

Taro Aso opening statement, FCCJ professional luncheon with candidates for the LDP President
September 19, 2008

I am Taro Aso. What's been occurring in North Korea, what will happen to the markets in the aftermath of the Lehman and AIG debacles, things like these require our heed that'll be the most careful. We are undergoing one of those stages of history where nothing in the world seems easy to predict, which makes the Japan-US alliance all the more important. I must tell you that be it John McCain, or Barack Obama, the next President of the United States should count on me, Taro Aso, very much.

With the PRC and the ROK. There'll be problems between Japan and those two countries. No need to be flustered, though. Because Japan, the PRC and the ROK, those three nations are destined to prosper together. You now have a rising China. You also have a rising India. That's good news, you ought to say. Why not Japan making best of it, benefiting from it, you ought to think.

A democracy, an advanced economy, and an innovator. That's what Japan has long been. Of late, it is the PRC who has come forward to say that they want to learn from those experiences. A country whose experiences guide others... A country that's advanced in solving problems... That's what Japan is about. Another role Japan plays in Asia is the one as a stabilizing force. We'll do this together with the Americans.

Whenever it gets difficult to foresee the future, what you'll do is talk to your friends. I'll do that, too. Australia, India, the EU and NATO... countries and organs like those pop up in my mind.

So, is Taro Aso a hawk? If by calling someone hawkish you mean that he is determined to willingly sacrifice his life to defend the role, peace and stability, and the national interest of Japan, yes, I am a hawk.

On the economic front...

Long-term, my aim is to maximize Japan's growth potential. Mid-term, it is to do fiscal re-engineering and devolution. And short-term, I'm going to boost Japan's economy using such fiscal means as tax incentives.

One question to you. Would you say that the DPJ can rule? From the Bank of Japan, the refuelling to budget proposals... The DPJ is the party that's taken all of them hostage. We, the LDP, cannot give in. That's exactly the reason why I stand for office as LDP President and Prime Minister. **END**