

# Japan: Spectre of fascism is haunting us

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**About six months have passed since Japan's late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was fatally shot. On 28 December last year, the office of Abe was closed. [1] It looked like the end of the longest post-war disturbing nationalism and populist demagoguery. The chairperson of the Abe support group said:**

**"The Abe office will be closed, but "Abeism" will be handed over to the next person".**

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It sounds rather silly. "Abeism", the longest source of post-war reactionary politics, must be eradicated. Over the past six months, the secret maneuvers between the former Unification Church (currently Family Federation for World Peace and Unification) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have been exposed one after another. [2] Abe's career was crossed by international right-wing nationalism links. His politics, which prioritized capital, had ignored victims and exploited the labor force under low-wage and unstable working conditions in the name of "self-responsibility theory". "Abeism" is a result of corrupted capitalism. It has thwarted the creation of working class and crushed organized workers' movements. The Japanese population has lost a lot by the emergence of "one-strong" politics. [3] On the other hand, conservative politicians who had gained political power thanks to Abe's political legacy still wanted to keep Abe's influence alive. And incumbent Prime Minister Fumio Kishida forced the state funeral of Shinzo Abe to maintain and reproduce its political legacy.

## Forced state funeral of Shinzo Abe to maintain and reproduce "Abeism"

The state funeral edict under the Empire of Japan before World War II had been abolished when the Japanese Constitution was enacted after Japan's defeat. The reason for its abolition was that it was incompatible with the Japanese Constitution's sovereignty of the people, equality before the law, freedom of thought and conscience, and separation of religion and state. Therefore, state funerals are not permitted under the current Constitution. However, Fumio Kishida said, "the state funeral will be conducted at the discretion of the Cabinet," and emphasized the "great achievements" of Shinzo Abe. And on 27 September last year, Kishida forced the state funeral which has no legal basis. At the state funeral, Former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga read his condolence message. In the condolence message, each word that got into emotional expressions was terrifying.

"Why did heaven allow such a tragedy to happen? Why did it take the life of a person whose life should not be lost?"

“Prime Minister, your judgment was always correct.”

“It is because of you, an irreplaceable leader in the history of Japan, that we were able to pass all the difficult bills, including the State Secrecy Law, the Peace and Security Preservation Legislations, and the Revised Organized Crime Law.”

## **“Prime Minister, your judgment was always incorrect”**

“A person whose life should not be lost.”

First of all, this word made us feel very sick. In other words, this word means that there are people in this world who are not regretted even if they lose their lives. As a successor of “Abeism”, Yoshihide Suga revealed the baseless eugenics. Abe was surrounded by the eugenics and racist prejudices. In 2018, a female LDP lawmaker Mio Sugita who was “raised” by Abe said in a magazine that the government should not support sexual minority couples because they cannot bear offspring and thus “lack productivity”. She came under fire in 2018. But so far, Sugita repeatedly made offensive discriminatory remarks against Koreans, Ainu, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ people, people without children, and women. In the latest Fumio Kishida Cabinet reshuffle, Sugita was even appointed parliamentary vice minister for internal affairs and communications. [4]

“Prime Minister, your judgment was always correct”

No, your judgment was always incorrect. The Japanese population has lost a lot by the emergence of “one-strong” politics. And your death buried most of them in the dark. In 2015, Abe had crossed the Rubicon and made Japan a war-capable nation by passing a set of security bills to loosen the tight restrictions on the Self-Defense Forces. [5] Yoshihide Suga had consistently served as Chief Cabinet Secretary and had continued to support Abe for seven years and eight months since December 2012, when the Second Abe Cabinet was launched. He is also the longest-serving Chief Cabinet Secretary in Japanese history. Suga’s remarks at the state funeral were symbolic of fascist politics by Abe and Suga, who have repeatedly pursued “politics of lies”. For the fascists, coherence and consistency are irrelevant. Their remarks are full of contradictions. But some Japanese media praised them. LDP lawmakers “raised” by Abe have definitely inherited the eugenics of “Abeism”. Suga pretended to be calm in defiance of contradictions. And his condolence message rather aroused strong reactionary emotions among the Japanese people.

## **Inherited political legacy**

Consistent political legacy of “Abeism” was inherited from his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi. In the process, cooperation between conservative politicians and conservative religious organizations has been consolidated into specific policies by the initiative of the former Unification Church. [6] The Japanese branch of the former Unification Church was opened in 1959. And in the 1990s, the organization expanded aggressively throughout the world. Abe and his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, also a former Japanese Prime Ministers, were not members. But they were known as supporters. The organization was one of the LDP’s reliable allies against communism. [7] Abe also had connections with another right wing religious organization: the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership (SAS). And SAS had a close relationship with the Nippon Kaigi (the Japan Conference), an extreme right wing nationalist organization that was established in 1997. In 2001, a women’s association was established in Nippon Kaigi. The main lawmaker members of the association are Eriko Yamatani and

Sanae Takaichi, who will be explained later. Both SAS and the Japan Conference had Diet Members' Caucuses. Many parliamentary members belonged to both of the two Caucuses. And the national image that the two organizations were aiming for overlaps. These conservative religious organizations played a major role in the backlashes against women and LGBTIQ people that began in the 2000s. And since 2006, Abe had been the de facto leader of the reactionary backlashes. Abe's career was crossed by international right wing nationalism links. Close relationships with Abe were developed not only to conservative religious organizations but also to extreme right wing. Cabinet ministers and leading LDP politicians with close ties to the extreme right wing such as Yoshihide Suga, Eriko Yamatani, Sanae Takaichi, Tomomi Inada and others continued to support Japan's longest-serving prime minister.

### *Close relationship with fascist extreme right wing*

In February 2009, an intimate group photo of Eriko Yamatani (former Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission in the Second Abe Cabinet) and seven members of anti-Korean organization "the Citizens Group That Will Not Forgive Special Rights for Koreans in Japan" (or *Zaitokukai*) was released. *Zaitokukai* is a famous anti-Korean group which has about 10,000 members. In December 2010, Yamatani took a photo with *Zaitokukai* executives in her room of the Members' Office Building of the House of Councillors. [8] Yamatani has repeated the same claims as *Zaitokukai* regarding exclusion of Korean High School from its free tuition high school education program. [9] In September 2014, Sanae Takaichi (former Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications in the Reshuffled Second Abe Cabinet) and Tomomi Inada (former Minister of Defense (in the Reshuffled Second Abe Cabinet) met with representatives of an extreme right-wing organization, an adherent of Nazism, at the Diet Members' Office Building respectively and took pictures of each other. The organization name is "the National Socialist Japanese Workers' Party/Nationalsozialistische Japanische Arbeiterpartei (NSJAP)". The photos were posted on the organization's website. [10] Furthermore, in September 2014, a two-shot photo of Shinzo Abe and *Zaitokukai*'s executive was posted on the website. It wasn't the first time the two had met. [11] "Abeism" was at the same time a "strong magnet [12] that attracted social movements/individuals of extreme right wing and "left wing" to "fight together". Their self-proclaimed social movements sometimes turned into hate speech demonstrators yelling "kill!", "parasites", "cockroaches", and "criminal Korean" in the areas of many ethnic Korean residents such as Kawasaki [13] by anti-Korean organizations such as *Zaitokukai*. And they sometimes turned into division of LGBTIQ communities. "Strong magnets" have forced unfair and discriminatory treatment on oppressed people on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, creed, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, family origin, disability and other grounds under the pretext of "opinion" and "freedom of expression". [14]

### **“United struggle” of fascist extreme right wing and “left wing”**

The cooperative play between Japan's right-wing LDP and conservative religious organizations has been purposefully constructed as a powerful framework to seek discriminatory policy consensus in order to abandon the LGBT Equality Act in 2021. It was like a rigged horse race. The LGBT Equality Act was not finally submitted by LDP to the parliament even after consensus between Japan's ruling and opposition parties. In the course of abandonment of the bill, Eriko Yamatani and others strongly and relentlessly hit out at transgender people at the closed-door meeting. [15] Yamatani said on May 19<sup>th</sup>:

Some people have stated an opinion that they have a male body but they are women. Therefore, they should be allowed to use the women's restroom. Or they participate in women's sports and win medals. A number of ridiculous things are happening.

On the same day, a self-proclaimed “left wing” twittered “Lawmaker Eriko Yamatani’s claims are claims of common sense/just for granted.” After that, other ludicrous and groundless transphobic remarks were made on social media and websites using feminist language masking conservative interests. And even discriminatory international solidarity was also being strengthened in some “left-wing” communities. As a result, the LGBT Equality Act, which had been under discussion for five years by the ruling and opposition parties, was strangled in June 2021 by joint struggle of fascist extreme right wing and “left wing”. In response to the Yamatani’s remarks, a novelist known as one of the leading figures in Japanese feminist literature announced that she would vote for Eriko Yamatani by “united struggle” at the 2022 Japanese House of Councilors election of 10 July. In the past, articles of the novelist’s book and an interview had been published in the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) newspaper. But friendly relationship between the novelist and the JCP did not last long. She published a novel in a literary journal on the issue of “transgenderism” around the world according to the website. And her book was introduced on “Countries”-“Japan” section of the website of an international anti-trans feminist group at the time of writing with contact information of the organization in Japan. [16] Abe’s “one-strong” politics acted as a “strong magnet” attracting the extreme right wing and the “left wing” into a “united struggle” against LGBTIQ people. And the newly created “common enemy” was transgender people which doesn’t fit into “traditional gender norms” which had been intentionally created. Then their capricious common purpose was trans exclusion. [17]

### **“Abeism”: a result of capitalism in decay**

From the past situation of Abe’s politics, the fascism inherent in “Abeism” emerges. “Abeism” is closely associated with fascism and the fascist movements, if not fascism itself. The eugenics regarding LGBT mentioned by Mio Sugita “raised” by Abe is reminiscent of the Nazi’s selection of people from the standpoint of “productivity”. The ideology of “Abeism” rests on the authority of “traditional gender norms”. And that ideology, like fascism, must always hunt down and persecute its enemies. The ideology requires the presence of an enemy to exist. And the “common enemy” created by that ideology has attracted the divided “left wing”. The language and attitudes of racist close friends with Abe are very similar to how Trump describes immigration. It also resembles the situation of the extreme right wing forces, including racist, transphobic, anti-Semitic [18], and misogynist around Trump. The language to describe the oppressed and the method of oppressing them is fascist language and methodology itself: they use terms other than human beings such as “parasites” and “cockroaches” to perpetuate their racist stereotypes. Horrible and terrible stereotypical portrait of oppressed people created by extreme right wing LDP politicians and “left wing” attracted by a “strong magnet” is like Nazi propaganda tactics. [19] And in the tactics, the Japanese self-proclaimed “left wing” has played an important role as Strasserismus for their “united struggle” consciously or unconsciously.

Fascism is not a phenomenon of the past. [20] A spectre of fascism is haunting the world while increasing its negative and capricious life force.

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