



## How Japan prime minister's homework on Trump paid off



If Japan needed reassurances it was indeed still the US's top ally and friend in the increasingly unstable Asia-Pacific, it got that and then some.

If Japan needed reassurances it was indeed still the US's top ally and friend in the increasingly unstable Asia-Pacific, it got that and then some. But what was striking about the Trump-Ishiba meeting at the White House was what didn't happen.

Unlike most of the Trump domestic and global dynamics so far, this was neither controversial nor confrontational. On television, he is very frightening," Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told reporters after Friday's meeting. But when I met him, he was very sincere, very powerful and strong willed," he added.

There's a lot that ties Washington and Tokyo. Japan has been the top foreign investor in the US for five consecutive years, creating thousands of jobs. And there are 54,000 US military personnel stationed in Japan. But President Donald Trump has given his friends and foes a lot to worry about: from tariff wars against China, Canada and Mexico to his US "ownership" of Gaza Trump has made some erratic decisions towards countries that believed themselves to be America's friends," said Jeffrey Hall, lecturer at Japan's Kanda University of International Studies.

"There was a fear in Tokyo that the same might happen: that Trump might slap huge tariffs on Japan or start some dispute. But that didn't happen," he added. While Trump didn't rule out tariffs against Tokyo, it wasn't the main feature of this meeting.

Ishiba went to Washington prepared. He'd studied. Literally. he held "study sessions" with staff and sought advice from his predecessor, Fumio Kishida. He also had some help from the widow of the late former PM Shinzo Abe, who had a close relationship with Trump during his first presidency, forged on the golf course.

Apart from when Trump mistakenly referred to Nippon Steel as "Nissan", there weren't many eye-raising moment like the many other announcements by the US president. In fact - as far as Japan is concerned - this meeting was reassuring.