

A Keynote Speech by ABE, Shinzō, Former Prime Minister, Japan "Mapping the Democratic Agendas for the Next Generations"

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Hello, everyone. I must begin by thanking Dr Chen, Chairman of the Prospect Foundation, for having me today.

March 23rd, 1996, someone I have respected so much, the late Honorable President Lee Teng-hui, was elected for the first time in the Taiwanese history by popular vote as President of Taiwan.

That was the moment when democracy began to take root in the nation.

I hereby pray that Dr Lee shall rest in eternal peace.

I also pay tribute to the people in Taiwan. Because this year, it is the 25th anniversary of your achievement.

I am glad that Taiwan as a democratic entity has taken part in the Leaders' Summit for Democracy.

It was timely and well deserved. My hearty congratulations to all the people in Taiwan.

As President Biden says, Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to defend it, fight for it, strengthen it, and renew it.

And on that account, few nations embody that reality better than Taiwan.

Now, what are the agendas to make democracy more robust for the future generations?

First, Taiwan, the United States, and Japan have one common important agenda.

That is to never ever lose our faith in freedoms, in human rights, in the rule of law, and in democracy, for our children and their children to do the same to cherish democracy.

Here, Taiwan must be a leader because YOU deserve that.

Rise up, Taiwan, I would like to say, to spread faith across the globe in democracy.

It is even more important for Taiwan to do so now, when in Hong Kong democracy has little space to prosper.

Second, why shall we lose no faith in democracy?

Democracy may be messy. Democracy consumes time.

A study shows that in 2016 as Prime Minister to answer questions from my fellow members of the parliament, I spent a total of about 370 hours tied to a chair, not so comfortable, on the floor of the parliament.

Democracy, therefore, also hurts. It is not good for your health.

David Cameron, on the other hand, in that same year, did so only for about 50 hours.

I envied him.

Still, however messy, democracy is forever young.

If the administration gets too rusty, you can change it, and your democracy gets renewed.

Where there is no consent of the voters, there is no government.

The power of democracy comes from within, neither from without, nor from the above.

That is why, in the long run, democracy is strong.

Third, when there is a threat over Taiwan, and its democracy, it is a dire challenge to all of us, especially to Japan.

With that in mind, I have enhanced Japan's national security.

The United States military and Japanese Self Defense Forces have been close, all the time.

Now, the relationship is even closer.

It is Japanese Self Defense Forces that provide security cover to US military assets in and around the country every day.

Lest we forget, weakness invites provocations.

The three of us must stop no effort in building our capabilities in all domains, from the undersea, sea surface, air space, to the cyber and outer space.

To that end, let us consider new ways of sharing our knowledge and technologies even more effectively.

Here is another point.

An adventure in military affairs, if pursued by such a huge economy like China's, could be suicidal to say the least.

We must urge them not to pursue territorial expansion and restrain from provoking, often bullying, their neighbors because it should harm their own interests.

And yet again, we must have more partners to work with to make our voice heard with more strength.

With that in mind, I worked hard first to reinvest into the alliance with the U.S., second to widen our boundary from Asia Pacific to Indo-Pacific, and third to launch the QUAD process.

Japan, on my watch, chose to hoist high a banner for freedoms, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Not only India and Australia, but countries such as France and the U.K. and even more freedom loving nations are gathering around that banner.

Jointly, Australia and Japan brought TPP into place.

It is a group of economies that hold the rules-based order very much dear.

That is why, the U.K. does qualify as a member, and so does Taiwan without doubt.

Finally, the United States, Japan, and other like-minded countries should work hard to bring Taiwan to international organizations of universal relevance.

WHO comes on top of the list. There are many others.

That is one important way for us to sow seeds of hope for the next generations of the Taiwanese.

A prouder Taiwan will become a stronger guardian of our common values, and it will be in the best interest of Japan, the United States, and indeed, the entire world.

Thank you very much.