

Globalization vs. Nationalism: Abe Shinzō's Beautiful Country Narrative

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Abstract: Western democracies are experiencing a surge of populism. Discontent towards globalization produced Brexit in the UK's EU referendum, while Donald Trump seized American presidency. Those who failed to benefit from globalisation are shifting their support towards Rightwing parties in Western Europe, notably in France. Japan is also experiencing a rightward shift; but is this due to a rising discontent with globalisation? Is Abe Shinzō's 'beautiful country' (*utukushii kuni*) narrative similar in characteristic to the nativist anger surging in Europe and the US? As a country that is amidst a nationalist swing towards the right, but benefits enormously from globalisation, is Japan comparable to Western Europe and the US? This paper traces the narratives of 'globalization' and '*utukushii kuni*'—and hence nationalism—to determine whether the two terms confront one another, or are complementary in the Japanese case. There are indications that globalization- and nationalist narratives complement one another in a pragmatic recognition of Japan's vulnerabilities. Hence, unlike its Western counterparts, Abe's nationalism is predicated upon embracing globalization.

Populist surge that swept through the West in 2016 shocked the world. The British decision to leave the European Union (EU) following the June 2016 referendum revealed the existence of a significant level of discontent towards not just the EU, but also globalization in general, whereby those who could not benefit from globalization used the referendum as a vehicle for venting their frustration and anger toward the establishment. The victory by Donald Trump in the November 2016 United States Presidential election was a further blow to the established international order. Trump seems intent on delivering his campaign promise to put 'America First', taking the US out of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement and the Paris climate accord. Not only that, he has repeatedly questioned US alliance commitments, not only making alliance partners nervous, but also potentially upending the current international institutional framework. France almost experienced a similar fate: the May 2017 presidential election returned Emmanuel Macron, a renowned globalist, as the victor; but the fact that Marine Le Pen, of ultra-right Front National (FN), running on anti-globalization ticket, made it comfortably into the second round revealed the reality of populist surge.

While it is premature to determine whether or not populism is following a global trend, there are similarities between and among the British decision to leave the EU (the so-called Brexit), the Trump phenomenon, and the performance of FN. They all share an inward-looking, our-country-first, sentiment underpinned by nationalism

and rejection of globalization. Here, globalization is seen as a problem, and the solution is identified as turning inward, reversing the tide of globalization. And nationalism effectively reconstructs a sense of Us vs. Them—that the world (=Them) is ganging up against Us; and the only to right the wrongs is to reject globalization. The Brexit, Trump, and the rise of populism elsewhere show us that such a message appeals to voters. In short, globalization seems incompatible with nationalism.

Is this the case in Japan as well? The Japanese Prime Minister since December 2012, Abe Shinzō, is a renowned nationalist. He has written a book in 2006 outlining his nationalist programme of transforming Japan into a ‘beautiful country’ (*utsukushii kuni*). Here, he intends to change the 1947 constitution, bring about fiscal restructuring, and to encourage the Japanese people to be confident of their own country along with its history and culture.¹ On the one hand, the Abe’s nationalism is evident. He wants Japan to be free of the shackles of pacifism, becoming a strong and resilient country that can fend for itself. Moreover, he wants to instil patriotism through education: for him, only by being proud of one’s country can Japan become a strong—and hence a beautiful—country. On the other hand, fiscal restructuring constitutes another dimension of Abe’s programme. This has been dubbed ‘Abenomics’, and it calls for not only businesses to keep on seeking international markets, but also for encouraging inward investment, as well as skilled immigration—potentially a very controversial subject in Japan. Put differently, Abenomics is contingent upon embracing globalization: rather than seeing it as a source of problems, Abe is actively identifying globalization as an important recipe for the realization of *utsukushii kuni*. As such, the Japanese case under Abe seems to defy the Western experience where nationalism and globalization are incompatible with one another. On the contrary, Abe’s nationalism is predicated on globalization.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, I provide some initial observations on the surge of populism in the developed world. In the second section, I explore whether a similar trend can be identified in Japan. While Japan had its own surge in the past decade, the emphasis is more on nationalism than populism. In the third section, I explore Abe’s narratives to fathom the extent to which nationalism and globalization are compatible. Abe seems to think that a beautiful Japan is a country that is culturally proud of itself, while simultaneously becoming an

¹ Abe Shinzō, *Atarashii kuni e: utsukushii kuni e kanzen-ban* (Tokyo: Bunshun shinsho, 2013).

attractive destination for foreign investment and skilled workers. Finally, I argue that Abe sees globalization as a crucial ingredient in his patriotic programme. The lesson from Abe's nationalism is clear. Unlike its Western counterpart, under Abe globalization is compatible with nationalism. To an extent it is the result of Japan's particular experience; but it also means that the relationship between globalization and nationalism are context dependent.

Globalization and Its Discontents in the Developed World

The year 2016 turned out to be a momentous year, having propagated two political seismic waves. The first wave hit on 23 June, when voters in the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (EU) by 52% to 48%. The second shock, perhaps more significant than the first, followed the election in November of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States. In both instances, the picture is emerging of voters—many of whom failed to benefit from globalization—venting their anger on the 'elites' by punishing them with leaving the EU or voting in an outsider and a populist. Furthermore, in both cases, there was a discernible, nativist, tinge in the support for 'regaining sovereignty' in the UK and 'mak[ing] America great again' in the US.

In the so-called Brexit, it seems that the result of the referendum not only reflected British public's historic Euroscepticism, but it also reflected wide-spread suspicion that the country was over-run by immigrants, and the perceived need to free itself from the shackles of Brussels bureaucracy in an effort at 'taking back control' and repatriating powers back to Westminster. There were also questionable references to £350 million ploughed back into the British National Health Service (NHS) once the payments to the EU had been suspended.

While the circumstances and the political-economic context in the US was different from the UK, there was nevertheless a significant cohort of voters who felt disillusioned by the elites and their promises of prosperity under globalization, only to witness white-collar factory jobs disappear. And similarly to the UK, the latent xenophobia among the majority of voters meant that Trump's message of 'building

the wall’ with Mexico and deporting millions of ‘un-docs’ successfully caught the imagination of people who lost out on globalization.

In an early assessment of the Brexit vote, Anand Menon and Brigid Fowler observe that, ‘[w]hen elites have sought—sporadically—to “sell” membership domestically, they have tended to do so in transactional and economic terms, focusing on “what we get back” in return for “what we put in”, rather than from any strategic or historical perspective or sense of mutuality’, thereby instilling in the minds of the British public that the EU could be done away with if the perceived benefits of the membership outweighed the costs.² Hence, the voters’ sense of victimization through globalization translated into ‘the need to stop paying money into the EU budget; a desire to restore “parliamentary sovereignty” (meaning in this context, refusing to submit to EU law); and the ability to determine a British immigration policy, couched in terms of a need to take back control of British borders’.³ Subsequently, what swayed the vote was the ‘lack of popular affinity for the EU, low levels of public knowledge, the lack of practised and effective public arguments for integration, splits within the two main UK parties, and divisions and disaffection in the country at large what undercut support for internationalised economic liberalism and the elites who advocated it’.⁴

A similar dynamic is observed in the Trump victory. As *The Economist* put it, his ‘victory has demolished a consensus that his “apparently amateurish and chaotic campaign has humiliated an industry of consultants, pundits and pollsters’, to the extent that the US ‘has voted not for a change of party so much as a change of regime’.⁵ Again, it was the wide-spread sense of disillusionment with the ‘elites’ felt by those who could not benefit from globalization. Here, globalization became a byword for elite arrogance and their disdain towards those who witnessed their livelihoods disappear. *The Economist* added that ‘[a]nger has sown hatred in America. Feeling themselves victims of an unfair economic system, ordinary Americans blame the elites in Washington for being too spineless and too stupid to stand up to foreigners and big business; or worse, they believe that the elites themselves are part

² Anand Menon and Brigid Fowler, ‘Hard or Soft? The Politics of Brexit’, *National Institute Economic Review*, No. 238 (November 2016), p. R5.

³ Menon and Fowler, ‘Hard or Soft?’, p. R6.

⁴ Menon and Fowler, ‘Hard or Soft?’, p. R9.

⁵ ‘The Trump Era’, *The Economist*, 12 November 2016. Accessed at: www.economist.com/node/21709951/print. Accessed on 11 January 2017.

of the conspiracy'.⁶ Hence again, globalization was identified as the source of ills, and the elites were named as culprits.

Populist pressures can be witnessed in other parts of the developed world: a similar wellspring of discontent with the current political *status quo* feeds populists around Europe. This includes France, where Marine Le Pen of Front National is poised to make it through the first round of presidential elections, as well as as in the Netherlands with the Party of Freedom and the Alternativ für Deutschland in Germany. As *The Economist* suggests,

the emergence of Ms Le Pen matches a pattern of insurgent populism across Western liberal democracies. A fear of job losses due to automation and deindustrialisation; a backlash against immigration; a distrust of self-serving political elites; the echo-chamber effect of information spread on social media; common factors helping populist political movements elsewhere have touched France, too.⁷

And it is not just the populists on the Right that are threatening the *status quo*; but also from the Left, such as Syriza in Greece and Italy's Movimento 5 Stelle.

Populists in the Western economies are tapping into the shared anxieties and latent anger of voters disenfranchised through globalization, as industries hollowed-out and lower-skilled jobs migrated overseas. Also, it seems that the latent xenophobia made a convenient scapegoat out of migrants. Their sense of helplessness fuelled vengeance towards the 'elites', which in turn made purported 'outsiders' not tainted by the establishment look more appealing. As Menon and Fowler observe, the Brexit vote 'was a vote of socio-economically "left-behind"; but also of "socio-cultural terms"', whether they lived in areas with recent rapid increase in migration, 'among those regarding multiculturalism, globalisation and immigration as forces for ill, large majorities voted to leave'.⁸ The populists purveying nativism and nationalism, along with the message of anti-globalization effectively won the hearts and minds of enough people to realize Brexit and Trump's victory and to make Le Pen presidency a serious possibility.

⁶ 'The Trump Era', *The Economist*, 12 November 2016. Accessed at: www.economist.com/node/21709951/print. Accessed on 11 January 2017.

⁷ 'Fractured', *The Economist*, 4 March 2017, p. 18.

⁸ Menon and Fowler, 'Hard or Soft?', p. R7.

Populism on the Rise in Japan Too?

Japanese politics evinced a similar emergence of populist politicians in the early 2000s. Koizumi Junichirō of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) assumed prime ministership in 2001 bowing to destroy the LDP from the inside, assuming the mantle of a ‘reformer’.⁹ He proved to be media-savvy, appealing to the masses by simplifying his message, portraying his reformist credentials as ‘good’, while those who oppose him as ‘bad’, akin to labelling them as enemies of reform. Such a simplified message gained positive media coverage proving popular with the electorate. Koizumi’s approach was tagged as *Koizumi gekijō* (‘Koizumi theatre’), and his determination to privatize postal services became the hallmark of his reform agenda. He successfully utilized the language of ‘Us vs. Them’ to convince the voters that the supporters of his privatization policy were the ‘good’ reformers, while those who opposed it were portrayed as establishment figures steeped in vested interests and thus branded ‘bad’. This worked wonders, enabling Koizumi’s LDP to win a landslide victory in the 2005 Lower House elections. According to Nakano Kōichi, Koizumi’s deft reading of public opinion and his ability in exploiting media interests enabled him to exercise decisive leadership.¹⁰

Another instance of populism in Japan was witnessed through the emergence of an outspoken and media savvy outsider. A former lawyer, Hashimoto Tōru, entered politics when he won the Ōsaka gubernatorial election in January 2008. As Charles Weathers argues, he was a complete outsider not connected to any political clan and hailing from ‘a somewhat disadvantaged family background’, but this experience ‘provided a foundation for his brash political style and helped to legitimate his demand for competition-driven practices’ as antidote to the establishment and vested interests, including the bureaucracy.¹¹ Similar to Koizumi, Hashimoto adopted the language of ‘good vs. evil’, labelling bureaucrats resisting reform as enemies of the people of Ōsaka. As Weathers observes, Hashimoto’s lack of political connection meant that a

⁹ Nakano Kōichi, *Ukei-ka suru Nihon seiji* (Tokyo: Iwanami shinsho, 2015), p. 119.

¹⁰ Nakano, *Ukei-ka*, p. 121.

¹¹ Charles Weathers, ‘Reformer or Destroyer? Hashimoto Tōru and Populist Neoliberal Politics in Japan’, *Social Science Japan Journal*, 17:1 (2014), p. 81.

Strong rhetoric [was] used in part to compensate for lack of family political connections or established party support. Hashimoto once told reporters, ‘Since I haven’t had any political power, how can I get the public to listen to me? I have to say things the media can pick up easily or I flop, right?’¹²

In Hashimoto’s case, the media-friendly soundbites translated into an aggressive language aimed at bureaucrats and union members, along with those deemed critical to his Ōsaka metropolis (*Ōsaka-to*) project.¹³ According to Murakami Hiroshi, Hashimoto effectively employed a familiar populist strategy of identifying a popular ‘enemy’ and assuming the role of a ‘hero’ aggressively seeking to discredit privileged establishment figures.¹⁴

Both Koizumi and Hashimoto share characteristics similar to other Western populists in their attack on the establishment. However, while both the Brexit and Trump are understood as a vote of no-confidence on the political class, the Japanese case seems to focus more on the unresponsive bureaucracy that purportedly gets in the way of structural reforms. Hashimoto exemplified this; and while Koizumi’s determination to ‘destroy’ the LDP seem similar in scope to Western populists, structural reform meant not only upending the *status quo* within the LDP, but it also implied the weakening of the link between bureaucrats and the party.¹⁵

Yet, another factor—globalization—that played a crucial role in both the Brexit and Trump seems remiss in the Japanese case. To be sure, if we consider free trade agreements (FTAs) to be manifestations of globalization, they are potentially the sources of domestic discontent. As Hidetaka Yoshimatsu argues, FTAs are ‘political architectures’ that a ‘sometimes concluded to enhance the state’s security position in evolving global and regional politics’,¹⁶ and in the case of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Yoshimatsu adds that the

[The cabinet of Prime Minister, Abe Shinzō] needed to join TPP negotiations from a geopolitical standpoint. The diplomatic relationship with China had deteriorated, ... [and the] Abe cabinet sought to participate in the US-led TPP talks as a cornerstone of its alliance policy with the United States.¹⁷

¹² Weathers, ‘Reformer or Destroyer?’, p. 82.

¹³ Murakami Hiroshi, ‘Nihon seiji ni okeru popurizumu: 2015-nen no “Ōsaka-to”, “Ishin”, yūkensha’, *Ritsumeikan hōgaku* No. 5/6 (2015), p. 891.

¹⁴ Murakami, ‘Nihon seiji’, p. 893.

¹⁵ Nakano, *Ukei-ka*, pp. 120-22.

¹⁶ Hidetaka Yoshimatsu, ‘Diplomatic Objectives in Trade Politics: The Development of the China-Japan-Korea FTA’, *Asia-Pacific Review*, 22:1 (2015), p. 102.

¹⁷ Yoshimatsu, ‘Diplomatic Objectives’, p. 113.

Given that large multinational corporations tend to gain from the FTAs, there are potentials for the emergence of discontent from local concerns.¹⁸ Furthermore, the secrecy surrounding the trade negotiations ‘can be seen to delegitimize the trade negotiation processes and can itself provoke resistance from a range of interests and social movements’.¹⁹

The Abe cabinet rushing to ratify the TPP seems to illustrate the level of potential domestic resistance, particularly from the domestic agricultural lobby. Superficially, given Abe’s nationalist credentials, it seems plausible to suggest that the prime minister has an incentive in pandering to those who are discontent with globalization. The *utsukushii kuni* (the ‘Beautiful Country’) rhetoric during his first stint as a prime minister between 2006 and 2007 evoked a nativist myth of Japanese uniqueness akin to Trump’s ‘America First’ narrative. Yet, when Abe returned as prime minister in a landslide victory in December 2012, the main policy driver became the so-called ‘Abenomics’ focusing on economic recovery through structural reforms making Japan an attractive destination for inward investment, as well as re-establishing Japan as an influential economic player. To be sure, nationalist projects also remained, including enhancing the international role of Self Defence Forces (SDF), as well as ushering in a constitutional amendment. On closer inspection, though, once Abenomics is combined with constitutional change and SDF enhancement seem to resemble the core tenet of *utsukishii kuni*—to make Japanese nation beautiful through economic restructuring and patriotism. Hence, Abe’s nationalism seems to combine the fruits of globalization with the characteristic nativism similar to the one witnessed through Brexit and Trump. In short, nationalism and populism in Japan embrace, rather than reject, globalization.

Populism, Nationalism, and Abenomics

Just as in Breixt and Trump, populism in Japan has a nationalist element, with its nativist attachment to the ‘country’, along with the invocation of identity politics

¹⁸ Yoshimatsu, ‘Diplomatic Objectives’, p. 106.

¹⁹ Patricia Ranald, ‘The Trans-pacific Partnership Agreement: Reaching behind the Border, Challenging Democracy’, *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 26:2 (2015), p. 242.

demarcating ‘Us *versus* Them’. In the Japanese case, it is conceivable that the ‘Them’ constitutes the familiar *Asian* Other, but the more recent examples of Japanese populism seems to be directed against a more specific Otherness akin to the Western examples. In the notable case involving Hashimoto Tōru, and his Osaka Restoration Party, rather than a ‘general critique of existing political actors and structures’, the invectives are usually reserved for ‘*specific* critique against *specific* actors and structures’.²⁰ Hashimoto served as both the governor of Osaka prefecture (2008-2011), as well as the mayor of Osaka city (2011-2015), and as Murakami Hiroshi notes, the infamously confrontational style of Hashimoto was primarily directed against groups and systems (*soshiki ya seido*) identified as problematic, with Hashimoto calling the opponents ‘stupid’ (*aho*) and dismissing their arguments as non-sequiturs (*kijō no kūron*). While the use of buzz words may seem evasiveness, Hashimoto’s followers joined him on social networks amplified the attacks, muffling criticisms of his abrasive approach.²¹ This had an echo-chamber effect, whereby Hashimoto’s targets recoiled from arguing against him, while the bystanders seeing it as someone else’s problem (*taigan no kaji*).²²

Hence, Hashimoto’s identity politics was directed primarily against the establishment. As Charles Weathers argues, in his appeal to the people of Osaka, Hashimoto claimed that, ‘[w]e cannot entrust things to Diet politicians.... Isn’t it only the people of Osaka prefecture who can get things moving?’.²³ At a national level, Weathers notes that the ‘LDP and the Democratic party curried Hashimoto’s favour at the national level in 2012 when they feared his electoral strength’, thus providing an organic link between Hashimoto and national politics²⁴—even when Hashimoto sought to position himself as an outsider.²⁵ According to Ioan Trifu, ‘Hashimoto also often exhibited nationalistic or extremist tendencies’ along with anti-establishment

²⁰ Petter Y. Lindgren, ‘Developing Japanese Populism Research Through Readings of European Populist Radical Right Studies: Populism as an Ideological Concept, Classifications of Politicians and Explanations for Political Success’, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 16:4 (2015), p. 585.

²¹ Murakami Hiroshi, ‘Nihon seiji ni okeru popurizumu: 2015-nen no “Osaka-to”, “Ishin”, yūkensha’, *Ritsumeikan hōgaku*, No. 5/6 (2015), p. 895.

²² Murakami, ‘Nihon seiji’, p. 896.

²³ Charles Weathers, ‘Reformer or Destroyer? Hashimoto Tōru and Populist Neoliberal Politics in Japan’, *Social Science Japan Journal*, 17: 1 (2014), p. 84.

²⁴ Weathers, ‘Reformer’, p. 84.

²⁵ Ioan Trifu, ‘Prefectural Governors and Populism in Japan (1990s-2010s)’, *Acta Asiatica Varsovienska*, No. 26 (2013), p. 25.

sentiments, declaring that a ‘strong power, almost dictatorial, is needed to change today’s politics’.²⁶

Hashimoto has reaffirmed his populist credentials after he left office. In his interview with *Asahi shimbun* in December 2016, he claimed that ‘Trump has more merit than Clinton’, arguing that ‘if Trump becomes the president, then it would give Japan the opportunity to be more independent’, adding that ‘what is important is how content [*manzoku*] the people are—whether be it the economy, dignity of the nation [*kokka no puraido*], or ideology [*shisō*]’.²⁷ And it is here that we find linkages between Abenomics and Hashimoto’s populism. Hashimoto effectively endorsed Prime Minister Abe’s restructuring, suggesting that ‘what is crucial for a politician is to be able to find an issue [*kadai wo mitsuke rareruka dōka desu*]’,²⁸ adding that voters want

Food on the table, not ideology [*shisō*] or lip-service [*kirei goto*].... Because people feel their livelihoods are threatened, political correctness ceased to be the number one priority....What we need is to say ‘No’ to current political status quo.... We need to adjust democracy [*minshu-shugi no saisei*] if need be.²⁹

Interestingly, Hashimoto suggested that ‘populism as a label is meaningless. All politics is populist [*taishū-geigō*] in nature’, as ‘democracy is about winning’, and that ‘I believe populism is a means for solving problems’.³⁰ Yet, he also added that ‘it is political correctness to label something as populism. You need to critique discrete policies’.³¹

²⁶ Trifu, ‘Prefectural Governors’, p. 26.

²⁷ *Asahi shimbun*, ‘Toranpu shōri wo popurisuto ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (1)’, *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 4 December 2016. Accessed at: <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016113000003.html> (Accessed: 13 December 2016).

²⁸ *Asahi shimbun*, ‘Toranpu shōri wo popurisuto ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (1)’, *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 4 December 2016. Accessed at: <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016113000003.html> (Accessed: 13 December 2016).

²⁹ *Asahi shimbun*, ‘Toranpu shōri wo popurisuto ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (2)’, *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 5 December 2016. Accessed at: <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016120200002.html> (Accessed 13 December 2016).

³⁰ *Asahi shimbun*, ‘Toranpu shōri wo popurisuto ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (4)’, *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 7 December 2016. Accessed at: <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016120500002.html> (Accessed 13 December 2016).

³¹ *Asahi shimbun*, ‘Toranpu shōri wo popurisuto ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (5)’, *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 8 December 2016. Accessed at: <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016120500003.html> (Accessed 13 December 2016).

It is also the case, though, that Hashimoto's populism and latent nationalism do not reject economic liberalism. As Kobori Masahiro noted, 'among his supporters, a decisive majority agreed with neo-liberal values'.³² Indeed, Hashimoto stated that,

Just because I am against TPP [Trans-Pacific Partnership], people say I am against free trade. That is incorrect. I am calling for a transition from "multilateralism" [*takoku-kan kyōtei*] to "bilateralism" [*nikoku-kan kyōtei*] instead....What determines Japan's political power is not the issue of principle [*kireigoto*], but power to negotiate.³³

Hence, this relative openness to trade seems to be the common platform for Hashimoto and Abe. Indeed, Abe shares affinities with Hashimoto over their shared calls for constitutional amendment and educational reform, while Hashimoto seems supportive of Abe's drive to turn Japan into an educational superpower (*kyōiku taikoku*).³⁴ Ultimately for Abe, it is Hashimoto's ability to win the hearts and minds of the people that remains most appealing.³⁵

Abe's Nationalism

If Abe is to be linked with populism, it is through his affinities with Hashimoto, particularly the former mayor's ability to attract voters and his nationalist sentiments. Abe himself has burnished his nationalist credentials, outlining his ambition to make Japan great again. According to Watanabe Osamu, 'Abe made clear his political direction [*seiji no hōkōsei*] was closer to Kishi Nobusuke, his grandfather than his father, Abe Shintarō'. For Abe, 'his father's war experience impacted on his ideology, and that made him suspicious [*kaigi-teki*] [towards war]'.³⁶ However, Abe added that, 'my grandfather grew up before the war, when Japan made tremendous strides [*taihen*

³² Kobori Masahiro, 'Populism as Rhetorical Politics in Britain and Japan: "Devil Take the Hindmost"', *Ritsumeikan Law Review*, No. 30 (2013), p. 115.

³³ *Asahi shimbun*, 'Toranpu shōri wo popurisu to ga dai-gaibō: Zen-Ōsaka shichō, Hashimoto Tōru intabyū shōsai (3)', *The Asahi Shimbun GLOBE*, 6 December 2016. Accessed at <http://globe.asahi.com/feature/side/2016120500001.html> (Accessed 13 December 2016).

³⁴ *Nihon keizai shimbun*, "'Ji-Kō-I" renritsu meguru omowaku', *Nihon keizai shimbun*, 19 February 2017, p. 12.

³⁵ *Nihon keizai shimbun*, 'Hashimoto-shi to renkei fukameru', *Nihon keizai shimbun*, 25 December 2016, p. 2.

³⁶ Watanabe Osamu, 'Sengo hoshu seiji no naka no Abe seiken: "gunji-takoku"-ha no keifu', *Gendai shisō*, January 2007, p. 117.

hiyaku-teki—the glorious era [*eikō no jidai*], and that Kishi ‘was unable to change the constitution must have been one of his greatest regrets’.³⁷ But, as Tina Burrett observed, ‘Abe’s brand of populist nationalism polarise[d] opinion’ during his first stint as the prime minister between 2006 and 2007.³⁸ As such, ‘Abe was more accommodating in his second term than in his first, ... [having] concentrated on the economy and toned down his nationalist agenda’.³⁹ Likewise, Takase Junichi noted that changes to the Education Law and National Referendum Law were strongly ideological, though criticisms were rather muted.⁴⁰ Yet, as we will see, his economic programme of Abenomics is predicated on nationalism.

Abe’s idea of a ‘Beautiful Country’ (*utsukushii kuni*) was seen as an innovative (*zanshin na*) catchphrase when it came out in 2006 during his first stint as a prime minister. It was partly a nationalist project bidding farewell to the postwar regime, but also an effort at resurrecting the remains of failed fiscal reforms initiated by his predecessor, Koizumi Junichirō.⁴¹ He sought to reinforce his nationalist credentials by emphasising nativist language, telling the Diet in January 2007 that, ‘we Japanese are endowed with infinite possibilities. Enhancing them lie at the core of building a beautiful country’.⁴² Abe’s populist-pull resided in his ability to tap into what Abe Kiyoshi observed as the ‘*Shōwa* nostalgia’. According to Abe Kiyoshi, ‘[Prime minister] Abe seems to be fascinated with [the 1950-60s] because it typically represents the virtues of Japanese that is fading in the present era of *Heisei*’, resonating with the general melancholy of ‘lost Japanese-ness’.⁴³ The image of shared hopes and endless possibilities embodied in the language of *Shōwa* was also a cue for Abe to reiterate his nationalist project ‘to leave the postwar regime behind in order to rebuild the nation of Japan as a “new and beautiful country”’.⁴⁴

According to Nakano Kōichi, Abe utilised media effectively in a similar manner to Hashimoto, exerting pressure and eventually seeking ‘control’ over the

³⁷ Watanabe Osamu, ‘Sengo hoshu seiji no naka no Abe seiken: “gunji-takoku”-ha no keifu’, *Gendai shisō*, January 2007, p. 117.

³⁸ Tina Burrett, ‘Abe Road: Comparing Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Leadership of his First and Second Governments’, *Parliamentary Affairs*. Online first. DOI: 10.1093/pa/gsw015, p. 19.

³⁹ Tina Burrett, ‘Abe Road: Comparing Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Leadership of his First and Second Governments’, *Parliamentary Affairs*. Online first. DOI: 10.1093/pa/gsw015, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Takase Junichi, ‘Seiken unei to seiji komyunikēshon: Abe seiken no gengo seiji wo chūshin ni’, *Nagoya gaikokugo daigaku gendai-kokusai-gakubu kiyō*, No. 5 (2009), pp. 79-80.

⁴¹ Takase, ‘Seiken unei’, pp. 81-82.

⁴² Takase, ‘Seiken unei’, p. 85.

⁴³ Kiyoshi Abe, ‘A Critique of Japan’s Political-Cultural Nostalgia and Its Impasse’, *Kwansei gakuin daigaku shakai-gaku kiyō*, No. 124 (2016), p. 83.

⁴⁴ Abe, ‘A Critique’, p. 84.

contents of reporting on his policies. Here, Abe's target included media organisations such as the national broadcaster, NHK, along with a liberal newspaper, *Asahi shimbun*. Tactics included shoehorning a sympathiser, Momii Katsuto, as the president of NHK, and encouraging right-wing media, such as *Sankei* and *Yomiuri* newspapers, to criticize *Asahi* over its reporting of comfort women.⁴⁵ Abe's reluctance to fully endorse the 1993 Kōno Remark admitting to Japanese government complicity in recruiting comfort women underlined his revisionist tendencies.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the Japanese government's December 2014 intention to establish 'Japan House' as a venue for exhibiting a 'correct image' of Japan and to 'restore dignity and national interests of Japan' represented Abe's enthusiasm for propaganda⁴⁷—particularly cogent following the deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations since the flare-up of territorial dispute in August 2012, along with the escalation of PR-battle between Tokyo and Beijing in response to Abe's misguided visit to the controversial Yasukuni shrine in December 2013.

Hence, Abe's affinity towards Hashimoto, along with his appreciation for the impact of media in packaging his nativist message places him on a populist spectrum. Moreover, his explicit nationalism seeks to provide a corrective to the so-called postwar regime rooted in the language of Japanese pacifism.⁴⁸ If postwar Japan is understood to be constrained by the pacifist Constitution, then it becomes an imperative to redefine Japan as *utsukushii kuni* by regaining dignity and confidence as a strong military power with a revitalized economy. Also noteworthy in Abenomics is that its nationalist—and to an extent, populist—element does not reject globalization. Unlike the Brexit and Trumpian counterparts, Abenomics embraces free trade and globalization. To be sure, this should not come as a surprise, given Japan's resource constraints. But it is also the case that Abe's longing for a stronger and dignified Japan entails the state to maintain its status as a leading international economic power. For him, economic revitalization entails an open economy and the continuation of a policy encouraging Japanese corporations to cultivate international markets—something that is criticised by Nakano, who considers Abenomics's fiscal reform element as a 'corporate policy' (*kigyō shugi*) in disguise.⁴⁹ In a similar vein,

⁴⁵ Nakano Kōichi, *Ukei-ka suru Nihon seiji* (Tokyo: Iwanami shinsho, 2015), pp. 155-56.

⁴⁶ Nakano, *Ukei-ka*, pp. 166-67.

⁴⁷ Nakano, *Ukei-ka*, p. 168.

⁴⁸ Watanabe, 'Sengo hoshu', p. 137.

⁴⁹ Nakano, *Ukei-ka*, pp. 154-55.

Watanabe notes that Abe needs to tackle both the normalization of Japan through Constitutional amendment, as well as to redefine neoliberalism enabling newcomers to enter the market saturated by *keiretsus*. And in the process, Abe's nationalism cohabitates comfortably with globalization.⁵⁰ In other words, Abe's economic revitalisation requires globalization as a recipe for making Japan a 'beautiful county'.

Nationalism Cohabiting with Globalization in Abe Narratives

As a staunch nationalist, Abe made no secret of his admiration for his grandfather, the former prime minister Kishi Nobusuke. For Abe, Kishi was a role model to be emulated. In his book, *Atarashii kuni e (Towards a New Country)*—which was a revised version of the famous *Utsukushii kuni e (Towards a Beautiful Country)*⁵¹—Abe wrote that Kishi sought to realize postwar Japan's aspiration to become a sovereign state (*dokuritsu kokka*),⁵² effectively a corollary to the conservative notion that Japan had been emasculated as a result of pacifist constitution. Abe stated that his 'theme' was to transform Japan into a strong country that can fend for itself, proclaiming that 'security (*anzen hoshō*) and social security (*shakai hoshō*) was my theme as a politician'.⁵³ Indeed, his intention has been to 'turn this country into a confident and proud country (*jishin to hokori wo moteru kuni*)', and on the eve of assuming power for the second time, he made clear of his aspiration to 'reclaim Japan (*Nippon wo torimodosu*)', reclaiming 'Japan, for the Japanese people, from [the shackles of] postwar legacies'.⁵⁴ Hence, the nationalist elements are easier to identify in Abe's *atarashii-/utsukushii kuni* programme; but as I will show later, his nationalism is also predicated upon globalization as its foundation in a significant departure from populists in the US and Western Europe.

Abe's Nationalism

⁵⁰ Watanabe, 'Sengo hoshu', p. 142.

⁵¹ Despite the current emphasis on Abenomics, this shows the persistence of 'beautiful country' narrative forming the basis upon which Abe's fiscal reforms constitute one element of his nationalist programme.

⁵² Abe Shinzō, *Atarashii kuni e: utsukushii kuni e kanzen-ban* (Tokyo: Bunshun shinso, 2013), p. 28.

⁵³ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 45.

⁵⁴ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 254.

Given his nationalist credentials, Abe's nationalist narratives are easier to identify in his writings and pronouncements. Having grown up observing Kishi renegotiate the mutual security agreement with the US in 1960, he has come to ponder what it meant to be a conservative. Furthermore, Abe began questioning why conservatism was vilified across the media and by the populace in general, writing that, 'for me, conservatism is not an ideology, as it is a stance in thinking about Japan and being Japanese.... We need to be prudent about how and why traditions nurtured throughout the long Japanese history still survive today'.⁵⁵ Abe lamented the gradual erosion of Japanese tradition and customs, arguing that Japan was encountering a loss of 'familial ties, love for one's homeland, as well as a longing for the country'.⁵⁶ In a seeming rebuttal of individualism and the excessive emphasis on human rights, Abe claimed that 'the rights of the individuals are guaranteed by the state',⁵⁷ and that the 'state and nation are not in conflict. Rather, they are mutually related'.⁵⁸ Reaffirming his patriotism, Abe stressed that 'we should be proud of the shape of our country that we helped shape ourselves. We have no intention of changing its shape',⁵⁹ adding that 'there is no other place to which we feel at home than our own country. Whatever others say, there is nothing unnatural about being proud of our country, history, tradition, and culture'.⁶⁰ We can see that Abe has invoked nativism familiar in the Brexit and Trump victory.

Abe's inward-looking patriotism evokes the populist criticism of globalists as citizens of nowhere. Coupled with his communitarian instincts, Abe claimed that 'people from other countries consider us as being Japanese—belonging to [the Japanese] state',⁶¹ adding that 'there is nothing more inorganic [*mukishitsu*] about someone refusing to belong'.⁶² In a imaginary reminiscent of the primacy accorded to landscape as the source of national essence and identity in Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo*,⁶³ Abe wrote that

⁵⁵ Abe *Atarashii*, pp.30-31.

⁵⁶ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 67.

⁵⁸ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 73.

⁶⁰ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 95.

⁶¹ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 96.

⁶² Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 97.

⁶³ Watsuji Tetsurō, *Fūdo* (Tokyo: Iwanami bunko, 19XX?).

A country is not about its governance structure. It is about the landscape [*tochi-gara*] of Japan. There, we can relate to the nature, our ancestors, family, and regional communities [*chiiki komyunitī*]. To defend our country is about defending the foundations of our very existence—our families,⁶⁴

adding that ‘it is because we have the beautiful rice paddies that makes Japan beautiful’.⁶⁵ These could be seen as Abe’s efforts at appealing to public’s nostalgia towards a long-lost sense of home. The readiness with which a Watsuji-esque identity narratives were invoked confirmed the centrality of nationalism in Abe’s thinking. Elsewhere, Abe has been burnishing his nationalist credentials. On the eve of assuming office for the first time in September 2006, Abe wrote that, with the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons evident, ‘the Japanese diplomacy is entering a significant juncture’,⁶⁶ proclaiming that, as a politician, ‘one must be ready to die for Japan—a country that is beautiful [*utsukushii kuni*]’.⁶⁷ On the issue of constitutional amendment, he stated in an interview in 2007 that ‘the constitution is supposed to narrate Japan’s vision for the future and ideals’, and since the current constitution was written 60 years ago, ‘it is not fit for purpose anymore’.⁶⁸

The aggressive language of his first term of office has been subdued by the time he became prime minister for the second time in December 2012. But as the imminent constitutional amendment, as well as the enhanced role for SDF attest, nationalism remains the foundation upon which fiscal reforms are to be conducted. Indeed, Abenomics, with its associated fiscal- and structural reforms, is fuelled by globalization; but it also remains a means to an end: as a vehicle to realize the renewal of Japan into an *atarashii kuni*.

Abe and Globalization

There is an impression that nationalists are largely opposed to globalization. Abe’s nativism possesses an essentialist notion of Japanese homeland as a unique entity that is readily distinguishable from the rest of the world; and his tendency towards

⁶⁴ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 246.

⁶⁶ Abe Shinzō, ‘Kono kuni no tame ni inochi wo suteru’, *Bungei shunjū*, September 2006, p. 96.

⁶⁷ Abe, ‘Kono kuni’, p. 108.

⁶⁸ Abe Shinzō and Sakurai Yoshiko, ‘Totsugeki intabyū Abe Shinzō vs. Sakuari Yoshiko’, *Bungei shinjū*, May 2007, p. 94.

nostalgia seems antagonistic towards the ubiquity and indeterminacy of globalization. Indeed, both the Brexit and Trump was mainly a reaction against the worst excesses of globalization, prompting populists to play on the fears and anxieties shared by the populace, pledging to roll back the tide of globalization.

There is also a tinge of populism in Abe. While not as emphatic as Hashimoto, we can witness some elements of exploiting people's anxieties. For instance, Abe made reference to people's anger following the Triple Intervention in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, writing that the 'people's anger at the perceived weakness of the then government' was understandable.⁶⁹ Here again, he was inferring the need for a strong state to give voice to the people. Simultaneously, referring to the failure by the government—and particularly the bureaucracy—to keep track of pensions contributions, Abe argued that the 'Social Welfare Office failed to warn people that unless a person has contributed for 25 years or more, then they were set to lose their entitlements. This is a typical case of lack of service spirit [*sāvisu seishin*]'—a familiar populist tactic of criticizing the establishment.⁷⁰ He added that there is a need to reform the pensions system: for instance, consolidating bureaucrats' pensions scheme with that of the private sector. And according to Abe, the reason why this has not been accomplished yet was 'due to resistance from the bureaucrats'.⁷¹ So, there is a hint of populism in Abe. Yet, despite his nativism and the familiar populist-pull, Abe does not see globalization as an anathema. This seems to set him apart from the more familiar populism behind the Brexit and Trump. Indeed, his amenity towards globalization is not so much in conflict with his nationalism, as it is very much a necessary ingredient in the *atarashii-utuskushii kuni* project.

Contrary to the stereotypical nationalist who instinctively shuns globalization, Abe embraced globalization as a necessary condition for the revitalization of the Japanese economy. In short, Abenomics required globalization to succeed. In his book, Abe made several cases in support of globalization. He argued that the 'prolonged economic downturn' is one of many factors that contribute to making Japan's environment hostile.⁷² Abe reminisced about the late-1950s/early-1960s (the *Shōwa* 30s) as an era when '[the people who survived the War] turned their regrets for the

⁶⁹ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 30.

⁷⁰ Abe, *Atarashii*, pp. 185-86.

⁷¹ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 195.

⁷² Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 5.

defeat and regrets for starting the War into an opportunity' to embrace globalization and to thrive.⁷³ In referring to the Koizumi cabinet's decision to send SDF to Iraq in November 2003, Abe claimed that 'it was in Japan's national interest to help revive peace and stability in the Middle East', as Japan remains dependent on oil imports from the region.⁷⁴ Hence, rather than turning his back on globalization, Abe seem confident in embracing it, unlike his nationalist counterparts in the West.

Indeed, Abe's message had been distinct in its celebration of the opportunities of globalization in stark contrast to Brexiteers and Trump's 'America First'. Abe argued that,

What we are striving for is to turn Japan into a country where people want to come to work and invest. In other words, we want Japan to turn itself into a country for anyone to be given a chance and to exploit their skills.⁷⁵

Here, the proverbial drawbridge is conspicuous by its absence. Abe considered innovation to be 'the key to future growth',⁷⁶ suggesting that 'we need to take Asian markets into consideration. We need to make the flow of people, goods, and capital as free as possible, and turn economic growth in Asia translate into economic growth for Japan'.⁷⁷ What was anathema to Brexiteers and Trump supporters have been turned into an opportunity for Japan.

The embrace of globalization has been a running theme for Abe. In a magazine interview in October 2006, Abe claimed that 'the businesses need to think about the need to survive the global race, not just the domestic competition' implying the necessity of structural reforms forming the blueprint for Abenomics in his second term of office.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Abe added that Japan needed to promote itself as a 'brand', stressing that 'we need to establish our own brand image in the global market place'.⁷⁹ In another interview, Abe reaffirmed his commitment to globalization, stressing that 'Japan needs to take initiatives in creating an open and innovative Asia'.⁸⁰ On the one hand, it is no surprise that Abe wanted to embrace globalization: a

⁷³ Abe, *Atarashii*, pp. 82; 225.

⁷⁴ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 139.

⁷⁵ Abe, *Atarashii*, pp. 161-62.

⁷⁶ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 242.

⁷⁷ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 243.

⁷⁸ Abe Shinzō with Suenobu Yoshimasa and Katō Kiyotaka, 'Kempō kaisei ni rīdashippu wo hakki', *Sekai shūhō*, 3 October 2006, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Abe, Suenobu, and Katō, 'Kempō', p. 20.

⁸⁰ Abe and Sakurai, 'Totsugeki', pp. 101-2.

resource-constrained Japan necessarily thrived on globalization; and the declining population made it an imperative to think positively about opening up Japan's labour market to migrants. On the other hand, Abe's enthusiasm for globalization distances him from his nationalist counterparts for the very same reason.

Abe's embrace of globalization remains an ongoing theme in his second term. He argued in a magazine interview in July 2013 that his support for the ill-fated Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) despite 'strong opposition from interest groups and from within the LDP' as a way to help revitalize the Japanese economy.⁸¹ Writing in a conservative monthly in 2014, Abe claimed that 'Japan is already recognized as an economy full of high quality workforce and businesses. If we utilize these resources well, we can ride out many problems',⁸² adding that 'even the regions need to realize that the time has come to seek new markets internationally'.⁸³ Furthermore, he wrote again in 2015 suggesting that 'I consider myself to be the top salesman for Japan.... By contributing high quality infrastructure worldwide, it will benefit the Japanese economy; and by helping developing countries thrive, it will help to foster peaceful international community'.⁸⁴

While Abe's enthusiasm for foreign markets resembles mercantile realism with parallels to populists in the West, nevertheless we can still witness his undiminished devotion to globalization as a key to Japanese economic revival. At the World Economic Forum Japan Meeting in June 2013, Abe told delegates that his government's intention is to 'unleash the "possibilities" [*kanō-sei*] of Japanese business to the outside world', and to 'become the world's most business-friendly environment' by 'bringing in people, capital, and investment; and turn them into seeds for economic growth', adding that 'Abenomics is about a "win-win" between international economy and the Japanese economy; a "win-win" between economic growth and fiscal restructuring'.⁸⁵ And as if to emphasize his globalist credentials,

⁸¹ Tawara Sōichirō, 'Naikaku sōri-daijin Abe Shinzō kinkyū intabyū', *Chūō kōron*, July 2013, p. 22.

⁸² Abe Shinzō, 'Abe Shinzō Abenomikusu dai-nishō kidō sengen', *Bungei shunjū*, September 2014, p. 95.

⁸³ Abe, 'Abe Shinzō', p. 102.

⁸⁴ Abe Shinzō, 'Abenomikusu no seihi wo tou: "Ichioku sō-katsuyaku" waga shin-i', *Bungei shunjū*, December 2015, p. 103.

⁸⁵ Kantei, 'Sekai keizai foramu Japan Meeting o-puningu sesshon'. Available at :http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0611speech.html. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

Abe proclaimed in February 2015 that ‘the inward-looking Japanese mindset of pre-Abenomics Japan is no more. Japan is now open inside and outside’.⁸⁶

Hence, for Abe, nationalism cohabitates rather comfortably with globalization. Unlike the populists witnessed through Brexit and the election of Trump, globalization is embraced as an economic lifeline for Japan. On the one hand, this is not surprising, given Japan’s resource constraints. Japan thrives on trade and has benefited from globalization. On the other hand, this reminds us that nationalism does not automatically translate into an outright rejection of globalization. Indeed, herein lies the uniqueness of Abenomics: while it is mainly about fiscal restructuring, Abenomics also constitutes a crucial ingredient in Abe’s nationalist ambitions in Japan’s renewal as a strong, and hence, a beautiful country. As such, globalization remains an integral part of Abe’s patriotic programme.

Utusukushii Kuni that Embraces Globalization

Abe remains a staunch nationalist intent on amending the pacifist constitution. But at the same time, he seems to be a proponent of globalization, identifying it as a key to Japan’s economic revival. Observing the Brexiteers and Trumpians, it is tempting to conclude that nationalism and globalization do not mix. Both are inward-looking and intent on rolling back the tide of globalization. To be sure, both the Brexit and the Trump phenomenon do not reject trade: they both share mercantilist sentiments in considering international trade as a contest between winners and losers, hoping to be able to export to the international markets and attract inward investment, albeit coupled with non-tariff barriers, while considering trade deficits as an indication of defeat. We can witness an element of mercantile realism in Abe encouraging Japanese businesses to cultivate international markets. Simultaneously, though, it is the case that Abe also feels compelled to admit that Japan needs not only inward investment, but also skilled workforce, given the significant decline in Japanese population. Hence, nationalism and globalization cohabitate comfortably under Abenomics.

⁸⁶ Kantei, ‘CLSA Japan fōramu 2015’. Available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/97_abe/actions/201502/24clsa_forum.html. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

It must be remembered that Abenomics as a prescription for reinvigorating Japanese economy and society, and is an integral component of Abe's larger patriotic programme of realizing a beautiful country (*utsukushii kuni*), and hence a new country (*atarashii kuni*) that is economically dynamic, confident, and courageous enough to shed pacifist constraints of the so-called postwar regime. Abenomics is about regaining *genki* ('vitality'). In his book, Abe suggested that one way to tackle ageing society, and hence the pensions time-bomb is to 'extend "health expectancy" [*kenkō jumyō*] so that the elderly can live healthily without having to tap into health care'.⁸⁷ And on education, he argued that the 'aim of the education system is to nurture determined citizens, and to construct a dignified state'.⁸⁸ But doing so requires structural reforms, because 'if the youths stop believing in the future, society loses vitality, and order crumbles'⁸⁹—a clear identification of Abenomics as a vehicle for his nationalist programme. Hence, here we see a clear connection between education as a way to inculcate future generations with a sense of patriotism, on the one hand; with the imperatives of economic reforms, on the other. In short, Abenomics is needed for the Japanese to be proud of their homeland.

Yet, Abe's nationalism does not translate into a rejection of neoliberal economics. Indeed, Abe seems comfortable with economic competition. Abe stated that 'competition means there are going to be winners and losers. With fiscal reforms, it is natural that there will be disparities [*kakusa*]. What is important is to make sure we have adequate safety-net',⁹⁰ and that 'what we must make sure disparities do not manifest'.⁹¹ As such, 'we need to make sure people can be given another chance [*sai-charenji*]'.⁹² Put differently, Abe wants a strong country that can fend for itself, and for the citizens to be proud of the country's culture; and to be confident that they will be rewarded for their efforts. Hence, Abenomics as the economic component of Abe's patriotic programme suggests that Abe believes that globalization will provide Japanese society with resilience and revitalization necessary to realize the goal of becoming *utsukushii kuni*.

⁸⁷ Abe, *Atarashii*, pp. 200-1.

⁸⁸ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 209.

⁸⁹ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 215.

⁹⁰ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 226.

⁹¹ Abe, *Atarashii*, pp. 226-7.

⁹² Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 229.

Utsukushii Kunin as *Embracing Globalization*

The narrative of *utsukushii kuni* inheres a nativist tinge evoking the image of homeland. It was more prominent during his first term of office between 2006 and 2007, but still rears its head in official pronouncements in his second stint since December 2012 while often upstaged by Abenomics. Even then, *utsukushii kuni* is still alive, and indeed, provides the platform upon which Abenomics embraces globalization.

The problem with *utsukushii kuni* lies in its definition: it is diffuse and hard to pin point. It is effectively a set of disparate images embedded in nostalgia about the Japanese homeland. Simultaneously, though, the fuzziness of *utsukushii kuni* lends itself to accommodating globalization within the language of nationalism and nativism. From Abe's book, one can garner a sense of what beautiful country entails: it is about a strong country that bids farewell to a purportedly lame duck *senjo* regime.⁹³ Elsewhere, we also see that *utsukushii kuni* is about regaining national dignity as a country that is respected by the international community and a being a country that the Japanese citizens can be proud of.⁹⁴ In a 2006 press conference, Abe lists the attributes of *utsukushii kuni* as comprising: (1) a beautiful nature, culture, and history; (2) a free society; (3) innovative, openness, and willingness to invest in human capital; and (4) to be explicit about 'country identity', and to turn Japan into a desirable destination for foreign talent.⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that there is already a hint of Abenomics in calling for a country open to inward investment and immigration of foreign talent. The foreshadowing of Abenomics was evident in his September 2006 speech to the Diet. He outlined his vision of a beautiful country in which a 'beautiful Japan is a country that is full of vitality, chance, and kindness. It is a country that cherishes the spirit of autonomy [*jiritsu no seishin*]. And it is a country that is open to the world.'⁹⁶

The connection between *utsukushii kuni* and what would become Abenomics was reaffirmed in January 2007, when Abe told a meeting on economic reforms that

⁹³ Abe, *Atarashii*, p. 233.

⁹⁴ Kantei, 'Abe naikaku mēru magajin', 5 October 2006. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/m-magazine/backnumber/2006/1005.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

⁹⁵ Kantei, 'Abe naikaku sōri daijin kasha-kaiken', 26 September 2006. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/abespeech/2006/09/26press.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

⁹⁶ Kantei, 'Dai 165-kai kokkai Abe naikaku sōri daijin shoshin-hyōmei enzetsu'. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/utukusii/abespeech/165.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

‘for Japan to be able to thrive as a beautiful country, vitalized economy is indispensable as a foundation’,⁹⁷ and in referring to the youths and the need to instil confidence in the future, Abe stated that, ‘I have pledged to create a beautiful Japan that is respected throughout the world, that our children can be proud and feel confident, respects the spirit of autonomy, and is full of vitality, chance, and kindness’.⁹⁸ And in an order to implement this, he suggested that Japan needed to ‘construct vitalized economy, especially in light of population decline’, and needed to ‘be innovative, and be open to vitality from Asia and the wider world’, where ‘Japan needs to act as a bridge [*kakehashi*] between Asia and the world’ and to ‘become a model for a 21st century international society’.⁹⁹ Hence, even in his first term as prime minister, Abe located his economic programme firmly within the larger framework of his patriotic project.

Even if the economic dimensions of his nationalist project—Abenomics—attracted much attention in his second term in office, the language of beautiful country did not disappear. Indeed, it remained an underlying theme, particularly as the reconstruction following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami became an imperative. In a April 2013 ceremony commemorating Japan regaining sovereignty back in 1952, Abe stated that ‘we have the responsibility to turn our indispensable country, Japan, into a beautiful country’.¹⁰⁰ In his address to the local mayors in November 2013, Abe reiterated the organic linkage between Abenomics and *utsukushii kuni*, addressing the delegates that ‘there is no healthy [*genki*] Japan without healthy regions’, and ‘the roots of beautiful Japan lie in the regions’.¹⁰¹

Compared to his nationalist counterparts in the West, his anchoring of globalization firmly within the patriotic programme stands out as an anomaly. Indeed, his embrace of skilled immigration as a potential solution to the ageing and diminishing workforce distinguishes him from the proponents of Brexit and

⁹⁷ Kantei, ‘Keizaisei shimon kaigi tōshin wo uketa “Nippon keizai no shinro to senryaku” (kakugi kettei) ni tsuite no naikaku sōri daijin no danwa’, 25 January 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/abespeech/2007/01/25danwa.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

⁹⁸ Kantei, ‘Dai 166-kai kokkai ni okeru Abe naikaku sori daijin shisei hoshin enzetsu’, 26 January 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/abespeech/2007/01/26sisei.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

⁹⁹ Kantei, ‘Dai 166-kai kokkai ni okeru Abe naikaku sori daijin shisei hoshin enzetsu’, 26 January 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/abespeech/2007/01/26sisei.html>. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Kantei, ‘Shuken kaifuku, kokusai-shakai fukki wo kinen suru shiki-ten: naikau sori daijin shikiji’, 28 April 2013. Available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0428shikiten.html. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

¹⁰¹ Kantei, ‘Zenkoku chōson-chō taikai’, 20 November 2013. Available at: http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/actions/201311/20chouson.html. Accessed on 3 August 2016.

supporters of Trump. Within the wider context of Japanese foreign policy, this is understandable: that Japan is resource-constrained, and that the only means for survival for Japan is to trade with the outside world. Furthermore, the declining population, and the associated shortage of working-age adults, along with the ticking pensions time-bomb makes fiscal restructuring an imperative. Only by encouraging inward investment can the Japanese economy remain resilient. In terms of his nationalist programme, a strong country can only be realized through open economy that Abenomics seeks to achieve. And if *utsukushii kuni* is a strong country, then Abe seems to understand that there is no choice but to embrace globalization. As such, globalization remains an indispensable recipe for his patriotic programme, reflecting the particular constraints facing Japan.

Conclusion

Abe's patriotic programme of *utsukushii kuni* remains in rude health. While much of media attention might be devoted to Abenomics, we are constantly reminded that economic prosperity is needed to make sure the Japanese citizens can be proud of their own country. Hence, Abenomics is an economic vehicle for the realization of *utsukushii kuni*; and that embracing globalization remains a necessary part of Abe's patriotic programme.

In analyzing the reverberations from Brexit and the election of Trump, we see that nationalism played a crucial part. Simultaneously, we see that nationalism remains an inward-looking ideology that seeks to shun globalization. Indeed, populism that has swept both the Western Europe and the US is understood to be a reaction against the worst-excesses of globalization, where people who could not benefit from globalization were convinced by voices calling for the raising of draw-bridges and preachers of xenophobia. As such, once we gaze upon the aftermath of Brexit and Trump, it is tempting to suggest that nationalism remains incompatible with globalization.

Yet, if we turn our attention to Japan, the picture looks rather different. While Abe is renowned for his nationalist credentials, this does not mean that he also shuns globalization. Within the particular context of Japan as an island state facing severe

resource constraints, along with the persistent population decline, embracing globalization is the only route for survival. For Abe, globalization is not an anathema. Indeed, for him, by embracing globalization, he believes that Japan can regain international dignity and pride.

What the narratives of *utsukushii kuni* tells us is that embracing globalization does not mean that we are becoming the citizens of nowhere. As Abe seeks to show, globalization can be utilized as a vehicle for reasserting Japaneseness. It also means that we need to be mindful of Abe's embrace of globalization as an integral part of patriotic programme. Regardless of what the examples of Brexit and Trump show, nationalism and globalization are not necessarily mutually exclusive.