

Cherry Blossom Festival Remarks

Greetings good to be here at the event that has always symbolized the beginning of Spring in Washington, DC

You have heard already today about attitudes on both sides of the Pacific. The polling data that Bruce Stokes described this morning documents a high degree of both respect and trust between citizens of Japan and the United States.

You have also heard from Satu Lemaye about the deep financial, business, trade and travel ties between the two countries - over \$1B spent every year by Japanese tourists is five American states; 39,000 employees of Japanese companies in Illinois, and California exporting over \$20B to Japan.

The Cherry Blossom Festival is the premier annual event that highlights the cultural ties between the two countries, dating back about a century.

So the ties between the world's two most prosperous democracies are positive, complex and of long standing. There even are associations in natural events like the arrival of spring here in Washington.

In this region of the United States for years the tree that marked the end of winter was the shadberry. It's blooming

coincided with the arrival of the shad, a fish that spent most of its life in the ocean, then in huge numbers ran up the great rivers of the East Coast of America, including the Potomac, to spawn.

It was the shad that often provided the first fresh meat of the year to both Native Americans and the new settlers, after the winter had made other game scarce.

The shad are running again in recent years, now that the rivers have been cleaned up, and we will see the shadberries blooming soon. But now it is the cherry tree that marks the arrival of Spring for many of us, and instead of shad bringing fresh meat to hungry settlers, the tourists bring fresh income to local merchants.

So it is interesting how traditions change, and the interaction between the US and Japan weaves into older traditions

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Many of the individual findings of the poll results you heard this morning are fascinating, as are many of the facts about what Japanese commerce means to the United States. The overall conclusion we can draw is that the two countries have a strong, positive and deep relationship.

This good relationship is of long standing. It was over 100 years ago that Japan gave these cherry trees to the United States as a gesture of friendship.

The US-Japan relationship has been generally very positive on both sides, during all this time, with several notable exceptions.

In the United States there was a period of anti-Japanese sentiment in the 1920s, leading to the Immigration Law of 1924 that restricted Japanese immigration, and imposed other prohibitions on Japanese in this country. During the war the United States interned Japanese American citizens in camps without any due process.

Japan's military regime in the 1930s saw the United States as the chief obstacle to its expansion in Asia, and eventually attacked the United States in 1941 in an attempt to drive it out of East Asia.

However, following the war, beginning 70 years ago in 1945, a strong US-Japan alliance formed that has continued to this day.

What has always been remarkable is how close our relationship has been despite such differences in our national characters.

I think it would be difficult to find two peoples of major countries that are more different - than Americans and Japanese.

There was a very interesting book on the subject first published before World War II, with a second edition after the war.

The book is titled *We Japanese*. It was commissioned by the managing director of the Fujiya Hotel, in Hakone, to try to explain the true nature of Japan to the hotel's guests.

There is a wonderful chapter in the book called, "Topsy-Turvydom," that begins:

"It is often remarked that Japanese do things in ways directly opposite to those of a foreigner. To the Japanese, foreign ways appear equally unaccountable."

Some of the examples are serious cultural differences, often showing up in language:

There are no words in the language which exactly express the same meaning as the terse English "yes" and "no."

There are no swear words in the Japanese language.

And some are humorous:

A Westerner stirs his tea in the way the hands of a watch move, a Japanese does it in the reverse way

My young staff tells me that these differences do not seem to exist today, which is good, but it is interesting that they were considered to exist in our parents' time.

However it is still true that Americans are open, informal and direct, whereas Japanese are private, observe strict rules of behavior, and are very indirect.

So what is the basis of this strong relationship that has endured for generations, since it certainly is not cultural affinity, as it has been with Great Britain, for example.

As the Cherry Blossom festival reminds us every year, there is a strong cultural interest between the two countries -

Popular American culture fascinates some Japanese, from music through clothes.

Japanese culture, both traditional and contemporary, catches the attention of Americans, from woodblock prints and food through manga and anime cartoons.

These attractions, however, are of the exotic and different between the two countries and cultures, rather than of the familiar and similar.

The one cultural area that is common between the United States and Japan is baseball - same rules, after all - 9 men on a team, 9 innings in a game, 3 outs in an inning, four balls for a walk and three for a strikeout.

However on a closer inspection, the differences between how the game is played on the two sides of the Pacific are as striking as the similarities:

-US managers building a team around the qualities of individual players; Japanese managers relentlessly training individuals to play specifically defined roles.

-US fans heckling of individual players on the other team from the bleachers; Japanese chants, songs and flags in the stands.

-US brushbacks and bench-clearing brawls; Japanese teams' stoic discipline in the face of adversity.

So cultural attractions between the United States and Japan are many and strong, but they cannot account for the strong ties between our countries.

Neither can an explanation be found in the influence of Japanese ethnic groups in the United States, as is true for other nationalities from the Irish through the Jews.

Japanese Americans are the smallest ethnic group from the major Asian countries:

According to the 2010 census, citizens of Chinese heritage were the largest single group of ethnic Americans from major Asian countries, followed by Filipinos, Indians, Vietnamese, Koreans, then Japanese. Except for Hawaii, Japanese Americans are among the least politically active of the ethnic American groups.

By the way, Americans are only the fifth largest group of foreigners living in Japan.

So what is it that has kept this relationship alliance together all these years, the last 70 of which have been an alliance ?

I would point to the central role of shared values.

As the examples I gave earlier demonstrated, the shared values are not easily discerned on the surface, and they are not across the board, but they nonetheless have brought our two countries together over the decades since Japan opened to the

outside world in the Meiji era, and since the United States assumed a role in Asia.

One shared value is the common belief in the importance of technological progress, along with well developed technological prowess.

Alongside their veneration of the past, and their wish to preserve it, Japanese also believe in the value and importance of newer and better devices. They have an inherent progressive problem-solving approach.

In the past, much of Japanese technological progress was imitation, importing best technology from foreign countries.

However, if some of the basic technology was imported, Japanese often reworked, improved and perfected it far beyond the achievements of its originators.

The Japanese automobile industry famously learned to build better, less expensive cars than those from the United States, and Detroit had to go back to school to learn lessons from Japanese continuous improvement processes.

Japanese railroad trains were originally imported from abroad, but today Japan sells high-speed train technology back into countries that developed the railroad much earlier.

And Japan in many areas has gone far beyond importing and perfecting to discovering and inventing: Casio invented the electronic calculator in 1957, and Japanese companies were selling them in the 1970s; Seiko the first quartz wristwatch in 1969; Sony for years was a powerhouse of inventiveness, from the CD to the digital camera to the Walkman. And, most important, Japan invented the automatic electric rice cooker. We just used ours over the weekend.

In this century, Japanese scholars have won Nobel prizes in chemistry and physics for the mathematics of subatomic particles, the discovery of fundamental processes of photosynthesis, and the discovery of the science of the LED.

Another powerfully uniting force has been the shared value of common threats from other countries.

During the Cold War the United States and Japan were united by the shared threat from the Soviet Union.

So, too, of course were the countries of Western Europe and the United States.

But on the two sides of the Eurasian continent the forms of alliance to deter the threat from the Soviet Union developed differently. In Europe, the key component of the NATO treat is Article V:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and they agree that . . . each of them will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

In the case of the US-Japan alliance treaty, the key is also Article V, which states,

“Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes.”

In other words, an attack on Japan would cause the United States to meet the common danger, but there is no reciprocal obligation for Japan to respond to an attack on the United States.

The next article of the treaty states that Japan will provide bases for American forward deployed forces.

So the security treaty with Japan is more limited, more transactional and less balanced than that with NATO. However despite this imbalance the US-Japan Alliance has a depth and

strength that have actually made the transition from the Cold War more smoothly than the NATO alliance.

It is, rather the foundational belief in representative, democratic government that is the most powerful common value between the United States and Japan.

Democracy has historically longer roots in the United States than in Japan, where it did not gain influence and support until the 1920s, and then was completely derailed by the military nationalistic regimes of the 1930s.

However at the end of World War II the United States imposed a democratic form of government on Japan that has proved durable and resilient.

However, if my remarks this afternoon have made any point, it is that similar concepts in Japan and the United States can have far different appearances, and democratic values are no exception.

Since 1955 a single political party has held power in Japan except for one brief recent period.

Politics often seem hereditary in Japan - the current prime minister is the grandson of a former prime minister, and

Japanese political family dynasties go far beyond the Clintons and Bushes that Americans find strange.

However the elements of representative democratic government are all present and functioning in Japan and the United States:

Free and fair elections;

Individual rights;

A vibrant and contentious press;

An honest civil service that provides government services competently;

An independent judiciary;

Political parties that react to popular opinion and aspirations;

And Japan, perhaps more than the United States, values shared sacrifice, voluntary, not coerced, commitment to work for the greater good, an ethic without which democracy cannot flourish.

So over the years, as the United States has been involved in Asia at many different stages, from wars in Korea and Vietnam, through long phases of peace, with great changes in Asia in countries such as the Republic of Korea, China, Indonesia, it

has continued to feel both a strategic confluence of interests and a confluence of values with Japan.

And Japan, for its part, has not only relied on the United States for defense support, but has shared the preference for democratic representative forms of government, and for working most closely with a country that shares those values.

What of the future ?

What is most exciting for those of us in Sasakawa USA is that the US-Japan relationship appears on the verge of one of its most vibrant and positive stages in history.

For the past twenty years the relationship has been fundamentally strong, but in many ways stagnant.

Japan's economy has been stalled, and its role in international affairs has diminished. The United States has tried many different approaches to the security environment that followed the end of the Cold War, some of which have succeeded and some of which have not. We went through a major recession of our own making, from which we are only now beginning to emerge.

But now things are changing.

Japan is taking vigorous action to reignite its economy. There are mixed opinions about whether the actions of the first two years will produce the desired results, but there is no doubt that Japan will keep actively pushing new approaches to break out of its past doldrums.

The United States is emerging from its recession, and the foundation for future growth seems solid.

Japan has committed itself to a new national security policy, which Prime Minister Abe labels, "Proactive contribution to peace." Japan is moving out with diplomatic, economic and military initiatives, to play a much stronger role in the world. It is taking early steps to put more balance in the treaty relationship with the United States.

In the United States, the upcoming 2016 presidential election promises to include, for the first time in many years, a strong discussion of national security issues. What are the threats? What are the opportunities? What allies can we count on?

I have no doubt that out of this new situation will emerge a US-Japan relationship that is even stronger than in the past, that will serve as the foundation for policies that benefit not only both countries, but also East Asia and other regions of the world.

In the recent past, much of the security dialog between the United States and Japan has been about our relationship with each other - issues having to do with the basing of US forces in Japan, or narrow bilateral economic issues.

However we have a chance to move onto big issues that are not only important to each of our two countries, but can make a difference in the East Asia region, and the world.

Prime Minister Abe will be visiting the United States later this month, the first official visit by a Japanese prime minister in 11 years. He will be addressing a joint session of Congress during his stop in Washington.

I hope that the impetus from this visit will overcome the last few obstacles in the way of US-Japan agreement on the terms of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. The TPP will set the framework for international economic relations for 11 more countries very quickly, and for many more, hopefully including China, thereafter. It will establish the rules for an international economic system that favors the very best practices in areas like the environment, labor practices, state-owned enterprises, and many others.

Also in connection with the Prime Minister's visit the two countries will probably announce a new set of bilateral defense guidelines, the first since 1997. The primary changes from past agreements will be in the role of Japan. While the country is not about to become an aggressive wielder of its advanced

military force, it will modernize US-Japan defense concepts to better meet the challenges of the 21st century.

From the Japanese point of view, Japan will have a greater ability to support its interests in a more equal partnership with allies like the United States. For the United States, there will be a commitment from Japan to work together in situations that threaten our common interests. In a world in which few of our traditional allies seem interested in events outside their borders, and most are decreasing their military expenditures, it is refreshing to have a partner that is thinking how to do more, and is increasing its defense budget.

With these two important achievements nailed down, it is time for the United States and Japan to get to work.

We can cooperate to support early democratic transformations in many countries of the world - in Myanmar, in Sri Lanka - and we can work together to support countries that are headed in the right direction - Indonesia, or countries that need to be steered back on the right path - Thailand.

We can cooperate on supporting China's entry into the world economic system, and in efforts to deal with regional challenges in the Middle East and with North Korea, for example, while together deterring Chinese new found power from being misused for territorial gain. We can challenge China to move in a democratic direction that will unleash its full potential.

We can cooperate in the area of energy and dealing with climate change.

There is a full range of important objectives important to both Japan and the United States that can be achieved by a shared vision and closer cooperation across the full range of security, economic and diplomatic activities.

So this Cherry Blossom Festival 2015 is a marvelous chance to look back at the US-Japan relationship, and to value the many cultural ties between the two countries.

It is also a great opportunity to think about the future of the Alliance, and to commit to its new possibilities and promises.

Thank you