

opinion

Branding Japan beyond Abe

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SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

Japan's prime minister has returned from what looks at first blush to have been a very successful personal mission to reinforce to the American audience that "Japan is back," and to remind Americans that Japan stands today, 70 years after the end of World War II, as one of America's closest allies.

As the daughter of a 20-year-old navy ensign who served aboard the USS Missouri eight months after Japan's formal signed surrender aboard the battleship, the close relations between the United States and Japan today are nothing short of a marvel.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's congressional speech was designed to humanize a man whose political rhetoric often reflects a militaristic and masculine view of Japan's past. True to form, he began his speech referencing his maternal grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who served as Japan's 56th and 57th prime minister. He quoted from Kishi's 1957 speech to the U.S. House of Representatives: "It is because of our strong belief in democratic principles and ideals that Japan associates herself with the free nations of the world."

It must have been particularly exhilarating for Abe to share such a positive memory of his grandfather's post-World War II political career. Abe has been quite open about how revolted he is by those who accuse Kishi of being a Class-A war criminal suspect. The suspicion is legitimate. U.S.-led Allied Occupation forces did arrest Kishi at war's end for his role as director of munitions under Prime Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo, but he was released and never convicted. This led to a political career groomed by those same Occupation forces that needed a conservative anti-communist leader for postwar Japan.

The prime minister has spent a lifetime in dedication to restoring the image and good name of his maternal grandfather. His righteous devotion to the reputation of this one man stands as a psychic block to what is becoming a growing problem for Japan's full nation brand campaign — an inability to get

beyond the politics and policies of Shinzo Abe.

Abe does not seem to have the will or the way to devote the same energy to Japan's overall reputation in the Asia-Pacific region and the world as a nation of 127 million can and should do.

If I were to publish a book today on this condition, I'd call it, "Brand Japan: A Government in Need of a Nation." The people of Japan need to be reminded of their value beyond Tokyo's central government, its dominant party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and its main leader, Abe.

We hear so much from the Abe administration about collective self-defense and the need to revise Japan's peace Constitution. Japanese citizens need to strengthen their collective self-defense of free speech and free press. A democracy anywhere, but especially here in Japan, thrives only when multiple voices are heard, when dissent is allowed, and when citizens feel free to express their thoughts and views without fear or favor.

A growing chorus of global voices who care deeply about Japan is genuinely concerned with the Japanese government's hardening of its political arteries. These friends of Japan worry that not only Japan's image but also its reputation is becoming one that is less open and free in its democratic principles. On the heels of Abe's trip to America, nearly 200 leading Japan studies scholars from inside and outside Japan released an open letter urging the prime minister to fully acknowledge Japan's role in the comfort women system of World War II.

The open letter to Abe is a symbolic gesture. While I believe in the power of sincere apology and forgiveness, I do not believe that the prime minister alone can repair the bad feelings in this region. Whatever Abe says, he will be met with a lot of negative pushback. It's a no-win for him. If an apology on his part were met with a grass-roots effort to bring more people into the 70th anniversary conversation, then it might have some positive impact.

While we wait for August to arrive, the citizens of Japan need to elevate the

national conversation beyond Abe and any statements he may or may not make about Japan's past. Japan seems trapped in a political straightjacket. Its outward gestures to the world are becoming dominated by headlines reporting the comings and goings and rhetoric of politicians who look largely to the past in order to heal personal wounds or pursue vendettas.

Abe labeled his speech to Congress "Toward an Alliance of Hope" in reference to strengthening U.S.-Japan relations, particularly in collective security and trade.

He notably did not quote his father, Shintaro Abe, for whom my Abe Fellowship is named. Shinzo Abe went along on at least 20 diplomatic trips with his father, who was Japan's longest serving foreign minister. Nearly 25 years after Shintaro Abe's death, the Abe Fellowships support his legacy through sponsoring policy-relevant research that will strengthen the level of intellectual cooperation between U.S.- and Japan-based academics.

Shinzo Abe has also been silent about his paternal grandfather, Kan Abe. This grandfather ran in 1942 as a liberal independent with no political party backing to challenge Tojo's policies, and succeeded in winning a seat in the Lower House. If we define hope as a desire for something to happen, Kan Abe went beyond hope to courage in action in this country's darkest hours. I'd like to see the prime minister widen his reference list when talking about his personal and Japan's history.

In the spirit and memory of Shintaro Abe's dedication to dialogue in international relations and Kan Abe's political backbone when all others were falling in tow with the military line, my hope is for a citizen alliance that moves us beyond narrow politics.

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Germany is Mercury, the U.S. is Mars

Stephen F. Szabo
Washington
THE GLOBALIST

Germany and the United States are Mercury and Mars. Germany is Mercury, the Roman god of commerce and the U.S., Mars, the god of war.

Germany has emerged over the past decade as the big winner in the West from globalization, the "Exportmeister" of the world in its class. It is the paradigm of a geoeconomic power, one that relies on its economic rather than its military power for its influence and which defines its national interest largely in economic terms.

Germany's world-class companies have a global reach and a global vision. Beyond the realm of pure politics, they are cornerstones in giving Germany shaping powers on the global stage.

A "shaping power" — while not a super power — is a state that has the power to shape outcomes and events. It offers an important status at a time when we see the emergence of a polycentric highly interdependent world with rising non-Western powers playing a larger role in global and regional decision-making.

The official German government paper on this concept puts the idea of "Gestaltungsmacht" (as shaping powers are called in German) in the following terms: "These countries are economic locomotives that substantially influence regional cooperation and also have an impact in other global regions and play an increasingly important role in international decision-making. ... We see them as more than developing countries but as new shaping powers."

Shaping powers base their influence on economics and, rather than acting within the confines of traditional alliances (such as the European Union, NATO and the Group of Seven), they fashion networks with new actors both at home and abroad.

Given Germany's great reliance on exports and its dependence on the import of natural resources, it needs to have a reputation as a reliable economic partner. Generally speaking, sanctions, drawing red lines and employing military force all run counter to Germany's geoeconomic interests.

In this sense, risk aversion, already a deeply embedded trait in German political culture, is reinforced. In my view, that has produced the "Nein Nation," a Germany that increasingly says no to policies that might endanger these economic interests. Its use of sanctions against Russia is an important departure from this posture.

America, in contrast, is both a major economic and military power with global security interests. The U.S. has a tendency to look to its imposing military instruments in dealing with foreign policy. Accordingly, it has developed a national security state that is as imposing as the German commercial one.

The resurgence of nationalism and military force as seen in Russia's challenge in Ukraine and the growing Chinese military challenge in East Asia have



opened questions concerning which type of power is best suited to operate in the 21st globalized century.

The divergence in the discussion over how to respond in Ukraine, between Chancellor Angela Merkel's ruling out of military options and the growing support in the U.S. on arming Ukraine, illustrates the potential for real-life differences in these two approaches.

The German model may seem to many Americans as one-dimensional and lacking in the necessary military tool in its diplomatic arsenal. Critics have a point when they argue that Germany has let its defense capabilities atrophy. Even geoeconomic powers need a strong military to hedge against risks in an unknown future. That is certainly something which the Ukraine case has made clear.

However, Germans are correct to argue that a geoeconomic approach will win out against the classic, if not antique, geopolitical approach of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Putin seems to be at war with globalization and the interdependence it brings. He has reversed Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's adaptation of Peter the Great's strategy for the modernization of Russia.

As Gorbachev understood, the Soviet Union (now Russia) could not be a first-tier power if it relied too heavily on the military dimension. In fact, it was this over-reliance on the military dimension that led to military spending at a level of over 25 percent of the GDP of the Soviet Union, helping to cripple its economy.

Putin has famously called the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. But he fails to understand that the collapse came from within from a corroded technological and economic base.

That is why Putin's turn at Russia's helm will end up being another geopolitical catastrophe for the country. Germans are right to argue that economic power and the interdependence it has brought will prevail over the exercise of military force and the disregard for what former U.S. official Zbigniew Brzezinski has called the "global awakening."

As he wrote in 2008, "For the first time in history, almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious and politically interactive. Global activism is generating a surge in the quest for cultural respect and economic opportu-

nity in a world scarred by memories of colonial or imperial domination."

The issue for the U.S. is that it is of course a geopolitical power as well as a geoeconomic power. But the country's leadership has to realize that it is increasingly neglecting its geoeconomic power in favor of its military dimension, at the cost of its influence.

The limits of military power have been made very clear by the U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, while the neglect of economic power has become increasingly salient.

At the recent International Monetary Fund and World Bank spring meetings, concerns about America's declining economic power dominated the week. It was Washington's blunder in opposing the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which led geoeconomic Germany and other key European partners to join the AIIB.

This blunder followed the failure of the U.S. Congress to enact IMF reform, which would have recognized the shift in the global economic balance toward Asia — something successive U.S. administrations have long advocated, chiding "old Europe."

On a broader level, the continuing gridlock in Washington endangers economic reform at home, including much-needed infrastructure investment.

The potential free trade agreements that would enhance American leadership both in Asia and the Pacific are very contentious as well on Capitol Hill, which will not please nations in Asia and Europe. The TPP and TTIP are at the heart of the new geoeconomics and will have a longer term impact on American influence than its response to Ukraine.

If the U.S. wants to continue to be a shaping power in this century, it will have to reduce its over concentration on military options — which remarkably has been a bipartisan phenomenon. The U.S. needs to rediscover its geoeconomic potential. Otherwise, it risks making the mistakes of Putin — and losing the insights of Merkel.

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GOP hawks twist Reagan's foreign policy legacy

DOUG BANDOW



Washington

Alzheimer's robbed Ronald Reagan of his memory. Now Republican neoconservatives are trying to steal his foreign policy legacy. A de facto peacenik who was horrified by the prospect of needless war, Reagan likely would have been appalled by the aggressive posturing of most of the Republicans currently seeking the White House.

Ronald Reagan took office at a dangerous time. The Cold War raged and Reagan sacrificed much of his political capital to increase U.S. military outlays. But he used the new capabilities created almost not at all.

Reagan's mantra was "peace through strength." Peace was the end, strength the means. He focused his attention on the Soviet Union and its advanced outposts, especially in the Western Hemisphere. Restraining the hegemonic threat posed by an aggressive, ideological Soviet Union led to Reagan's tough policy. Still, Reagan avoided military confrontation with Moscow. Indeed, he routinely employed what neocons today deride as "appeasement."

For instance, Reagan dropped the Carter grain embargo against Moscow. Reagan said he desired to encourage "meaningful and constructive dialogue."

Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement were a global inspiration, but the Polish military, fearing Soviet intervention, imposed martial law in 1981. No American bombers flew, no invasion threatened, no soldiers marched. Reagan did little other than wait for the Evil Empire to further deteriorate from within.

Little other than talk, that is. Reagan wanted to negotiate from a position of strength, but he wanted to negotiate.

Moreover, as my late White House boss, Martin Anderson, and his wife, Annelise, documented, Reagan was horrified by the prospect of nuclear war, which drove him to propose creation of missile defense and abolition of nuclear weapons.

In their book on foreign policy analysts Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke observed: "from 1983 onward, Reagan devoted more of his foreign policy time to arms control than to any other subject." Norman Podhoretz, the neocon godfather, denounced Reagan for "appeasement by any other name."

Reagan was willing to switch rhetoric and policy when circumstances changed. He recognized that Mikhail Gorbachev was different from previous Soviet leaders. Reagan worked with Gor-



bachev despite criticism from his own staffers. Gorbachev later wrote that Reagan "was looking for negotiations and cooperation." Or, in a word, appeasement.

Of course, Reagan was not a pacifist. But he was cautious in using the military. He usually intervened through proxies to counter Soviet or allied communist influence—an important but limited agenda which disappeared along with the Cold War.

Reagan used the military in combat only three times. The first instance was Grenada, after murderous communists ousted their slightly less hard-line colleagues. Reagan defenestrated the new regime, simultaneously protecting American medical students and eliminating a nearby Soviet outpost. When the job was done Reagan brought home the U.S. forces.

The second case was against Libya in response to evidence that Tripoli had staged the bombing of a Berlin nightclub favored by Americans. It was a simple retaliatory strike. There was no regime change and nation-building.

The third, and sadly disastrous, intervention was Lebanon. The U.S. had few measurable interests at stake in that tragic nation's civil war, but Reagan sought to strengthen the nominal national government, in truth but one of some 25 armed factions. Washington trained the Lebanese military and took an active role in the fighting. U.S. intervention triggered attacks on both the U.S. Embassy and Marine Corps barracks.

Reagan recognized that he'd erred. He "redeployed" existing troops to naval

vessels which then sailed home without fanfare. Because he had the courage to back down, thousands of Americans did not die fighting in another meaningless Mideast war.

Yet neoconservatives denounced him for refusing to occupy Lebanon. Podhoretz charged Reagan with "having cut and run." President George W. Bush argued that Reagan's withdrawal was one reason terrorists "concluded that they lacked the courage and character to defend ourselves, and so they attacked us."

Lebanon was a terrible mistake, but Reagan learned from his errors. More important, he was no global social engineer. Even where he acted militarily he had a narrow objective.

It's presumptuous to claim to know what Reagan would think today. But he likely would be angry at the attempt to use his legacy to justify a failed foreign policy.

When Ronald Reagan left office the U.S. truly stood tall. George W. Bush more than any of Reagan's other successors squandered the Reagan legacy.

And Bush did so with a recklessly aggressive policy that ran counter to Reagan's far more nuanced approach in a far more difficult time. Similarly, most of today's leading Republicans, in contrast to Reagan, appear to want strength but not peace.

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Intensive parenting producing infantilized youths

GEORGE WILL



Washington

Controversies about "free-range parenting" illuminate today's scarred cultural landscape. Neighbors summon police in response to parenting choices the neighbors disapprove. Government extends its incompetence with an ever-broader mission of "child protection." And these phenomena are related to campus hysteria about protecting infantilized undergraduates from various menaces, including uncongenial ideas.

The Meitivs live in suburban Montgomery County, Maryland, which is a bedroom for many Washington bureaucrats who make their living minding other people's business. The Meitivs, to encourage independence and self-reliance, let their 10- and 6-year-old children walk home alone from a park about a mile (1.6 km) from their home.

For a second time, their children were picked up by police, this time three blocks from home. After confinement in a squad car for almost three hours, during which the police never called or allowed the children to call the Meitivs, the children were given to social workers who finally allowed the parents to reclaim their children at about 11 p.m. on a school night. The Meitivs' Kafkaesque experiences concluded with their accused of "unsubstantiated" neglect.

Today's saturating media tug children beyond childhood prematurely, but not to maturity. Children are cosseted by intensive parenting that encourages passivity and dependency, and stunts their abilities to improvise, adapt and weigh risks. Mark Hemingway, writing at The Federalist, asks: "You know what

it's called when kids make mistakes without adult supervision and have to wrestle with the resulting consequences? *Growing up.*"

Increased knowledge of early childhood development has produced increased belief in a "science" of child rearing. This has increased intolerance of parenting that deviates from norms that are as changeable as most intellectual fads.

"Intensive parenting" is becoming a government-enforced norm. Read "The day I left my son in the car" (Salon.com). Kim Brooks' essay on her ordeal after leaving her 4-year-old in the car as she darted into a store for about five minutes.

Writing in the Utah Law Review, David Pimentel of Ohio Northern University notes that at a moment when "children have never been safer," government is abandoning deference to parents' discretion in child rearing. In 1925, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of parents "to direct the upbringing and education of children." Today, however, vague statutes that criminalize child "neglect" or "endangerment" undermine the social legitimacy of parental autonomy.

And they ignore the reality that almost every decision a parent makes involves risks. Let your child ride a bike to school, or strap her into a car for the trip? Which child is more at risk, the sedentary one playing video games and risking obesity, or the one riding a bike? It is, Pimentel says, problematic for the legal system to enforce cultural expectations when expectations, partly shaped by media hysteria over rare dangers such as child abductions, are in constant flux.

Time was, colleges and universities acted *in loco parentis* to moderate undergraduates' comportment, particularly regarding sex and alcohol. Institutions have largely abandoned this,

having decided that students are mature possessors of moral agency. But institutions have also decided that although undergraduates can cope with hormones and intoxicants, they must be protected from discomforting speech, which must be regulated by codes and confined to "free speech zones." Uncongenial ideas must be foreshadowed by "trigger warnings," lest students, who never were free-range children and now are as brittle as pretzels, crumble. Young people shaped by smothering parents come to college not really separated from their "helicopter parents." Such students come convinced that the world is properly devoted to guaranteeing their serenity, and that their fragility entitles them to protection from distressing thoughts.

As Penn State historian Gary Cross says, adolescence is being redefined to extend well into the 20s, and the "clustering of rites of passage" into adulthood — marriage, childbearing, permanent employment — "has largely disappeared." Writing in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Cross says that "delayed social adulthood" means that "in 2011, almost a fifth of men between 25 and 34 still lived with their parents," where many play video games: "The average player is 30 years old." The percentage of men in their early 40s who have never married "has risen fourfold to 20 percent."

In the 1950s, Cross says, with Jack Kerouac and Hugh Hefner "the escape from male responsibility became a kind of subculture." Today, Oldies radio and concerts by septuagenarian rockers nurture the cult of youth nostalgia among people who, wearing jeans, T-shirts and sneakers all the way, have slouched from adolescence to Social Security without ever reaching maturity.

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