

# **The Alignment of the Taiwan-Japan Partnership in the Face of Modern Challenges**

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members of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan:

Greetings from Taiwan!

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak. It gives me tremendous joy to remember the last time I spoke at the Club in 2006, in person, as the Minister of Mainland Affairs. I am quite happy to speak to the Club again, this time as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Before I start, I would like to express my appreciation to the members for bringing quality report about Japan to the world. Your work is critically important not only for us outside Japan to know Japan better, but also for us to understand how to make adjustment in the ever-changing

international landscape based on your report.

Indeed, the international landscape has gone through tremendous changes in the last few years. Strategic competition and rivalry between democratic countries and authoritarianism is apparent. It is especially so after the outbreak of COVID; the Chinese communist regime further exploited the pandemic to impose their political agenda on many others.

In parts of Europe, Africa and South Asia, the Belt and Road initiative already allowed the Chinese government to exercise its influence, but it also left a trail of debt, corruption, and erosion of democratic governance. We are seeing the awakening of many democracies. Some in Western Europe, and the EU itself, are formulating their own versions of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Some in Eastern Europe are calling for the withdrawal from 17+1; many around the world are calling for clean 5-G by rejecting Huawei. Some European countries are now sending naval vessels to the West Pacific for freedom of navigation

operations and holding joint exercises with Japan and the US.

In Central and South America, from what I have observed, “vaccine diplomacy” is creating divisions within countries as they scramble to curb the pandemic. And it gives the Chinese government an opportunity to exert its influence in the Western Hemisphere. As we speak, China is providing quick access to the Chinese-made vaccines, anti-pandemic resources, as well as development funding to those who are willing to accept political partnership with Beijing. China then uses this partnership to lure or pressure those allies of Taiwan and the US to lean toward Beijing. Through these maneuverings, China is trying to gain political influence in the region at the cost of Taiwan and the US. Again, from what I have observed, the strategic competition is taking place in this area, and we have to understand the ramification on the strategic interest of the fellow democracies if the trend is not dealt with.

The strategic rivalry is most obvious in the Indo-Pacific. The

authoritarian regime is flexing its economic and military muscles, deploying hybrid warfare tactics to project wider influence over the region. Moreover, tensions continue to rise in the East and South China Seas. Grey zone tactics, excessive maritime claims, and maritime militias carrying out operations at the order of the military, the CCP regime is exploiting all means possible to induce clashes just below the threshold of a major war.

The situation is worsening around Taiwan. The military threat and coercion, infiltration, influence operation, grey zone tactics, and massive disinformation campaign are all designed to erode the public support for democratic institutions, and the threat is escalating rapidly. If we read the tension in the Indo-Pacific as the consequence of the expansion of the Chinese authoritarian regime, I think you will agree with me that Taiwan is on the frontline of that expansionism, and Taiwan is the focal point of the ideological rivalry between democracy and authoritarianism.

We in Taiwan understand our responsibility to not only protect our sovereignty, but also to safeguard a free and democratic Taiwan not falling into the hands of authoritarianism. The government and people of Taiwan are absolutely committed to self-defense. But of course, we want better and more cooperative relations with the like-minded fellow democracies to strengthen our capabilities in meeting common challenges.

Taiwan and Japan share the values of freedom, democracy, human rights protection, and the rule of law. And over the years, we have proven to be friends in times of trouble. Whenever a major disaster took place, we have always come to the other's aid as soon as possible. The spirit of mutual support and affinity between the two peoples form a solid foundation for the two countries to enhance ties. There are also issue areas where our partnership can benefit not just ourselves, but the broader region.

Under the current international strategic landscape, we should

speed up the process to restructure supply chains. The pandemic has underlined the risk of overreliance on a single source of supply. Taiwan and Japan both boast top-notch technology talents, and a closer collaboration of our industries can create synergies beyond our imagination.

The same goes with trade. Australia's case of wine, lobster, barley, and coal exports is a reminder of the urgent need of diversification on trade. And for this matter, I would like to emphasize Taiwan's intention to join the CPTPP. Deeper regional integration is the key to buttress individual countries' defense against trade retaliations.

Solidarity and cooperation are critical in deterring authoritarian aggression. We were pleased to welcome Japan on board the Global Cooperation Training Framework, or GCTF, as a full partner in 2019. It is a platform to train officials and experts in the region on global issues such as public health, environment, digital economy, woman's empowerment, and so on. It is also

the first platform calling for global attention on disinformation and its impact on democracies. We also look forward to working with Japan, the US, and other like-minded countries through this platform to pool international efforts to address other critical non-traditional security issues such as cybersecurity, energy security, marine debris, law enforcement, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Through GCTF, I am very proud to say, Taiwan and Japan have formed a strong partnership to jointly take on regional challenges.

I would also like to emphasize that Taiwan is grateful for Japan's increased gestures to support Taiwan publicly. Japan's call for Taiwan's inclusion in the World Health Organization is unequivocal. It is also working with other like-minded partners to take concrete actions in Geneva to quest for Taiwan's participation. The call for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO was further written in the joint communique in the most recent G7 foreign ministers' meeting. Japan's effort is highly appreciated.

Recently, the mentioning of peace and stability over the Taiwan Strait in the Joint Statements for the US-Japan 2+2 and the summit meetings, as well as the Japan-EU summit, is highly significant. This makes Taiwanese people feel that we are not alone in confronting the authoritarian expansionism; we have friends giving us good support.

Over the years, Japan has time and again showcased its admirable leadership in managing regional affairs. Now a key player in the CPTPP, the QUAD, and G7, Japan holds the key to the sustainable peace and development of the Indo-Pacific. As for our part, Taiwan is a responsible member of the international community, and we are determined to contribute to all regional endeavors.

Ladies and gentlemen, you and I are on the same boat in this battle to safeguard democracy and freedom of speech, and you can count on Taiwan to fulfill its responsibility to the world. I can assure you that, to Japan and other fellow democracies,

Taiwan will be a reliable partner and a force for good in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. While democracy may not appear to be the strongest form of civilization, it is by far the most resilient, and with solidarity, Taiwan and Japan will be stronger together. I have faith in the power of freedom and democracy, and I have faith that freedom and democracy will prevail. Thank you.