

Diplomacy and Integration in the Post Modern World

Consul General Akira Muto
Snowden International School
June 6, 2014

Headmaster Whiting, Headmaster Hopkins, graduating students, teachers, parents and friends:

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak on this auspicious occasion. Before I begin, I would like to express my congratulations to the graduating seniors, and to their parents who have given their love and strong support to their children.

I thought that I would talk today about diplomacy, and how diplomacy on an international scale can help to change the world and maintain peace and prosperity.

To start, I would like you to reflect for a moment on how different the world of today is from the world that you were born into late in the last century. In the 1990s, some believed in the “end of history,” where liberal democracy would finally prevail all over the world, putting an end to the Cold War era when the Soviet Union and the United States competed with each other for its own ideology, and avoided conflicts by maintaining a delicate balance of power.

Over 20 years have passed since the end of the Cold War, and yet the world has become an even more complicated place. In the eastern hemisphere, due to a new rising power and its assertive actions, the strategic environment in the Asia Pacific region has changed dramatically. And in the western hemisphere, the recent annexation of Crimea has sent a strong shock through Europe, enveloping the area in an atmosphere of crisis.

Further, in today’s world, we have to deal with such non-traditional challenges as terrorism, natural disasters and piracy on the high seas. And then there are the new domains of cyberspace and outer space that we have to manage. We cannot

address these problems solely with the principle of the balance of power between powerful nations.

Rather, the world community is slowly but surely experiencing a steady process of integration through the forging of multilateral collaborations that transcend the boundaries of statehood. Free trade agreements such as the Trans Pacific Partnership among the Pacific states and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership among the Atlantic states that are currently being negotiated are reflections of this process. We have also seen in recent years that multilateral collaboration in the area of disaster relief has grown enormous in both size and diversity.

Just think about the extraordinary relief effort that the whole world, and particularly the United States, mounted on behalf of the victims of the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake. Immediately following the earthquake, the U.S. Forces in Japan organized Operation “Tomodachi”- Japanese for “friendship”- to work alongside us to provide aid. A fleet of about 20 vessels, more than 140 aircraft, and 17,000 military personnel immediately engaged in a mission to help. And that was just the beginning of the tremendous outpouring of support that we received.

In any event, we must not repeat the history of the European countries in the two world wars of the last century. The international community must stand together to repulse attempts by any country, whether in the East or in the West, to change the status quo by coercion or by force. Otherwise, the world order in the 21st century will be governed by the arbitrary use of force, leading us back to the confusion and chaos which humankind experienced in the previous century.

We must also continue to establish multiple layers of networks in various areas, including trade and investment, intellectual property rights, freedom of navigation

and flying over the high seas. These networks are being formed by people with different kinds of expertise: economists, government officials and diplomats. And most importantly, these networks must be formed by those who understand the importance of international rules and universally accepted values.

Managing the world's multiple national interests could be a long and difficult journey. In our age of technological innovation, it will require a multi-faceted approach, rather than just the conventional pursuit of state interests. It will require greater roles for individuals to play, and individual values will be more weighted as we move into the post-modern world. Therefore, each one of you here today could become an active player by reaching out to other parts of the world and make a difference in leading this journey safely to the end. I believe that the values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law, to which Japanese and the U.S. citizens share a commitment, will guide us in our joint efforts to address the challenges of our time.

This year, a half century has passed since President Kennedy strongly wished to be the first post-war American president to travel to Japan. He was unable to fulfill this plan, due to his untimely death by assassination, but now his daughter, Caroline Kennedy, is serving as U.S. Ambassador to Japan. It was President Kennedy who really understood the importance of expanded exchanges at the grass-roots level in order to repair a broken dialogue with Japan in the early 1960's. This was at a time when Japanese students were rioting against the Security Treaty between Japan and the United States as well as against U.S. military bases in Okinawa. It was also the perspective of President Kennedy that maintaining the peace was not only a matter of security between powerful nations, but also a matter of fundamental human rights. These perspectives are still valid today.

Exchanges on various levels play, and will continue to play, a more important role in our mutual diplomacy. On April 23, President Obama visited Japan and met with Prime Minister Abe. In the joint statement that was issued following their meeting, both leaders acknowledged the importance of grass-roots exchanges. Last year, to encourage more youth exchanges, the Japanese government started the Kakehashi, or Bridge for Tomorrow, Project. Each country will be sending 2300 young people for home stays and other valuable cultural experiences in the other country. Our two countries have further agreed to double the number of exchange students crossing the Pacific by 2020, when the Summer Olympics will be held in Tokyo.

Under the Kakehashi program, the Japanese government has so far selected 59 high schools from all across the U.S. to travel to Japan for 10 days. Beyond academic excellence, each of these schools is required to have a Japanese language program and to place an emphasis on international educational exchange. This April your students participated in a Youth Global Service Learning Program in Costa Rica, and in the past you have sent students to over 20 countries. So I am very pleased, though not surprised, that Snowden is one of the schools that the Japanese government chose to visit Japan. Headmaster Cara Whiting is to be commended for her guidance and support of Snowden's superior educational exchange programs.

On June 10th of this year, a group of 25 from Snowden will travel to Tokyo and Okinawa. In Okinawa, they will enjoy home stays and join together with students from Chinen Prefectural High School for an intercultural exchange experience. Considering the historical background Okinawa enjoys in terms of Japan's security and U.S. military bases, I am certain that the exchange visit in Okinawa will be of incalculable importance, both for the personal development of the individual

students, as well as for the well-being of relations between our countries, and that the students will successfully serve as citizen diplomats.

So if there is anything that I would like you to take away from my talk today, it is to recognize the role of individuals, the value in being aware of the world beyond the United States, and in reaching out to other cultures and countries and making friends with your peers around the world. This is what the world needs right now. It needs a network of friendships that reach across borders and over bridges, friendships not just on the World Wide Web, but in person, in real life. I am very pleased that Snowden is so active in this way, and that we are able to collaborate with you in making such friendships happen.

I would like to conclude my speech by emphasizing the importance of President J.F. Kennedy's ambition to, quote, "move the world to just and lasting peace." As President Kennedy also said, with respect to the Soviet threat, and I quote, "So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal."

Thank you.