacy” in which Japan views international relations as if from a space shuttle. He said in the Diet that “Diplomacy should be conducted with a bird’s-eye view of the globe as a whole, and Japan must cultivate ties with the countries which preserve such universal values as democracy and human rights.” To attain Japan’s national interests, he has sought to create a coalition of the willing which can share the same values with Japan.

International relations are not just a gathering of countries. When gathered, the relationships among them will come to exist as an entity in its own right, and in today’s globalized world, an event in one place on the globe can be transmitted to the other side of the globe quite easily. In this sense, international relations today are not the same as those in the Westphalia period. They are no longer a gathering of states.

Recommendation 1. Foundation for “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”

The conduct of human beings has made progress, and international relations are not an exception. Comparing the cost of exercising coercive power in the 19th century with that of today, we now find it is much more difficult for one country to conduct a military intervention into another country. The purpose of Japan’s “values-oriented diplomacy” is not just for Japan to attain its own national interests, but rather to pursue a universal agenda including issues such as human security, global governance, and renunciation of military conflict. In this sense, Japan must be a leading country in realizing universal goals, as well.

More specifically, while Japan’s universal agenda used to be predicated on the idea of “charity,” in which advanced countries provide various kinds of aid to developing countries, international relations today, with the cold war’s end, need to embrace the idea of “solidarity,” in which countries, regardless of their economic size, seek to share common values in a globalized world. In other words, Japan’s pursuit of human security must be predicated on horizontal networks today, rather than the vertical dimension of the haves and have-nots.

Recommendation 2. Specific Tasks for Japan’s “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”

This “values-oriented diplomacy” cannot be based only on idealistic principles. It is easy enough to say something universal, but specific plans to realize the ideas must also be created.

First, it can be argued that “values” are added to foreign policy when a country becomes powerful enough to project its power to other countries. The same logic, however, can also be applicable
when a declining power seeks to justify its international presence vis-à-vis other countries. To implement its values, such a country must maintain a certain level of capability in both security and economic terms. The weaker country, while facing other countries’ projections of values, can expect to be faced with a dilemma between its own values and the others’ projected value.

Second, weaker countries, if they can move in concert with other countries sharing the same/similar values, can project their values to other countries. The partnership can present itself in the form of coalitions, alliances, ad hoc cooperation, institutions, and so forth. If the institutionalization progresses, these partnerships can become international organizations with a certain level of bureaucracy. The more values are institutionalized, the more legitimacy they have for global projection.

Third, projection of values into the international arena often invites nationalistic chauvinism. One country’s ideas about “justness” can be seen as “unjust” in other countries, and if various countries seek to project their own “values” to the international arena with nationalistic sentiments, it will only lead to chaotic confusion in world politics. In the anarchical nature of international relations, values which have no foundations of power, or which cannot be supported by other willing partners, will only invite other countries to retaliate by relentlessly projecting their own values in return. Even if one country regards a value as “just,” any other country may not follow the projected value. In this sense, political leaders need to maintain a sense of international stability even with other countries not having the same value with Japan.

**Recommendation 3. Institutionalization of “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”**

It is important for one country to advocate its own values to others, but in order to disseminate the values, they must be institutionalized. It is not enough only to create new ideas.

For one country to disseminate its ideas, either some threat or enemy is needed to encourage the willing to coalesce around that idea, or countries can gather simply to pursue more universal values. Thus, “values-oriented diplomacy” can either coalesce those sharing the same values together for a common goal, excluding those which do not share those values, or it can bring all those pursuing universal values together.

In this sense, we cannot be too careful in drawing a line between those supporting one value and those not supporting it. Ideas of the “balance of power” in international relations are a typical example of tensions between/among different understanding of one value. And it is also necessary not to jeopardize relations with those who seem not to share the same value. This demarcation can make country-to-country relations worse.

**Recommendation 4. Which Values to Choose**

“Values-oriented diplomacy” cannot be narrowly selective. Selection of values which seem to be useful only for the country’s national interests will only jeopardize relations with countries not sharing the same values. We also need to pay attention to the relationships among various values. When one value is chosen, there will be another value intimately related to the original value.

As for Japan, one the one hand it has maintained a track record of not starting a war since the end of the Pacific War. On the other hand, the absence of military might in foreign policy can also be seen only as a concession, and those in the right wing who have seen the peace clause within the constitution
as a restraint have sought to emancipate Japan from such a postwar regime. Again, however, selection of only one value will jeopardize relations with those not supporting the same value.

Japan's recent tensions with Asian countries have made it clear that the Asian countries have selectively chosen the values that seem useful for their national interests. But Japan cannot become as selective as its neighbors, and the pursuit of more universal agenda has been Japan's goal since the end of the Pacific War.

Recommendation 5. What to Pursue in “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”

A “value” is not an “emotion,” and in this sense, values cannot be too naïve. During the 2009-2012 rule of the Democratic Party of Japan, such naïve ideas as friendship and love were the DPJ’s objectives.

International relations, however, are also a place to struggle for power and pursue interests. To avoid excessive pursuit of one's national interests over against others’, values cannot be too naïve, but must rather have power.

In this sense, Japan has observed international rules and customs shared by many countries since the end of the Pacific War, and this observance has become a source of Japan's strength in international relations. As Anatol Rapoport once said, international relations are the world of “civility” in which rules among states must be observed, human rights must be protected, and people need respect for others. Rules cannot be used for one country’s policymakers, but rather for the benefit of the general public as a whole.

Thus, Japan must continue to make a bridge between the countries that seem to have different values, and also between the general public and the government. The human security which Japan has been pursuing cannot be naïve, but must rather become a powerful agenda for universal goals.

Recommendation 6. The Ultimate Purpose of “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”

Japan must seek to realize “plural,” flexible,” and “mature” international relations.

Japan is currently a global player not just to project its own values, but also to accept and understand others’ values. Japan’s foreign policy so far, perhaps without explicitly understanding itself as a realization of “civility,” has conducted non-military methods of achieving peace, stability, and prosperity in international relations. Such peaceful but influential conduct will contribute to the forming of plural, flexible, and mature international relations.
I. Justice and Power in “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”

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Since the September 2010 incident that a Chinese boat clashed a vessel of Japan's Coast Guard, the Senkaku issue has become a big headache for Japan's relations with China. Japan has long maintained effective control over the islands since the Meiji period, while China has sought to justify its ownership with various documents tracing back to the Ming dynasty. “History” has been an effective tool for leverage when China negotiates with Japan. The idea that “we were inflicted by imperial Japan during the 1930’s and the 40’s” has been a universal terminology to stand themselves stiff against Japan. Their universal agenda, however, only deteriorates relations with Japan, since Japanese, who lost the war with US bombings of inhumane nuclear weapons, is sick of repeated claims and criticisms by Chinese who behave as if they have been conducting right things. Projection of China’s values often confronts those of Japanese who think that they also have been victims of the war.

Thus, Japan-China bilateral relations have reached one of the most difficult timings since the end of the Cold War. Even the concept of “confidence building measures,” an idea for two unfriendly parties to avoid a military clash by constructing a variety of war-avoiding techniques, has become difficult, since China says that it can make confidence building only with a country that China believes. For Japan to be believed by China, it has to make concessions to follow Chinese ideas, and the concession looks like a betray for Japanese, although it can be seen as a confidence for Chinese. Thus, justice for one country looks like projection of power for the other country, and projection of both sides’ different values only lead to turmoil in international relations.

Therefore, three methods most be taken into account so that a country will be able to realize its values in foreign policy.

Values with/without Power

First, it can be argued that “values” are added to foreign policy when a country becomes powerful enough to project its power to other countries. The same logic, however, can also be applicable when a declining power seeks to justify its international presence vis-à-vis other countries. To implement its values, such a country must maintain a certain level of capability in both security and economic terms. The weaker country, while facing other countries’ projections of values, can expect to be faced with a dilemma between its own values and the others’ projected value.

Values with/without Willing Partners

Second, weaker countries, if they can move in concert with other countries sharing the same/similar values, can project their values to other countries. The partnership can present itself in the form of coalitions, alliances, ad hoc cooperation, institutions, and so forth. If the institutionalization progresses, these partnerships can become international organizations with a certain level of bureaucracy. The more values are institutionalized, the more legitimacy they have for global projection.

Values with/without attention to international stability

Third, projection of values into the international arena often invites nationalistic chauvinism. One country’s ideas about “justness” can be seen as “unjust” in other countries, and if various countries
seek to project their own “values” to the international arena with nationalistic sentiments, it will only lead to chaotic confusion in world politics. In the anarchical nature of international relations, values which have no foundations of power, or which cannot be supported by other willing partners, will only invite other countries to retaliate by relentlessly projecting their own values in return. Even if one country regards a value as “just,” any other country may not follow the projected value. In this sense, political leaders need to maintain a sense of international stability even with other countries not having the same value with Japan.

**Lessons from Taiwan’s Failure and Japan’s “Values-Oriented Diplomacy”**

The value projection by President Chen Shuibian and Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party was a typical example of failure in “values-oriented diplomacy.” He once thought that Taiwan’s democracy should be internationally protected, and must be strongly supported by the United States. Chen thought that various confrontations would be indispensable to widen Taiwan’s space for diplomacy. However, his emphasis on Taiwan’s democracy was gradually regarded as a breach of the Taiwan-China status quo, and the US altered its perspectives toward President Chan from the symbol of Taiwan’s democracy to the breaker of the cross-strait stability.

Japan should learn from Taiwan’s failure. Projection of values without any of the above elements will lead Japan not to a democracy seeker but to a stability breaker. It must be emphasized that foundations of “international order” are not necessarily the same as those of “domestic order.”
II. Japan’s Value-Oriented Diplomacy: Historical Contexts and Political Implications

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The term “value diplomacy” was introduced to Japanese diplomatic parlance fairly recently, only in a November 2006 policy speech by the then Foreign Minister ASO Taro. But more broadly, “value diplomacy” may be defined as a state’s orientation toward values, principles, and norms that are advanced in international relations – orientations that are assumed either for the sake of advancing (or fighting against) those values, or for the sake of some extraneous goals. In this second, broader sense, “value diplomacy” is almost inevitable for any state. The traditional realist notion that diplomacy can be (and should be) conducted without (even ostensible) regard for “values” or ideologies made sense only insofar as major participants of IR shared common rules and cultures in the form of international law and diplomatic protocols. When this underlying cultural unity was broken through the global expansion of the states system and through the great ideological rivalries of the 20C, values and ideologies became unavoidable elements of IR.

Values that exert major influence on today’s IR may be classified into four categories or “layers.”

1) Layer I (Sovereignty values) Values upon which European states system of the 17-19th centuries was built. These include state sovereignty, non-intervention in domestic affairs, sovereign immunity, renunciation of distinction between just and unjust wars, etc. These also include “code of honor” in laws of war (such as humane treatment of POWs, distinction between combatants and civilians, etc.).

2) Layer II (Non-aggression values) Values which were adopted as a result of WWI and WWII, having to do mostly with de-legitimation of use of force except for self-defense or international policing action. These values include injunctions against use of force, for instance, for the purpose of gaining new territory. These are values codified in the UN Charter, and it was at least ostensibly accepted by both sides of the Cold War.

3) Layer III (“Western” values) These include individual liberty, democracy, free market, and basic human rights. These values go beyond traditional international law regulating relations among internally autonomous sovereign states. Some of these values are codified in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These values are “universal” in their potential reach, but they are sometimes called “Western” because their lineage can be most directly traced to Western intellectual tradition, and because during the Cold War, states in the Western camp tended to adhere to these values more than the rest of the world.

4) Layer IV (Postmodern values): These are values that have gained prominence on the international scene in the relatively recent past. They include environmental protection, as well as a host of new individual and group rights (gay rights, women’s reproductive rights, etc.) some of which remain controversial even in Western states.

Japan since the Meiji period absorbed “sovereignty values,” and transformed itself into an empire, but this ultimately ended in defeat in WWII. In the postwar era, Japan has shifted emphasis toward “non-aggression values” and “Western values.” Although “Western values” are regarded as at least potentially “universal,” during the Cold War, the actual extent of these values was limited to the Western camp. For this reason, during the Cold War era, few expected “Western values” to actually become universal. Instead, these values served to strengthen the solidarity within the Western camp (solidarist universalism). While emphasizing its commitment to peace (non-aggression values), postwar Japan also committed itself to the solidarity of the Western camp. To the extent that solidarist universalism was directed primarily against the Soviet camp, it was permissive of cultural and even political diversity.
within the “Western” camp, as long as member-states maintained a pro-American orientation.

With the end of the Cold War, the expectation arose that “Western” values may actually become universal. As a result, the “solidarist universalism” of the Cold War era was replaced by what may be called “comprehensive universalism,” which sought to actually extend “Western” values worldwide, and which cast more critical eyes toward cultural and political diversities that existed among pro-American states (cf. the debate on “Asian values”). The influence of “postmodern” values also grew. In this new environment, Japan reoriented its diplomatic rhetoric from one of solidarist universalism to comprehensive universalism, carefully skirting the issue of “Asian values,” and advancing new “universal values” such as “human security.”

The 9.11 Incident of 2001 once again infused IR with “friend-enemy” distinctions, and the policy of Bush administration revived the ideas of solidarist universalism. Also, the resurgence of historical great powers like China created new security worries in East Asia, underscoring Japan’s need for reliable allies. These circumstances prepared the background for the emergence of solidarist universalism in Japanese foreign policy in the form of “value diplomacy.”

“Value diplomacy” is sometimes criticized as unnecessarily ideological, and Japan’s recent value diplomacy is often characterized as a throwback to “Cold-War thinking.” Such criticisms are only partially valid. If pushed to the extreme, value diplomacy can become ideological and un-pragmatic, but the idea of purely pragmatic, value-less diplomacy is an illusion in the first place. Japan’s recent “value diplomacy” does reflect Japan’s search for reliable allies in the context of a deteriorating security environment. But this is only a logical response to the behavior of some states in the region that seem to point to backtracking on “non-aggression” values.

Besides, Japan’s “value diplomacy” is inspired not only by the realist attempt to seek allies and countering potential threats. Another component of value diplomacy is the effort to contribute to a more stable international order that could serve the interests of all states in the region. This is evident in a speech that Prime Minister Abe was to deliver in Jakarta in January 2013. There, the theme of spreading democracy or liberty took a back seat behind the key theme of building a stable international environment, particularly with respect to rule of law and freedom of navigation. Further, despite its barking rhetoric, Japan’s “value diplomacy” does not really bite. There is little evidence that Japan is attempting to use “value diplomacy” to undermine the stability of those states that do not conform to those “universal” values. While Japan does advocate “universal values” as ultimate goals, Japan is likely to remain flexible and modest in its attempts to advance those values. It is natural that states sometimes have disagreements with other states. But states that are committed to the basic value of non-aggression should have no reason to quarrel with Japan or its “value diplomacy.”
III. Japan’s “Value-oriented Diplomacy”: Evaluating Its Utility and Effectiveness

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The paper will discuss factors that lie behind the recent increase in Japan’s advocacy of values in its foreign policy and how these values might be effectively expressed in expanding Japan’s diplomatic horizons in today’s world.

Advocating “values” in a country’s foreign policy in general serves the following functions: 1) to demonstrate the country’s commitment to international society and highlight its raison d’être; 2) to rationalize a policy that the country intends to pursue or has already pursued; 3) to make a policy recommendation to the international community; 4) to send a message to the domestic audience and explain the government’s stance; 5) to form a network within the international community by supporting or containing a certain country or group of countries; 6) to provide a long-term perspective in forming policies; and 7) to “varnish” diplomacy that is actually based on national interests.

The style and degree of value advocacy differs from country to country depending on a nation’s experiences during the process of nation-building and based upon its status in the international community. In a country of immigrants like the United States, for example, where its founding was based in part on Puritan ethics, the pronouncement of national identity and national values was necessary for the country’s continued expansion while maintaining national coherence. This was quite a different case from that of Europe or Japan, where nation-building was a long, natural, evolution of local communities.

A nation’s international status also affects the way it expresses its values. Germany and Japan, as the losing powers of World War II, for example, were discouraged from advocating their values in the post-war years. Up until the mid-1990s, therefore, Japan remained low-keyed in advocating its values to the international community. What changed in Japanese diplomatic style at that time was an increased awareness of the necessity to project its values in conducting foreign policy. Among the values that the Japanese political leaders have advocated since then are: “the arc of freedom and prosperity,” democracy, liberty, and fraternity. What might explain this change in the style of Japanese foreign policy?

Two factors stand out in explaining Japan’s increased advocacy of values in foreign policy. The first is the end of the Cold War and the concomitant redefinition of the Japan-U.S. alliance, which has been closely tied to Japan’s national interests. With the disappearance of the common threat to the alliance, the Soviet Union, Japan started to search for its new role in global security in cooperation with the U.S. The second factor lies in the increased national confidence that Japan gradually gained in the process of its post-war efforts to return to and contribute to the international community as a pacifist economic power. The international reputation of Japan as a country of cleanliness, hospitality, technological development, environmental concern, and refined cuisine, for example, confirmed to the Japanese that it was time for the country to grow out of its post-war, subservient mentality and become more “normal” and proactive in its foreign policy behavior, in keeping with its role as a mature democracy and an advanced industrial power. In this light, the change in Japan’s diplomatic style since the 1990s was a natural outcome of the country’s efforts to live up to its resolve as a peace-loving country after the war. This change, therefore, should not be taken as a sign of resurging nationalism or as a
sudden lean to the right (ukeika).

If “value-oriented diplomacy” is to remain one of the pillars of Japan’s foreign policy for the coming decades, the values that its political leaders advocate need to meet two conditions in order to be effective. First, the values must originate from Japan’s own historical experiences and diplomatic practices, shared among all the political elite and with the public. A faithful compliance with international law and a pluralist understanding of the nature of international society embodied in its modern diplomatic history would be more appropriate and persuasive values for Japan to advocate than liberty or democracy which are of Western origin. Second, values must be universal and should not be asserted in a way that can be taken as encouraging containment of a certain country or countries. As such, the values to project in foreign policy necessarily remain those that bind the international community only loosely. What we can expect then is civility; a minimal degree of compliance with the most basic principles of international relations; that is, not the kinds of values that presuppose a high degree of convergence in specific foreign policy behaviors among countries.
IV. Industrial Policy, the East Asian Miracle, and Regional Integration after the Lehman Shock

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Japan’s industrialization since the Meiji period, which “followed the Western countries,” demonstrated strong characteristics of “state capitalism” under bureaucratic guidance. The later economic growth, growth of the private capital, diversification of the industries, and political democratization gradually weakened the state control of the industries, but the start of the Japan-China War in the 1930s led to re-strengthening of state control over the economy. The cooperative approach between the state and the private sector in developing a blueprint of regional economic integration during construction of the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere was succeeded in Japan’s post-WW2 economic reconstruction and the process of regional economic integration in East Asia. The cooperative model, which was featured in the World Bank report on The East Asian Miracle (1995), attracted the attention of scholars and policymakers in and out of Japan as an alternative paradigm of development to the U.S.-style liberal capitalism. Developing countries praised the role of the state in limiting the “exploitative” side of globalizing capitalism, while the United States criticized the “unfair” advantages of the “Japanese-style” capitalism in global competitions.

The 1997-98 Asian Economic Crisis and the responses of the affected countries posed a major challenge to the “East Asian model.” South Korea, which had graduated from being a recipient of the Japanese overseas development assistance (ODA), adopted drastic economic deregulation and liberalization, with the aid of the conditionalities under the IMF emergency loan. The reform exposed the Korean firms to global competition, and differentiation of the “winners” from the “losers” was carried out ahead of Japan, which had to await the “Koizumi reforms.” However, in China and other East Asian countries, close coordination between the ODA plans and the overseas investment, production transfer, and component trade by the Japanese firms continued, although the “tied aid” of the past (in which the aid money was used directly for capital goods imports from Japan) had largely been abolished.

The appreciation of yen triggered by the Plaza Accord of 1987 and the resulting large-scale transfer of manufacturing productions from Japan to Asia kept pace with the Japanese economy’s shift into the service sector. The Japanese economy now earns more in financial services and intellectual properties. Japan, on one hand, shares interests with the western nations in deregulation in entering the services market and improved protection of the intellectual property rights in developing countries. The proportion of trade surplus in Japan’s overall balance of payments has shrunk, and Japan in recent years even runs a trade deficit. Meanwhile, the proportion of the investment revenues has risen, which makes Japan’s economic structure similar to the western countries. Japan’s identity has therefore become similar to that of the mature developed countries and investors on the issue of establishing a common set of investment rules.
The Lehman Shock in 2008 exposed the lack of U.S. government supervision over the U.S. firms, which played the central role in globalization of the financial business. The event offered an opportune moment to revise the U.S.-style liberal capitalism, which almost reached the status of the global standard. Even earlier, liberalization of global trade through multilateral negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) stalled, leading to the accelerated shift to bilateral and regional free trade agreements (FTAs). Making of investment rules has also failed to multilateralize and is limited to conclusion of bilateral agreements. Japan has joined the negotiations for a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), but both removal of the trade barriers in the U.S. automobile sector and liberalization of the Japanese agriculture sector face political resistance.

Meanwhile, the development model of China, which surpassed Japan to occupy a greater part of the East Asian economy, is the very mercantilist model Japan once adopted. China makes a large trade surplus in trade with developed countries, receives their investments but restricts activities of the investors, promotes inward technology transfer, protects and promotes indigenous enterprises, restricts free movement of capital, tolerates stealing of IPRs by the indigenous enterprises, and resists opening of the services markets. China signs FTAs with only smaller developed countries, with which it forces many exemptions. In signing FTAs with developing countries, China focuses on procurement of natural resources and food and export of its own manufactured goods, neglecting “development” of its economic partners. This neglect is also common in the U.S.-style liberal capitalism. (Some technical assistance in China’s third world diplomacy is welcomed in the remote areas, and China’s diplomatic competition with Taiwan seeks political gains over economic ones. However, as China’s entry into development of the oil fields and purchase of agricultural lands in Africa indicate, the country’s economic relations with developing countries are becoming more exploitative.)

In this circumstance, can Japan offer a development paradigm like the “Japanese model” or the “East Asian Miracle” of the past and shoulder a central role in the regional economic integration process? While the old model was centered on regionalization of the production network in the manufacturing sector, can Japan offer a new comprehensive model inclusive of the services and agriculture sectors? Under what conditions, can a model Japan proposes be accepted in East Asia and broader Asia Pacific?

There are no short answers to all these questions. A combination of social and political stability without strong coercion by the state in Japan during the period of high economic growth was a remarkable accomplishment, which had a strong appeal to other countries. But, today’s economic stagnation in Japan, at least partly, is attributed to the legacies of this old paradigm, and the country today is understandably going through a major political realignment. Japan does not lead the world in many areas, and a rare exception is found in terms of grasping of the national population. Polarization of the income-generating generation and the pensioners is a challenge that encompasses all economic, social, and political dynamics. Japan must first reach a domestic consensus about how to cope with this challenge. The current splits along three dimensions are the sharpest. Nationalist vs. Globalist—Will the economy open up? Will the opening include the labor market (which is a social question as well)? Liberal Capitalist vs. Welfare State—Will Japan retain a high degree of social welfare support for the “weak”? Materialist vs. Post-Materialist—Will the Japanese continue to measure their happiness in terms
of material values over intangible values? These questions will not likely to yield a clear-cut answer. However, a strong national consensus on where the balancing points might be has to be achieved, if the nation is to have a coherent direction. Only then, the model can be armed with Japan's pivotal strength in various related areas—be it environmentally friendly technology, labor-saving robotics, spiritual and cultural sophistication, and/or communal bonds.
V. Japan’s Value Oriented Diplomacy toward the United States: Upholding its Image as a Liberal Democracy

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In a speech delivered at the Japan Institute of International Affairs on November 30, 2006, Foreign Minister Taro Aso of the first Shinzo Abe administration advocated “value oriented diplomacy” in general and “the arc of freedom and prosperity” in particular. The latter was a vision that “Japan will serve as an ‘escort runner’ to support these countries [young democracies situated around the outer edge of Eurasia].” As its subtitle “Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons” indicates, this speech aimed “to add a new pillar” to Japan’s foreign policy, which had already stressed the importance of the Japan-U.S. alliance and its relationships with its neighboring countries. In other words, Japan’s value oriented diplomacy was regarded as the third pillar independent of the alliance.

In December 2013, the second Abe administration approved the first National Security Strategy of the Japanese Government. This important strategic document declares that “the maintenance and protection of international order based on rules and universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law, are likewise in Japan’s national interests.” Moreover, it reconfirms not only that “The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan’s security” but also that “Such close alliance between Japan and the U.S. is underpinned by various factors, including that the two countries share common strategic interests and universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law.”

It appears, however, that this national security strategy regards sharing universal values as entirely natural and lacks an awareness that it needs to be upheld consciously. A declining perception of sharing universal values would weaken the psychological foundation of the alliance. In order to avoid such a situation, it is necessary for Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy not only to expand its diplomatic horizons, but also to pay more attention to the United States, which is located at the center of its foreign policy.

This paper focuses on an important aspect of Japan’s value oriented diplomacy that has not attracted much attention: that is, the conscious need to uphold Japan’s image as a liberal democracy in the United States, which is the main promoter of universal values.

In the first section, I discuss the significance of Japan’s value oriented diplomacy toward the United States from two perspectives. First, the Japan-U.S. alliance is based on the universal values shared between the two nations. The Japan-U.S. Security Treaty includes an expression: “to uphold the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.” Second, the United States, the ally of Japan, attaches great importance to universal values. As for the latter, it is worth noting that diversity in civilization and culture is considered to be compatible with sharing universal values, which are ideas about political and economic institutions, and that a set of universal values has been one of the criteria to
distinguish friends from enemies. Sharing universal values with the United States is one of the best national security assets for Japan.

In the second section, I analyze the impact of Prime Minister Abe’s historical comments on Japan’s image as a liberal democracy in the United States, by focusing on remarks about the Kono Statement concerning the comfort women issue and the Murayama Statement concerning Japan’s colonial rule and aggression. Historical revisionism in Japan has weakened a sense of common values in the United States. The former comfort women are perceived as victims of gross violations of women’s human rights, while the rule of law is eroded by prime minister’s public statements that regard the definition of aggression as problematic. In the United States, the historical perception issue has given birth to the concern that Japan is returning to a nationalist country that is incompatible with universal values. Moreover, it is ironic that historical revisionist statements by Japanese political leaders have counterproductively strengthened the memories abroad that they would like to deny. From a strategic point of view, the Japanese Government should exercise self-restraint toward the verification and revision of the Kono and the Murayama Statements.