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A Vision for Peace and Prosperity in East Asia: A Taiwan Perspective

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(full text) Introduction

Thank you very much for your kind introduction, Professor Murata. If my memory serves me right, this is my eighth visit to Japan. Without exception, every visit deepened my knowledge about and respect for this great country. Now let me start by offering my sincere apologies for my cancellation of a visit to this university July last year due to an unexpected typhoon. As then Mayor of Taipei City, I had to rush back to Taipei to make sure my fellow citizens were safe and sound. The unfulfilled appointment with you, however, has been lingering in my mind ever since.

This is why, regardless of my tight campaign schedule, I would like to come here to see you before I meet with other Japanese friends during this trip.

Over the past century, Doshisha University has proven itself to be an exemplary institute of higher learning. Founded on Dr. Joseph Neesima's (Amherst awarded him honorary doctor's degree) aspiration and commitment to education, the university has distinguished itself in many disciplines.

Some people have called Doshisha the Waseda of West Japan. However, my Taiwanese friend- an alumnus of Doshisha- assures me that, in fact, Waseda is the Doshisha of East Japan.

What is certain is that Dr. Neesima was a man of vision. In his speech to the graduating class of 1879, he said in English, "Go, Go, Go, in peace, be strong! Mysterious hands will guide you."

Although I was not there to hear him speak in person, I am sure those mysterious hands work in mysterious ways. Only three days ago, a Doshisha graduate, Hiramatsu Kunio was elected Mayor of Osaka. You all know that I am running for the president of Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China, I sure could use some help from those "mysterious hands"!

An Old and New Human Bond

As you know well, in the second half of the 19th century, when laws on national isolation were still in effect in Japan, Mr. Joseph Hardy Neesima embarked on a trans-Pacific voyage to study Western science and Christianity in the U.S. Several years later, Mr. Neesima became the first Japanese to receive a graduate degree from the U.S. Mr. Neesima returned to Japan,

and in 1875 founded a school in Kyoto, which later became Doshisha University. Mr. Neesima is the prime example of a successful blend between traditional Japanese culture and Western civilization. And this blend is a recipe for the present-day modernized Japan.

Before I arrived here, I just revisited the history between Taiwan and Japan. Although Japan's colonization in Taiwan had incurred strong resistance among the Taiwan people, the Japanese still left much friendship and good memory that both peoples cherished.

The first memorable man is Count(hakushaku) Itagaki Taisuke, a leading figure in the Meiji Restoration. Count Taisuke had consistently shown strong concern and care for Taiwan, which was under Japan's colonial rule. What Count Taisuke said and did had earned enormous respect from many Taiwan people including Lin Hsien-tang. Count Taisuke also advocated better treatment of the Taiwan people.

We also appreciate Professor Yanaihara Tadao's profound sympathy and understanding toward Taiwan. Professor Yanaihara had written extensively for the cause of justice for Taiwan under Japanese rule, and he even came to Taiwan to speak publicly for Taiwan's enlightenment movement. Professor Yanaihara later became the first President of the University of Tokyo after WWII.

There is another Japanese gentleman by the name of Hata Yoichi. Indeed, Mr. Hata carried out Japan's colonial policy of "Industry for Japan, Agriculture for Taiwan." He spent 10 years building an agricultural irrigation system known as Chianan Irrigation Canal in southern Taiwan near the Tropic of Cancer. His contribution has been greatly appreciated by the local farmers until today. Last August I went to his memorial and laid wreath at his monument.

My political party, the Kuomintang, also has a long-standing relationship with Japan. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the KMT, had lived in Japan for nearly 2 years and 9 months, or 999 days, to be exact. In fact, the forerunner of the KMT, the Revolutionary Alliance, was founded by Dr. Sun in Japan in 1905. In fact, during his days of exile in Japan, his Japanese friends gave him the name Chong-shan Nakayama). He then added Chiao Kikori). That became his name while in Japan. Later he became better known in China as Chong-shan, not as Wen which was his original Chinese name. The Republic of China's late President Chiang Kai-shek had also studied and lived in Japan for about four years. The name list of Chinese revolutionaries could go on and on. Meanwhile, many Japanese, for instance, Umeya Shokichi Inukai Zuyoshi, who sympathized with Chinese revolution became good friends of Sun and Chiang.

My point is that your ancestors and mine have been interacting with one another, and learning from one another for many, many years. Our history and geography are destined to be bound together now, in the centuries past as well as in the future. Surely there were some pages in history of which neither of us would feel particularly pleased. Under misguided policies, precious human lives were lost and national dignity dealt serious blows. But I believe firmly that as we enter the 21st century and over 60 years after the end of the Second World War, we should leave the ghosts of the 19th and 20th centuries behind.

This is why I believe that while not forgetting the lessons of history, we should learn to forgive and move on. Let us face it and admit it frankly now. Our future is too important for us to continue to be entangled in the past. Both Japan and Taiwan have not paid enough attention to each other during most of the post-war years. We both looked more toward the West than toward each other. We both tended to view each other through stereotyped lenses. We both saw only black and white in each other without acknowledging the existence of shades of gray.

So my first proposal to you all who are blessed with Mr. Neesima's spirit of openness is that we should learn to face each other anew. Japan is different from years ago. It is now more confident, more worldly and more assertive.

Taiwan is also different - more democratic, more rowdy internally, and more troubled and troubling in world affairs. And my party is certainly different. Many Japanese friends may not realize that the KMT is not what it used to be. It is now younger in membership, more democratic in decision-making, and definitely more Taiwan oriented. Given these changes, if Japan and Taiwan continue to view each other through old stereotyped lenses, we are bound to miss opportunities, if not repeating past mistakes. If we could open our minds - and hearts - to each other, I believe we will become not just friends, but intimate friends and partners. As such, we could better cope with the rapidly changing circumstances in the region which is still fraught with intractable problems and unpredictable challenges.

Therefore I feel strongly that, if elected as President of Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China, I will first give Taiwan a new pair of lenses and urge both sides to jointly raise the quality and quantity of people-to- people exchanges between our two countries. Taiwan has a large population speaking good Japanese. Over 20 universities have set up Departments of Japanese Language and Literature or Japan Studies. Japanese arts and culture, including crafts, dance, music, literature, computer games, popular arts, tea ceremony, flower arrangement, architecture, gardening, swords, and cuisine can be easily found everywhere in Taiwan. Last year(2006) alone, 1.21 million Taiwanese tourists visited Japan while 1.16 million Japanese made their journeys to Taiwan. Both were record-high. But I think these are not enough. We have to go beyond the Japanese or Chinese languages. We have to tell those who don't speak these two languages that they should strive to better understand each other as they are trying to understand the West. I hope this will turn a new page in our history in the long run.

A New East Asia with a Big Heart

We should open our hearts and minds to each other, because we both will fail to meet the needs of the time if we don't. In the history of mankind, few neighbors get along well. Wars were fought more among the neighbors than with distant rivals. Yet after the end of two disastrous world wars, most of the former rivals and enemies have patched up and even become good friends and neighbors. Such is not the case in East Asia, our neighborhood, I am afraid. I oftentimes feel deeply sad about that. When you and I look around, why do we often feel a tinge of disgust, distrust or threat? Do we have to? Is this so because of "us" or "them?"

I believe in the long run if our neighborhood, East Asia, is to prosper, we will have to prosper

together. And to build a prosperous neighborhood, we will have to cooperate more closely. And to do that, we will have to remember lessons of history but put the historical ill feelings behind. Many other countries and peoples have done so. Some of them, notably France and Germany, have experienced centuries of bloody warfare and suffering. Yet they are now building a bright future together.

I am therefore pleased to see the improvement of the relationship between Tokyo and Beijing and the reduction of tension in the Korean Peninsula. If elected, I'd like to contribute our small part in reducing the tension in the Taiwan Strait.

Meanwhile, in view of our robust bilateral trade, a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Japan would serve our mutual interest. We hope we could negotiate with Japan on an FTA to boost our bilateral economic interactions.

I am particularly pleased to see Japan playing a larger role in world affairs. Japan now is the second largest economy in the world, the most democratic polity and the most open society in Asia. Japan's culture and society also evolved greatly over the years due to openness and innovation. There is indeed much to learn from Japan.

But as in other human interaction, learning is a mutual process. Taiwan should view and learn from Japan anew. Likewise, Japan could also view and appreciate Taiwan anew. Both of us should learn to understand the aspirations, pride and fears of each other. We both should approach each other more with "warm heart" than with "cold analysis." From Itagaki Taisuke, Yanaihara Shigeo and others I know that the Japanese are people with a big heart. I am sure we are the same in Taiwan. If we could feel and hear each other's hearts, I am sure there will soon be a brand new relationship between us. Let's give it a try, shall we?

A Pragmatic Idealist's Vision

Some of my Japanese friends told me that they don't feel they know me well enough. Deep down, I am an idealist. I believe in democracy and freedom for all. I condemned the June fourth incident in Beijing and I have never missed an anniversary memorial service since 1989. On my own or on behalf of my party I apologized to the families of those who suffered during the February 28 Incident of 1947 and the period of the so-called "white terror." And I hope the peoples in this part of the world will all live in democracy and freedom soon enough.

But I am also a pragmatist. I am acutely aware of the diversities and complexities in East Asia. Here we have the democracies, communism and dictatorships coexisting side by side. There is the most populous nation occupying a large landmass such as Mainland China; and some others not so big and not so populated. There is the most advanced economy such as Japan; and some others lagging far behind. There are Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus around us. In short, this is a highly heterogeneous neighborhood. To make peace in this neighborhood, we have no choice but being pragmatic.

Therefore, my vision for Taiwan is, first of all, to be a peace-maker, and not trouble-maker in East Asia. As you know well, there are now two "hot spots" or "flash points" in East Asia: North Korea and the Taiwan Strait. I think the current impasse in the Taiwan Strait is

completely unnecessary and avoidable. And if in power I will strive to defuse the Taiwan Strait as a hot spot altogether.

Secondly, our basic policy is to pursue peace on the basis of three nos: no unification, no independence and no use of force. In the past decade, different forces have attempted to pull Taiwan into one or another of the three treacherous routes. Some have even tried to define 'the change of status quo' as "the status quo." But they have all failed. I believe it is now time to reaffirm or even consolidate the status quo.

Third, to ensure the status quo would be respected, Taiwan needs what I call "Hard ROC" (R-O-C, Republic of China) strategy. Other than continued arms purchase from abroad, we will harden up our defense to an extent that is unshakable with our high morale, undefeatable by blockade, unoccupiable under invasion, and uncrackable with our sustained resistance.

Fourth, we will also seek to repair our relationship with the US which is now, unfortunately, at an all-time low. We also think the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U. S. and Japan remains a crucial security pillar in this area. The Treaty has been modified several times since its creation in 1951. In the 2005 Two-Plus-Two Statement between the US and Japan, it was stated that "encouraging the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue" is a "common strategic objective" of the US and Japan. KMT supports and welcomes the statement.

Fifth, to prevent the status quo from slipping into danger, I will seek to resume dialogue with Beijing on the basis of "92 consensus" or "One China, Respective Interpretations." In the decade of 1990s, the two sides had negotiated 24 rounds in total. Yet since 2000 the dialogue has been completely suspended. I think it is high time for both sides to resume the dialogue on the principles of dignity, equality and reciprocity, and "put aside the differences and seek commonalities."

Sixth, we will seek to negotiate with Beijing on the issues of direct links, tourism, "international space", a peace agreement and others. At the age of globalization and "thick and quick" communication, resolution of cross-strait issues through bilateral mechanism should be the norm, not exception.

Concluding Remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a pragmatic idealist, I will put regional peace, political stability and economic development first on my agenda. There will be no surprises for our friends abroad, only mutual trust in our foreign and cross-strait policies. We will expect a higher and more frequent official communication with Japan. But more cultural, societal, and economic interactions will continue to be the center of our policies. Hopefully, under a new KMT administration next year, a more solid, warm and heart-to-heart relationship can be established between Japan and Taiwan. Thank you!