

Lecture at the Rotary Club Vienna-Northeast
"Second Home, Fourth Assignment" Ver 3.

Prof. Rödler,
Prof. Frank,
Gentlemen,

0. Introduction

0-1. Today, for the first time since my time as Consul General in Düsseldorf, I am taking part in an RC meeting, where I was a member of RC Düsseldorf Süd. I would like to thank the RC President, Mr. Faulhammer, as well as Prof. Rödler, who is representing him today, for this opportunity, as well as Prof. Rüdiger Frank, my long-time friend at the University of Vienna, for the kind invitation.

0-2. On December 17 last year, I arrived in Vienna as Japanese Ambassador, and I last left in August 2009 as Ambassador; In the meantime, 13 years have passed before I was able to return to my "second home". In the following, I would like to talk about my engagement with Austria during my career as a diplomat (Part 1), and how I see Japanese-Austrian relations today, as well as future prospects from my perspective as Japanese Ambassador (Part II).

Part I. My engagements with Austria

1. My encounter with Austria

1-1. My first encounter with Austria dates back to 1983, when I joined the Foreign Ministry exactly 40 years ago. In the first year of my diplomatic service, I went to Hiroshima on my summer vacation. In a youth hostel I met a young Austrian student. The following year (1984), I came to West Germany as a young diplomat of the so-called "German School". From West Berlin, I travelled to Vienna for the first time before moving to Tübingen for a two-year language course.

1-2. My first posting, then, followed as a diplomat in Vienna (1986). Learning German in Swabian-dominated Tübingen was tough, and when I heard the Viennese for the first time, it sounded so fresh and musical that I immediately fell in love with it. This first assignment in Vienna left many impressions that were to influence a large part of my later life.

1-3. I immersed myself in the history of Austria since the Habsburgs, which turned out to be almost

identical to studying the history of diplomacy in Europe; and the process of nation-state formation since the 19th century. Through literary works I was able to learn not only German, but also history and culture. Stefan Zweig's historical stories, Viktor Frankl's experiences in the concentration camp – they are still fresh in my memory. The history of Bosnia by Ivo Andric, an experienced Yugoslav diplomat, gave me valuable inspiration to understand the history of the Western Balkans, including the background that led to the subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia.

1-4. In Austria, Fred Sinowatz was replaced by Franz Vranitzky as Chancellor. The formation of the grand coalition between the SPÖ and the ÖVP followed. The trigger was Jörg Haider's putsch in the FPÖ. At that time, I experienced the precursor of those elements that still determine Austrian domestic politics today: the rise of a right-wing populist political force and its consequences.

2. The end of the Cold War and changes in the international order

2-1. One year after my return to Japan, the Berlin Wall fell (1989). At the end of the same year, Ceausescu's dictatorship in Romania was abruptly ended by a popular uprising. I had experienced what it was like to travel through the Berlin Wall from West to East, or knew how the destroyed Frauenkirche in Dresden had looked like. In Romania under Ceausescu, the military had been building the so-called "Cultural Palace". All these upheavals in Europe, which were taking place on Japanese television, were all familiar to me.

However, the end of the Cold War also had an impact on Asia and the rest of the world. It brought about a dynamic that put an end to the civil war in Cambodia, for example. It was the Japanese diplomacy that set this peace process in motion. It was like this: Establishing contacts with the pro-Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh had long been considered taboo. Japan broke this taboo and held a meeting of all parties to the conflict in Tokyo (1990). I myself was among those who worked behind the curtains at that time. This was the prelude to the Cambodia Peace Conference in Paris (1991).

In 1992-93, Japan was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. I was in charge of it. I was dealing with wars in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia, among others. In Bosnia, during my time as a diplomat in Vienna, I had personally seen the beautiful old town of Sarajevo or the old medieval bridge of Mostar. Having to watch their destruction or the massacre of Srebrenica made me very sad.

2-4. In 1996, I was sent to Vienna for the second time. When OSCE election observers were recruited for elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I did not hesitate to apply. At that time, the Japanese Embassy in Vienna was also covering countries such as Slovenia and Croatia, which had emerged after

the breakup of Yugoslavia. More than half of all the work of the Japanese Embassy was concentrated on these countries.

Back in Japan (early 1999), I was involved in the nuclear and missile program of North Korea and Iran. During my next assignment abroad in Israel (2004-2007), I worked on the peace process in the Middle East, i.e. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At that time, a war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah. Near the border with Lebanon, I saw with my own eyes two destroyed Israeli Merkava tanks abandoned.

3. North Korea and Kosovo

3-1. During my third period of service in Vienna (2007-2009), one thing to be noted was that I had much to do with Professor Rüdiger Frank, thanks to whom I am delivering my lecture today. We exchanged views on North Korea on many occasions. I knew the background of North Korea's nuclear and missile program and the six-party talks, and the Japanese government was naturally interested in the situation in the DPRK or the follow-up issue. Professor Frank's insights on North Korea were of great relevance to our government.

At that time, the Kosovo peace process was mainly taking place in Vienna. Secretary-General Rohan – who was deputy to Special Envoy Maarti Ahtisaari – and Japan's Ambassador Umetsu met every few months. Each time I was there and sending reports back to Tokyo.

3-3. Then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed me to travel to Kosovo. The West was on the verge of recognizing Kosovo's independence, and Japan's response was crucial. My mission was to find out whether the situation in Kosovo fulfilled the requirements under international law for recognition as a state (i.e. territorial integrity, compliance with international law). I carried out research on the situation on the ground, collected assessments of the embassies based in Pristina, etc... Within a very short time, the time had come – Japan was the first country outside Europe to recognize Kosovo's independence. A few months later, I was carrying a letter from the then Foreign Minister Nakasone in my suitcase when I was on my way to Kosovo for the second time. This time it was about the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two governments.

3-4. Today, I am also Japanese Ambassador to Kosovo and, as such, I presented my credentials to President Osmani of Kosovo in February this year. I also told her about my two missions 15 years ago, and how happy I am to be able to work for Kosovo again as Japan's ambassador. On the same evening, I hosted the very first reception for the Japanese National Day in Kosovo as the Japanese ambassador. Also invited was the former Deputy Prime Minister Manai, to whom I had handed over the letter from

Foreign Minister Nakasone as mentioned above. It was a touching moment of reunion.

Part II: Today's Japanese-Austrian Relations and Future Prospects

4. Current status and challenges of Japanese-Austrian relations

4-1. Now I would like to talk about how I see the Japanese-Austrian relations and how I would like to develop them.

4-2. **Japan and Austria are partners in shared values**, and often represent almost identical positions on global issues. **Bilateral relations are running smoothly. However, the challenges facing our two countries are enormous**: security policy that needs to be redefined, economic security including energy transformation and supply chains, climate change, demography and migration, and the upholding of the rule-of-law-based world order. **Isn't it necessary for us, Japan and Austria, to stand even closer together?** That is the fundamental question I always ask myself. Here is how I am going to highlight some areas specifically:

- 1) Dialogue
- 2) Culture as a source of soft power
- 3) Economy and Business
- 4) Supporter Organizations

(1) Political dialogue

In recent years, we have had **a number of milestones** in our bilateral relations, including the **140th and 150th anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic relations** in 2009 and 2019. Taking advantage of these occasions, as well as the **accession of His Majesty the Emperor**, there was **a lively exchange of visits**, including the visit of the Austrian Federal President, Federal Chancellor and Foreign Minister to Japan, as well as the Imperial Family, the Japanese Foreign Minister and the Minister of State from Japan to Austria.

4-2-2. After the inevitable break due to the coronavirus pandemic, the **series of visits** was relaunched last year **by Economics Minister Kocher and Finance Minister Brunner** when the two visited Japan. EXPO Minister Okada came to Austria this year. In May of this year, the two foreign ministers, Schallenberg and Hayashi, met in Stockholm.

4-2-3. So **it was quite an intensive dialogue on a political level – except for the visit of the Japanese**

Prime Minister to Austria. The last visit of this kind was that of Prime Minister Kishi in 1959, which the Federal Chancellery is not excited about. I agree with this disappointment. What could not be realized over 60 years, however, is not easy to make up for, so you have to work out a solution seriously. In any case, in tandem with Austrian colleagues, I am looking for **a possibility of a summit, at least on the fringes of a suitable multilateral forum.** (As far as meetings at foreign ministerial level are concerned, the change of Japanese foreign minister requires the reestablishment of the framework of personal relations).

(2) Culture as a source of soft power

4.3.1. Without doubt, **cultural exchanges constitute a significant part of our bilateral relations.** The Corona pandemic had caused enormous damage in this respect, as all traffic – tourists and artists alike – was suspended. When the **Vienna Philharmonic** wanted to make a guest appearance in Japan last October, Japan was still under significant, if not total, entry restrictions. At the request of Secretary General Launsky-Tiefenthal, my predecessor was able to issue Japan's entry visa for the orchestra at the last minute. However, such an anecdote is now a history. **The Philharmonic and Boys' Choir are welcome cultural ambassadors of Austria in Japan.**

4-3-2. Artists from Japan also play a major role in Austria. **Maestro SADO Yutaka is the director of Tonkünstler Niederösterreich.** I was a guest at Grafenegg Castle twice at his concert. When **HISAISHI Joe, Japanese composer and conductor, played theme music from the anime of the famous animation studio Ghibli** at the Musikverein, it was a real sensation. Never before have I seen such a young, multinational audience at the Musikverein.

4-3-3. **Anime and manga** are now a global phenomenon, and we can certainly sell them well as **Japanese modern art.** That is what I would like to do. The pop culture festival "AniNite", which I knew from the past, has grown so much that it received over 20,000 visitors this year, who stormed the new venue – the Austria Center. **Cool content supported by young people is the true source of Japan's soft power.** At the **opening of the Japanese film festival JAPANNUAL** last week, I addressed the Viennese cinema fans and, with them together, got inspired myself with the film. For next year, I could even consider inviting representatives of the Austrian government to the opening.

(3) Economy and Business

4-4-1. However, my real greatest concern for bilateral relations is the **strengthening of economic relations between our two countries.** I already explained the reason. In light of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and intensified confrontation between the US and China, **the importance**

of economic security is increasing, including the need to build supply chains among value partners. On top of that, Japan and Austria are leaders in "monozukuri", i.e. value creation through production. Therefore, **it is obvious that our two countries need to be connected, and intensify the networks in terms of economy and business.** This view is increasingly gaining support from Austria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and the WKO.

4-4-2. But again, it is not easy, because the business model has changed a lot. This has something to do with the **globalization and localization of Japanese companies.** Because of globalization, Japanese companies do not have to set up their headquarters in every country. A Japanese CEO I know lives in Munich and travels from there to Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia, etc., just to give an example.

4-4-3. The localization is evident in the fact that **managerial positions of Japanese companies abroad do not necessarily have to be filled by Japanese.** In Düsseldorf, I even knew foreign managers at the top of well-known names such as Toyota and Mitsubishi Electric.

4-4-4. The result of the twofold "globalizations and localizations" is that the **distance between the embassy and the companies has become much greater** than it used to be. **We would like to support Japanese companies. However, the contacts with them are no longer a matter of course.** For example, if Japanese companies invest in Austria today, they do not need to register at our embassy or in the Japanese community. As a result, **even leading companies such as Takeda or TDK are running their operations without being noticed,** unless we turn to them. After my arrival, I sent several invitations to Takeda. As a result, at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Future Lab a month ago, the company invited me as one of the guests of honor. (We were able to establish contacts and subsequently invite Austrian executives to dinners and events of the embassy.)

4-4-5. What about Austrian companies in Japan? There are about 80 Austrian companies based in Japan, mostly so-called "**hidden champions**" – **and they are really "hidden" – invisible.** That is why I openly say they should come out more. **I hope that economic activities will become better known to the public of the respective country, so that Japan will be more visible in Austria and Austria in Japan.**

4-4-6. **The Osaka/Kansai Expo 2025 offers opportunities to establish contacts and network between Japanese and Austrian companies.** Our Austrian counterparts, i.e. Austria's EXPO team, and we agree on this. Partly for this reason, we are working closely with Austria. The first EXPO in which Japan officially participated under the Meiji government was the **Vienna World's Fair of 1873.** Japan conquered the hearts of Austrians at the time, and this **triggered Japonisme in art. This time it is Austria's turn to trigger an Austrian boom in Japan.**

4-4-7. Perhaps a word about the “**Austrian-Japanese Committee for Future Issues**” – a so-called "1.5 track" among business executives and government representatives. It was launched in 1990, and has been meeting every year to this day with the exception of during the Corona period, this **time they meet in Japan in next month**. At my suggestion, the focus will be on "**Hydrogen and the Future of the Automotive Industry**" – quite a hot topic. The WKO will also be strongly represented at the meeting. It is expected that the committee will act more in the future for more practical and practicable networking of companies from both countries.

(4) Supporters of Japanese-Austrian relations

4.5.1. The 30 city partnerships between Japan and Austria are a real treasure for our bilateral relations, and I support them as much as possible. For a long time, Vienna was known for not having twin city relations in the traditional sense, but for Vienna, as I heard, a **partnership on specific topics or with specific goals can** certainly be considered. I would like to work to ensure that such a **partnership can be created between Vienna as a federal state and a Japanese prefecture** (I am thinking primarily of Hiroshima Prefecture).

4-5-2. There are two prominent societies that support our relations: the Austrian-Japanese Society and the Japanese Society. They are active in their own way, but I think they should appeal more to **younger people**. Topics such as pop culture or Japanese films serve this purpose. I would be happy to work to ensure that a generational and mindset change will take place in these places.

6. Conclusion

6-1. To sum it up, I see the following points as my task as Japanese Ambassador to Austria, so that Japan and Austria will be closer together in the future:

- (1) Maintaining and strengthening political dialogue, with the possibility of a summit meeting at the level of Heads of Government
- (2) Cultural exchange as a stable basis, but with a focus on modern art for the younger generation
- (3) Strengthening economic and business relations
- (4) Taking good care of city partnerships, creation of a possible targeted partnership between Vienna and a Japanese prefecture, as well as the involvement of the younger generation in supporter organizations

It is becoming **increasingly clear to me how big the challenges will be**. However, I see it as **my duty to do everything in my power to achieve some of these goals that I have identified. This would be**

my own contribution to Austria, to which I feel so indebted, and where I have the privilege of serving for the fourth time.

6-2. Thank you for your attention.