

**Our Future at a Historic Crossroads**  
**“A Free, Open and Inclusive International Order**  
**Based on the Rule of Law”**  
**(14:30 —, July 29, EST )**

**0 Introduction**

Dr. Hamre, CSIS President and CEO, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you at the time-honored CSIS.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to President Biden, Secretary of State Blinken, and many friends of the United States across parties for their heartfelt condolences following the recent sudden and tragic death of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.

Former Prime Minister Abe was a statesman who believed in the power of the people of Japan and restored Japan’s vitality. He was also a world leader who dedicated himself to the peace and stability of the international community. Through his outstanding leadership, the Japan-U.S. relationship has been elevated to new heights, and his vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” has been embraced widely in the international community, going beyond Asia. We are all struggling to cope with the fact that he’s gone. However, I believe that the best way to honor him is to carry on his legacy and conduct the diplomacy of Japan with strength.

With these thoughts in mind, I am visiting Washington D.C. for the first time since becoming the Foreign Minister last November. I have a deep personal connection to the United States. After joining a Japanese trading company in 1984, and staying in North Carolina and Kentucky several times to buy tobacco leaf, I had ample opportunities to experience the warmth of Southern hospitality. Later, when I left the company to study in Boston, I was surprised to be told that my English had a Southern accent. And even now, that accent often slips out when I have a drink.

Today, I am delighted to be back to discuss the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

Japan and the U.S. are in position to steer the course of the international community. Today, I will talk about the challenges that Japan and the U.S. must tackle amidst an increasingly severe international environment, as well as my vision for our collective future.

## **1 Shared Sense of Crisis of Being at a Historic Crossroads**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, let me emphasize the importance of this moment: we are currently standing at a historic crossroads, one fraught with a sense of crisis. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is an outrage that has shaken the very foundation of the free and open international order and disrupted the peace and prosperity we have enjoyed since the end of the Cold War, leaving us with a critical question: Will we be able to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law? Or will we end up allowing the international community to become a jungle, where the strong overwhelms the weak and brute force can easily change the status quo? We are facing a watershed moment.

What is happening in Ukraine must never be allowed elsewhere in the world, including in the Indo-Pacific. We must all learn the right lessons from the current situation in Europe. Russia's aggression needs to go down in history as a clear failure, otherwise it is inevitable that other countries will follow Russia and attempt to change the status quo by force.

For this reason, it is vital that we unite in support of Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. President Biden has rallied the international community to this end, and Japan highly appreciates his leadership. Japan itself has also made the decision to drastically change its foreign policy toward Russia. In addition, Russia's aggression is causing major disruptions in the world's energy and food supplies, although Russia is using false narratives about this. To address these challenges, we will further strengthen our cooperation through the G7 and other fora.

It may seem as if the world is divided into two camps which are split between completely different worldviews: the G7 and like-minded countries including Japan and the U.S. on one side, Russia and countries that take a similar position on the other. However, as seen in the case of the aggression against Ukraine, there are many countries in between. For example, take the UN General Assembly Resolution on "Aggression against Ukraine", which was adopted this March. Though it succeeded with an overwhelming majority of 141 countries, 35 countries abstained. Certainly, each country has its own reasons for abstention. But we must never accept unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, no matter where in the world. We must work to make the international circle of this consensus larger and more resilient. Therefore, we will continue to tenaciously reach out to those middle-ground countries while also being mindful of their individual situations.

## **2 The Indo-Pacific is the Most Strategically Important Region for Japan and the U.S.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to turn to the Indo-Pacific region.

The Indo-Pacific is home to more than half of the world's population and accounts for nearly 60% of the world's GDP. It is the growth engine of the world, a region filled with potential. There is no doubt that this region is of utmost strategic importance to Japan and the U.S. Our goal is to prevent conflicts and to utilize the region's potential for stability and prosperity. However, even in this region, the "logic of brute force" is gaining more traction over the "rule of law," and the strategic balance in the region is becoming increasingly challenging for Japan and the U.S.

Obviously, ongoing unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East and South China Seas are matters of growing concern to the international community, especially to countries in East Asia including Japan. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is also of extreme importance. We also cannot overlook attempts to achieve national interests by leveraging access to a gigantic market, opaque development assistance, and other forms of economic coercion.

As underscored in the Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement issued in May, it is essential to maintain a high-level, candid dialogue with China. Japan does not hesitate to say what needs to be said to China, urging Beijing to fulfill its responsibilities as a major power in addressing international challenges, such as regional stability and development finance, in accordance with the rules of the international community. At the same time, cooperation with China is also important when necessary, such as on climate change. Besides, China is a key player in dealing with North Korea as was demonstrated in the Six Party Talks. These views underpin Japan's efforts to build a constructive and stable relationship with China.

North Korea has been intensifying its nuclear and missile activities, thus increasing security threats to Japan and the U.S. This year alone, there have been at least 28 missile test launches, including ICBM-class ballistic missiles. There is also concern about a possible seventh nuclear test. North Korea's nuclear and missile activities are in violation of Security Council resolutions, and are a clear and serious challenge to the peace and stability of the international community. Security cooperation among Japan, the U.S., and the Republic of Korea is becoming increasingly important in the face of these threats, and we will enhance the trilateral security cooperation including the Japan-U.S.-ROK joint exercise which we agreed to in June. Also, the abductions issue must be resolved immediately.

In the midst of the Quad Leaders' Meeting in Tokyo in May, China and Russia conducted joint bomber flights near Japan. It is no exaggeration to say that the deeper and stronger military coordination between China and Russia is emerging as a security concern.

The common goal of Japan and the U.S. is to build a free, open, and inclusive international order in the Indo-Pacific region based on the rule of law. This is precisely what Japan's vision, a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", known as FOIP, seeks to achieve. Japan will strengthen its FOIP efforts and formulate a "FOIP Plan for Peace" by next spring.

Since announcing a vision for FOIP in 2016, Japan has been in dialogue with various countries to share its vision and collaborate with them. As a result, various actors have come to announce their own visions for the Indo-Pacific that align with that of FOIP. This February, the Biden Administration announced the U.S. "Indo-Pacific Strategy." We believe that it demonstrates the U.S.'s unwavering commitment to the region. At the same time, in order to realize a FOIP, we will promote cooperation with our most important partner in this context, ASEAN, which adopted ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). We will also cooperate with Quad members India and Australia, and G7 and European partners. Furthermore, we need to step up our cooperation with the Pacific Island countries.

Next, I would like to talk about three challenges we need to address in the Indo-Pacific region, the most critical theater for both Japan and the U.S.

### **3 Issues to be Addressed by Japan and the U.S.(1): Restoration of Strategic Balance**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our first challenge comes in the form of restoring strategic balance.

Diplomacy can work more effectively when the security balance is firmly maintained. As such, there is an urgent need to strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. After all, “Heaven helps those who help themselves.” I stressed this point at the Japan-U.S. “2+2” convened virtually this January. I emphasized then—and continue to emphasize now-- that Japan intends to play a larger role in maintaining the balance.

In order to demonstrate this commitment, Japan will formulate a new National Security Strategy by the end of this year. We are going to fundamentally strengthen Japan's defense capabilities within five years, substantially increasing our defense budgets in order to underpin this plan. We will continue to keep all options, including what we call “counterstrike capabilities”, on the table, as we realistically consider what is necessary to protect the lives of our citizens and our territory. Through these efforts we will evolve bilateral roles and missions, and strengthen our joint capabilities.



At the same time, the U.S.'s military presence and unwavering commitment to the defense of Japan have become even more important. In order to maintain the competitive edge of the Japan-U.S. Alliance well into the future, we need to fundamentally strengthen our cross-domain capabilities, including cyber, space, and electromagnetic spectrum, as well as our investment in advanced technologies such as AI and quantum science. It is crucial that we also ramp up cyber and information security.

Furthermore, I believe that the credibility of extended deterrence by the United States needs to be strengthened. Russia's recent nuclear threats in the midst of its aggression toward Ukraine are absolutely unacceptable. On the other hand, Russia's outrageous actions remind us of the importance of extended deterrence in ensuring the stability of the international community. In particular, East Asia is home to China, which continues to expand its nuclear capabilities, and North Korea, which has made no secret of its desire to possess nuclear weapons. In light of strategic balance in the region, Japan and the U.S.'s efforts are required to further improve the credibility and resilience of U.S. extended deterrence.

Nonetheless, it is Japan's strong belief that the apocalyptic horrors caused by nuclear weapons must never be repeated. Japan will advance realistic measures to realize a world without nuclear weapons, upon the foundation of the trust it enjoys with the U.S. In particular, I would like to strongly urge China, which is rapidly building up its nuclear arsenals in an opaque manner, to contribute to arrangements that reduce nuclear risks, increase transparency and advance nuclear disarmament as stated in the Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement in May.

The NPT is the foundation for efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons. A few days from now, the NPT Review Conference is set to begin in New York. As the only nation that has suffered atomic bombings in war, Japan will strive to reconcile conflicting views between participating countries to produce a meaningful outcome for the Conference. While it is not common for heads of government to attend, Prime Minister Kishida will be the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so, demonstrating our dedication and commitment to the Conference.

In recent years, multilayered partnerships with allies and like-minded countries that share universal values in the Indo-Pacific region, such as Japan-US-Australia, Japan-U.S.-ROK, NATO+AP4 and AUKUS, have become more active. From the viewpoint of further encouraging such security partnerships in the region, Japan signed and has been negotiating the Reciprocal Access Agreements (RAAs) with Australia and the UK respectively. Also, Japan is deepening strategic discussions not only with these two countries but also with the Philippines, Germany, India, Indonesia and France through “2+2” ministerial meetings. Furthermore, we will advance Defense Equipment and Technology Transfer Agreement with ASEAN countries.

#### **4 Issues to be Addressed by Japan and the U.S. (2): Economic Order Formation and Economic Security**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The second challenge facing Japan and the U.S. lies in the building of economic order and economic security.

One of the purposes of my visit to the U.S. is to hold the first Economic “2+2” Ministerial Meeting with Secretary of State Blinken, Secretary of Commerce Raimondo, and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hagiuda. We are living in a time in which it is necessary to discuss diplomacy, security, and economy as one, from a geopolitical perspective.

First of all, I would like to emphasize that the common goal of Japan and the U.S. is to create a free, open, and inclusive economic order in the Indo-Pacific, harnessing the remarkable growth potential of the region. This aim is not feasible without continued U.S. commitment. In this context, Japan welcomes the IPEF, “Indo-Pacific Economic Framework,” launched by the U.S. in May this year. Japan will work with the U.S. and other partner countries so that the IPEF can reap an early harvest.

At the same time, the U.S. should be a leader in the economic integration of the Indo-Pacific region. It was the U.S. that developed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, into what it is today, with a clear-sighted view of its strategic importance. Currently, several economies have requested their accession to the TPP, and discussions are underway. However, in light of the history of the TPP's establishment and significance, it is none other than the U.S. that should be at the heart of it. Bearing all this in mind, Japan strongly hopes for the return of the U.S. to the TPP at the earliest possible timing as it bears great strategic importance.

The next point I would like to emphasize is the need to deepen Japan-U.S. cooperation on economic security. The COVID-19 pandemic and the global incidents that followed exposed the vulnerability of our supply chains. New challenges have been emerging such as the theft of critical technologies, the forced transfer of intellectual property rights and the coercive pursuit of national interests backed by economic power. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to these challenges could risk limiting our diplomatic flexibility and weakening international solidarity toward strategic issues. We shared this view at today's Economic "2+2" Ministerial Meeting, in which we discussed issues of economy, diplomacy and security as one, and reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening Japan-U.S. cooperation.

In Japan, the Economic Security Promotion Act has recently been enacted. Based on this law, Japan will further promote Japan-U.S. cooperation in areas such as the stable supply of strategic goods, supply chain resilience, and the development and safeguard of advanced technologies while harmonizing our system with that of the U.S. and other like-minded countries.

## **5 Issues to be Addressed by Japan and the U.S. (3): Promotion of Multilayered People-to-people Exchange that Upholds the Japan-U.S. Alliance**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The third challenge is how Japan and the U.S. can upgrade people-to-people exchanges to the next level. Such interactions have long sustained and upheld our robust Japan-U.S. Alliance.

A highlight of my personal experience came in 1991, when I interned in the offices of then-Representative Stephen L. Neal and then-Senator William Roth. Under Senator Roth, I was personally involved in the launch of the Mansfield Fellowship Program and I am pleased to be joined today by incoming fellows and alumni of the program. Since then, I have made it my life's work to promote this kind of people-to-people exchange between Japan and the U.S., believing that friendships fostered therein will buttress a robust Japan-U.S. Alliance today and in the future.

We continue to ensure that our people-to-people exchange is keeping pace with the changing times. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in May, our two leaders concurred to boost programs including the Mansfield Fellowship Program and also foster the next generation of leaders that will advance a "free and open Indo-Pacific." I'm fully committed to pushing this forward.

It would be remiss not to mention the contributions of great Japanese American leaders in developing people-to-people exchange between our two nations. Taking this opportunity, I would like to pay my profound respect to great predecessors; to name a few, former Senator Daniel Inouye, former U.S.-Japan Council President Irene Hirano Inouye, and former Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta. We would like to collaborate with next generation Japanese American leaders to further develop Japan-U.S. cooperation in the future.



## **6 Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I said at the beginning, we are currently standing at a historic crossroads. Japan and the U.S. must be prepared to walk a “long and winding road” for the foreseeable future. Political scientists often ask, “Who will lead the 21st century?” However, our job is not to predict the future; our mission is to create it.

And this future must be a free, open, and inclusive international order based on the rule of law. It is also important for our democratic system to develop incrementally into one in which freedom, human rights, and diversity are better respected. Japan and the U.S. will fulfill our responsibility to lead such global governance while broadening support for this order and cooperating with other like-minded countries.

I am sure that the road ahead will be “long and winding”, but our unwavering commitment and tireless efforts will surely “lead us to the door” of peace and stability in the international order.

Thank you very much for your attention.