
— Opinion

Letters: Japan's diplomatic achievements

Japan's ambassador responds to 'omissions and misrepresentations' in article.

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I'm compelled to take issue with Michael Smith's article ("Japan's 'wolf warrior' ambassador eyes the exit [<https://www.afr.com/world/asia/japan-s-wolf-warrior-ambassador-to-leave-20230219-p5clp4>]", February 20) for a number of omissions and misrepresentations regarding the work undertaken by Japan's embassy in Australia. At no point was any reference made to the remarkable progress in bilateral relations in the recent past, particularly the four prime ministerial meetings between prime ministers Fumio Kishida and Anthony Albanese, in addition to the signing of our historic Reciprocal Access Agreement and updated Joint Declaration on Security Co-operation.

Far from being beholden to any political affiliation, the embassy has forged close ties across the political spectrum, as evidenced by the attendance of Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, Trade Minister Don Farrell, and chair of the Australia-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Group, Senator Catryna Bilyk, at the embassy's Emperor's Birthday reception.

These achievements are a result of the dedicated work undertaken by the staff, Japanese and Australian, at the embassy of Japan, whose tireless efforts have provided the momentum for the successes that we share today.

Any ambassador would consider themselves blessed to be supported by such a team, whose enthusiasm for our bilateral relationship has brought our two countries closer together than at any point over the past half century.

That dedication deserves only the highest of praise, as it provides irrefutable evidence of the successes that lie within close Japan-Australia co-operation.

Ad hominem criticisms of ambassadors are par for the course – that is the reality of diplomacy. Yet to call the morale and efforts of the embassy into question through

unfounded allegations and speculation betrays a bias that serves no useful purpose.

As I declared when I first arrived, I am here to see this relationship succeed, and succeed to heretofore unprecedented levels. To do this, I need to be honest, open and to the point – three elements that unfortunately are in short supply when it comes to public discourse, and which ought to be properly reflected in newspaper articles, one would think.

Shingo Yamagami, Ambassador, Embassy of Japan in Australia, Yarralumla, ACT