

Address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress
KISHIDA Fumio, Prime Minister of Japan
For the Future: Our Global Partnership

April 11, 2024

1 Introduction

Mr. Speaker, Madam Vice President, Honorable Members of the United States Congress, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you, I never get such nice applause from the Japanese Diet.

And let me introduce my wife, Yuko, who is in the gallery. The fact that I married Yuko should give you great confidence in all my decisions.

I am truly honored to speak here in this citadel of democracy and before you, the representatives of the American people.

Nine years ago, the late Prime Minister Abe, who was a close friend of mine, stood in this very spot and gave an address titled “Toward an Alliance of Hope.” I was Foreign Minister in his Cabinet at that time, and I was deeply struck to witness the bond between our two countries.

Since childhood, I have felt a connection to the United States, perhaps because I spent my first three years of elementary school at PS 20 and PS 13 in Queens, New York. Even though I was the only Japanese student there, my classmates kindly accepted me and helped me immerse myself in a new culture.

We arrived in the fall of 1963, and for several years my family lived like Americans. My father would take the subway to Manhattan where he worked as a trade official. We rooted for the Mets and the Yankees, and ate hot dogs at Coney Island. On vacation, we would go to Niagara Falls or here to Washington, D.C.

And I remember things that were strange and funny to a little Japanese boy, like watching the *Flintstones* . . .

I still miss that show. Although I could never translate “yabba dabba doo.”

After 60 years, I have a message for the good people of Queens. Thank you for making my family and me feel so welcome. I have never forgotten it.

So, I speak to you today as a long and close friend of the United States.

I know that the National Park Service is undertaking a rehabilitation project in the Tidal Basin. As a gesture of friendship, Japan will provide 250 cherry trees that will be planted there, in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of your independence.

2 The leadership of the United States

As you might also remember, the 1964 World’s Fair was held in Queens. Its symbol was a giant Unisphere, and the fair’s theme was “Peace Through Understanding.”

And yet we also know that peace requires more than understanding. It requires resolve.

The U.S. shaped the international order in the postwar world through economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power. It championed freedom and democracy. It encouraged the stability and prosperity of nations, including Japan.

And, when necessary, it made noble sacrifices to fulfill its commitment to a better world. The United States policy was based on the premise that humanity does not want to live oppressed by an authoritarian state, where you are tracked and surveilled and denied from expressing what is in your heart and on your mind.

You believed that freedom is the oxygen of humanity.

The world needs the United States to continue playing this pivotal role in the affairs of nations.

And yet, as we meet here today, I detect an undercurrent of self-doubt among some Americans about what your role in the world should be.

3 New Challenges

This self-doubt is arising at a time when our world is at history's turning point. The post-Cold War era is already behind us, and we are now at an inflection point that will define the next stage of human history.

The international order that the U.S. worked for generations to build is facing new challenges, challenges from those with values and principles very different from ours.

Freedom and democracy are currently under threat around the globe.

Climate change has caused natural disasters, poverty, and displacement on a global scale. In the COVID-19 pandemic, all humanity suffered.

Rapid advances in AI technology have resulted in a battle over the soul of AI that is raging between its promise and its perils.

The balance of economic power is shifting. The Global South plays a greater role in responding to challenges and opportunities and calls for a larger voice.

Turning to Japan's own neighborhood, China's current external stance and military actions present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge, not only to the peace and security of Japan but to the peace and stability of the international community at large.

While such a challenge from China continues, our commitment to upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law, as well as peace, will continue to be the defining agenda going forward.

As a Hiroshima native, I have devoted my political career to bringing about a world without nuclear weapons. For years, I have worked to revitalize the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime so that we can gain momentum in pursuit of the aspiration. But there exists an imminent danger of nuclear weapons proliferation in East Asia. North Korea's nuclear and missile program is a direct threat. The issue of abductions by North Korea

remains a critical issue.

North Korea's provocations have impact beyond the region. It has also exported its ballistic missiles to support Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, greatly increasing the suffering of the Ukrainian people.

Russia's unprovoked, unjust, and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has entered its third year. As I often say, Ukraine of today may be East Asia of tomorrow. Furthermore, Russia continues to threaten the use of nuclear weapons, which has contributed to worldwide concern that yet another catastrophe by nuclear weapon use is a real possibility. In this reality, close coordination between Japan and the U.S. is required more than ever to ensure that the deterrence our Alliance provides remains credible and resilient.

New forms of oppression are being imposed on the world. Freedom is being suppressed through digital technologies. Social media is censored, monitored, and controlled.

There are growing cases of economic coercion and the so-called "debt trap" diplomacy, whereby the economic dependency of nations is exploited and weaponized.

Facing such rapidly-changing pressures, how do we continue to safeguard our common values?

4 Global Partners

I want to address those Americans who feel the loneliness and exhaustion of being the country that has upheld the international order almost singlehandedly.

I understand it is a heavy burden to carry such hopes on your shoulders.

Although the world looks to your leadership, the U.S. should not be expected to do it all, unaided and on your own.

Yes, the leadership of the United States is indispensable.

Without U.S. support, how long before the hopes of Ukraine would collapse under the

onslaught from Moscow?

Without the presence of the United States, how long before the Indo-Pacific would face even harsher realities?

Ladies and gentlemen, as the United States' closest friend, *tomodachi*, the people of Japan are with you, side by side, to assure the survival of liberty. Not just for our people, but for all people.

I am not saying this out of my strong attachment to America. I am an idealist but a realist, too. The defense of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law is the national interest of Japan.

The Japanese people are fully committed to these values. I do not want to leave our children a society where human rights are suppressed, where political self-determination is denied, where our lives are monitored by digital technology.

I know you don't either. Upholding these values is both a cause and a benefit for our two countries as well as for the generations to come across the world.

Right now, Japanese and U.S. service members are working side by side to deter aggression and ensure peace.

I admire them, I thank them, and I know I speak for all of us when I say--they have the gratitude of both our nations.

On the spaceship called "Freedom and Democracy," Japan is proud to be your shipmate.

We are on deck, we are on task. And we are ready to do what is necessary.

The democratic nations of the world must have all hands on deck.

I am here to say that Japan is already standing shoulder to shoulder with the United States.

You are not alone.

We are with you.

Japan has changed over the years. We have transformed ourselves from a reticent ally, recovering from the devastation of World War II, to a strong, committed ally, looking outward to the world.

Japan has transformed its national security strategy. Uncertainty about the future stability of the Indo-Pacific region caused us to change our policies and our very mindset. I myself have stood at the forefront in making our bilateral alliance even stronger.

In 2022, we announced that we would secure a substantial increase of our defense budget by FY 2027 to 2% of GDP, possess counterstrike capabilities, and improve cybersecurity. Today, the deterrence that our Alliance provides is stronger than ever, bolstered by U.S. extended deterrence for Japan.

Japan has taken strong sanctions against Russia in the wake of its aggression against Ukraine. We have announced over \$12 billion in aid to Ukraine, including anti-drone detection systems. This is part of NATO's aid package, and, yes, we are even working with NATO on the other side of the world from us.

I might add that in February, to help a devastated Ukraine get through these agonizing times, I hosted the conference for Ukraine's economic growth and reconstruction. Japan will continue to stand with Ukraine.

As the geopolitical landscape changed and as Japan grew in confidence, we expanded our outlook beyond that of being America's closest ally. We first became a regional partner of the United States, and now we have become your global partner. Never has our relationship been so close, our vision and approach so united.

Today, our partnership goes beyond the bilateral. Examples include trilateral and quadrilateral cooperation among the U.S., Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, India,

and the Philippines as well as cooperation through the G7 and with ASEAN. The three leaders of the U.S., the Republic of Korea and Japan convened at Camp David last summer to inaugurate a new era of our partnership.

From these various endeavors emerges a multi-layered regional framework where our Alliance serves as a force multiplier. And, together with these like-minded countries, we are working to realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Here in this chamber, we should have strong bipartisan support for these efforts.

Japan believes in U.S. leadership, and we also believe in the U.S. economy.

Japan is the number one foreign direct investor in the United States. Japanese companies have invested around 800 billion dollars, creating almost one million American jobs. These are good jobs with half a million jobs in the manufacturing sector alone.

At home, I am embarking on a set of initiatives called a New Form of Capitalism to drive the Japanese economy. The public and private sectors are joining hands to transform the social challenges we face into engines of growth. Wage increases, capital investment, stock prices -- all have attained levels not seen for thirty years. The Japanese economy is now making strides by capitalizing on these unprecedented and major changes. A growth-oriented Japanese economy should also spur even greater investment in the United States. And we can then help boost the global economy to steer it toward a strong growth trajectory in the years to come.

Just yesterday, President Biden and I demonstrated our commitment to leading the world on the development of the next generation of emerging technologies, such as AI, quantum, semiconductors, biotechnology, and clean energy.

And the scope of our bilateral cooperation expands to space as well, illuminating our path toward a brighter and more hopeful tomorrow. The TV broadcast of Apollo 11's lunar landing of 1969 is still seared into my memory. Japan's lunar lander mission in January achieved the first pinpoint landing in history. Yesterday, President Biden and I announced that a Japanese national will be the first non-American astronaut to land on

the Moon on a future Artemis mission.

We have two astronauts with us today. Would Mr. Hoshide and Mr. Tani please stand?

Mr. Akihiko Hoshide has flown to space three times and served as commander of the International Space Station for five months in 2021.

Next to him, is Mr. Daniel Tani. He is a retired Japanese American astronaut who has conducted six spacewalks and in his two missions logged over 50 million miles.

Which is a lot of frequent flyer points.

Mr. Hoshide and Mr. Tani are living symbols of our collaboration in space, and we will have many more such collaborations in the future.

Thank you, gentlemen.

5 Conclusion

Let me close with this final thought. I want you to know how seriously Japan takes its role as the United States' closest ally.

Together we carry a large responsibility. I believe that we are essential to peace...vital to freedom...and fundamental to prosperity.

Bonded by our beliefs, I pledge to you Japan's firm alliance and enduring friendship.

"Global Partners for the Future." - We are your global partner today, and we will be your global partner in the years ahead.

Thank you for inviting me, thank you for your hospitality, and thank you for the role you play in the world.