

“The Best Way Is to Go in the Middle: Towards a Stable Middle East Imbued with Vitality — Japan and Egypt Turning a New Page — ”

Excerpts from the Keynote Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Delivered in Egypt, January 17, 2015

Full text: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201501/17egypt.html



Two years ago, when I announced in Jidda Japan's new policy towards the Middle East, I stated that I wished to make "harmony and tolerance (al-tasaamuh)," together with "coexistence and co-prosperity (al-ta'aaish)" and "collaboration (al-ta'aun)," our leading principles. I have pursued our Middle East policy exactly along those principles. This time my attention is on the idea "Khair Al-Umuri Ausatoha" or, "the best way is in the middle," which represents your ancestral wisdom. In terms of placing importance on tradition and valuing moderation, Japan and the Middle East share strong commonalities in our fundamental approaches to life.

It goes without saying that the stability of the Middle East is the foundation for peace and prosperity for the world, and of course for Japan. Should we leave terrorism or weapons of mass destruction to spread in this region, the loss imparted upon the international community would be immeasurable. Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has concentrated earnestly on building a nation that values freedom and democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The unwavering path we have taken to this day is one adhering to peace. Japan, which now bears the banner of "Proactive Contribution to Peace Based on the Principle of International Cooperation," is determined to devote readily the experience, wisdom, and capacity it has nurtured towards enhancing world peace and stability. Based exactly on those thoughts, my government pledged two years ago assistance of 2.2 billion U.S. dollars towards the entire region of the Middle East. The entirety of that has already been put into execution. A stable Middle East that is vibrant. A stable Middle East backed by the spirit of Khair Al-Umuri Ausatoha. A stable Middle East where people can live without anxiety. Japan's assistance always aims at no less than restoring stability in the region. Let us just imagine how much potential you could unleash in Egypt, in the region, once your society has restored stability and again ensured the path towards growth. Japan wishes to be a never-failing running mate to you as you work towards that future. The Government of Japan will newly carry out assistance of 2.5 billion U.S. dollars in non-military fields including humanitarian assistance and infrastructure development, intended for the entire region.

In Egypt, we will assist in the expansion of Borg El-Arab International Airport, which is close and convenient to E-Just and to a promising industrial location. We have decided to provide

360 million U.S. dollars in ODA loans as assistance for this project and for the development of the power grid. Japan will provide state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly technologies as assistance towards your transportation infrastructure, like the Cairo Metro, as well as renewable energy and thermal power. These are intended to contribute to Egypt's development, and by extension, to widening the foundation for stability across the entire region.

First in Amman, I will confirm our unwavering support to the Government of Jordan, a country that stands at the front line facing the unfolding situation. I intend to express to King Abdullah II my sincere respect for his efforts towards interfaith reconciliation. In Palestine, I will set out measures that will help enhance the stability of people's livelihoods, in areas such as healthcare, water supply, and assistance for refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. We are going to provide assistance for refugees and displaced persons from Iraq and Syria. We are also going to support Turkey and Lebanon. All that, we shall do to help curb the threat ISIL poses. I will pledge assistance of a total of about 200 million U.S. dollars for those countries contending with ISIL, to help build their human capacities, infrastructure, and so on. In Iraq, it is absolutely necessary to have a stable government through a Cabinet of national reconciliation, inclusive of all political parties. Japan will continue to provide assistance to help support such efforts.

Believing that dialogue that includes neighboring countries is indispensable, and that cooperation and building trust among these countries are also indispensable in advancing the peace process, nine years ago Japan proposed launching a "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" on the West Bank. The agro-industrial complex that is at the core of the corridor project has now taken shape. In the not so distant future, agricultural products from around Jericho will receive added value there. They will then make their way through the corridor to reach consumer markets in the neighborhood and in the Gulf region. Over time, the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" might well turn into a great destination for tourists. Shall we not work to make Palestine a place bustling with tourism? Japan will gladly serve as a catalyst to make that happen. Now, for 18 long years since 1997, the Japanese government has been inviting young men and women from both Israel and Palestine to Japan to let them mingle with each other while spending time in the country.

I would like these young people in particular to become a young force shouldering the responsibility of peace. Japan believes that the day will come in the near future when we can recognize Palestine as a state. In order for that day to arrive sooner, we will appeal to both Israel and Palestine to resume negotiations to advance the so-called Two-State Solution. Please also call to mind the framework known as the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, or "CEAPAD." Japan, which revived from the devastation of war, and the countries of Southeast Asia, which have achieved rapid economic progress in only a single generation, have an abundance of experience and wisdom to be harnessed in assisting Palestine. This framework began under the auspices of Japan and aims to help build collective knowledge to be used for Palestine. Japan has been a country engaged in enduring cooperation over the long term in order to cultivate trust, which is indispensable for peace in the Middle East. I would like to add that Japan stands ready to undertake with great willingness whatever role is appropriate for us to carry out.

The Middle East... that's the region endowed with great possibilities. And yet now it appears to be no exaggeration to say that the region is exposed to a challenge that is among the most serious in its modern history. I pay the greatest tribute to your efforts to stride towards stabilizing people's livelihoods over all else, by choosing not extremism but gradualism. The world will be truly blessed when the Middle East steadily takes that enormous step, aiming at tolerance rather than hatred, and embracing moderation. We pledge to continue our efforts to assist in bringing about coexistence and co-prosperity, harmony and tolerance through collaboration and, yes, moderation in the Middle East. To that end we will spare no effort to apply our capabilities and wisdom to the greatest possible extent.