

Keynote Speech

Presented by His Excellency YAMAGAMI Shingo

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

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1. Introduction and Acknowledgements

Her Excellency, Ambassador Jan Adams,
The Honourable Richard Court AC,
Major General Natasha Fox,
Former Defence Minister Stephen Smith
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and thank you for your kind introduction. Gordon and if I were told by Tokyo to slow down, Canberra is telling me to keep up!

It is indeed a great pleasure to be back here in Perth after such a prolonged break. Thank you for finally letting me in! I tried on a number of occasions to do so!

It is often said that absence makes the heart grow fonder, in which case I have high hopes for the success of this presentation!

During my first visit last year, I remarked on the incredible natural beauty and material wealth of Western Australia, and so when the opportunity came via an invitation from my friend Gordon, I moved heaven and earth to be able to enjoy such good company and breathtaking views out here in the West.

Everything about WA is on a grand scale – the largest producer of gold in the world in September 2021, the world's largest iron ore mining centre, a coastline of 12,895km and a landmass greater than most nations.

WA is always striving for greatness – where else in the world would you find wines named after Plantagenet realms?

And judging from weather reports, even Karratha is giving the Sun a run for its money.

WA has held a unique fascination for Japan, and that came long before our discovery of your loveable

quokkas.

From the earliest arrival of Japanese pearl divers to Broome, through to the major investments by Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Marubeni in WA iron ore during the 1960s, right up to today and the involvement of MIMI and Inpex in LNG and soon-to-be explored green hydrogen exports, WA has drawn Japanese from Albany to Pilbara in search of material.

This in turn has made WA a hot spot for Japanese visitors by reputation alone.

Back in 2019, WA attracted a youthful bracket of Japanese tourists, most of whom were aged 20-34 years old. Moreover, 2 out of 3 of those visitors were on a return visit.

You know that you are doing something right when you can attract that many young Japanese people to the pubs and clubs of Northbridge, and thus forever change the image of the Japanese as quiet and demure!

It is often pointed out that Japan and WA share the same time zone, and unlike the states out east, there's no fiddling around with daylight saving time, which comes as a great relief!

I did read that you had four referendums on daylight savings and a test run of it before removing it altogether in 2009.

So at the very least you were thorough in your examination of it, itself a very Japanese trait.

The fact that you face onto the Indian Ocean, and that you are closer in distance to the capitals of Asia than the cities out east continues to generate appeal in Japan, and is one of your endearing strengths.

Indeed, your proximity to our mutual Quad partner India is a major drawcard for Japan, as it allows us to work trilaterally with India on defence and national security.

Furthermore, our continued mutual involvement in India, further developing its infrastructure while meeting its energy needs, and our advocacy for IORA assists in promoting India's regional role while simultaneously boosting its economy.

The Indian Ocean is as much a key part of our security strategies as the Pacific.

For decades, the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean have provided Japan with myriad sources of sustainment and growth, and so their importance to us, as much to Australia, cannot be overstated.

2. The Quad

In recent years, however, we have witnessed the emergence of state actors who are not inclined to promote the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and who take it upon themselves to act unilaterally to force

change in violation of international law, based on their own opaque reasoning.

The challenges that this presents could not be allowed to go unanswered, and certainly not in a region as dynamic as the Indo-Pacific.

It was in recognition of this that the four democracies of Japan, Australia, India and the United States combined our shared Indo-Pacific goals to embark on the Quad.

From its inception as a concept first promoted by Japan, the Quad has grown into one of the leading multilateral dialogues in this region.

Its remit is vast and continues to grow. From vaccine distribution, to critical and emerging technologies, strategies for mitigating and tackling climate change, and from outer space to cyber space, the Quad works together to ensure that the nations of the Indo-Pacific benefit from the rule of law, economic prosperity, and peace and stability.

Our shared mission has become even more vital in light of recent events.

Last month I had the privilege of accompanying Foreign Minister HAYASHI during his visit to Melbourne to attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, expertly hosted for the first time by Foreign Minister Marise Payne.

Foreign Minister HAYASHI himself remarked upon how timely the meeting was, given that, in his words, "the power of diplomacy is being called into question".

The very fact that this meeting took place despite all of the obstacles presented by the COVID pandemic and competing parliamentary schedules speaks to the importance placed upon the Quad by its membership and how crucial its activities have become.

As the Ambassador of Japan, I can also report that thanks to the kind consideration of our Australian hosts, the meeting took place on a public holiday in Japan, thereby allowing Foreign Minister HAYASHI to attend.

The Quad partners jointly declared our opposition to coercive economic policies and practices that run counter to the rules-based order, and will work collectively to foster global economic resilience against such actions.

The four Ministers have also welcomed the fact that the Free and Open Indo Pacific vision has been resonating in various regions around the world, including ASEAN, the EU and other European partners.

It was in recognition of this that a senior Australian official approached me during the Foreign Ministers' meeting, heartily expressing the view that "Australia now very clearly understands that it is not alone".

These words alone brought a smile to my face. As host of the Quad Leaders' Summit in the first half of this year, Japan hopes we might have more reasons to work together as we move ahead.

Furthermore, against the backdrop of the recent outrageous Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Quad leaders convened a virtual meeting this month and confirmed that such an attempt to unilaterally challenge the status quo by force must not happen in this Indo-Pacific region.

This is further proof of our commitment to regional stability and prosperity. I can assure you that Japan stands with Ukraine.

As proof of our commitment, Japan made the unprecedented move of providing non-lethal equipment to Ukraine, including bulletproof vests, tents, helmets, generators, medicine, and so on.

With Australia providing its own lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine, together we have shown that we will act in defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity against those who would seek to infringe it by force and intimidation.

3. The RAA and Defence Cooperation

This brings me to the main theme of today's symposium – a new era in Japan-Australia security cooperation.

That cooperation, which has been steadily building over the decade, reached a new highpoint with the signing of the Reciprocal Access Agreement in January this year.

As a long-term advocate for the Agreement, you can imagine my excitement as I was invited to join the Australian delegation for the virtual summit meeting that took place in Parliament House, and where I witnessed the signing of the Agreement by our two Prime Ministers.

Here I was, an Ambassador of Japan, joining Team Australia in an unprecedented gesture to mark a milestone in our bilateral security relationship, and whose significance, in the words of Prime Minister Morrison, "cannot be understated".

So there was important symbolism there, given that this is the first such Agreement that Japan has made with any country.

But what it also showed is that Japan and Australia are resolutely committed to this special strategic partnership, which is far, far more than mere symbolism.

What the RAA does is significantly increase both the quantity and quality of the bilateral exercises that Japan and Australia conduct together.

With a legal framework in place, this allows us to conduct far more complex and sophisticated joint exercises

using more equipment and with a broader scope of scenarios.

This in turn will greatly increase our inter-operability, and complements our existing defence arrangements with our mutual ally the United States.

What all this means is that in the years ahead, the various arms of the SDF will be paying call to the bases, ports, and training grounds in Australia in greater numbers and with more hardware.

I hope this will also mean more SDF uniforms will be seen around the streets of WA, maybe enjoying a bottle of Little Creatures!

Yet there is so much more on offer.

Japan, like Australia, aims to become an independent space power, and we are currently engaged in strengthening the scientific, technical and industrial foundations of our space activities to improve our space situational awareness (or SSA).

Yet to make the most of our technology, we need a partner, and what better partner could there be than Australia, and Western Australia in particular.

As we lie on the same longitude, our satellite information can be shared in real time.

This also makes it easier to monitor space activity, as demonstrated by JAXA's use of the SSC space tracking station at Mingenew to monitor the Epsilon Rocket Number 5 last year.

The Defence Technology Sharing Agreement that we have already allows us to cooperate on building capability in tandem, and I anticipate more development in this area as we move forward.

This includes responding to the threat posed by ASAT (anti-satellite) weaponry being developed by countries such as Russia and China.

4. AUKUS and the International Order

This is why Japan was so quick in vocally welcoming the formation of AUKUS.

The adoption by Australia of nuclear submarines brings further areas of potential cooperation with the SDF into view, including joint exercises within the East China Sea or even the Sea of Japan.

Australia itself recognises the importance of this vital maritime area, a point reinforced by the Defence Minister's speech to the National Press Club last year, in which he mentioned the Senkaku Islands for the first time in the context of China's threat to Taiwan and the regional order.

This comment certainly caught the attention of Tokyo, and was very warmly received.

With the security situation growing more severe in our region and more broadly across the world, like-minded countries will act in unison to mitigate potential threats by promoting deterrence.

What the past two years have also taught us is that national security and the economy are one and the same.

Japan and Australia's experience of the COVID pandemic and economic coercion demonstrate conclusively that national security and the economy are inseparable and must be treated as such.

We are under no illusion that the road ahead will be challenging. So together with allies and partners, we are doing all within our power to ensure that the rule of law remains a fundamental part of our regional order.

5. Conclusion

So this is where Japan and Australia are at present, on the cusp of a more dynamic, robust security relationship reinforced by decades of steadily built cooperation.

What would have seemed inconceivable to generations past has become a reality through the dedication and commitment of Japanese and Australians determined to see this security cooperation succeed.

If my speeches over the past year can be said to have a theme, it is "how far we have come together".

The fact that we are here today, talking about a new era in Japan-Australia security cooperation, is a fitting testament to the hard work done by many in this room who have "pulled out all the stops" to move this security relationship forward.

We've advanced with all the dynamism of a Dennis Lillee in-swing, and there are still many overs to go.

So before I try your patience with any further sports metaphors, I will say that in Japan, Australia has a mate whose shared values and strategic interests will help ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains free and open.

Together with our partners and allies, we're ready to "kick this one out of the park".

Thank you.

Thank you very much for listening.