

In the Eyes of the Beholder: Policy Speeches of Prime Minister Abe Shinzou

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Introduction

The second coming of Abe Shinzou with the reelection of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to the lower house (shugiin) of the Japanese Diet in December 2012 was thought highly unlikely at the time of his sudden resignation as Prime Minister on 12 September, 2007. Among some younger people there was a trendy expression “to do an Abe” (安倍する) used to mean “when faced with a difficult situation, throw in the towel and get out.”¹ Having been re-selected as party leader some months before the election, voters knew that if they voted for the LDP he would be the new prime minister. The clear failure of Abe’s first approximately one-year term as prime minister and the apparent success of the first two years of his second leads one to ask: What changed? Clearly much had changed. The political situation in Japan, the 2008 Lehman Brothers shock and other events, in particular the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in eastern Japan had a large impact on Japanese people. But it is the purpose of this paper to examine what if anything changed in Abe, in particular, in his rhetorical style or substance? To answer this question, Abe’s early speeches from both terms (his second tenor as prime minister continues at time of writing) will be analyzed and compared.

The first section that follows will look at the background leading up to Abe’s first term as prime minister, the circumstances and important events of his first term, and then briefly comment on the reign from 2009 to 2012 of the Democratic Party of Japan, whose defeat in election in December 2012 leads

to Abe's second opportunity to take the helm once more. The failure of the DPJ to implement effective policies sets them up for defeat in December 2012. The discussion of this at the time Abe would start his second Administration prepares for the analysis that follows, which will incorporate further elements of the situation and Abe's and others' perspectives to better analyze the speeches.

Background

From the early 1990s until the second decade of the 21st century, Japan experienced what came to be called, first, at around the turn of the century, the lost decade, and, as time wore on, the lost two decades. As of this writing the Japanese economy appears to be improving, showing the clearest sign in a long time that it may finally break out of the cycle of low growth and deflation that have plagued it for so long.

The end of the economic bubble in the early 1990s and electoral reforms also ushered in an era of political change in Japan. In 1993, the 1955 system in which the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had ruled continuously since 1955 gave way briefly to a government by a coalition of opposition parties.² This was short lived and the LDP soon returned to power in coalition with their erstwhile political opponents, the Social Democratic Party. This coalition would soon change to a coalition between the LDP and the Komeito (Clean Government Party), which would manage to hold power until 2009, when for the first time since 1955, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) would win enough seats to enable it to gain a majority of seats in the more powerful lower house of the Diet (shuugiin) and thus form a government on their own. While they ultimately included some smaller parties in a coalition, it was nonetheless seen at the time as what Asian studies expert Victor Cha referred to as "the biggest political change in Japan in many decades."³

Before briefly discussing the DPJ 's term in office, the circumstances of

Abe's first term as prime minister will provide the necessary background for better gaining insight into the speeches examined later. In September 2006 when Abe started his first term, Japan was well into its second lost decade of low or no economic growth and spurts of deflation. Despite the continuing economic malaise, Abe was taking over from Koizumi Junichiro, a prime minister who left office still highly popular. The government's own polling clearly showed that social welfare policy (pensions and health care 72.7%), policies to deal with the aging society (54.5%) and economic policy (50%) were the top concerns mentioned by those polled.⁴ Despite these over-riding concerns in the public, "The defining characteristic of the Abe administration was its ideological ambition and its decision to prioritize conservative legislative efforts relating to education, defense, and constitutional reform."⁵ As will be seen in the analysis of his speeches below, while paying lip service to the issues of concern to the public mentioned above, the first Abe Administration focused on an agenda that was out of touch with the concerns of many Japanese people.

This mismatch in policy focus and public opinion was compounded by a pension funds scandal in which the Social Insurance Agency apparently lost 50 million public pension records. Abe's apparent inability to competently deal with this scandal and others caused by cabinet ministers were all to be a drag on his leadership. During his 366 day tenure, in addition to the pensions problems, five ministers resigned over scandals, one committed suicide, and one referred to women as "child bearing machines."⁶ The disconnect between the Abe administration's policy focus and public opinion was already obvious in a government poll in January of 2007, when only 20.9% replied they thought the Government's policies reflected the ideas and opinions of the public and over 75% responded that they did not.⁷ After riding in on Koizumi's coattails and starting his term with an approval rating of 71%, Abe resigned 366 days later. "At the press conference, sweating and grey-faced, he

looked like a broken man Few expected to hear from him again.”⁸ After the long serving and popular Koizumi, the contrast was such that it likely hurt the LDP as a whole. As Reed and Shimizu noted, “Abe soon squandered all the popularity that Koizumi had built up.”⁹

While the LDP was able to continue in power for a further two years (and two more prime ministers), in hindsight the writing was perhaps already on the wall. Failure to make any significant progress in righting the economy, and the 2008 financial crisis seemed to create the conditions for change. In the 2009 elections, the Democratic Party of Japan was able to take control of the lower house of the Diet and lead in forming a new, non-LDP administration.

The DPJ government led first by Hatoyama Yukio had initially high public support. In his policy speeches Hatoyama was clearly setting a new course for Japan, especially with regard to its neighbors and its relationship with issues of the wartime past.¹⁰ The lack of progress in their stated goals, internal party divisions, and opposition attacks were damaging to their popular support. Hatoyama would be succeeded by Kan Naoto, who, after the March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi Ichi nuclear plant disaster, would give way to Noda Tsutomu. The DPJ’s inability to show results early on, their inability to competently deal with the aftermath of the disaster—particularly the nuclear disaster, all compounded to be a heavy drag on support for the DPJ.

This created an opportunity for the LDP to reassert itself, which it did in December 2012, with Abe once more at the helm. The voting patterns suggest however, that this was less a vote for the LDP as it was an expression of dissatisfaction with the DPJ. The number of votes cast for the LDP was actually less than they received when they lost to the DPJ in 2009.¹¹ This was due to low turnout. More dramatic was the fall in the number of seats for the DPJ from the 308 seat gained in 2009 to a mere 57 in 2012.

Despite some voter fatigue with both main parties, having put emphasis on the economy during the campaign created hope both within and outside Japan that the second Abe administration might actually be able to make a change. As Pilling noted, even if “Abe can bring even modest sustainable improvement to an economy that has been sideways for years, he will go down as one of the most effective Japanese prime ministers in decades.”¹² As the comment suggests, one of the challenges still facing Japan in 2012 was the continuing economic lethargy. This deteriorated further from the shocks emanating with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers in 2008. The financial crisis that set off, coupled with the devastation caused by the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan, got the incoming Abe administration focused sharply on the economy. The polls consistently show, with little variation, consistent concern among the public for the kinds of policy fixes they desired during Abe’s first administration—public welfare (pensions and healthcare), policies concerning issues of the aging population, and economic/jobs policies, usually in that order, but all generally seeing 60 % or more of respondents citing them as important.¹³

While the Abe administration was putting economic policy forefront, it did not mean that the nationalist tendencies of his first term had gone by the wayside. Some of that agenda had indeed been accomplished, as will be evident in the analysis of the speeches below. After the gains made in the house of Councilors elections in the summer of 2013, Fackler noted the election result offers Abe, “an outspoken nationalist who promises to revitalize Japan’s deflationary cycle and strengthen its military, the chance to be the most transformative leader in a decade.”¹⁴ If in his first term “Abe simply lacked the kind of passion that he exhibited in conservative and defense issues”¹⁵ to do much about fixing or reforming the economy, that is not to say the old Abe was completely gone. As Tanaka Hitoshi, former Deputy Defense Minister said of him, “From a young age, Abe had it in his

mind that he would be the one who would bring the postwar regime to an end.”¹⁶ If the first time around Abe misread the public mood about nationalistic issues and discovered his priorities were out of sync with those of the public, the second Abe administration was seen as being more attentive to them.

Before beginning to look at the Abe’s specific policy speeches, it needs to be clarified exactly what a “policy speech” means in the Japanese context.¹⁷

Japanese Policy Speeches

A “Policy speech” as a translation of the Japanese terms used to refer to these speeches (*shiseihoushinenzetsu* or *shoshinhyoumeienzetsu*) is inadequate if it is taken as suggesting that policy proposals will be presented and their efficacy demonstrated or somehow argued. Both can roughly translate to “policy speech,” however, the former is given at the start of an ordinary session of the Diet, usually in January. The latter is given at the start of extraordinary sessions and as such is usually shorter and more focused on the specific business of that session. In Western terms, the speeches given at the start of the regular sessions are closest in similarity to Queen’s speeches in England. Broadly speaking, the generalizations about their functions discussed below refer more accurately and consistently to the policy speeches given at the opening of regular session of the Diet.¹⁸

Examination of the samples of speeches reveals a number of sometimes overlapping functions they seem designed to serve. Some of these are explicit in the speeches themselves, while others are suggested indirectly or suggested from the context in which the speeches are given. Clearly, as the generic title in translation suggests these speeches can be presumed to deal with policy. And they do, a point I will discuss in more detail below. The speeches, as noted earlier, are also given at the beginning of Diet sessions, suggesting a second purpose, the formal opening or beginning of Diet

proceedings. This purpose is clearly indicated in the beginning of most speeches with a formulaic expression:

Here at the start of the fourth Diet, it gives me great pleasure to speak to you on [the Government's] policy plans.¹⁹

The opening section will also frequently include a statement reflecting on the legitimacy of the speaker. In the opening above, Yoshida continues, “The scandal leading to the resignation of the Ashida cabinet has brought about the formulation of the present cabinet.”²⁰ Such statements offer little if any new information to the audience but serve merely to formally reaffirm the legitimacy of the speaker, a formula repeated in almost all these speeches, particularly at the start of a new cabinet. In other speeches, similar remarks may reflect on a recent election which may or may not have produced a new prime minister, but the purpose remains essentially the same. At other times, the opening of an extraordinary session needed to complete work on legislation carried over from the regular session, such remarks are frequently omitted.

At the start of a new government, prime ministers will often express their humility and the heavy responsibility they feel in leading the government:

Having been named by the Diet to take on the heavy responsibility of the premiership, it is a great honor for me to have the opportunity to express the government's views [on policy].²¹

The mention of selection by the Diet (confirmation by the Diet after selection by the Party) also serves again to reaffirm the legitimacy of the government, while expressing humility in the face of the task at the same time, an expression with potential to enhance the speaker's ethos in a culture where ostentation, in this situation in particular, would be viewed negatively.

With some variation the introductory sections of the speeches, usually no more than a few sentences in length, serve to formally mark the beginning of

Diet proceedings, to reaffirm the legitimacy of the government, and, particularly in the case of a new prime minister, make reference to the speaker as a man of humility, prudence, and sincerity.

A second purpose of the speeches, ostensibly the primary purpose of the speeches concerns issues of policy. The speeches most often will move quickly into a discussion of policy immediately following the introductory remarks. This section of the speeches makes up more than ninety percent of the speeches on average, and is generally organized around general policy themes rather than making reference to specific policy or legislative proposals. The exceptions to this are most often references to past policy in relation to the need to alter or amend a particular policy, as a means of introducing background to clarify the issues involved, or merely to report, often treating foreign affairs, or the effects of policy positions the government might be following at the time. In discussing specific policy or legislative proposals for the coming session the treatment tends to become much less specific, offering general statements of what the government thinks are the important issues involved in policy areas like education, social welfare, national infrastructure, economic policy, housing, and other areas. But what they do achieve through this process is a setting of the legislative agenda, as these speeches then become the basis for opposition parties to query the government of the day on policy.

This lack of specificity contrasts with the speeches from the throne in Great Britain, which serves similar functions to the Japanese policy speeches. Like the Japanese policy speech, the Queen's speech is largely authored by the cabinet and top party leadership (minor stylistic editing by the Queen's secretary) and is the product of considerable behind the scenes deliberation. Queen's speeches, however, more clearly lay out the legislative agenda for the coming session. Hence considerable attention is focused on what will or will not make it into the speech since exclusion from the Queen's speech usually

means legislation (of any major sort) has little chance of passing that session.

Speech Analysis

The analysis that follows, examines the two premierships of Abe through the lens of the speeches he made early in his premierships. The aim is not to predict what will happen for the remainder of his tenure, nor a historical assessment of his political leadership. Examination of the speeches should help clarify how he has managed to remain a relatively high level of support in his second time around in contrast with his dismal performance the first time. Of course the circumstances are different, but situational factors alone do not offer adequate explanation.

Some of the more generic factors discussed above will be dealt with in passing, but the primary focus is on looking for differences and similarities which might suggest some strategic rhetorical differences between the two administrations. Whatever differences there may be, other substantive elements which may help explain the different trajectories of the first and second Abe Cabinets are also discussed. Obviously, many factors beyond these policy speeches are at work in the political environment in which politicians and their publics interact, but it is hoped that such an analysis can offer some insight into Japanese political discourse in general, and the rhetoric of this prime minister in particular.

The First Abe Administration²²

In 2006, prior to becoming prime minister, Abe published a book titled *Utsukushii kuni he* or *Toward a beautiful country*.²³ This book was part autobiography and part political manifesto, and many of its themes are echoed in his speeches. Because of the emphasis he gives this idea, it seems appropriate to consider this Abe government as the Beautiful Country Cabinet. The first speech he gave was the somewhat less formal

shoshinnhyoumeienzetsu, or a speech for an extraordinary session.²⁴ However, perhaps because it was his first speech as prime minister he gave a comparatively long one (about 8400 characters as opposed to about 9500 for opening the regular Diet session in the January). As the first speech he clearly sought to set the tone of his administration and establish his ethos as prime minister. As such it is worthwhile taking a close look at this to see how this develops in the later speech.

After the usual opening remarks noting his appointment to the office of Prime Minister and expressions of humility, in the second paragraph he stresses that he will not work for special interests but will work “on behalf of the entire people—the ordinary people who live by the sweat of their brows, love their families, wish to improve their communities and hometowns, and who want to believe in the future of Japan.” This rather elaborate reference to “the people” chimes with his recurring theme of inclusivity, which is also linked to his “beautiful country” vision that he elaborates on later.

This introductory section continues by previewing the topics to be discussed in the speech. The next paragraph treats the economy and gives the impression that things are looking up, but in the later section he also details a number of policy initiatives he plans. He continues with a paragraph on Japan’s aging society, the urban/rural imbalance, income imbalances, corporate scandals, and foreign policy, all of which he will elaborate on in later sections. The remainder of this introductory section is taken up with his idea of a “beautiful country,” his vision for the direction he believes Japan should be aiming.

A beautiful country is a “country filled with vitality, opportunity, and compassion, which cherishes the spirit of self-discipline, and is open to the world.” He offers a list of four conditions to be met for this beautiful country to be achieved: a country that “values culture, tradition, history and nature;” a country “underpinned by free society, respects discipline, and has dignity;” a

country that “continues to possess the vitality to grow toward the future;” and a country that “is trusted, respected, and loved in the world, and which demonstrates leadership.” This idealistic list would likely find few in opposition. What he means specifically by valuing history and respecting discipline is another matter, and not elaborated on. In the closing of this introductory section he describes the administrative changes he is making in the Prime Minister’s Office in order to more effectively implement the changes he desires.

The next two sections cover economic policy and finance. Again with a nod to the beautiful country ideal, what is notable in the first is the large number of specific examples of projects he has planned—Innovation 25, Economic Partnership Agreements, a goal to double foreign investment in Japan by 2010, a Japanese Cultural Industry Strategy, the Asian Gateway Vision, the Challenge Again Assistance Measures—all of which seek to stimulate Japanese economic activity and give the impression of being useful, and seem to have some specificity (at the very least by having proper names). He continues on to talk about employment for all, mentioning particularly the underemployed, the NEETS, part-time workers, and the elderly, and helping medium and small businesses, though with these groups he doesn’t mention specific policies, only intentions and the importance of helping these groups.

Fiscal and Administrative Reform is a staple of most Japanese policy speeches and here to the recent trends are given a rehashing. The need to balance the budget, cut spending, cut waste, and promote efficiency, are all mentioned. He sets some specific goals and discusses some general policy directions and the need for new policy directions, and also the need for administrative reform, a standard fixture in most policy speeches.

The next section deals with social welfare, including the aging of society, health care, social security costs, and crime. Again he offers a few specific

new initiatives but stresses the importance of these issues and the urgency of finding solutions. Something more might have been wiser here given the importance with which the public views these issues, as noted earlier.

The final two sections and conclusion of the speech come closer to was evident in reviewing the background of the speeches. In the section on education he makes specific call to change the Fundamental Law of Education. This is also linked to his “beautiful country” concept. He notes, “in recent years there has been a downturn in [children’s] morals and also their desire to learn.” He notes families and communities can no longer provide the “educational function they once did” and in order “to build a dignified nation and society”²⁵ “The first task is to ensure the early enactment of the bill concerning the Fundamental Law of Education.”

The last section before the conclusion deals with foreign policy, which is sub-headed “Shift to Proactive Diplomacy.” This is a topic also discussed in Abe’s book, and there as here he is eager to become more actively involved in diplomacy in Asian and the larger world. In this summary review he touches on the key issues at the time—North Korea’s missile launches, the abduction issue, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, China, South Korea and Japanese relations, Russia and Japan relations, etc. The problems of international terrorism also get a mention along with Japan’s efforts to help combat it. He closes this section with a call for Japan to be given a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, a long term desire sought over many recent administrations.

In the closing section, he introduces another topic of importance, that of Constitutional revision. He leads into this by referring again the notion of a beautiful country and uses the example of Morita Akio, who worked hard to sell the people in the United States on the high quality of Japanese goods. Abe continues to argue that “It is quintessential for Japan to present its new ‘country identity’ for the future to the world, that is, our country’s ideals, the

direction we should aspire, and the way in which we convey our Japanese-ness to the world.” And to this end, he sees the need for more public relations action by the Japanese government.

This paragraph is succeeded by one which begins, “The country’s ideals and vision are embodied in the constitution.” He goes on to argue that it is time to amend the Constitution and his intention to take action to try and make it possible. In his closing remarks, he begins to suggest that his “beautiful country” might actual be something new: “Our country Japan possesses beautiful nature, long history, culture and traditions, which we could be proud of in the world. With this tacit pride in our hearts, the time has come now to take a step forward toward a new nation building.” He closes his speech with a quote by Albert Einstein extolling Japanese virtues.

While a speech at an extraordinary session of the Diet, as his first speech as Prime Minister he spent time not only introducing himself and his vision, but also covering all the policy bases that varying groups would want to be sure were included. As discussed above the purpose of these speeches is usually not to argue specific policy but to set forth policy directions, and the broader directions, the larger picture, of the government’s vision going forward. At the same time, upon just reading the speeches, it is difficult to determine just what priorities the government will choose. As hindsight has shown, the first Abe Administration focused largely on the conservative agenda of changing the Fundamental Law of Education and trying to put in place the rules for changing the Constitution. The section on the economy in this speech did mention a number of specific smaller scale projects, but did not really deal with the larger reforms which many people, since the bubble burst have been suggesting were necessary.²⁶

His second speech January 2007²⁷ will examined with a focus on highlighting notable differences. The speech, coming as it did after the passage of the Fundamental Law of Education reform bill, is upbeat and more

confident in pushing Abe's more conservative agenda. The "beautiful country" vision is again sprinkled throughout the speech, from the very beginning: "in September last year, I laid out to the people of Japan the vision that the Abe Administration will pursue: 'a beautiful country, Japan.'" He continues a little later in his introduction to further describe this "new vision of Japan." To achieve this new Japan "we must not be content with the brilliant post-war Japanese success model, which our predecessors started and built from the ruins of the war. It has become obvious that many of the basic frameworks, starting from the Constitution down ..., " including in the list nearly every other major government policy area, need to be changed.

Changing what he referred to in *Utshikushii Kuni he* as getting rid of the post war regime gets clear billing here, clearly suggesting where he will focus no small part of his energy, as was noted in the review earlier. "Now the time has come to boldly review these post-war regimes all the way back to their origins, and set sail on a new course. In order to realize 'a beautiful country, Japan,' my mission is none other than to draw a new vision of a nation which can withstand the raging waves for the next 50 to 100 years to come." The rest of the speech follows the basic pattern as the first one examined, and, due to its closeness in time, does not include a lot that is new in terms of specifics. Like the first speech it continues lavish sprinkling of the "beautiful country" theme, with a closing call again for discussion on creating a new identity and revising the Constitution: "We will launch a new project which will bring together our collective wisdom to transmit strategically Japan's new 'country identity' for the future.... Toward the creation of a new country, we should deepen our discussions regarding the revision of the Constitution"

Abe only gave three policy speeches during his first Administration as he officially resigned fifteen days after giving his third speech, which was one reason the choice was made to focus on the two earlier speeches. As the

analysis has suggested, however, though these early speeches share many qualities associated with Japanese policy speeches, they did have a distinctive Abe Shinzou stamp on them. The next section will see what if any three years in the political wilderness had on Abe as both politician and speaker.

The Second Abe Administration

While mentioned above in discussing the background, clearly the disaster in Eastern Japan is going to have a prominent place in Japanese policy speeches for the foreseeable future. This situational anomaly is relevant to this analysis in so far as it effects the substance of the speeches. In doing so it would also have had some effect on the tone of the speeches. Nevertheless, the other issues which were part of the political landscape, economic, social welfare, defense, etc., were still hanging around, albeit in somewhat different forms, but not so different in terms of the public's concern over them (the special concern for the Touhoku Region aside of course). As of this writing, Abe is well into his second year of his second Administration and still remains reasonably popular. His early speeches may provide some clue as to what if anything has changed.

Here again analysis will start with a close examination of Abe first policy speech of the new Administration. The speech was a policy speech (a *shoshinhyoumeienzetsu*) given on January 28th, 2013.²⁸ He begins the speech with mention of his sorrow for the victims of the terrorist attack in Algeria and the need to work with the international community to combat it. At the beginning of his introduction he acknowledges what he refers to as the “major political setback” due to his illness, but having been asked lead the country again, he chose to do so due to his “deep sense of patriotism” and because “I believe that I have a mission which must be undertaken in order to rectify Japan's ... [crisis] situation.”²⁹ So far this is a fairly standard beginning. What we begin to see next is a much clearer focus on actionable issues.

After introducing the idea of "crisis" he adds specifics. "There is a crisis of the Japanese economy." He then elaborates briefly for a few sentences. "There is the crisis of our diplomacy and security." He follows again with a brief description. Lastly, "And, there is the crisis of education," going on to mention bullying, falling academic standards and pride in national tradition and history. I have quoted the English translation here, where these statements appear at the beginning of each description. These statements appear at the end of his description in the original, making them even more effective. As he repeats the pattern the audience will be able to complete the pattern for themselves. He concludes this with a very short, simple, statement: "It will not do for us to stand idly by." A very effective tie off that drives his point home.

By way of transition, he continues with a rhetorical question: "Honorable members of the Diet, shall we not now build a decent society where people who work hard are certain to be rewarded and where it is possible to embrace dreams and hopes for the future?" He continues with a brief call to action, which leads into a brief recounting of the three years spent in opposition and what they (the LDP) had learned from that. He mentions that already, since forming a government, he had instructed all ministers to work on the three areas of economic revival, reconstruction from the disaster, and crisis management. In closing this introductory section, he issues an appeal to opposition Diet members as well to cooperate and help to find a solution to the problems facing Japan.

The next sections follow a structure more similar to the standard policy speech. But, by following the same pattern he used to introduced the three topics to be dealt earlier, he has made it more predictable (and therefore understandable) for his audience. Again, the economy gets top billing and he starts with a lone statement: "The greatest issue and indeed an urgent issue for Japan is the revival of the economy." He continues on to argue about the

need to stop deflation to stop the ‘pie’ from shrinking. He also notes he has established the Headquarters for Japan’s Economic Revitalization as a ‘control tower’ for economic revival. He also mentions the Bank of Japan’s intention to set a 2 % inflation target at the “earliest possible time.”

In further developing this, the longest section of the speech, he mentions other fiscal policy intentions—supplementary budgets, investment in innovation, attracting investment from overseas. Some of these are fairly common tools and were policies mentioned in his first Administration’s speeches. The biggest difference here is the prominence—certainly partly a result of the situation—but in view of the first term speeches, it would not all seem to be a result of that.

The next section deals specifically with disaster reconstruction. This six paragraph section uses only the last paragraph to talk about policy. The other five are devoted to Abe’s visits to the affected areas and stories people told him when there. To anyone listening, this serves as an emotional appeal to support the reconstruction effort, certainly, but also a clear statement that the Prime Minister understands your pain. The policy is not so much a change in policy as a change in method of implementation to speed up the recovery.

The final section of the speech deals with diplomacy and security. The U.S.—Japan alliance is centerpiece again. Abe pledges to develop a strategic foreign policy based on “fundamental values of freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law, and we view the world as a whole, as if looking at a globe” (地球儀を眺めるように世界全体を俯瞰^{ふいかん}して). Abe once again pledges to take a leading role in the region, particularly with the countries of ASEAN, which in 2013 marked 40 years of cooperation with Japan. On security issues he pledges to defend Japan’s territory and airspace, and closes this section with reference to the still unresolved issue of the abductees in North Korea.

In the closing section, he refers to the crisis the country is facing as lying

“in the Japanese people having lost confidence.” He urges people to have faith in their own abilities and quotes former Prime Minister Ashida Hitoshi saying “There is no path forward other than by carving out our own fate with our own hands,” And Abe himself reiterates at the end, “There is no one else who will create a ‘strong Japan.’ It is none other than we ourselves who will do it.”

The second speech examined,³⁰ given before the regular opening of the Diet, in many respects returned to the more standard form, but the introductory section in particular of this speech, like that of the January speech, took a rather unusual form. It seemed to have been used to establish some recurring themes that were connected in various ways to various topics throughout the speech. The introductory structure was also somewhat unusual, consisting largely of short incomplete statements (noun phrases) proverbs, admonitions, and short quotes from people known and unknown. The very first two lines:

“‘A strong Japan.’ The people who create it are not some other people.
They are none other than we.”

The next paragraph consists of:

“National independence through personal independence.”

Abe then gives some additional explanation about his intention in using these expressions, namely that it is up to people themselves to make the changes they need to make a better life, and to do that you need to have faith that it can be better. Further, though he doesn’t say it, the second quote suggests a nation of strong individuals will become a strong nation. The next single-line quotation:

“The best is sharing joys and sorrows.”

The point of this, and Abe quotes Fukuzawa Yukichi as a fellow follower of this advice, was that helping people is not just about helping the weak but about sharing our good and bad times in everyday life.

The next single-line quote is presumably from someone in Touhoku:

“We all check on each other and encourage on another.”

With this statement he leads into a discussion of his visits to Touhoku, his assessments of the progress there, what he see as necessary to do further, and messages of hope for the people of Touhoku. Very little new is offered here from his previous speech, save to reiterate his desire for the people to have hope for the future.

The next section, on the economy, the longest at about one third of the speech, clearly shows the focus of Abe’s attention. In this policy speech, he introduces the three-prong policy that came to be known as Abenomics—bold monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy, and a growth strategy. He argues for this admittedly risky policy by saying that nothing will change “if we employ the same methods we have used until now.”³¹ He calls for courage of the sort the men working in Algeria (who were killed in a terrorist attack) had when they decided to go work there. He also notes that while Japan cannot forgive such acts, we must not let them cause “Japanese to lose the will and courage to spread their wings in the world.” Much of the argument in this section repeats familiar macro-economic policy directions, but also pushes hard for more expansion of Japanese businesses overseas. He discusses exporting Japanese food, pop culture, medicine, environmental technologies, and other new innovative technologies. He mentions his desire to pursue TPP trade negotiations with the U.S. to increase trade but also to make Japan a more attractive place for companies to come to invest. Much of the later discussion also touches on regulatory reform, which, though not in Abe’s earlier speeches, are a common theme in policy speeches as an area in need of reform. Abe continues with a number of examples of small companies trying to make the fastest bobsleds in the world, and uses such examples to urge people to aim higher (touching on the undercurrent in the beginning of the speech—making your own way).

The next section on domestic policy includes the goal of making Japan

“the nation that offers the greatest peace of mind in the world’ while also being ‘the safest nation’ in the world.” To achieve this Abe advocates infrastructure renewal, education reform, but perhaps most unusual and new is his call for a greater role for women in society as a whole. We need to create:

a country in which both women playing active roles in the workforce and women dedicating themselves exclusively to household affairs, and indeed all women, can shine, with confidence and pride in the lives they are leading. My fellow honorable members of the Diet, let us together create a Japan in which women shine.

This will mean making it easier for women to work by improving work schedules, better more flexible day care etc. This is certainly a bold step for the LDP.

On security Abe offered only a reiteration of Japan’s claim to the Senkaku islands and their determination to defend them against any incursions. To this end and for the purpose of improving defense policy in general, he announced the first increase in defense spending in eleven years. Abe concluded his speech with a story of Kaibara Ekken who had been growing a peony bloom. A young man who had been looking after his things in his absence accidentally had broken it. The youth was afraid Ekken would be angry, but when he returned, Ekken said, “I planted the flower to bring enjoyment, not anger.” Abe used the story to ask other Diet members to reflect on their reasons for becoming Diet members and to plead for their cooperation. He also asked for cooperation in promoting the discussions of the Deliberative Council on the Constitution and “deepen national discussion toward revising the Constitution.”

Conclusion

The analyses suggest a number of things. Clearly, Abe is still Abe. His

nationalistic motives are present in speeches from both terms as prime minister. But there is also a clear difference, part of it can be seen in the speeches. In the second Abe Administration we can see clearly from the speeches that Abe has his eye on the larger picture. The substantive weighting seems clear enough evidence of that. In this first Administration, despite some mentions of some of the similar issues, it became clear in hindsight (in consideration of what he actually did) that his passions seemed to lie elsewhere. Stylistically, the speeches from the first term tend to follow the standard form and manage to communicate their intended meanings. That standard form, however, is why most Japanese people don't take an interest in them. The flare he does add is the occasional metaphor, a story, an historical reference, or a saying, but these are not in abundance. Such flourishes are not such common practice for policy speeches (with some exceptions).

The second two speeches demonstrated considerable more creativity and a willingness to depart from standard form in a way that would have been more dynamic and though for brief moments less predictable, actually being somewhat suspenseful (and interesting) for his audience. Both these second speeches showed improved rhetorical skill, albeit within the limitations of the Japanese policy speech structure. At the very least they demonstrate the possibility that even within this—up to now limited largely by convention—format, other possibilities, other choices are available to effectively communicate intended meaning. And do so more enjoyably and effectively. Perhaps Japanese politicians are coming to appreciate the “value of leaders who look good and speak eloquently on the evening news.”³²

Addendum: Abe Shinzou Policy Speeches Examined

All speeches in Japanese and provisional English translation are available at:

<<http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/abespeech>>

First Abe Administration:

1a. 2006 第 165 回国会における安倍内閣総理大臣所信表明演説 . Sept 29.

1b. 2007 第 166 回国会における安倍内閣総理大臣施政方針演説 . Jan 26.

Second Abe Administration:

2a. 2013 第 183 回国会における安倍総理大臣所信表明演説 . Jan 28.

2b. 2013 第 183 回国会における安倍総理大臣施政方針演説 . Feb 28.

Any other speeches or press conferences quoted will be cited in footnotes.

¹ 秋山紀勝、“(ちよびちよび随想) はやり言葉「ええからかん」もぜび、“朝日新聞、10月、13日、2007; 30.

² The overview here has relied on a number of sources including the following: Gerald L. Curtis, “Japan at the Crossroads” *Asia Pacific Issues*, No. 41, 1999, 1-8 and *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; Inoguchi Takashi and Purnendra Jain, eds., *Japanese Politics Today*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; and Masuzoe Yōichi, *Years of Trial: Japan in the 1990s*, Tokyo: Japan Echo Inc., 2000. Japanese names are given following the Japanese custom of giving family names first.

³ Victor Cha, “Focus on Policy not Politics,” Op-Ed, *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 2010

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/08/opinion/08iht-edcha.html?scp=5&sq=hatoyama%20yukio&st=cse>> . Jan. 11, 2013.

⁴ Poll conducted October, 2006. This Cabinet Office poll and other data can be found at 内閣大臣官房政府広報室, 世論調査, Dec. 1, 2014.

<<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/index-ko.html>>. This site contains links for government surveys back to 1948, and includes updates done in more recent years for all surveys listed.

⁵ Fujihira Shinju, “Legacies of the Abe Administration,” 10. In Mark Mohr, ed. “Japan’s Political Mess: Abe Failed, Can Fukuda Do Better?” *Asia Program Special Report*, No. 139. Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars: January 2008; 9-14.

⁶ Reviewed in Mark Mohr, “Japan’s Political Mess: Abe Failed, Can Fukuda Do Better?” *Asia Program Special Report*, No. 139. Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars: January 2008.3.

⁷ Cabinet Office Poll, January 2007.

⁸ David Pilling, “The second coming,” *New Statesman*, 142, no. 5180, October 18, 2013: 28-31. It should be noted that part of Abe’s exhaustion at this time was also due to an illness he was suffering from.

⁹ Steven Reed and Shimizu Kay, “Overview,” 9. In Steven R. Reed, Kenneth Mori Mc Elwain, and Kay Shimizu, eds., *Political change in Japan: electoral behavior, party realignment, and the Koizumi reforms*, Stanford, Calif.: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2009; 1-15.

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- ¹⁰ I review these in Duane Olson, “Researching Japanese Political Rhetoric: A case Study on Hatoyama’s Policy Speech,” *西南学院大学英語英文学論集*、第50巻第1・2・3合併号、2010年3月。
- ¹¹ Manuel Alvarez-Rivera, Election Resources on the Internet: Parliamentary Elections in Japan, Parts I and II, 2007-2014, <<http://www.electionresources.org/jp/>>, Dec . 2, 2014.
- ¹² “Second Coming,” 31.
- ¹³ The Cabinet Office June 2013 poll had economic policy in second position at 59.6 % after health care and pensions at 65.9 %, and aging society policies at 49.9 %. One must accept too that the fact that the new Abe administration was putting such emphasis on his new economic plan, and the resulting coverage in the media likely influenced some people into seeing this as more important through media priming.
- ¹⁴ Martin Fackler, “Premier’s Party Wins Big In Japan,” *New York Times*, July 22 ,2013; A, 1.
- ¹⁵ Fujihira, “Legacies,” 12.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in Hannah Beech, Kobayashi Chie and Michael Crowley, “The Patriot,” *Time*, Vol. 183, 16, Apr. 28, 2014; 27. Abe said this of himself. In a speech in London he stated: “I consider it both my role and my fate to restore and enrich the power of Japan.” Abe Shinzou, Economic Policy Speech. Speech at Guildhall, London, June 19. Oct. 24, 2013 <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0619speech.html> Oct. 10th, 2014.
- ¹⁷ This is a summary of a longer discussion on Japanese policy speeches in Olson, “Researching Japanese Rhetoric,” 22-26.
- ¹⁸ All “policy” speeches prior to Prime minister Yoshida Shigeru’s speech of 30 November, 1953 were recorded as *shiseihoushinenzetsu*. According to the editors of the anthology of speeches covering the first one hundred years of the government cabinet system, 1885-1985, this was in keeping with customary practice (歴代総理大臣演説集 閣制度百年史編纂委員会 東京内：大蔵省印刷局 1985 p1161). The reason for the change is not clear, but the less explicit label, as a government’s or prime ministers’ opinions, may point to a desire to differentiate between the two and more clearly place more importance, at least formally, on the *shiseihoushinenzetsu* opening regular sessions.
- ¹⁹ Yoshida Shigeru, 4-4-48. 歴代総理大臣演説集, 459.
- ²⁰ 歴代総理大臣演説集, 459.
- ²¹ Hatoyama Ichirou, 歴代総理大臣演説集, 541.
- ²² The speeches to be examined here are listed in the Addendum following the main text, of which there are two each 1a,1b, indicating the order they were given. The second Abe administration speeches follow as 2a, 2b in the same Addendum.
- ²³ Abe Shinzou, *美しい国へ (Utsukushii kuni he)* Tokyo: Bunshunshinsho 2006.

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- ²⁴ Addendum 1a 所信表明 all quotes are from this speech unless otherwise indicated.
- ²⁵ This is a direct echo from 美しい国へ, 207.
- ²⁶ When he does finally get around to them in his second Administration, Robin Harding of the Financial Times noted that he finally had the right approach, but that it should have been done “fifteen years earlier.” “Japan Takes and Introductory course in Abenomics,” Apr. 7, 2013: 6.
- ²⁷ Addendum 1b 施政方針演説 January 10, 2007.
- ²⁸ Addendum 2a 所信表明演説 January 28th, 2103.
- ²⁹ The Japanese word here is 危機 and in the later usages is translated as “crisis” for consistency. The provisional English translation used critical in this context.
- ³⁰ Addendum 2b 施政方針演説, February 28, 2013.
- ³¹ In a later speech, he admits they are not entirely new. “We have shot these arrows before, but only timidly and incrementally. In my plan, the three arrows are being shot strongly, fast, and all at the same time.” In “Japan is Back.” Speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Feb. 22. June 17, 2013. <http://csis.org/files/attachments/130222_speech_abe.pdf. >Nov. 12, 2013.
- ³² Steven R. Reed, Kenneth Mori McElwain, and Kay Shimizu eds., *Political change in Japan: electoral behavior, party realignment, and the Koizumi reforms*, Stanford CA: Asia-Pacific Research Center, 284.