

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan  
at the 54<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference  
Night Owl Session "Present at the Destruction? The Liberal International Order Under Threat"  
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Thank you. Good evening.

First, on the security front, I think, the NPT regime, the cornerstone of international non-proliferation order, is now under attack. Let me show you this photo. This is something we caught. A North Korean tanker sitting next to another tanker. They sit together for six hours doing “ship-to-ship transfer”. North Korea, with its continued ambitions that include removing U.S. Forces from the Korean Peninsula and reunifying the Korean Peninsula on their terms, sees nuclear weapons as important means to achieve their goals. This is exactly why we should never accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. If we accept a nuclear-armed North Korea, I am afraid it’s going to be the end of the NPT regime. So we should not be blinded by their “charm offensive.” So we need to continue keeping pressure on North Korea and keeping the NPT regime safe.

Second, I think there are attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion. See the South China Sea or the East China Sea. There have been many attempts to change the status quo, and it’s not just by political or military activities. It’s more of economic or social attempts to change the status quo. Let me talk about infrastructure. There is a lot of demand for infrastructure in Asia, Africa, Middle East, and it’s good to have a good quality infrastructure to satisfy the demand. But if you look at it, there are a lot of infrastructure projects that never consider transparency, economic soundness, or about recipient country’s economy. So, we have to be careful not to be manipulated through such infrastructure investment.

We used to believe economic growth will lead to democracy. But in reality, it has not. For the last twenty years, the global GDP has increased to its 240%. But the number of countries that have parliamentary democracy is actually going down. The economic growth by state capitalism does not lead to democracy. The state capitalism creates a middle class that has strong connection to the existing government. Those middle class think the status quo is a good thing. Democracy that might bring about a change is not welcomed. So we need real market economy, we need real capitalism, we need real free trade to protect our democracy, rule of law and basic human rights.

So in that context, I think Japan and Europe should work together. We are now trying to conclude the EPA between Japan and the EU. SPA [Strategic Partnership Agreement] is almost done. So there are a lot of things we can do together. And the United States have been the biggest and foremost contributor to the liberal international order. Now we need to help our indispensable partner, the United States, through burden sharing and cooperation. We need the United States to keep the international order, which is based on liberalism and rule of law, so I think it’s time for us to work together.