

Japan After Abe Shinzo: Suga Has Inherited Abe's "Beautiful Japan". What Will Happen to It?

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On August 28, Abe Shinzo resigned from his eight year rule of Japan as prime minister to be succeeded by his former Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga, who became the prime minister of Japan on September 16. The world is asking what will happen to Japan under Suga who has inherited the complex and challenging legacies of Abe.

The most important legacy of Abe Shinzo is his dream of making Japan a "Beautiful Country", which the majority of Japanese people seem to refuse. The beautiful country is what his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi tried to construct and he succeeded. Abe's beautiful country is founded on racism and the authoritarian governance inherited from the pre-1945 era.

The foundation of such Abe's beautiful Japan is Shintoism enforced by Bushido. Shintoism makes the emperor a divine God. On the other hand, Bushido requires the people to make the ultimate sacrifice for the emperor. The combination of the two systems of thought has produced double effects. On the one hand, it invites racism. Being the people of living God, emperor, Japanese race is superior to all other races. On the other hand, it makes the Japanese government a messenger of the God emperor's will. This justifies the authoritarian government; the people must obey the government.

The racism of Japan was cruelly exposed during Japan's invasion of Korea, Manchuria and China. Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi can be singled out as the most racist person. While he was Deputy Minister of Industrial Development of the puppet nation, Manchukuo, in the 1930s, he conscripted millions of Chinese, forced them to work as slave for the industrial development of Manchukuo. Kishi's labour policy was attributable to his conviction of Japan's racial superiority and his contempt of other races, especially, the Chinese and the Koreans.

In the eyes of Kishi, Chinese were sub-human deserving sub-human treatment. According to Wikipedia: Nobusuke Kishi, called the Chinese as "lawless bandits", "incapable of governing themselves" "robot slaves", "mechanical instruments" and he compared Chinese with the dirty Yangtze river or something worse.



Hideki Tōjō (right) and Nobusuke Kishi, October, 1943 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Kishi used the same labour policy during WWII while he was Minister of Munitions under Tojo Hideki. He recruited 670,000 Koreans and 41,000 Chinese to work as slaves in Japan living under worse than subhuman living conditions. No wonder why Kishi was notoriously known as “Devil of Showa (Showa- no-yokai).

Racial discrimination is still flourishing in Japan, especially under Abe’s rule. The conviction of the superiority of the Japanese race leads inevitably to racial discrimination. The tradition of racism of Kishi is inherited by Abe. A great number of foreigners in Japan have had experience of racial discrimination. According to a survey, racial discrimination is practiced in many areas of activities. For instance in 2008, 38% of foreigners were refused to stay at inns; 70% of foreigners were refused by landlords of rental dwellings. And, many restaurants refuse the foreigners, the “Gaijins”.

Those races who are the targets of the most harsh racial discrimination are Asians, especially Koreans and Chinese. There may be many reasons for singling out Koreans as targets of Japanese prejudice. In reality, it should be the other way round. Koreans should dislike Japanese. After all, Japan was planning to make Koreans its slaves. Nevertheless, Japanese in Korea are welcome and well treated. Then, why do the Japanese hate so much the Koreans? The possible reason is that Koreans who are, in the eyes of Japanese, an inferior race have become Japan’s rival in economic performance, military strength and diplomatic achievements. This is a reality which Japanese cannot accept, especially Abe and his friends.

Racial discrimination against Koreans is the most destructive and persistent. There are about one million Koreans many of whom came to Japan as slave labourers conscripted by Abe’s grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, during WWII. In Japan, many of Koreans are Special Permanent Residents, but being Korean descendents, they used to be refused from old age pension, medical insurance and social benefits. They were not allowed to have jobs in many fields including civil service. They may be naturalized. But, one of the naturalization conditions is the adoption of a Japanese name and the giving up of the Korean name.

The cruel form of racial discrimination against Koreans is the never ending hatred. In 1923, during the great Kanto Earthquake, 6,000 Koreans were murdered on the street because of wrong rumour to the effect that Koreans had poisoned the water supply. In 2015, an ultra-right-wing violent group known as Zaitokukai, which is organized specifically to end welfare and privileges given to Koreans in Japan. It is a Korean-hate group. It terrorized Korean elementary school children shouting at them: "Go back to Korea, you are Korean spies" This gang organizes anti-Korean demonstrations shouting "Kill Koreans!". The Supreme Court of Japan recognized their crime and they were fined

This gang organization has 10,000 members. The leader is not a rich man and he is not in a position to finance the organization's hate activities. It is possible that this ultra-right political organization or some big corporations finance its hate activities. Korea has similar organization, "Il-bae" which is pro-Japan and anti-progressive government; it is suspected to be financed by large corporations. It is noteworthy to point out that, in the 1930s, in Manchuria, Abe's grandfather, Kishi, used the Japanese crime syndicate, Yakuza, to terrorize the Chinese slave labourers.

The Japanese conviction of racial superiority has produced another unfortunate outcome. It has led Japan to embrace the vision of the Tanaka Memorial in which the world conquest by Japan of superior race was inevitable; the world conquest would go by step, the conquest of Korea first, followed by the invasion of Manchuria, then the war with China, then the conquest of South-East and South Asia and, finally, the victory over the United States. The vision of the Tanaka Memorial was surely shared by Kishi who was the right-hand man of Tozo Hideki who planned the war against the U. S.

It is possible that Abe wanted to restore the world where the superior Japanese people rule the world, at least East Asia. For this, he would want to have an authoritarian government like Hitler's Germany. Abe did not admit he was Nazi sympathiser, but there are many events and signs that show such possibility. At schools, the Imperial Rescript of 1890 is taught. This document includes Emperor Meiji's education policy based on the national religion, Shintoism and Bushido requiring the people to obey the government so that peace and harmony prevails in the society and to believe in the glory and salvation of the Japanese people by sacrificing oneself for the emperor.

Shintoism has come back in 21st century Japan. More than 300 lawmakers are members of the Shinto Association. Then, there is the Japan Conference (Nippon Gaigi) which is the brain of the ultra-conservative force in Japan; it openly expresses the need for restoring the pre-1945 imperial and militaristic Japan. About 80% of members of Abe's ministers were members of the Nippon Gaigi.; most of these ministers remain in the cabinet of Suga.

There is another event which shows Abe's thirst for the pre-1945 Japan. It is the scandal of Moritomo Gakuen; it is one of the ugliest corruption cases of the Abe government. In this scandal, Abe and his wife were involved; it was about the sale of public land which was worth about US\$ 6 million for as little as US\$ 1 million; the land was for the construction of the school. To cover up the scandal, the Ministry of Finance had hard time by destroying or modifying the related documents. One of the high ranking civil servants of the Ministry even killed himself in order not to reveal the truth.

The most meaningful aspect of the event was the fact that the mission of the school was to educate future leaders of the imperial and militaristic Japanese empire. There is another

aspect of Abe's beautiful Japan; it is the need for authoritarian government. One of the virtues of Japanese people is harmony and peace, which can be assured through absolute obedience to authoritarian government.

This notion of peace and harmony is not the results of spontaneous and autonomous efforts of the people; it is the results obtained by obeying the public authorities. This behaviour is shared by Koreans of old generation who lived under the Japanese rule or the pro-Japan conservative government of General Park Chung-hee who was a Japanese army officer. In other words, the peace and harmony asked in Abe's world is the absence of objections to any government policies, even if they are not fair and just. This is the reason why the Japanese people do not down to the street to protest.

For Abe and his party, LDP, the model of such authoritarian government is the Hitler model. Kishi was a fervent admirer of Nazism. Abe Shinzo is a Nazi sympathiser. Some of his ministers were or are members of the Japan Nazi Party. Hitler's Mein Kamp is taught at schools. Hitler's Election Strategy is popular among the members of the Nippon Gaigi.

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Abe's government, Taro Aso said this:

“German Weimer Constitution has changed into Nazi constitution before anyone knew. It was changed before anyone else noticed. Why don't we learn from this period?”

Japan's strong belief in its racial superiority is the most important reason for perennial friction between Japan on the one hand, and, on the other, China and Korea. What irritates China and Korea is Abe's refusal of Japan's wrongdoings and atrocities committed during the first part of the 20th century against China and Korea.

At the center of friction between Japan and Korea is the sex slavery and labour slavery. The savage atrocities against Korean workers and the Korean young teenage girls can be explained only by Japanese racism. There were no Japanese comfort women; there were no Japanese slave workers. Japan could commit such disgusting crimes, because the Japanese military considered Korean teenage girls as part of military equipments and because the Korean labourers were regarded as disposable instrument of the production of goods. That is why Korea asks Japan to admit the crimes in the name of the Japanese government and pay for the crimes.

Abe seems not to accept that the people of the divine emperor, that is, the Yamato race, do commit such crimes. He knows well that the Nanking Rape, the labour slavery of Korean workers and the sex slavery of the Korean comfort women are historical facts. But, Abe seems eager to hide these crimes so that the young generation continue believing in the superiority of the emperor's people. In fact these crimes are not reported in the school history text books. It seems important for Abe to convince the young generation that the Japanese people - a superior race- cannot commit such crimes.

But, it is just impossible to hide these crimes. The better way of handling these crimes is to admit these historical facts, ask for the pardon from the victims and liberate the poor young generation of Japan from the guilty conscience.

Abe's racism can negatively affect Japan's global leadership. Abe has been trying to play global leadership through various means. Japan is known for its heavy investments in

lobbying activities with politicians in Washington, London and Paris. Japan has been funding foreign countries' major think tanks, research centers, universities and media to create favourable image of Japan.

In fact, it is not easy to find papers which criticize Japan. This is harmful for Japan's healthy evolution as global leader. To be a useful leader, Japan should be respected and trusted and even liked. Being feared is not a good quality of the global leaders. Many countries in Asia fear Japan with armed with war constitution which Abe tried so hard to produce. The fact that Abe does not admit crimes committed against China and Korea is interpreted as the justification of such crimes and his possible ambition to dominate again these countries.

Korea has been the major object of Tokyo's lobbying. A great number of conservative academics, politicians and researchers have been receiving Japanese money for decades in order to make Koreans feel inferior to Japanese and justify Japan's colonial oppression. The most known pro-Japan and anti-Korean progressive force is the "New-Right" movement which has produced a school text book in which Japan's colonialism was good for Korea.

There are other means Japan employs to play global leadership. Japan tries to play leadership through the Comprehensive and Progressive TPP (CPTPP), or TPP minus the U.S. Originally, Obama promoted TPP with 12 member countries not so much for trade promotion as for the purpose of containing China. For this, the U.S. had to pay price in the form of privileged imports of member countries' goods. Now, Japan has given itself the mission of leading CPTPP.

There is another channel of Japan's global leadership. Japan has taken the initiative for the Quad which is the alliance of Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. This alliance is aimed at the containment of China through security cooperation and investments in the Indo-Pacific economic corridor designed to compete with China's BRI (One Belt-One Road Initiative).

One wonders the reason behind Japan's attempt to play the role of global leadership. The real reason behind all these diplomatic and political manoeuvres could be the revival of Asia dominated by the superior Yamamoto race (the emperor's race). It is quite possible that Abe is hoping to restore the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere cherished by his grandfather Kishi and managed by the divine people. This may not be done military conquest; it may be attempted through political and financial means. But, Abe and his friends should give up such dreams. Asia is no longer the Asia of Kishi era.

It is obvious that, in Abe's mind, Japan needs a new constitution which allows Japan to invade other countries. Japan's SDF is more than sufficient to defend Japan from foreign invasion. Hence the planned amendment of the peace constitution is to invade other countries. This is what worries Asian countries, especially Korea and China.

The success of Japan's global leadership depends on several factors. However, two factors stand out. First, Japan should have economic capability to help other countries. But the mediocre success of Abenomics, the destructive impact of the ill managed COVID-19 crisis and the unsolved structural problems of the Japanese economy indicate that Japan cannot go far in its leadership. Second, Japan is having difficulties in assuring cooperation with China and Korea. Without such cooperation, it is not easy to lead East Asia. To have such cooperation, Japan must admit its wrongdoings committed against China and Korea. Japan should accept, as fact, the 1937-Nanking Rape of torturing, murdering and raping hundreds of thousands of children, men and women of Nanking. Japan should accept the horrendous

crimes against teenage Korean girls and workers.

If Japan wants to become a “normal” country and play global leadership, it should give up the illusion of being superior people; it should not look at Chinese and Koreans as inferior races.

Image on the right: Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga giving his first press conference as Prime Minister on 16 September 2020. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



If the Japanese are superior race, they should behave accordingly; they should be generous; they should be inclusive; they should understand other races; they should hold hands with other races and cooperate for a better world for all.

Prime Minister Suga has inherited Abe’s beautiful racist Japan. Is he going to carry out such legacy of Abe? It is true that Suga is not a part of Japanese political aristocracy like Abe and many other LDP members; his father was a strawberry merchant. Therefore, in some quarters, one thinks that he may go for more liberal Japan and more suitable Japan for the 21st century.

However, if he does so, he is likely to be invited out by the vested interested group such as the Japan Conference. In other words, as long as the LDP keeps power, the pursuit of Abe’s dream will continue and Japan will be more isolated in Asia and further ruined. Japan needs a new breed of people who know how to say “NO!” to counterproductive dream of restoring Japan of pre-1945 era.

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