

DEBATE

Tatsuo MASUDA

We are grateful that Mongolia has made Japanese sumo so popular. I have one question, and this is something very important – you are prepared to be an intermediary between North Korea and the world. Please do that, I beg you, because there is no one else who has openly said that to my knowledge. Therefore, I very much count on you and I hope you make the world a better place to live.

Tsakhiajin ELBEGDORJ

When I meet with my friends from Japan, they are always really concerned about abductee issues – some Japanese were also abducted in North Korea – and when I was President I was visiting Shinzo Abe's home. We were sitting there and talking about this. We have close relations with Prime Minister Abe, and during my presidency he visited Mongolia three times. That is how significant our country's relations are, and we also have an economic partnership agreement, a free trade agreement, between Mongolia and Japan. That was the first time we concluded such an agreement. Those issues are really interesting.

Japan-Mongolia relations go back a long way. Once Kublai Khan tried to invade Japan, and at that time he had the biggest navy. He was in China and established the Yuan Dynasty; China's money is called the Yuan. He introduced paper money there and established the Yuan Dynasty; he had the biggest navy and twice tried to invade Japan. There was a big ocean wind, which the Japanese called *kamikaze*, meaning the Divine Wind; we call it bad weather. Since then we have that great relationship. Regarding sumo, Mongolia has been dominating for fifteen years; there are five grand champions, and four of them are Mongolians.

People have also asked during my presence here what time is good for going to Mongolia and what there is to see. There are many things to see, I told them, and July or September are the best times to come to Mongolia. I am really inviting you, and I am making very good connections with you. Please come to Mongolia. Regarding the Japan-North Korean issue, we have a hotline and exchange really important information with the Japanese Foreign Ministry. We have our people there and have insight about it – we have a unique perspective and unique insights. I have access to North Korea if I want to go there; Mongolians go there, and many North Koreans go to Mongolia and ask what happened to our former Communist leaders, whether they were killed or punished. We say that nothing happened, that most of them are living there, and the former Communist Party is still there. Democracy means giving an opportunity – the essence of democracy is not pleasing everyone but keeping diversity. Diversity is the source. It is about keeping the right to be different – that is the essence of democracy.

Many people are not happy with today's political establishment, but people are really happy that we have diverse voices in Mongolia, along with social media and freedom of expression, and keeping that in our part of the world is really crucial. Many people are learning from that.

Meir SHEETRIT

I wonder what issues you are fighting against or stand against in Mongolia today.

Hervé MARITON

Mr President, what about southern Mongolia? Is it a non-issue?

Tsakhiajin ELBEGDORJ

Do you mean Inner Mongolia?

Hervé MARITON



Yes.

Tsakhagiin ELBEGDORJ

You mentioned economic issues, and the Mongolian economy is not a diverse one. We need to make our economy more diverse and more productive; that is the main issue in Inner Mongolia. We concluded an agreement with the IMF and are working very closely with them. Another issue, of course, is more exposure to the world, giving Mongolia more weight on the world stage. That is really important, and one way is participating in this conference and presenting about my country here.

You asked about Inner Mongolia. Mongolia's territory is the 18th largest in the world, but this is only 10% of what our territory used to be. There are five million Mongolians living in China, but only 3,180,000 in Mongolia. There are more than one million Mongolians living in Russia, and 10 million worldwide. We have great relations; Inner Mongolians can come to Mongolia and our people go there. It is not a big problem.

Thierry DE MONTBRIAL

We have to stop now, but since it is the last day, and you are talking about demographic considerations, I cannot refrain from a joke. It is to illustrate the importance of small countries, much smaller ones than yours. It is a story about the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, who once visited China, and after a few drinks he said, 'Well, the great thing is that China and Luxembourg together are a quarter of the human population.' Thank you very much.

Tsakhagiin ELBEGDORJ

There is also a joke about when the American President visited China. He visited the Great Wall of China. They said that China built this Great Wall, that China is a big, powerful nation, but he said, 'Of course, the building of this Great Wall is really important. But who made you build this Great Wall? It was the Mongolians.'