

Unconventional strategies for Anti-war protest under dictatorship

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

(1) Strategic judo

The secret of judo is to make your opponent fall by his/her own momentum. If he/she pushes you, you pull him/her. If he/she pulls you, you push him/her. Strategic judo turns obstacles into advantages. You can regard an obstacle as a tool with which you can outdistance your competitors. For example, when the environmentalist protests increased, most firms opposed stricter regulations. But one firm made use of the environmentalist movement. An aquaculture firm devised a system to purify water beyond the prevalent requirement, and pressured the government by means of the environmentalist movement to establish a new requirement which the firm could satisfy but its competitors could not.

(2) Protest by oversompliance

Protest by overcompliance is a variation of strategic judo. It was well-known that during the German occupation of Denmark, when Germans required Danish Jews to wear a yellow armband, the Danish King Christian the 10th wore a yellow armband and demonstratively walked in streets to insult the Germans and to delight the Danes.

(3) Covert reversing by high level planners in Japan

While Danes were playing their strategic judo against the German occupation, high level anti-war planners in Japan were playing covert reversing against the militarists. During the last phase (1944-1945) of the Second World War, highschool (in German, Gymnasium; in French, lycée) students were mobilized to factories to replace regular factory workers who were drafted into the Army. This caused an educational vacuum among highschool students. To remedy the situation, the Navy played a covert reversing. The Navy knew that after Japan's defeat, Japan would need scientists and engineers in post-war technological and industrial development. The Navy took bright highschool students out of factories and put them in Yoka Heigakkoo, which it invented.

“Heigakko” means “naval academy.” “Yoka” means “preparatory.” Therefore the two words together should mean “naval pre-academy.” It sounded like a pro-war training school. However, it was an anti-war device. No war-related courses were taught. On the contrary, the curriculum included mathematics, physics (including thermodynamics) chemistry, biology, English, world geography, world history. It paid off. The results were not only post-war technological innovations, but also a new kind of business management practices such as job rotation which fostered interactive invention (Maruyama 1989, 2002), sense of joint responsibility with which anyone can correct anyone else's errors in the assembly line, without the need to send back the defective unit back upstream where the errors were made (Maruyama 1994).

The students of Yoka Heigakkoo were pampered. The meals included nutritious ingredients such as meat, which were unavailable in the general population, and occasional cakes which were a rare luxury. In contrast, the meals at the factories were no more than thinly diluted rice soup. The nutritional deficiency caused not only physical and mental weakness but also diseases and infections. Tuberculosis was common.

While the Yoka Heigakkoo students were pampered, the Navy also ran a slave system of Yoka Renshuusei, which enabled operation of “luxuries” such as Yoka Heigakkoo. These Yoka Renshuusei (Yokaren in short) were baited by the government propaganda, supposedly to become the glorious Kamikaze suicide pilots, but were channeled to hard labor such as digging of air raid shelters.

Actually, the anti-war/pro-war conflicts originated during Meiji Period in the form of Navy/Army rivalry. In 1867, Tokugawa government (Edo Government) ended, and Emperor Meiji took over the control of Japan. After 264 years of isolationistic policy of Edo Government, Japan had much to catch up with European and North American science, technology, political and institutional system. Japan imported the navy system from England, and the army system from Germany. The British Navy was internationally experienced, while the German Army was not only nationalistic but more narrowly Prussian-centered. In 1861 Wilhelm the First became the king of Prussia. In 1862 Bismarck became the prime minister of Prussia. In exactly 1867, North German Alliance was established centered around Prussia. In 1871, Wilhelm the First became the emperor of Germany. This internationalist/nationalist contrast between British Navy and German Army was clearly mirrored in Japan.

Between the First and the Second World War, the top level of the Japanese Navy had many persons who had lived in foreign countries. For example, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the top commander in the Navy, had studied at Harvard University. In contrast, the Army had very few generals who were interested in foreign countries. An exceptional example is Tsuguakira Fujita, a high-ranking Army physician. He had relatives who traveled to foreign countries, and he liked to listen to news of foreign countries (Birnbaum 2006). Furthermore, he was well-versed in Chinese classics and history, and would not have tolerated the atrocities committed by the Japanese Army in China and other Asian countries.

In February 1936, a group of young Army officers assassinated anti-war government officials, and thereafter the politics in Japan were dominated by pro-war Army. On July 7, 1937, the Japanese Army provoked a war against China near Beijing, with the pretext that a Chinese soldier shot a bullet in the direction of the Japanese Army. At that time, Chang Kai Shek was busy fighting Mao’s communist army and ignored the Japanese invasion. Incidentally, Chang had graduated from the military academy in Japan.

While the Japanese Army was busy instigating and preparing for an expansion of the war in China to Southeast Asian countries in order to plunder oil and other natural resources, the Navy maintained its anti-war stance. Admiral Yamamoto, who knew the geographic size and the industrial capacity of the USA, knew that if USA would become involved in a war against Japan, it would be impossible for Japan to win the war. When he was asked “how long would Japan be able to hold out in the Pacific Ocean,” he replied: “two or three years.” Actually that time span was shortened because USA succeeded in deciphering the Japanese secret message code, and the tide turned against Japan already in June 1942 when the Japanese Navy was defeated at Midway Island. That is to say, only six months after “Pearl Harbor.”

As these examples demonstrated, the three unconventional strategies are useful for anti-war protests under dictatorship.