THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES

A NEW ERA REQUIRES NEW POLITICAL WILL

AN ADDRESS BY THE HONORABLE SHINZO ABE

FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

The Brookings Institution
Washington, D.C.
Friday, April 17, 2009

[PROCEEDINGS PREPARED FROM A TAPE RECORDING]

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WELCOMING REMARKS:

Richard Bush, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

INTRODUCTION:

Strobe Talbott, President, The Brookings Institution

FEATURED SPEAKER:

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
Former Prime Minister of Japan

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BUSH: Good afternoon. My name is Richard Bush. I'm the director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies here at Brookings, and it's my great pleasure to welcome all of you to this special event.

I told Prime Minister Abe that the fact that so many people have come to Brookings on a Friday afternoon when we have wonderful weather outside is a tribute to him and reflects the high expectations you have in his speech.

But you don't want to hear me talk. I would like, therefore, to invite my president, Strobe Talbott, to come up and introduce Prime Minister Abe.

MR. TALBOTT: Thanks, Richard. You don't want to hear me talk either.

But I do have the distinct honor and pleasure of welcoming all of you, and, of course, Prime Minister Abe. His visit here to Washington underscores the importance of the U.S.-Japan bilateral relationship. And his visit here to the Brookings Institution underscores our institutional commitment personified by Richard Bush, not only to the relationship between the United States and Japan, but also to the security of the Northeast Asia region, which is the focus of the Policy Center that Richard has here at Brookings.

I also want to extend a particular warm word of welcome to Ambassador Fujisaki, who is a personal friend, a friend of the institution, and a frequent participant, as is his wife, by the way, in discussions that we have here in this auditorium and other rooms here at Brookings.

It was just a few days after the November presidential elections that Ambassador Fujisaki spoke in this auditorium on the following topic: A World in Crisis: Charting a Way Out. Crisis is still with us, and we are working together, the United States and Japan, to find a way out. And we are now going to hear recommendations on the course lying ahead from Japan's 90th prime minister.

He is a statesman of great stature. His is a voice of experience and wisdom. He has been heard from for quite a long time, even though, as you can all tell, he is still a very young man, but he first served in the Diet at the age of 39, and he went on to serve in key roles at the right hand of two other prime ministers: Mr. Koizumi and Mr. Mori.

As prime minister, it is significant, I think, that his first foreign visit was to China, and that was three years ago, and that visit helped greatly improve the atmosphere between Tokyo and Beijing. His visit to Seoul improved the bilateral relationship between Japan and the Republic of Korea. And, by the way, it was also at a time when such improvement was very welcome, indeed, since North Korea had just detonated a nuclear device.

Prime Minister Abe focused his personal attention and the attention of his government on other regional and global issues as well, and those certainly included Iraq. Moreover, he has been a voice for forward thinking and

enlightened thinking about the subject that's on all the world's mind, which is that of climate change. To wit, his "Cool Earth 50" initiative, which calls for a 50 percent reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. That was featured at the G-8 Summit in Hokkaido last summer.

All of this, I think, speaks to the theme of his personal leadership, and that word, "leadership," captures, I think, the topic of the address that he is going to give us today. He is going to speak to us about how to harness the search for bold, pragmatic solutions to political will, and that means the political will of individual governments, but, also, harness that search for solutions to the multiplier effect that derives from international cooperation of the sort that underlies U.S.-Japan relations.

So, Prime Minister Abe, welcome to Brookings, welcome to Washington, and we look forward to hearing from you.

(Applause)

PRIME MINISTER ABE: Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm extremely grateful to Strobe Talbott, the president of Brookings, for giving me this opportunity. And I would also like to extend my appreciation to Richard Bush and every one of his able staff for welcoming me here again. I'm glad to be with you all.

Let me begin by touching on Iraq and Afghanistan.

In January, I was in Iraq representing the Government of Japan. I spoke with Jalal Talabani, president of Iraq, and other senior officials, and left the country with the strong view that the situation on the ground is improving steadily.

Then I thought that this achievement, remarkable as it is, has only been made possible by the more than 4,000 men and women in uniform, those American soldiers who sacrificed their selves. I shall never forget that, and no one in Japan should ever forget that. True, it will take more time before the Iraqi people gain full independence, but they're moving forward, not backward. That much is certain.

Now, as for Afghanistan, it is still a long, long way to go, so, what I would tell you today is that I will do whatever it takes for Japan to do more to further the stabilization of Afghanistan.

My country did provide financial support, and the amount, $2 billion U.S. dollars, was by no means small. Japan also played an important part in disarming Afghan soldiers. I am very much proud that more than 100 Japanese men and women, though not in uniform, are now in Afghanistan, building schools, helping Afghan teachers. Still, it is my hope that Japan does even more to work with Americans, Canadians, and members of NATO nations on the ground in the difficult terrain of Afghanistan.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is my second visit to Brookings. Last time I gave a speech here was four years ago in 2005. To end that speech, I quoted from *Miles to Go*, a book by Daniel Patrick Moynihan. That quote went like this: "Politics is almost always in some measure an argument about the future and persons claiming to be knowledgeable in this regard will almost always find an audience among politicians." For me, this quote means that you must

have the courage to swallow bitter medicine if it is from someone really knowledgeable. I am engaged in politics only to build a better future for Japan and for the world.

Now, as we stand in the middle of a recession that some call a depression, and as I look back over the four years since I was here last, the question to be asked is the following: Did you listen carefully to the men and women who have the knowledge and the compass to map a better future? We must also ask ourselves: Do we have the courage to swallow the bitter medicine, and, above all else, do what we should do?

Please remember, in my country, the bubble burst in 1990. We knew at that time that we would have to fix the banks and dispose of the toxic assets, but primarily we did not listen to the wise counsel of those with the valuable knowledge, who were not necessarily few in number. More importantly, we did not have enough political will to put those measures into practice because to do so was just as unpopular a move as it is now in the U.S. So unpopular, in fact, that an entire decade was lost before a cabinet formed in 2001 and finally became determined to make the necessary reforms.

Do you do or not do what you should? That's the question you should ask yourselves.

The current economic crisis is set to be the sort of crisis that comes once in a century, and I believe that in the midst of this crisis, we are, perhaps, being excessively short-sided. Of course, we have to address immediate issues, such as mortgage problems and unemployment. However, statesmen also have an obligation to tackle tomorrow's problems. Statesmen have to build systems and projects that will allow their citizens to enjoy benefits over the long-term and invest in those systems and projects. What is the key to such long-term systems, I believe that the innovation of technology is the most important factor.

As prime minister, one of my goals was to make Japan, once again, a center of innovative excellence, hence, my initiative called "Innovation 25." It is a long-term strategy, whereby, until the year 2025, Japan should grow by technological innovation and the productivity growth this entails. Japan's population is already declining, as well as aging. The labor force in Japan will decline further.

In the face of these trends, there's no question that the only way to maintain our power is to improve our labor productivity through innovation. Japan should in no way stop investing into scientific research and research and development effort if it wants to grow and prosper. That point must also resonate well among the Americans.

However, I pushed the "Innovation 25" initiative not only for the sake of Japan. It was also for the betterment of the world, as it is my strong desire that Japan's growth by innovation will have made the world a better place to live.

This leads me to tell you of the other initiative I still hold dear. That is my plan called "Cool Earth 50." If you ask men and women on the street today in which field innovation bears the biggest importance, the answer will most likely be climate change.

For a long time, I have had strong faith in the importance of innovation to prevent global warming. That was the reason why I put forward the "Cool Earth 50" initiative before the 2007 G-8 Summit in Germany. I had a double meaning, actually: Reduce emissions by 50 percent by the year 2050, hence, the name "Cool Earth 50." That was and still is an extremely ambitious goal, and it will be impossible for us to achieve it until we cover many more miles in technological innovations.

The responsibility for achieving this target, heavy as it is, will, in the end, fall on the shoulders of the Americans and the Japanese, as we are both more capable than anyone else of innovation.

It was in 1903, as many of you may know, that the brothers Wilbur and Orville Wright succeeded in flying a powered airplane. But even three years later, newspapers around the world ran articles questioning whether they were flyers or liars. Still, they did not yield or give in. The strong heart and will that the Wright Brothers had are core ingredients that make innovators.

This strength runs deeply in the blood and genes of many Americans, and I believe the same is true of many engineers and scientists working in Japan. You know that those in the retail business assert that what is important is location, location, and location. I would say that when it comes to the challenges against an aging society, against the declining economy, and, above all, against climate change, what is important is innovation, innovation, and innovation. That was the reason why I use the word "innovation" many times in my proposal for "Cool Earth 50." Indeed, the initiative will be a challenge against both climate change and declining productivity.

I find a similar motive driving President Obama's program, the "Green New Deal," and the similarity between the two reminds me how much we can do together to better the world as alliance partners.

In mid-February, Secretary of State Clinton came to Japan. That was her first trip overseas after taking office. She said, in Tokyo, that she wanted to strengthen the alliance. I agree. We must welcome that. She also said that she wanted to tackle not only bilateral issues, but also global issues. She then went on to say that cooperation would be required between the U.S.-Japan alliance and China to tackle issues of global concern. I could not agree more. These three nations, the U.S., Japan, and China, three of the largest economies in the world, must join hands whenever necessary and with greater frequency than ever before to tackle issues of global magnitude.

I was the one who made a fence-mending trip from Japan to China. Indeed, Beijing was the destination I choose to visit first as prime minister. I can now admit it was fun to disappoint those pundits who had argued for sometime that Shinzo Abe, as prime minister, would damage Japan-China relations. On the contrary, my trip laid the foundation for the bilateral relationship that is win-win for both sides.

The Japanese and the Chinese are now enriching what we call our mutually beneficial, strategic relationship. I think that I did a job that was vital because, as I said just now, China must work with us.

That being said, I must touch on the Chinese military build up. I will not go into detail, as you have many experts at Brookings. I will say very little, for example, on their aircraft carrier programs or about what they are doing in the Pakistani port town of Gwadar. Look at the Chinese defense budget, which has been making double digit growth without any break over the last 20-some years. The Chinese maintained initially that it was only to increase the salaries of the soldiers. But it has not been verified. I would like you to join me in saying to the Chinese what matters is transparency, transparency, and transparency.

At any rate, for its neighbors, China poses great uncertainties. Its defense programs, economic management, environmental damage, and its society, which is being shaken by the mounting frustration of the poor population, are all reasons for concern. That is why Japan and the U.S. must invest more into our time-honored alliance, bound by the same set of common values, especially when our great neighbor, China, is undergoing such a shaky transformative period of growth.

I cannot end my speech, without touching on North Korea. North Korea remains the biggest threat to security in our part of the world. Kim Jong-il, despite the warning we all sent him, shot the missile in a self-claimed attempt of launching a satellite. We cannot forgive the outrageous and provocative act of launching a missile over Japanese territory.

I support an attempt to foster direct dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea. I do that on the ground that we stick to the core principles, such as to make the Korean peninsula a nuclear-free area.

In verifiable fashion, we can by no means allow Kim Jong-il to call for brinkmanship diplomacy, and we must make no compromise on the abduction issue. Japan, for its part, will have no normalization with North Korea unless they send back to Japan all the abductees still alive and come clean on the fate that the rest of them had to face. The number of abductees totals 17. That is the number that the Japanese Government has so far recognized. Twelve of these victims have yet to return home, but according to that survey by an NGO in Japan, there are still many more Japanese men and women in North Korea that Pyongyang had kidnapped. Kim Jong-il must make clear how many abductees remain alive and send all of them back. I should stress all of them back to their home country of Japan.

And to Kim Jong-il, I say this: Japan will simply never give in. Don't play games with us, as there is no room for compromise. But, remember, you see incentives here. If you do what is right, you will be rewarded by the international community and by the region's most advanced economy, Japan. That is an incentive structure. The U.S. and Japan must work on to try to push Pyongyang onto the right track.

In Tokyo, Secretary Clinton made it absolutely clear that the abduction issue should be part of the six-party process. I can tell you that, in saying this, she touched the heart of the Japanese.

Well, time is running up. Both Japan and the United States, as great democracies, can weather the world however stormy it is. In democracies, statesmen are a critical part of the system. They hear the vox populi and do what

ought to be done, though it may be bitter rather than easy to digest. Therefore, the strong will of the statesmen counts most. That is what I tell myself every day when I wake up.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. BUSH: Thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister for that very illuminating speech. We now have about half an hour before the prime minister has to leave, and just a couple of your questions. If I call on you, please wait for the microphone and then identify yourself.

As you can tell, the prime minister is very smart, so, you don't need to ask a long and complicated question. He will understand what is on your mind. I want to give the first question to my friend Chris Nelson.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Richard, Mr. Prime Minister. Really interesting speech. Particularly the North Korea section, because, as you know, we've really been focused on that.

Two things from it, with your permission. You endorse direct bilateral outreach by the United States, and I'm wondering if you would have advice or things you need to see, things you would like to see take place, perhaps a little more coordination on sanctions from the U.N., for example, things that have to happen before we could do that without causing a misunderstanding or backlash.

And, on the second part, you make an extremely strong reiteration of your policy and your government's policy on abductees, but that, in some ways, has been a difficult issue for American policymakers. Secretary Clinton agreed it should be part of, but, perhaps, there would be room for discussion of how much of a part before it becomes an obstacle, too, and I think we'd all be very interested in how you would advise trying to bridge that gap, which did become a problem during the Bush Administration.

PRIME MINISTER ABE: I will answer in Japanese, please.

MR. BUSH: That's fine.

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) Let me answer that on the first point, as I made clear in my speech, Japan is not opposed to the idea of direct talks between the United States and North Korea. We must be aware, however, of the possibility, in light of past occurrences, that the North Koreans may be trying to drive a wedge between the United States and Japan. If there were to be direct talks between the United States and North Korea, the fundamentals must be adhered to.

It will be important to work toward a solution for the nuclear issue, of the abductee issue, and if it's anything that can contribute to the settlement of these issues, then we would be in favor of talks between North Korea and United States. We should also be aware that the North Koreans like to play games. They say that they will not return to the six-party talks, and then the international community gets all nervous and says please come, and one has to give them some sort of reward for attending. The same thing may be occurring or we have to be aware that the same thing may occur with a dialogue between the United States and North Korea, which is to say that the North Koreans will promise to talk to

the United States, and then, later, may say well, actually, we're not going to talk to the United States, and thereby try to get some kind of reward.

Another thing I'd like to say in this regard is about the U.N. statement. Unfortunately, it did not become a resolution, but there was a statement made by the U.N., and what that made clear was that North Korea's launch of a missile was in violation of U.N. resolutions and that each country must abide by U.N. resolutions. This served to reconfirm that understanding.

And, so, what's important is that the United States and Japan should share information, they should have a shared mindset and they should have that as the basis for common action.

And then, as far as the abduction issue is concerned, as I made clear in my speech, the Japanese Government has confirmed 17 abductions, but there may be many more, and it is only the North Koreans who know how many Japanese people they have abducted. And if they lie on this issue, at some point, we will know what the true answer is. And what's clear is that as long as the abductee issue is not settled, there will be no settlement of issues regarding North Korea at the six-party talks. And we're very glad to hear that the Obama Administration supports our position on settlement of the abductee issue.

MR. BUSH: Over here?

QUESTION: Good afternoon, and thank you for your talk.

You mentioned that the solutions to our economic problems are innovation, innovation, innovation. The last part of the 20th Century in America, we had a tremendous amount of innovation, but we had problems with distribution of wealth and income, and if that continues to be the case, we never get a fair distribution of the benefits, and the inner circles of political and commercial interest seem to block a fair distribution. How are we ever going to get – I would suspect it's similar in Japan because it's throughout the world that way. How are we ever going to really get a system that's stable and fair for everybody so cost benefit is equal or somewhat equal across the populations?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) Let me point out as far as innovation is concerned, in my speech, I talked about that, but I didn't propose that as a solution for the current economic crisis we're facing, this is more the current economic crisis needs to be dealt through financial measures, how to have more stable financial industry, how to make sure that the economy does not retrench. And, also, fiscal stimulus would be important in this regard.

And what I want to point out with innovation is that, in spite of the fact that the Japanese population is declining, and, therefore, our working population is shrinking, we can maintain worker productivity by using innovation, and this can be used to bring about further economic growth. And, also, in accomplishing the "Cool Earth 50" goals, we need to have technological innovation.

And, so, as far as the current financial crisis is concerned, we need to deal with this through fiscal stimulus and also a lot of investment will be necessary, but I think what's important is that we invest in areas which will allow the Japanese economy in the future to not lose its competitive edge.

And then as far as the redistribution of wealth, I think that needs to be decided on a national level. Each country must decide, it must choose what it will do about that issue. And as far as my country is concerned, all citizens have retirement benefits available to them, all of them have health insurance, so, I think that we have done more active income redistribution in Japan than the United States has.

I think the fact that a comprehensive safety net is available to citizens, to the people, helps them to deal with the current economic crisis with equanimity. But it's a difficult balancing issue really, because if you do too much for the citizens, then they will just become dependent on the government, they will not be independent, and that will eventually lead to a loss of competition nationally. So, where to strike a balance is what's difficult.

MR. BUSH: Eric McVadon?

MR. McFADDEN: Eric McVadon, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis.

Mr. Prime Minister, maritime forces from the U.S. and Japan and from China all have a common cause, the piracy problem in the Gulf of Aden.

Is that a signal that maybe we are looking to a future where we could have maritime cooperation among those three nations, rather than an adversarial relationship? Is this a good signal or an aberration?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) In order to deal with the pirates off of the Coast of Somalia, China and the United States have dispatched navies, and, recently, Japan also has dispatched ships from its Marine Self-Defense Forces. Perhaps, this is a good thing, such that in that it will allow the navies of these three countries to work together. This will provide an opportunity for the United States, Japan, and China to cooperate in solving or in dealing with a world problem.

And I think that it will be a good thing if there are other opportunities in which this sort of trilateral cooperation can occur. And I think, also, it will be important that this sort of cooperation leads to a China that is more responsible, as more of a responsible actor in the world.

MR. BUSH: Question right there.

QUESTION: My name is Andrew Shepard. I work at the State Department and worked at Embassy Tokyo during your prime ministership, so, it's a pleasure to meet you.

You've mentioned a lot of different issues about U.S.-Japanese relations and multilateral negotiation issues. There's going to be an election in Japan this year, and there's a legitimate possibility that the opposition party, Democratic Party, may come to power in Japan.

So, I would be interested in hearing your opinion on, if that was to occur, what kind of policy differences could we expect to see in the U.S.-Japanese relationship?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: It just so happens that Mr. Maehara of the Democratic Party of Japan, who used to be the leader, is in Washington at the same time, and, perhaps, if I had brought him here, he would be in a better position to answer your question.

As far as the Democratic Party of Japan is concerned, to praise them a little bit, perhaps, I could say that they have diverse positions, diverse opinions, but, on the other hand, they don't have a solidified, unified voice that they speak with.

For instance, the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan, Mr. Ozawa, has said that Japan no longer requires the U.S. 7th Fleet. In other words, what he was insinuating was that Japan would be okay if the 7th Fleet and the Marines were to leave.

MR. HAYASHI: (Off mike) I think it's opposite of that –

INTERPRETER: Oh, the --

MR. HAYASHI: (Off mike) As far as 7th Fleet is stationed in Japan, Japan needs no other U.S. forces (inaudible).

INTERPRETER: Mistake by the interpreter.

PRIME MINISTER ABE: It's a big difference, yes.

(Laughter)

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) Japan only needs the 7th Fleet, that it does not require the Marines to be stationed there anymore.

But I think that Mr. Maehara, who's also in Washington at this time, if he were to be the prime minister in the event that the Democratic Party of Japan were to set up an administration, I don't think there would be much change in policy with me.

I think that Mr. Maehara made a speech in which he said the Marines should not be sent to Guam, and that's a change in policy, and I'm not sure exactly what he meant by that.

In other words, what I'm trying to say is that it's difficult to tell what the Democratic Party of Japan would do, especially on a foreign front if it were to be elected.

MR. BUSH: Gentleman right here?

QUESTION: (Self introduction in Japanese) My question is: I think that genuine states holding initiative over the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia is Iran and China, in terms of economics, not the U.S. So, my question is: how do you think the U.S. – Japan should involve with Iran, Pakistan, or China, those stakeholders from now on?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) As far as the countries that were enumerated, it's a question as to whether these are responsible stakeholders or not. But one thing I should point out is that Japan depends for much of its energy on the Middle East, and much of the oil that flows into Japan has to pass through the Hormuz Straits, the Indian Ocean, the Southern and Eastern China Sea, and these countries touch on these bodies of water where Japan's fuel passes through. So, it's critical, it's a matter of life and death for Japan really, that these countries be stable and that Japan have a cooperative relationship with them.

Among the countries that you referred to, there are economic sanctions now that have been placed on Iran, but many of the countries you referred to have been recipients of overseas development aid from Japan.

MR. BUSH: The gentleman way in the back?

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Sean Tannen with the AFP News Agency, a journalist.

I wanted to expand on your comments about China's military buildup. President Obama recently made a speech where he was calling for nuclear disarmament. Of course, that's a position Japan has long had against nuclear weapons, but is there a concern on the part of Japan about the current proposal, about the potential future absence of a U.S. nuclear umbrella, particularly in light of China's rapid military buildup?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) Japan has taken the lead in the United Nations in calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and for disarmaments. On the other hand, in Asia, much of the Cold War structure is still in place, and the North Koreans have shown a zeal for attempting to obtain nuclear weapons.

For Japan, the American nuclear deterrent has been very important. And, so, for that reason, we are in favor of the speech that President Obama gave in Prague. And when I had the chance to meet with Vice President Biden recently, I gave him a letter from Prime Minister Aso that contained that sort of thought. And contained in that letter was a reference to the fact that Japan is the only country in the world that has ever been subject of nuclear attack and that Japan, for a long time, has wished to see the elimination of nuclear weapons from the world. And, for that reason, we welcomed President Obama's speech in Prague.

And, looking at this from a realistic approach, what's necessary is to work first on bringing down the stocks of nuclear weapons in the world, and, in that process, it will be important not only to have the United States and Russia involved, but, also, to involve China, as well. And it will also be important to have an effective way to respond to the issue of nuclear proliferation. And, as you referred to in your questions, it will be important throughout this process to make sure that American nuclear deterrence not be damaged or not be adversely affected in East Asia.

So, I don't believe that it is contradictory to work toward nuclear disarmament, but, also, to maintain U.S. nuclear deterrence in East Asia.

MR. BUSH: Mr. Prime Minister, I would like to ask the last question.

You talked about basing future economic growth on innovation. A country that wants to do that must have a very strong foundation in education, science, research, and development. What do you think Japan needs to do to improve in these areas?

PRIME MINISTER ABE: (Interpretation; original remarks in Japanese) The areas to which you referred are very important in bringing about innovation. In my cabinet, we looked at education as a very important area. So, that was an important pillar of my administration, education. We are looking at increasing expenditures on education.

One other thing we need to work on is Japanese universities, which tend to be very insular, very much closed to the rest of the world. We need to make them more open.

And we also need to encourage private companies to invest in areas that will bring about research and development.

And, so, as far as research and development education are concerned, still, these areas in Japan are quite insular, we need to make them more open, we need to have more scientists from around the world come to Japan and, on the other hand, also have more Japanese scientists go out into the rest of the world.

MR. BUSH: Okay. Thank you.

We've reached the end of our time. I feel an obligation to ensure that you don't fall behind on your schedule, but I want to thank you very much for your very enlightening speech and your enlightening answers.

I would invite the audience to give Prime Minister Abe a round of applause.

PRIME MINISTER ABE: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. BUSH: If I can please ask you to stay in your seats so that it won't take Prime Minister Abe half an hour to get to the front door.
As a reward for your patience, they'll be a copy of his speech outside. Thank you very much.

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