

Strategy Bulletin Vol. 310

Lecture notes of the memorial seminar for former Prime Minister Abe (1)

Shinzo Abe, Japan, and the World

Musha Research held a memorial seminar for former Prime Minister Abe on July 21.

Mr Yoshihisa Komori, Sankei Shimbun's Washington correspondent, was invited to deliver a lecture entitled '**Mr Shinzo Abe, Japan and the World**'.

With his kind permission, the following is the transcript of his lecture.

Mr Shinzo Abe, Japan and the World**Mr Yoshihisa Komori, Transcript of speech**

Thank you all for gathering here today. I would like to thank you all for gathering here today. I would like to express my sincere condolences to Mr Shinzo Abe, a special person for both Japan and the international community, for his very unexpected and unconvincing death. It is a positive project for Japan to hold a meeting at this time to express condolences and talk about what achievements he had.

He was like a young bamboo shoot

There are countless Shinzo Abe watchers. There are also many more Shinzo Abe supporters in the world of politics, business, the media and academia. I would like to explain three reasons why I dare to speak in front of you. If I were qualified to speak about Mr Shinzo Abe, the first thing I would think of would be that I have known and interacted with Mr Abe for an extremely long time. When I think about it, I met Mr Abe for the first time exactly 40 years ago in 1982. Before that, I was the Mainichi Newspaper's Vietnam correspondent, and soon after that I was the Washington correspondent. I spent almost 10 years immersed in international reporting overseas. Immediately after that, I started working as a foreign correspondent in the political section of Mainichi Newspaper in Tokyo.

Just at that time, Shinzo Abe joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as his father's secretary since his father Shintaro Abe, also used to work for the Mainichi Shinbun, became a foreign minister. So, we decided to have a study group with young people from both the journalists' side and the Foreign Ministry's side. That is when Mr Abe joined us. I didn't really get the sense that Abe was the center of the event, but he was an impressive young man. He was very fresh, slick, reminiscent of a young bamboo, and would make a quick, to-the-point statement!

He was still young, in his late twenties, but he too had studied in Los Angeles and worked for a private company called Kobe Steel. I remember I had the impression that it was unusual for a young man to be so reticent. I wonder if it means that he had the habit of listening carefully and thinking deeply about what he heard on the spot.

Young politician with a strong interest in international affairs

Secondly, the interaction between Shinzo Abe and myself was also in an international context, and we discussed many things in the context of international affairs. Ten years after our first meeting, he became a member of the Diet. I was stationed in Washington again but would return to Tokyo from time to time. A little later, I was stationed in Beijing. During that period, every time I came back from Beijing or Washington, I met with Mr Abe. I limited my contacts to people who could talk about international issues and had an interest in them, so the number of people I had to deal with was small. I remember that we talked about the situation in

Musha Research Co., Ltd.

President

Ryoji Musha

musha@musha.co.jp

<http://www.musha.co.jp>

Tel +81-3- 3740 2143

2-16-7-3912, Konan,

Minato-ku, Tokyo

108-0075, Japan

Washington and Beijing over a meal in a humble cafeteria in the basement of the Diet building.

The third background is the so-called dialogue (dialogue in the July 2022 issue of Seoron: 'Now is the time to talk about Article 9') introduced by Musha. It is presumptuous to call it a dialogue with a former Prime Minister.

I was supposed to listen to what he had to say, but he said, 'Let's have a dialogue, since we have known each other for a long time'. As a result, we talked for about an hour and a half. It was at the end of April at his parliamentary office. It was around the end of April. Looking back, that was the last time we had a one-to-one conversation. Here he talked about a great many things. I would say that the thing he was most enthusiastic about was the revision of the Constitution.

Was Mr Abe a reformist?

So, what kind of politician was Shinzo Abe? The word immediately used is conservative. But I think he was more of a reformer. Reform means trying to change the system that is already in place. This is also a reform if you argue against the opinions held by the majority from the minority's point of view. Although there was a part of defending the good old things, Abe's political advocacy was overall a reform.

In addition, Mr Abe was also a realist. He saw the realities of the world and reflected them in the realities of Japan. In this respect, Mr Abe fought against the pacifism of non-resistance that was introduced earlier. Here.

If I expand on the background a little more, he fought against the heresy, which is different from the international standards. I mean that post-war Japan is still different from a normal sovereign nation, an independent nation, in some respects.

For Japan to function as a well-balanced nation, this heresy must be considered as a negative. I learned quite early on that Mr Abe was aware of this from an early age.

In fact, I had a long non-political period as a newspaper journalist in the beginning. But my awareness of this changed dramatically during my ten years of international experience in Vietnam and the US. I was a correspondent. We correspondents write for Japan even though we are in a foreign country. Therefore, we have no choice but to consider how Japan is seen from the outside. As a result, it gradually became clear that Japan is a unique nation, in other words, a heretic by international standards.

Recognition of Japan's heresy

Japan is a very well-balanced country. The economy is good, social welfare is good. Education is not bad. Domestic security is also decent. However, there is one major area of deficiency. That is the security of the country. We are not allowed to defend our own country. There is a heresy of self-rule. The heresy stems from the Constitution.

The preamble of the Constitution states that "The people of Japan, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world, are determined to preserve their own security and existence ". This is a translation of the Constitution written in English.

The preamble of the Constitution states that the Japanese people will maintain their own security not through their own efforts, but by relying on the goodwill of the people of other countries.

The main body of the Constitution, Article 9, can be interpreted in such a way that even the defense of one's own country is forbidden. In other words, the Constitution can be taken to mean that Japan must not defend itself.

I gradually became aware of this over and over while I was abroad. The decisive moment that awakened me was a meeting with Charles Kadis, an Army colonel of GHQ, the General Headquarters of the Occupying Forces who had written the draft of the Constitution and at that time he was already a lawyer at a law firm on Wall Street in New York City. When I went there, he was willing to meet and talk with me.

Immediately after the war, Mr. Kadis gathered 25 to 6 American servicemen who were said to be well versed in law and wrote the Constitution of Japan in 10 days in February 1946 in the Dai-ichi Seimei Building at the moat end of the Imperial Palace during the occupation, which was only 6 months after the surrender of Japan in 1946. About 30 years later, I went to see him and listened to his story for about three and a half hours.

He told me in detail how the Constitution was drafted at that time. He said a lot of things, but he also said that it had to be done quickly. In fact, MacArthur Command wanted the Japanese to draft the Constitution, so at first, they commissioned Joji Matsumoto, a legal specialist, to write the draft. However, when they looked at the finished draft,

it was judged to be almost the same as the Constitution of the Empire of Japan. General Headquarters MacArthur could not accept it, so the US side decided to write it, and it was written in 10 days.

The Constitution of Japan written by the US occupation forces

This fact is not often mentioned by those who are said to be in the Constitutional Protection camp, even today. "What was the main purpose of writing the Constitution of Japan at that time?" When I asked him, he gave a very succinct answer: "It was to keep the country of Japan demilitarized forever. This is not surprising, since only six months earlier we had been fighting Japan for nearly four years and caused the US a great deal of pain. The emergence of Japan as a military power was absolutely unacceptable.

The first idea was to draft an article saying that even self-defense was not allowed. This is where it all started. This was the start of Japan's post-war embarkation. The warped structure of the state is still the same today. A country that may not be able to defend itself is, after all, an anathema from an international perspective. There is no such country in the world. Shinzo Abe understood this from an early stage. He was convinced that Japan could not become a normal country unless the current situation was changed.

I had a strong sense that Mr. Shinzo Abe started his political career with the recognition that these warped postwar structures in Japan should be corrected as a starting point. He was less assertive and self-promoting in the beginning, even after becoming a member of the Diet. He often seemed to have a humble side. However, every time we talked with him at length, I often remember the impression that I was able to get a sense of his deep and fundamental way of thinking

This point goes back to Japan's so-called pacifism. Let me tell you about my own experience. A few days after the fall of Saigon in the Vietnam War, there was a great victory rally. From the point of view of the revolutionary forces in Vietnam, this was a great victory after 30 years of fighting against France, fighting against the U.S., and fighting against the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese government. At a big rally to celebrate the victory, they held up the golden saying of Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the revolutionary struggle: "We fought for these words, didn't we?"

The Vietnamese revolutionary forces had won a great victory in 30 years of fighting the US-backed South Vietnamese government against the French and the Americans. At a large rally to celebrate that victory, the golden saying of Ho Chi Minh, the founder of the revolutionary struggle, was delivered "We fought for these words. The golden saying was written in large letters on a huge banner at the front of the top floor of the former South Vietnamese presidential palace in the center of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. In Japanese, it read, "There is nothing more precious than independence and freedom. Perhaps because I was still under the influence of Japan's postwar education at the time, I was puzzled as to why the word "peace" was not used. I wondered why there was no word for peace since we had finally achieved peace after such a long and violent war. But the concept of peace was not there, should not be there, and had been daringly eliminated. The idea is that we must fight as a people and a nation for independence and freedom, even if it means sacrificing peace. This basic attitude is the same in other countries. They fight for their independence and freedom at the cost of peace. This is exactly what is happening in Ukraine today. If peace is paramount, a country should surrender as a nation. If a nation declares that it will always surrender for the sake of peace if attacked from the outside, it will cease to be a nation.

I became aware of this reality in the world 40 years ago during the Vietnam War, but very few Japanese politicians at the time were aware of it, especially in the senior politicians.

Japan's 'pacifism' is a surrender principle

Pacifism in English, however, is a misinterpretation of the word. Pacifism in English means the principle of not fighting. So, it is more accurate to call it anti-war or non-resistance. It can also be called passive pacifism or non-resistance pacifism. In international discussions, pacifism is a bit of a ridiculous term. This is because it means not doing anything against military aggression or threats from foreign countries. It is sometimes interpreted as a surrender principle. In Japan, it has been misused to mean pacifism, a term that seems to refer only to the love of peace.

Mr. Abe understood this situation well. And during his tenure as prime minister, he put forth the phrase "aggressive pacifism" as the basis of his defense policy. However, there was an overwhelming majority of opposition within Japan. This is an emotional argument that Japan, in its own way, will defend peace under Article 9 of the Constitution in any circumstances, regardless of what people say. Behind this argument is a distrust of the state and the government. For the people, there is a good reason for this as well, considering that if they had followed the orders of their superiors or the government, they would have ended up in the horrors of war. On top of that, there were about two other factors

that contributed to the so-called non-resistance pacifism of the postwar period, heresy from the perspective of world common sense, becoming the majority thinking of the people. One is clearly the policies of GHQ, or the occupying American forces. This is the educational policy, the censorship policy, and the propaganda that everything Japan did before the war was evil. The fact that the Japanese Constitution was written entirely by the occupying forces was also kept concealed for many years.

The other is also sympathy for communism and socialism. This is what the Japanese mass media and intellectuals are all about. If communism is just, then pre-war Japan and post-war Japan are evil. What the US does is not good, the alliance with the US is bad, it is outrageous to make Japan more balanced country through constitutional reform. Propaganda from forces sympathetic to communism and socialism proclaimed that if Japan became militaristic, it would surely attack some foreign country again. For such leftists, it would be better for Japan to be a semi-state with self-imposed boundaries.

Correcting the unilateral nature of the US-Japan alliance

One by one, Mr Abe changed this situation in post-war Japan. Now let us jump back in time and look at more recent times. What reforms did Mr Abe make to achieve this? In 2015, Japan passed a law allowing the limited exercise of the right to collective self-defense. Until then, Japan possessed the right of collective self-defense but was not allowed to exercise it. There is no such strange country anywhere. Japan's right to collective self-defense in the UN peacekeeping force is limited. Therefore, even if the Japanese Self-Defense Forces were to join the UN peacekeeping forces, they would not be allowed to go where there was even the slightest danger of combat. The situation was so strange that even if Japan was attacked, only Japan was not allowed to fight alongside other countries. Incidentally, this kind of prohibition on joint combat with other countries' armed forces is not addressed in the current Peace and Security Law.

Even under the current Japan-US alliance based on the Japan-US Security Treaty, Japan only gets help from the US when it is attacked in its territory or territorial waters. However, if an attack is made by a third country when US naval vessels or aircraft are operating for Japan's defense just outside Japan's territorial waters and airspace, Japan has nothing to do with it. In other words, the US-Japan alliance is not bilateral. President Trump pointed this out in a very rough way that is typical of him. He said it was unfair. Japan has stated many times that no matter how much the US is attacked, the Japanese should just stay at home and watch Sony TV. This point reflects the sentiments or thinking of a significant part of the US. Mr Abe believed that a certain degree of bilateralism was essential if Japan were to rely on the US-Japan alliance for its own defense.

He passed a new law, the Peace and Security Law, to ensure that the US would not only help Japan, but that Japan would also have to do something to help the US. Or, around the same time, the Specified Secret Protection Law was also passed. This is also related to Japan's post-war heresy. In post-war Japan, there was no concept of state secrets in the first place. So, it was not a crime to pass on government information, which amounted to secrets, to hostile foreign countries. This is because there are no anti-spying legal restrictions, which would be essential in other countries. There was a period when it was not illegal on the Japanese side to pass military secrets acquired from the US in the US-Japan alliance to a third country. Mr Abe has rectified this.

The state is with the people

In postwar Japan, there was a strong tendency to dislike the state in the first place. The state is assumed to be an evil entity that oppresses individuals. The state is described as state power. The word "oppression" often followed, as in a game of association. This was especially true in the media and among scholars.

However, in the political thinking that Mr. Abe clearly espoused as prime minister, the state is with the people. The people decide the state of the nation. That is what democracy is all about. In a democracy, the state and the people are the same, and it is the people who create the framework of the state, who choose the state. The state and the people are not opposing each other. However, many of the people do not have a sense of nationhood, or they see the nation as a bad entity. In this way, the people feel less and less inclined to do something for the nation. They will not do anything for the nation, even putting aside their personal interests. The sense of love for the nation of Japan also disappears. On the contrary, when people say they love Japan, they are labeled as right-wing or militaristic. Such a situation has continued for a long time. There was a time when I, too, was immersed in such a state of mind.

Mr Abe has gradually changed this point by using clear expressions and a mild way of speaking. He changed one thing after another in a way that was gentle but never bent at the core. Prime Minister Abe was also the first to establish the National Security Council. The National Security Bureau was created as an organization to implement

the policy. Until then, the concept of national security had not been part of Japanese government policy. However, we must clearly establish it. If we are an independent nation, we must create a system to protect our own country. We must change the political climate and the framework of administrative organization such that we are not allowed to take that action. That is what Shinzo Abe has accomplished.

The intensity of Abe bashing

However, Mr. Abe had an extremely considerable number of enemies. First, there were many self-proclaimed intellectuals in Japan who disliked him immensely. There was even a university professor who said, "I'm going to cut Shinzo Abe down with a Japanese sword. But even if such a rant were uttered, the public would not sanction or condemn it if the opponent was Mr. Abe. If the same thing were stated against a leftist politician, the mainstream media and opposition parties would make so important about it as if the nation of Japan had been turned upside down. Moreover, this Abe-bashing has been going on for a very long time.

I once asked Mr. Abe directly, "Don't you ever argue about being slammed? He responded, "I'm rather okay with it" However, he did divulge that he kept remembering who had said what and when. For example, in response to the Specified Secrets Protection Bill I mentioned earlier, there were movie directors saying "This is state censorship, they are going to suppress all secrets, even freedom of expression. It suppresses everything, even freedom of expression, so you will not be able to make movies." In his last conversation with me, Mr. Abe responded to this claim by giving an actual example, saying, "Then, if there was even one film that could no longer be made as a result of this law, I would like you to name it, and I would like to refute it." This point may still be Abe's human nature. I stated that if it were me, I would give the real names of the people who said they would not be able to make movies if this specific secret protection bill were passed, and I would condemn them. Mr. Abe laughed and said, "Well, I do that from time to time. The opponents of the Peace and Security Bill, which I mentioned earlier, declared it to be a war bill, and even propagandized that it would lead to a military draft. It has been many years since the law was passed, but there has been no war. Of course, there is no draft. In Japan, even if the so-called leftists and leftists are wrong in their statements, they are not pursued as wrong. I have been observing such a situation for a long time.

The fallacy of left-wing claims that cannot be blamed

For example, as an old story, there was a time when opinions in Japan were divided over whether Japan should make a total or unilateral peace with respect to the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan. The leftists, represented by the Socialist Party of Japan and the Asahi Shimbun, argued against a unilateral peace treaty. The term "unilateral peace treaty" itself was a distortion. In fact, it was a majority peace treaty in which many countries joined. However, the Asahi Shimbun and other newspapers referred to this situation as "unilateral treaty." The left-wing forces advocated boycotting this peace treaty if the Soviet Union did not join. If Japan had followed the policy of not accepting the peace treaty until the Soviet Union joined, as the Asahi Shimbun and others claimed, Japan's independence would have been much delayed. What would have happened to Japan then? It is frightening just to imagine.

Another similar case is the opposition to the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The so-called leftists in Japan were all vehemently opposed to this treaty, the Japan-U.S. alliance. What would have happened if the Japanese government had given in to this opposition and cut off the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty? What would have happened if Japan had eliminated the defense of Japan by the Japan-U.S. alliance? It is highly likely that Japan would have come under the influence of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Japan at that time was an enemy nation from the perspective of the United States. When Japan was at a very major crossroads as a nation, if it followed what the so-called leftists were advocating, it would be a terrible thing. The left was proudly shouting to the Japanese people about policy theories that could lead to terrible things. These things are not remembered very well, and many of the Japanese people are unaware of them. It can be said that Mr. Abe has been watching this situation closely.

Criticism of the mock trial of Emperor Showa as a war criminal

Mr Abe has had to fight these left-wing forces for quite some time. The first time it came to the surface in a big way was at an international conference held at Kudan Kaikan in Tokyo in 2000 over the "mock trial of women international war criminals". This was a women-led international mock trial to judge Japan's war crimes and pursue those responsible for them. Roles were assigned and sentences were passed. As a result, the court concluded that the comfort women issue was a criminal act by the Japanese government, that it had not apologized or paid compensation, and that the main culprit was the Showa Emperor. People from various countries came to this and NHK and the Asahi Shimbun made a program and broadcast it in a very deep intervention way. The Comfort Women issue took place at a time when the Asahi Shimbun's gross misinformation had not yet been recognized as misinformation and falsehood, both in Japan and internationally. So, the basic premise of this 'trial' was not in line

with the facts. There was a tremendous backlash and controversy over what Mr Abe, as a young politician, had said about the NHK program in the trial, which was seen as suppression of speech. However, Mr Abe did not do anything to suppress the press. However, Mr Abe did point out that the mock trial itself was a product of political bias that was extremely lacking in fairness. So, there is such a history.

Criticism of Abe in the US

And this Abe-bashing from the left spread internationally. For a time, rather than spreading to the US, a small number of left-wing liberal academics in the US, radical by US political standards by today's standards, used the New York Times to try to beat Abe.

Abe is a militarist, hawkish and nationalist who wants to return Japan to its pre-war state. This term nationalist is also a perverse one. The leader of any country is a nationalist in the sense that he loves and cares for his country and people. It is natural for the leader of a country to think positively about his country. But when that same word is used from the US side against Japan, it comes across as condescending from above. The word 'nationalist' itself gives the impression of having an undemocratic or anti-democratic element. The word is even tinged with racism.

Mr Abe was accused of using the word by left-leaning intellectuals on the US side. They were so emotional that they even used the word in a bad way. In one instance, they said that Shinzo Abe was a "thug", meaning a bad guy or an assassin.

In hindsight, however, this was a slander by a small group of academics in the US who were trying to thoroughly bash Japan over the comfort women issue. The first of these was a woman called Alexis Dudden, a professor at the University of Connecticut. It was also this Dudden who called Abe a 'thug' in a public forum. She was later awarded the Peace Prize by a South Korean academic organization for her criticism of Prime Minister Abe. She is a political activist who is close to South Korea. At that time, these people in the US were constantly beating Mr Abe.

Growing public appreciation for the abduction issue

However, Mr. Abe became prime minister in September 2006. He was the youngest prime minister in the postwar period. In the process of becoming prime minister, Mr. Abe's achievements on the abduction issue were significant. I happened to have moved from the Mainichi Shimbun to the Sankei Shimbun shortly before that time, but I had been deeply suspicious of and aware of the crime of abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean government since my days at the Mainichi Shimbun. In fact, the fact that the North Korean government had been systematically abducting Japanese citizens in Japan was well known to some on the Japanese side from an early stage. However, the Japanese government did not admit it. Most of the major media also denied it. Most of the media were in outright denial when it came to the "abduction of Japanese citizens by the North Korean authorities. The strong reaction was that it was outrageous to make such an innocent accusation against North Korea, and that it was contempt or prejudice against the Korean people.

So, there were quite a few people who stated the claim that there is no such thing as an abduction issue. The names of these people are all on record. But now, none of these people are talking about what they said, and they are completely silent about it. This is an example of how people on the left are not pursued no matter what mistakes they make.

It was in this context that Mr. Abe listened carefully to Shigeru Yokota and Sakie Yokota, victims of the abduction issue, believed their claims, and worked with them. I was still in Washington at that time, and in 2001, the year before Koizumi's visit to North Korea, a representative of the abductees' family association came to Washington for the first time and asked for support from the U.S. side. At that time, the second president of the Bush administration came in and declared that North Korea was an axis of evil. Surprised by this intransigence, Kim Jong-Il, the supreme leader of North Korea, was frightened by the U.S. accusations, expected Japanese assistance, and admitted that he had abducted Japanese nationals. At that time, the U.S. government was more understanding than the Japanese government in resolving the issue of Japanese abductions by North Korea. That is why the Yokotas were happy. At that time, the core of the LDP government tended not to take a firm attitude toward North Korea. Under these circumstances, Mr. Abe was the only one who was making efforts to resolve the abduction case, even going against the wishes of the LDP core, and staying close to the side of the abductees.

In Washington, I heard in detail from Mr. and Mrs. Yokota and others about the reality of the situation. In fact, I met with representatives of the Family Association and the Association of Japan Relief Volunteers on a daily basis and offered my own advice as to whom the Japanese victims should meet with on the U.S. side, both public and private. That is why I was even more strongly aware of Shinzo Abe's efforts to resolve the abduction case. And Koizumi's visit

to Japan completely proved that Mr. Abe was right in what he had been trying so hard to do. I am sure many of you remember how this development raised the public's opinion of Shinzo Abe.

An introduction to Abe's real image in an op-ed for the New York Times

However, even after becoming prime minister, his negative reputation did not disappear at home and abroad. In this regard, I played a modest role regarding the evaluation of Mr. Abe in the United States. In September 2006, shortly after Abe's birth, the editor-in-chief of the New York Times Contributing Pages contacted me and asked me to write a critique on the new Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. I asked him why when the New York Times was slamming him. When I asked him, he clearly admitted that he had been writing too much negative stuff about Shinzo Abe and that it was a bit unbalanced. He asked me to write something objective, even though it would end up being positive, since you are able to see what is really going on with Mr. Abe.

Naturally, I did my best to write this article in English. The article was quite large and appeared at the top of the contributing page. The headline was "Who is afraid of Shinzo Abe? The headline, "Who is afraid of Shinzo Abe?" was an imitation of the famous 1960s American stage play, "Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

The first point I made in the article was that Abe is the first postwar prime minister to have grown up in a democracy, and the second was that he is also a US ally. He sat on the lap of his grandfather, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, and his house in Nanpeidai, Shibuya, was surrounded by demonstrators shouting against the Security Treaty, and when he imitated them and said he was against the Security Treaty, his grandfather told him to stop. He pointed out that he himself had grown up believing that the way for Japan was to cooperate with the United States.

Abe's new approach to the history issue

The third point was that, unlike previous Japanese leaders, Shinzo Abe would not simply apologize for the so-called history issues that had emerged. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has its own policy on historical issues, and I have witnessed this during my years in China, but until the Abe administration came to power, there was a period when Japan did not respond to or deny any unjust accusations made by foreign officials or private citizens on issues related to the war. Looking back on it now, many of you may wonder if such a situation ever existed, but it did. They did not deny or refute anything. That is why I was exposed to this accusation against Japan for a long time while I was in China. For example, the Chinese side officially claims that 350,000 unarmed Chinese civilians were killed by Japanese troops in Nanjing in one month. They denounce anyone who does not acknowledge this as being anti-Chinese. However, this is an impossible claim no matter how you look at it. Even at the Tokyo Tribunal, the population of Nanjing at the time was only 200,000.

Regarding comfort women, a man named Seiji Yoshida testified that Japanese officials were forcibly and systematically hunting local women in large numbers on the island of Jeju. However, it was later discovered that this was all a lie. For many years, there were 200,000 female sex slaves, called "comfort women," which turned out to be a lie. It was widely claimed that these comfort women were the result of the Japanese government's or military's policy of systematically forcibly taking young women from the towns and villages around them. In other words, the misconception of systematic forced taking by the Japanese military had taken root in the United States as well. Mr. Abe was the biggest target of attacks based on this misconception. When Mr. Abe stated that there were no forced renditions, it was falsely reported that "Shinzo Abe denies the existence of military comfort women. The New York Times was the spearhead of such denunciations. A Japanese Canadian named Onishi was the paper's Tokyo bureau chief, and he wrote such Abe-bashing all the time.

A higher-level issue was the response to the attitude that all pre-war Japan was evil. In postwar Japan, the most popular paradigm was the assertion that prewar Japan was evil. That is why Kimigayo is not good. I, for example, was a member of the generation that received such postwar education. When you go to other countries, you can see the distortion of this peculiarity of Japan. No country denies its own flag or national anthem. Nor does it assume that all its own history is evil. Japan's heresy is blatant in that area as well, but people have a tough time saying that even if they think it. But Mr. Abe pointed it out frankly.

Abe's reputation in the US skyrocketed

After that, Mr. Abe's reputation in the U.S. changed little by little. He himself went to Washington several times and present a discourse on the 70th anniversary of the end of the war to the U.S. Congress. He emphasized Japan's democracy, clearly stated a course of cooperation with the U.S., and no longer simply apologized for the war. Abe's English is quite good. He is not fluent, but when he speaks in English himself, he prepares more than enough in advance and really tries his best. It is the kind of English that ordinary native Anglo-Americans can understand very

well. The 70th anniversary speech he gave to a joint session of Congress was different from similar speeches by previous Japanese prime ministers in that he did not say that prewar Japan had done everything wrong. It also said that there would be no more apologies. It was an honest summation that both the U.S. and Japan had fought with all their might, and the U.S. had won the war. This frank message was surprisingly well received by the US side. This positive reaction to Mr. Abe was spreading rapidly.

To take a step back in time, Mr. Abe became ill in 2007 and resigned from the prime minister's office. He then became the leader of the opposition party. In fact, it was during Mr. Abe's out of power period that the reputation of Shinzo Abe in the United States began to change dramatically. Mr. Abe went to the U.S. as a representative of the opposition party and talked with various people. In the U.S., when the second Bush administration was in power, conservatives saw Abe's good points and clearly recognized that Shinzo Abe was a good partner with whom they could coexist through democracy and the Japan-U.S. alliance, the common denominator. They graciously welcomed Shinzo Abe even though he was not in power.

Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, who were in the second Bush administration, and Weinstein, the director of the Hudson Institute, who were appointed by President Trump to be the next ambassador to Japan, but it did not happen because Trump lost the presidential election were these important people who invited Mr. Abe, not in power, and treated him very politely on many occasions. The high regard and warm hospitality shown to Mr. Abe by many on the Republican side, as well as Mr. Abe's own efforts to speak to the American public in Washington, led to a circle of goodwill in the American public and private sectors that spread to the Democratic side as well. In the meantime, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of the Democratic Party of Japan, and other members of the DPJ administration said and did things that disappointed the Obama administration in the U.S., and this was one of the reasons why Shinzo Abe's reputation among the U.S. public was enhanced.

Abe's 'free and open Indo-Pacific' is now a key US policy

Shinzo Abe has clearly gained international acclaim for his Indo-Pacific initiative, which he preached earlier than any of the other countries. According to Abe's own explanation, he came up with this concept with the idea of changing the tense situation between Japan and China from the side or from a higher dimension. This point was clearly stated by Mr. Abe himself in his interview with me in April of this year.

Mr. Abe had been insisting since 2006 that the two oceans, namely the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, should still be considered together. Finally, in 2016, at an international conference on economic development in Africa, he clearly used the phrase "free and open Indo-Pacific" to publicize his vision internationally.

This "free and open" part contains an explicit message to China. The phrase "free and open" was meant to imply that China is working to expand internationally with its One Belt, One Road, and other infrastructure initiatives, but that the content of these initiatives is neither free nor open.

The Trump administration thought this was a good idea, so they started using it as fodder when condemning China's dictatorship and exclusive practices. I was curious what the Biden administration, which has consistently condemned that Trump administration, would do when it came on the scene. The Biden administration tended to eliminate everything that the previous Trump administration did, but in the end, the Biden administration ended up using the same phrase as the Trump administration, "a free and open Indo-Pacific," a phrase that Abe began to use to this day.

In the geopolitics of geographic expansion into the Indo-Pacific with respect to China, the focus is on India. India is a very subtle entity, but it has a strong sense of caution and distrust toward China. We need to draw it in and use it as an added pressure on China in particular. The push for such a comprehensive strategy seems to have appealed to the U.S. side. Since the end of the Obama administration, China has become a major adversary for the United States. As a result, the Trump administration declared that the policy of engagement with China, which had been consistently adopted by successive administrations, was wrong. It became a policy of confrontation and confrontation toward China. The Biden administration has followed much the same policy. However, there are some holes here and there. The Biden administration's "blistering diplomacy" toward China is also a characteristic of the Biden administration, as it believes that there are parts of China with which it must still cooperate and get along with. But in any case, the input of Shinzo Abe is clear in the Biden administration.

Why bring up the Unification Church?

Finally, I would like to mention a few things that concern me about Mr. Abe's assassination. The recent tendency to focus on the former Unification Church and make it seem as if that issue is somehow responsible for the assassination is puzzling. The only source of this information is the investigative authorities, who are clearly responsible for making the assassination of an important person so easy to accomplish.

I find it very unfair and suspicious that the current tone is to blame the Unification Association, with the major mass media as the main stage. Assassination cannot be justified under any circumstances. I also disagree with the assertion that this is a challenge to democracy. This is also an easy thing to say. But I am not sure what is in it. There is absolutely no evidence that the assassination suspects killed Mr. Abe to deny or challenge Japan's current democracy. Rather, I believe that the assassination occurred because of the weakness of Japan's current democracy. If the police in Nara were completely unaware of the fact that the suspect, a long-time resident of the area, had been smuggling guns and gunpowder, it would be an overprotection of individual rights in the name of democracy, whereby the private lives of residents are not touched. The fact that Mr. Abe's security was also completely inadequate suggests optimism that assassination would not occur in today's democratic Japanese society. From the suspect's point of view, the lack of security and protection in the name of democracy is what made the crime possible.

Comparison with the Reagan Shooting

When I learned of the assassination attempt, I was reminded first of the shooting and attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan, which I witnessed up close and personal: on March 30, 1981, a 25-year-old man named Hinckley fired six shots at President Reagan in Washington City. The security situation at that time has already been publicized in detail. Jerry Parr, who was the head of the Secret Service at that time, wrote a book titled "The Secret Service" which has recently been published in Japan. It is an interesting book. In the book, he describes in detail how President Reagan was saved. The shooter fired one shot and left an interval of about 3 seconds before firing the next shot. This is similar to what happened to Abe. Now the first shot was fired, the head of the security team, who was closest to the president, grabbed him by the collar, dragged him to the ground, and shoved him into the presidential car that was next to him. Another guard followed suit and pushed the president into the car. A third guard stood at the entrance of the car, facing the shooter. In any case, the move was thoroughly in line with the policy that the priority was to protect the president.

What has become clear since that time is that the presidential guard is based on a diamond shape. In other words, there is one guard directly in front of the president, two guards on the right and left of the president, and one directly behind the president. This makes a diamond shape. The president himself often wears a bulletproof vest. In Reagan's case, he was not wearing a bulletproof vest because he was supposed to come out of the Washington Hilton Hotel, walk a mere 10 meters, get into his car, and drive back to the White House.

Questioning the Failure to Protect the Guard

Let me raise several points that I question at this time. The first point is why there was zero security protection behind Mr. Abe. It was clear from the recording that the suspect was moving freely behind Mr. Abe, and that no one on the security team responded to his ominous and disturbing movements in any way.

The second point is why the guards did not protect Mr. Abe's body in the three seconds or so between the first shot and the next shot. He could have been forced to get down on the ground or covered by his own body to protect himself. However, there is no indication that they did anything. Third, if this suspect has been manufacturing a variety of guns and explosives at the same residence for the past 10 years, why didn't the authorities take precautions to detect his movements? Why wasn't this type of dangerous human activity alerted in the not so large local community? It seems extremely unnatural.

The fourth point is, if he is as important as Mr. Abe, why wasn't he given bulletproof vest to wear? Mr. Shinzo Abe, if not the incumbent president of the United States, was the most vulnerable target in Japan today. Even at a cursory glance, there were serious lapses in security and protection. It is heartbreaking that such a situation resulted in the death of a valuable leader of Japan.

Painful Regret on Mr. Abe's Last Smile

I have been looking at Mr. Abe from an international angle for many years, and I am now aware that I have somehow felt in my heart that as long as he was around, the nation of Japan would never fall below a certain level, that Japan would never fall into the abyss. Simply put, I have always felt that Japan would be fine as long as Shinzo Abe was alive and well. Mr. Abe, who was like a star of hope, has passed away.

In the interview with Mr. Abe, I told him at the very end that "there were many people in Japan who said, it is still Mr. Abe, and you would not be able to ignore them." What I meant by that was that he might be willing to serve as prime minister again. Mr. Abe responded with an indescribable smile and said, "No, I will do my utmost to help the Kishida administration." I took the liberty of interpreting this as a sign that Mr. Abe was willing to take over the top of the national government if the need arose. But now those hopes have come to naught. It is a pity. It is a painful regret.

Finally, I would like to report on the praise for Mr. Abe in Washington. While there is a lot of praise and criticism in Japan, I am surprised that there has been no negative reaction in Washington. I was surprised by the number of messages I received from friends and acquaintances, who I had seen as liberal and indifferent or critical of Mr. Abe, saying how sorry they were for his loss and what a grave tragedy this is for Japan. I realize that the impact of Shinzo Abe's tragedy in the world is greater than what is perceived in the Japanese media.

I would like to conclude with my heartfelt prayers once more for the repose of the soul of Mr Abe. Thank you very much for your kind attention.