

[New Shimoda Conference](#)  
**Revitalizing Japan-US Strategic Partnership for a Changing World**

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Tokyo, Japan

**Opening Remarks**

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I am honored that Tadashi Yamamoto asked me to help open today's New Shimoda Conference, and I am delighted to see so many people from the United States and Japan gathered here today with the desire to recalibrate and revitalize Japan-US partnership



First, I wish to congratulate the Japan Center for International Exchange on their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I have participated in many of JCIE's activities over the years, and this has allowed me to witness how Tadashi Yamamoto has nurtured networks of people in both countries which serve as important assets for the Japan-US relationship. I feel it is now our responsibility to utilize these assets to reinvigorate our bilateral relationship and, just as important, to continue to build upon this base in order to ensure that our partnership remains strong for future generations.

You just heard Congresswoman DeGette's remarks, and I wish to acknowledge the 6 members of the US Congress who have travelled halfway around the world to be with us today. I know from personal experience how difficult their schedule is, and I understand they have just been working nonstop until five o'clock in the morning of their departure. When speaking about Japan-US relations, we used to hear the term "Japan bashing," then "Japan passing," and in recent years even "Japan nothing." These have worried many of us in Japan. However, the fact that these busy Congressional members would come this far to jointly explore how to improve our cooperation gives me faith in the strength of our countries' relationship.

The other anniversary that many people will be talking about today is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US-Japan Security Treaty, which was signed in 1960. Last year was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which makes this year the 51<sup>st</sup>. Many people do not realize it, but that is an important number. That is because "51" is the number that Ichiro Suzuki wears on his Seattle Mariners uniform. It is not just important because Ichiro comes from Aichi Prefecture, the prefecture that I represent in the Diet. It is also important because Ichiro represents, in many ways, what we should be striving for in US-Japan relations.

As you know, baseball was invented in the United States, and it was exported to Japan nearly 140 years ago. In Japan, we made this into our own sport with a distinct style and philosophy. Ichiro excelled when he was playing in Japan, but 10 years ago he moved to the United States.

Now, every young Japanese baseball player no longer dreams of playing for the Yomiuri Giants, but of breaking into America's Major Leagues.

When Ichiro moved to the Major Leagues, he brought with him a very Japanese style of play. Surprisingly, this turned out to be a great success, and his example has improved American baseball and gained the admiration of many Americans. So many people like me were amazed and proud when he claimed a place in American history by breaking the single season record for base hits. The stars of American baseball used to be home run hitters, but Ichiro has proved that it is just as important to focus on getting singles and doubles. He showed Americans and Japanese that we are more likely to succeed by accumulating hits and then relying on our teammates to help us score, than by swinging for the fences and trying to win the game all on our own.

On the one hand, Ichiro is evidence of how the cross-fertilization between our two societies benefits all of us in ways we never could have anticipated. On the other hand, though, he also demonstrates what we need to be doing for the future of Japan-US relations.

Right now, we need to be accumulating a lot of hits. There are a host of increasingly complex global challenges that require Japan-US cooperation. We hear talk about "green innovation" and it is clear that there is a lot that our two countries can be doing together on climate change and clean energy. Global health and communicable diseases are another area ripe for deeper Japan-US collaboration. There is much more that we can be doing on development issues as well, better coordinating our policies in order to combat poverty around the world.

Stronger government-to-government cooperation on issues like these is essential. But if we are going to be successful in deepening Japan-US cooperation, we also need greater cooperation at the nongovernmental level. One excellent example is the success of Table for Two, a nonprofit initiative that I have been deeply involved with. Table for Two was founded in Japan to combat the twin problems of obesity in the developed world and malnutrition in the developing world by encouraging restaurants and cafeterias to donate 25 cents to combat malnutrition in poor countries each time somebody in a rich country eats a healthy meal certified by Table for Two. In just 3 years, 7 million school lunches have been provided in Africa as a result. The interesting thing is that, after Table for Two was created in Japan, an American arm was established, and the growth in the United States has been even faster than in Japan. The American and Japanese arms manage to work together effectively, helping one another, and their collaboration improves the operations on both sides.

Revitalizing US-Japan relations requires us to accumulate hits like this in a wide range of areas, and as we do this, we will start to build momentum in the relationship. But to get to this point, we need to have a more intense and more candid dialogue about what we should be doing together and what we need to prioritize. There has been a general sense that policy dialogue between our two countries has declined in recent years, so I am especially pleased to see the revival of the Shimoda Conference and I hope we will see more initiatives like this.

Both of our countries are currently going through the process of reexamining what our roles should be in the world, both individually and as partners working together. In Japan, where the

bureaucracy has historically played a large role in governance, it has become clear that politicians need to project greater leadership and will be increasingly important in helping determine how our country fares in the 21st Century. This is why I believe that having a sustained dialogue among parliamentarians from our two countries is particularly important as one way to help build the sense of team spirit between our two countries. And this is why I am so gratified to see so many of my colleagues from the Diet and so many friends from the US Congress here today. I sincerely hope that today's meeting will help spark a reinvigorated Japan-US parliamentary dialogue on the key global issues before us, much as the original Shimoda Conference led to the establishment of the first Japan-US parliamentary exchange.

It is a new world that we face, and the challenges before us are increasingly complex and interconnected. Strong Japan-US cooperation is needed, but the coordination that team play requires is harder than trying to hit home runs. It depends on talking more to each other and listening better—but also on making sure that our talk is relevant, and that it is translated into action. This is difficult. But this is what is needed if we are going to strengthen our partnership in a sustainable manner and rise to the challenges that will face us in our next 51 years together.

Thank you very much.