

Japan's Diplomacy: Ensuring Security and Prosperity

Speech by H.E. Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan

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Good evening. I am Taro Aso.

Allow me to begin my address tonight with a somewhat abrupt question to you: how would you summarize the aims of diplomacy in a single phrase?

I assert that diplomacy aims at ensuring the security and prosperity of a nation and its citizens. This is not something that can be achieved by advocating self-serving ideals.

The security and prosperity of Japan cannot be realized without the security and prosperity of the international community. That is my starting point. It is imperative for Japan in particular to keep this firmly in mind, as we are heavily dependent on other countries not only for our supply of food, resources, and energy but also for markets.

I assumed office as Prime Minister last September. Immediately before that, on September 15, the failure of the major US financial services firm Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. occurred, and the world plunged into a severe financial and economic crisis. Most certainly, what were required were not abstract discussions but rather concrete policies and actions.

At the G20 Summit held in Washington in November, I called on the other world leaders to tackle this crisis through coordination among the developed nations. Specifically, I cautioned against becoming inward looking and instead called on the leaders to proactively uphold the global financial and economic order and control the situation. As one example, Japan announced its readiness to provide financing of up to 100 billion US dollars to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to reinforce the Fund's financial foundations. Since that time, my calls have been moving towards realization through the cooperation of various countries.

Before I assumed this office, some worried that if I became Prime Minister, relations with China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) would sour. Yet in fact the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting held independently of other international meetings came to fruition for the first time this past December. I have already met with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao of China eight times in total. I have also held eight summit meetings with President Lee Myung-Bak of the ROK, including the one on the day before yesterday. I believe that the relations with the leaders of these two countries are the closest they have ever been in the post-World War II era.

It is we ourselves who create a world that is secure and prosperous. When Japan takes proactive steps towards the realization of such a world, Japan truly furthers its own national interests.

While serving as Minister for Foreign Affairs in November 2006, I delivered an address at a seminar organized by the Japan Institute of International Affairs. On that occasion I articulated the concept of the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" as a new pillar to be added to the basis of Japan's foreign policy, which is reinforcement of the Japan-US alliance as the cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy and cooperation with neighboring countries.

There are nations now freed from the constraints of the Cold War that are exploring their futures with new hope. Japan will support the efforts of such young nations.

Japan will serve as an "escort runner" to those countries who are putting into practice the strong conviction that I have had for many years, namely "the pursuit of economic prosperity and democracy will lead to peace and happiness (peace and happiness through economic prosperity and democracy)." This is what I stated in the speech.

That conviction is the path that Japan has walked down and pursued consistently since the end of World War II. It is also the approach forming the backbone of Japanese diplomacy.

Two and a half years have passed since I delivered that speech. Yet with the threat of weapons of mass destruction from North Korea and others, frequently occurring acts of terrorism and piracy, and so on, the world in fact finds itself in an even more serious situation now than it did then. In addition, the financial and economic crisis has plunged countries around the world into very difficult circumstances.

Against the background of this challenging international situation, what is Japan doing, and what should it do? In my address today I would like to state my ideas in the concrete.

1. The Security of the World and of Japan

First of all, I would like to speak about the security of Japan and the world.

(1) North Korea

Serious challenges now lie before us.

Since this spring, North Korea has in quick succession gone ahead with a missile

launch and its second “nuclear test”. This is an unambiguous threat.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1874, which was adopted unanimously by the Council, must be implemented steadily. Japan led the Council towards the adoption of this strong resolution. Japan will take concrete measures including financial measures and cargo inspection in order to implement it.

Moreover, it is imperative that we apply strong pressure on North Korea in close cooperation with the United States and the ROK, as well as with China and Russia. We must show that engaging in further provocative actions will not bring about any benefit. At the same time, we have not closed the door on resolving this situation through dialogue.

I once again urge North Korea to sincerely and fully implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions and take tangible steps towards the comprehensive resolution of outstanding issues, including the abduction, nuclear and missile issues.

As this issue clearly demonstrates, Japan’s security and prosperity cannot be secured through the efforts of Japan alone. First of all, it is indispensable that the effectiveness of the Japan-US alliance be ensured. This alliance is a living arrangement and not something for which it suffices simply to have a piece of treaty document. We must constantly strengthen the Japan-US Security Arrangements through unremitting efforts by both Japan and the US.

At the same time, as Japan asserts its national interests and gains the cooperation of relevant countries, it must fulfill its international responsibilities in tangible ways.

(2) *Anti-Piracy and Counter-Terrorism Measures (Afghanistan, Pakistan)*

Recently, Japan has taken another step forward in upholding its international responsibilities through the enactment of the Anti-Piracy Measures Law.

The security of maritime transport is of vital importance for Japan as a trading nation. Moreover, countering acts of piracy is an international issue, with many countries dispatching vessels.

Some 2,000 ships affiliated with Japan navigate the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia in the Middle East annually. In order to ensure the safety of these ships and protect the lives and property of our citizens, Japan too has dispatched Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) escort vessels and P-3C patrol aircrafts. With the enactment of this new law, it has become possible for Japan to respond to vessels requesting escorts regardless of their country of registry.

Japan has received thanks for these efforts from the captains of many ships that

have been exposed to the threat of piracy. We also received the warm compliments of President Arroyo of the Philippines when she visited Japan the other day. In fact, more than 70% of the crews of Japan's ocean-going vessels are nationals of the Philippines.

Among our anti-piracy measures, the Government of Japan is of course expending its utmost efforts in support for security and people's livelihoods as means of remedying the underlying issues.

First, we are providing assistance towards the stabilization of Somalia. This includes the restoration of security, job creation, and improvement of the humanitarian situation, among other efforts in Somalia, where piracy is rampant. A civil war and a state of anarchy have continued in Somalia for almost 20 years and the people there are facing unimaginable hardships.

Second, we are working to enhance the maritime security capabilities of Yemen and Oman, which neighbor Somalia. Japan has already conducted training for personnel of the Yemeni and Omani coast guards and we will be providing further assistance.

In this way, we can say that activities by the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) and Japan Coast Guard on the one hand and assistance to Somalia and surrounding countries in the areas of security and quality of life on the other are two sides of the same coin.

We are also engaged in these same types of "two sides of the same coin" efforts in our fight against terrorism.

As one part of counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan, Japan has been conducting replenishment support activities in the Indian Ocean through the efforts of the MSDF. The Replenishment Support Special Measures Law was extended last December to enable the continuation of these activities. The MSDF has been continuing its activities every day in scorching heat that exceeds 40 degrees. The MSDF personnel's techniques are of the highest standard and are even referred to as "the hand of God" by the foreign navies being replenished. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and my respect to the members of our Self-Defense Forces and to the families awaiting their return.

The situation in Afghanistan is entering a critical stage as it prepares for presidential elections in August.

Japan has succeeded in amassing a number of achievements in Afghanistan to date, including constructing or restoring more than 500 schools, training 10,000 teachers, providing literacy education to some 300,000 people, and providing vaccines for a total of 40 million people, along with providing assistance equivalent to the salaries of the entire 80,000 Afghan police personnel for six months as support in the area of security.

We will be making even greater efforts in both security and improving people's livelihoods in the months and years to come.

Afghanistan's problems are deep-rooted and they should be approached in the context of the stability of the broader region including Pakistan and Central Asia in an integrated manner. The neighboring country, Pakistan, is currently dealing with well over three million internally displaced persons resulting from its battle with extremism. In order to assist Pakistan as it faces these circumstances, I convened a Donors Conference in Tokyo in April through coordination also with the Obama administration soon after it took office. As the result of vigorously approaching major countries around the world to cooperate, international assistance of over five billion US dollars was pledged, exceeding our expectations. Japan as the co-chair of the Conference was highly commended by countries all around the world. President Zardari, who attended the Conference, made firm commitment to take on Pakistan's challenges and expressed his gratitude to the Japanese people. Japan will continue to demonstrate leadership in support for Pakistan.

(3) The Responsibilities of the Government and the Ruling Coalition

I take pride in the fact that the government and the ruling coalition have thus far protected Japan's security and prosperity by appealing to the Japanese people about the direction in which Japan should proceed—dispatching the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq, the Indian Ocean, and the coast of Somalia; reinforcing the Japan-US alliance that is the foundation of Japan's defense and of peace and stability in the Far East.

At the same time, unfortunately the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has opposed or objected to all of these important choices for Japan.

All of the roles that Japan has taken on have been necessary ones. Is it that the DPJ wants some other country to carry out those roles? That would be unacceptable to the international community.

Even as we face the North Korean issue, a leader of the DPJ even said regarding the Japan-US alliance that the United States Seventh Fleet was sufficient for the US's military presence in the Far East. This means that the Japan-US Security Arrangements would be scaled back dramatically and the deterrence that the US provides to Japan would be considerably reduced.

This would make it simply impossible to protect Japan and the Japanese people.

I am making it a point to highlight this, as it is an extremely important issue for the security of Japan.

2. The Prosperity of Japan and of the World

Next I will discuss how to ensure prosperity through diplomacy.

(1) The "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity"

I would like to introduce one example.

Japan has been moving forward with a symbolic project in the Palestinian Territories, named the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative. This is not simply an economic development project. In cooperation with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan, Japan aims to Jericho and other parts of the West Bank green using Japanese and Israeli technologies. The agricultural products made there by Palestinian people would be exported through Jordan to consuming regions such as the oil-producing countries in the Gulf. The relevant parties would work together, lowering the walls of distrust among them and sharing the benefits. This project will bring forth collective prosperity using Japanese ideas, technologies, and funding. The realization of peace in the Middle East is one of the most challenging diplomatic issues in the world. Japan wishes to be a mediator fostering confidence and trust, which are scarce resources in the Middle East. It is with such hopes that we have been promoting this project.

Last week the "Economic and Fiscal Reform 2009" was adopted by the Cabinet. The acceleration of strategic international contributions was identified one of "the top priority issues" among those basic policies. The key words of my policies have been "reassurance," "vitality," and "responsibility." This is also true in the international realm.

As with the project in Palestine, Japan will move forward in its undertakings with responsibility along with other relevant parties in order to foster peace of mind and vitality. I would like to firmly ensure the prosperity of the world and Japan through this type of international cooperation.

(2) The Initiative of a Eurasian Crossroads and the Concept of a Modern-Day Version of the Silk Road

Today, I would like to discuss a new initiative with you.

I would like to draw your attention to Central Asia and the Caucasus region, which lie at the very center of the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" and enjoy abundant energy and other resources. Japan will engage in cooperation to bring the Eurasian continent together both north to south and east to west via this region.

I call this the initiative for a Eurasian Crossroads.

Running vertically will be the “North-South Logistics and Distribution Route,” a route that will run from Central Asia through Afghanistan to the Arabian Sea. I envision the development of both roads and railways.

Horizontally there will be an “East-West Corridor,” a route running from Central Asia through the Caucasus to Europe. I envision developing ports on the coast of the Caspian Sea, among other ideas.

The development of such regional infrastructure will unite resource-rich Central Asia and the Caucasus in one whole region that includes Afghanistan and Pakistan which needs a foundation for the economy.

I have in the past spoken of Asia’s subregion-wide development such as the concept of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor in India and the Mekong Economic Corridors in Indochina. Through these projects, it will be possible for example to shorten the travel time from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to Chennai, India from the current roughly two weeks by sea to only eight days by developing infrastructure and making use of Japanese technology such as “one stop” services at border crossings.

We can envision a future in which we connect this series of initiatives to develop a route by which people, goods, and capital flow freely, traversing the entirety of the Eurasian continent beginning at the Pacific Ocean and ending in Europe.

This could also be called a modern-day version of the Silk Road and today I have shared with you this major initiative that contains just such a vision.

If stability and prosperity succeed in achieving synergistic effects in this region, it will result in a substantial boost for the global economy. China, India, and Russia are important partners towards this end. I would very much welcome the interest of these countries in these initiatives.

3. A Message to the World

I have spoken about my ideas in which Japan takes proactive steps to foster the security and prosperity of the world, but in doing so it is necessary to have a message being sent out to the world.

(1) Sending Out Japan’s “Soft Power” (Content Offerings, Japanese Values, Japanese as a Foreign Language, Schools for Overseas Japanese Nationals)

In promoting diplomacy, I consider it important for people within the context of

their relations with others to share their ways of thinking and their values. Trust comprises a foundation for international cooperation that is irreplaceable.

Japan enjoys a large number of forms of “soft power” that are respected around the world.

Anime, manga, and other entertainment content, movies, and fashion are called “Cool Japan” and they are held in increasingly high regard around the world. A Japan Expo will be held in Paris from July 2. You might be surprised to hear that this event, which will be held for the tenth time, draws some 150,000 young fans of Japanese pop culture from both within Europe and beyond.

Yet that is not all. Japan boasts a vast and varied range of soft power that includes the Japanese work ethic by which this country recovered from the ruins of defeat in war to become an economic superpower, such as the Japanese work style of always meeting deadlines for delivery and techniques for excellence in manufacturing products of value.

Contributions in which Japan excels include introducing these to the world and cooperating towards the fostering of human resources and the creation of systems in various countries.

In Cambodia, Japanese lawyers, including young female lawyers, have been playing an important role. They are compiling the civil code and code of civil procedure in the country’s official language of Khmer as a joint undertaking with local specialists. They are also coaching Cambodian instructors who are cultivating judges and lawyers. They have been continuing with these patient efforts for several years now.

The Japanese language is also a form of soft power. Increasing numbers of people around the world have taken an interest in learning the Japanese language, against the backdrop of interest in Cool Japan. There are even young people who begin studying Japanese to be able to read computer game “walkthroughs” that show ways to boost your chances of winning.

There are approximately three million overseas learners of Japanese at present. This number has been soaring continuously, with the total jumping 30% over the past three years, up from 2.3 million. In Southeast Asia, there are a number of universities at which the primary foreign language taught is not English but Japanese. We must further enhance Japanese language education abroad to respond to the enthusiasm of these learners.

Many local residents in foreign countries are also looking with great interest at schools for overseas Japanese students. There are requests to enroll local children in schools for overseas Japanese, as people want their children to learn the good manners and the diligence of the Japanese students. We hope to be able to respond in some way

to these expectations.

(2) Reinforcing ODA

ODA is one of the most important diplomatic means and tools for Japan as a peaceful nation and as an economic power. It is imperative that we reinforce the ODA in our bilateral relations as well as the ODA extended to international organizations.

Japan's ODA budget had been on a downward trend in recent years. As a result, Japan's ODA, which had ranked first in the world, now ranks fifth internationally after the US, Germany, the UK, and France. This is not only an issue of amount; it is also an issue of Japan's stance regarding diplomacy. I reversed the declining trend in our ODA through a combination of the original budget for fiscal 2008 and its supplementary budgets. We will be certain to ensure ODA volume so that Japan unflinchingly implements the assistance it has pledged to the world and responds to the new challenges facing the globe.

(3) Think Tank Exchanges

We are here today at a Japan Institute of International Affairs seminar. Intellectual exchanges through think tanks are also a critical diplomatic tool. In the process of formulating new international standards and rules, it is extremely important to be the first to generate ideas that are recognized the world over. It is necessary to take the lead in creating a new order by orchestrating Japan's intellectual powers through cooperation among industry, government, and academia.

I very much hope that Japan's think tanks, including the Japan Institute of International Affairs, which will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of its founding next year, continue to make solid efforts as a source of ideas for Japan's diplomacy.

In Conclusion

Diplomacy aims to ensure the security and prosperity of a nation and its citizens. This is easily expressed in a single phrase. However, a look at world history makes it obvious that putting this into practice is far from a simple task.

However, I have discovered brightness in the future of Japanese diplomacy. This is because I myself have seen that the younger generation has taken a stance of demonstrating their capabilities as individuals and they intend to contribute to the international community.

When I was serving as Minister for Foreign Affairs, I pledged that Japan would create a *terakoya* learning center to foster human resource development for peacebuilding. This *terakoya*, namely the Program for Human Resource Development in Asia for Peacebuilding, is still at a modest scale, graduating roughly 60 trainees over its two years thus far. However, through this course that was established in Hiroshima, participants from Japan and other Asian countries have gained knowledge and are now leaving the nest as peacebuilding professionals.

They have been launching their activities in peacebuilding field locations all over the world.

One woman from Timor-Leste who participated in this program was engaged in demining assistance operations in Laos as a member of an NPO organized by retired Japanese SDF personnel. People from Japan and Timor-Leste learning in Japan and then working together to build peace in Laos is something really wonderful, is it not?

I very much hope that the operations of this *terakoya* cultivating peacebuilders will be greatly enhanced in the future under the banner of Japan as a peaceful nation. I also have a dream that in the future our *terakoya* will foster prominent peacebuilders like JICA President Sadako Ogata, who served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Representative of the Government of Japan Yasushi Akashi, who has been working for peace in Sri Lanka.

The great ancient Greek poet Sophocles once said, “Chance never helps those who do not help themselves.” Hope visits those who exercise strict self-discipline, accumulate learning, and take necessary actions. This is true both for individuals and for nations.

In diplomacy and security, if you focus only on idealism while constantly opposing or expressing reservations about practical approaches, you will have no chance against the harsh realities of international society.

In this important aspect, I will continue to uphold the security and prosperity of Japan and the Japanese people through to the end.

Having stated my determination in this regard, I would like to close my address here.

Thank you for listening.