

A proactive contribution to peace

When addressing the North Atlantic Council, Japan's prime minister Shinzo Abe described his country and NATO as "natural partners"

Over the almost 70 years since the end of World War Two, Japan has followed the path of a peace-loving nation and consistently made efforts to realise the fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, embodied in the United Nations Charter. Japan will continue to adhere steadfastly to this course into the years to come.

At the same time, Japan has made steady contributions to world peace and stability across various individual fields, from international peace cooperation, disarmament, non-proliferation, international counterterrorism and the advancement of 'human security' to disaster management cooperation. In Cambodia, the Golan Heights, Haiti and South Sudan, as well as in the Indian Ocean for the fight against international terrorism, and in Iraq for providing reconstruction assistance, as many as 50,000 members of the Self-Defense Forces since the end of the Cold War have worked for peace in such locations all around the world.

Japan is shouldering roughly 11 per cent of the total United Nations peacekeeping operations budget, a figure second only to the United States. Japan has carried out more than \$300 billion of official development assistance (ODA) in total to 190 countries and regions to date. Japan's ODA marks its 60th anniversary this year. Looking back, we see that Japan has extended hands of assistance to our friends in Asia and elsewhere around the world since the time when Japan was still impoverished after the war.

On the foundation of this kind of unwavering path we have followed as a peace-loving nation, Japan will commit even more strongly than ever before to fostering global peace and prosperity. Moreover, I believe that Japan should play a more proactive role in order fully to defend freedom of overflight, freedom of navigation and other global commons ...

Japan is a 'natural partner' of NATO ... Together we triumphed in the Cold War, and more than two decades have passed since that time. The security environments surrounding Japan and Europe are each once again becoming increasingly severe ...

It is fair to say that the current situation in Ukraine is the greatest challenge for post-Cold War Europe. We cannot accept changes to the status quo by force or coercion. This is a global issue that also impacts Asia. Japan strongly urges all parties concerned to respect the rule of law and territorial integrity and to behave responsibly with maximum self-restraint.

The easing of tensions in eastern Ukraine is of the foremost importance.

We will encourage the restoration of democracy as well as national dialogue and integration. Towards that end, Japan will steadily implement the \$1.5 billion of economic assistance to Ukraine that it already pledged at the G7 summit in the Hague. We will be proactive in providing assistance towards the upcoming presidential election and in making contributions to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Special Monitoring Mission ...

The security landscape of the Asia-Pacific is also becoming increasingly severe.

North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is a 'clear and present danger'. Even this year, North Korea has repeatedly launched ballistic missiles towards the Sea of Japan and released statements indicating another nuclear test. These launches and another nuclear test clearly violate the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. The situation also involves the risk of proliferation of nuclear materials and related technologies to third countries including Iran. This is no longer an issue confronting East Asia alone, but rather a critical challenge facing the international community.

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It is a matter of course that the North Atlantic Council released a statement that condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test North Korea conducted in February 2013. In the Asia-Pacific, defence expenditures and arms imports have been increasing dramatically in recent years. In particular, China's foreign policy approach and its military developments have become issues of concern for the international community, including Japan ... In the South China Sea, there has been a series of actions based on unilateral claims, and a sense of urgent vigilance is mounting among regional countries.

For Japan, realising peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific is a top priority. We will act in cooperation with any nation who seeks to play a constructive role towards that end ...

Japan has reliably been materialising the assistance to Afghanistan that I pledged seven years ago ... Japan's assistance to Afghanistan, at a total scale of \$5.4 billion since 2001, has steadily brought forth positive results through partnerships with NATO and others in the international community. NATO's future directions are now under consideration towards its next summit to be held in Wales, the United Kingdom, in September. Japan will for its part develop its partnership with this 'future NATO' from the standpoint of putting our 'proactive contribution to peace' into practice ...

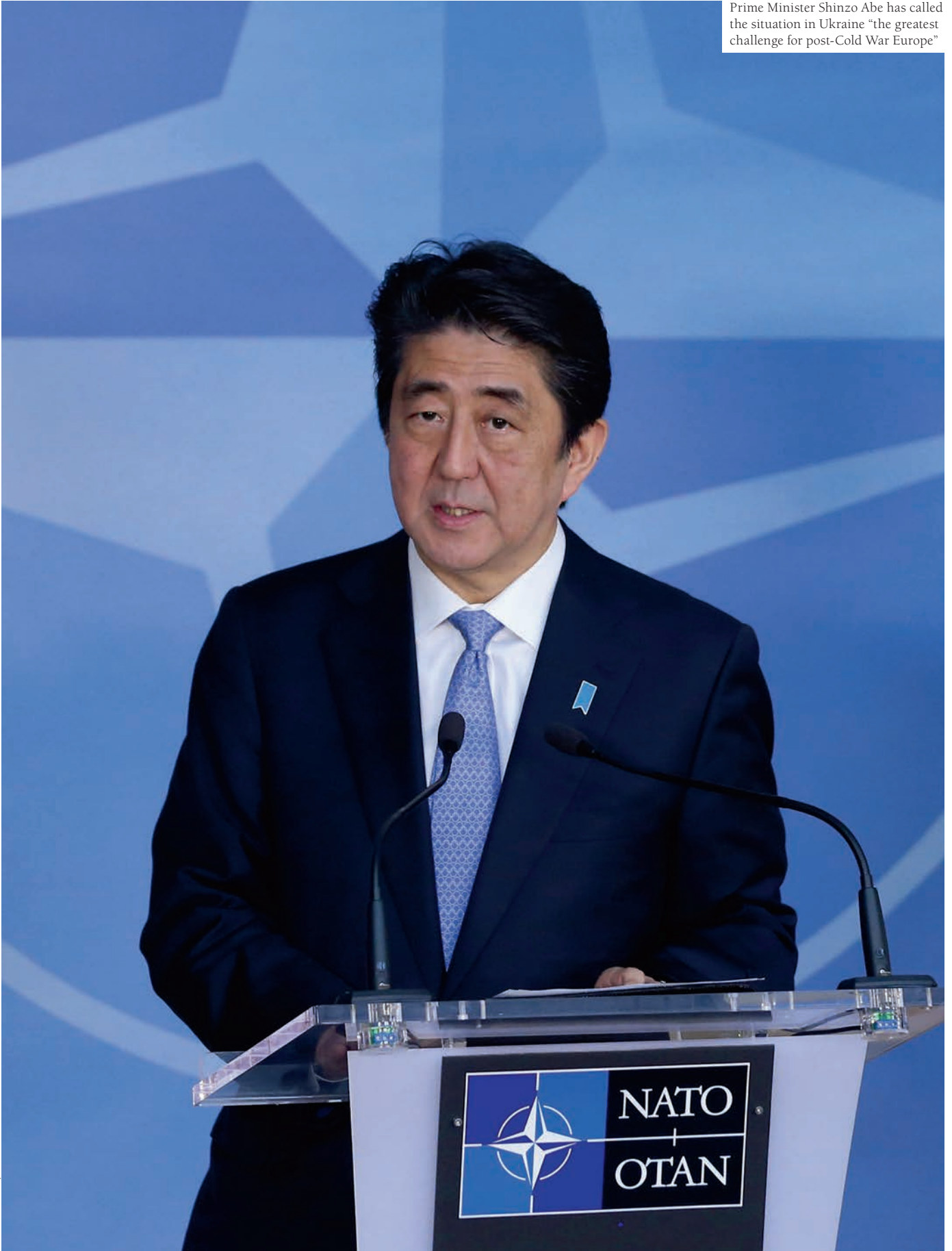
Japan places great importance on the concept of human security.

We are implementing down-to-earth assistance in such areas as capacity building for women as well as maternal and child health and the protection and promotion of women's rights in countries around Asia and in other developing countries. It is truly tragic that during armed conflicts, a large number of women suffer wounds of both the mind and body that do not easily heal – a situation that remains rife even here in the 21st century ...

I would like to close by asking one more time: why Japan and NATO? We are more than simply natural partners that share fundamental values. We are also reliable partners corroborated by concrete actions ... I sincerely look forward to Japan turning new pages of cooperation in the months and years to come as a reliable natural partner of NATO. ■

Excerpts from a speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, 6 May 2014

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called the situation in Ukraine "the greatest challenge for post-Cold War Europe"



FRANCOIS LENOIR/REUTERS