

**Japanese Diplomacy at a Turning Point in History  
and**

**the Future of Japan-UK Partnership**

(17:00-18:00, June 21, 2023, GMT)

Thank you, Mr. Bland, for your kind introduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is such an honour to be given the opportunity today to address the esteemed Chatham House.

As Mr. Bland did not fail to mention, I confess that I am a very big fan of The Beatles. My first visit overseas as Foreign Minister was to the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Liverpool, where I made a memorable debut by playing "Imagine" on a replica of John Lennon's iconic white piano at the Beatles Story Museum.

Now, we are facing a turning point in history in an increasingly severe international security environment. Russia's aggression against Ukraine ushered in the end of the post-Cold War era. However, the contours of the next era are yet to be seen. We have to address a complex crisis, where intensifying geopolitical competition is intertwined with global challenges such as climate change and infectious diseases.

What is required in mapping out a vision for the new era is to maintain and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and tackle the challenges of the international community including those faced by developing countries, toward the shared goal of leading the world to cooperation, *not* to division and confrontation.

The value of diplomacy is being tested.

With this in mind, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the leaders of the G7, the invited countries including those known as the “Global South”, and Ukraine shared the recognition that the following four points are of importance:

Firstly, all countries should adhere to the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;

Secondly, confrontation should be resolved peacefully through dialogue, and support for a just and durable peace that is based on respect for international law and the principles of the UN Charter;

Thirdly, any unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force is unacceptable anywhere in the world; and

Lastly, we should strive to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

As we work to translate these visions into actions, the United Kingdom is an indispensable partner for Japan in jointly shaping the new era. This is the message I would like to emphasize today.

Japan-UK relations have seen drastic development in recent years. Against this backdrop, what is the specific mission to be undertaken by Japan and the UK? Prime Minister Kishida and Prime Minister Sunak issued the “Hiroshima Accord” last month, which lays out the concrete cooperation Japan and the UK will undertake in opening a new chapter of their relationship.

Today, I would like to present the three guiding principles of Japan-UK cooperation, which flow through our cooperation under the “Hiroshima Accord”.

The first principle is “Shaping the New Era”: Our cooperation is rooted in our determination to shape a favourable international security environment.

The second is “Building Joint Capabilities”: Our cooperation goes beyond aligning our views and aims to develop the capabilities to jointly address common challenges.

The third is “Inspiring Each Other for Sustainability and Prosperity”: We will leverage our strengths to work towards inclusive prosperity, founded upon both economic growth and sustainability.

Let me now turn to how Japan and the UK will address the strategic challenges of today under these guiding principles.

## **2 The First Principle: Shaping a Favourable International Security Environment**

### **(1) Europe: Responding to Russia’s Aggression against Ukraine**

As the international community faces a historical turning point, a decisive factor in shaping the new era is how we respond to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. In Ukraine, the unquestionable principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity are being challenged. If we do not resist this unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force, then it could happen elsewhere in the world, including in East Asia.

It was with this sense of crisis that Japan made a major shift in its policy on Russia. Our strict sanctions on Russia and our powerful support for Ukraine constitute, in and of themselves, our efforts to maintain and reinforce the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Also, as the G7 leaders did in Hiroshima, it is critical that we continue to send a powerful message to the international community that Russia’s nuclear threats, let alone its use of nuclear weapons, are completely unacceptable under any circumstances.

Japan will work together with like-minded countries to follow up on the outcome of the G7 Summit, which includes:

- (i) Providing powerful support for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine, with the participation of the private sector;
- (ii) Continuing strict sanctions on Russia, including addressing efforts to evade and circumvent sanctions; and
- (iii) Engagement with the “Global South”.

Today, I am here in London, together with about 20 Japanese firms and institutions, to take part in the Ukraine Recovery Conference and deliver on Japan’s commitments made at the G7 Summit.

Tomorrow Japan will also hold the Business Round Table between Japan and Ukraine. I would like to express my sincere respect for the efforts of the UK in organizing this important meeting in a timely manner. In addition, from the viewpoint of enhancing the engagement of the private sector, the collaboration with third countries in both public and private sectors is important, presenting another opportunity of Japan-UK collaboration.

Leveraging its experience and knowledge gained through its own recovery from post-war devastation and natural disasters, Japan will implement uniquely Japanese forms of assistance, including on demining and debris removal, rebuilding livelihoods through developing basic infrastructure, recovering agricultural production and promoting industry, and reinforcing democracy and governance.

The security and prosperity of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is inseparable. To uphold the peace and prosperity of the international community, Japan and the UK must demonstrate, through words and action, that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are unacceptable anywhere in the world.

## (2) Realising a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

The second challenge for Japan and the UK in shaping the new era is in the Indo-Pacific, where we see a tectonic shift under way in the balance of power. The Indo-Pacific holds much promise in terms of its potential as the engine of economic growth and innovation. At the same time, there are issues such as opaque and rapid military expansion, unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, and economic coercion.

The future of the Indo-Pacific will shape the new era, not just for the region but for the world as a whole. Our strategic challenge is linking the region's potential to the stability and prosperity of the international community as a whole, under the free and open international order based on the rule of law. Our vision of a Free and Open-Indo Pacific, or FOIP, upholds this.

In tackling this challenge, one must inevitably consider the role China is playing in the future of the region and the world.

As stated in the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué, we stand prepared to build constructive and stable relations with China, recognizing the importance of engaging candidly with China and expressing our concerns directly to it. We act in our national interest. It is necessary to cooperate with China, given its role in the international community and the size of its economy, on global challenges as well as in areas of common interest.

This April, I visited China, during which I candidly conveyed such positions at a meeting with Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Director Wang Yi, and to Premier Li Qiang. I will continue to engage in dialogue with China on various opportunities, including on matters of concern.

At the same time, China needs to make a strategic decision that it will abide by the established international rules and that it cannot and will not change the international order in ways that are contrary to these rules by force or coercion. Efforts to achieve this will need to be long lasting.

We must also work to enhance our economic resilience, where further efforts on de-risking, *not* de-coupling, will be required. Building a constructive and stable relationship with China will be critical in charting the course of this region. We cannot discuss the future of the Indo-Pacific without stressing the importance of reinforcing cooperation with India, ASEAN and the Pacific Island countries.

In pursuing a FOIP, it is extremely important to reinforce our partnership with India, which holds this year's G20 Presidency as well as being the world's largest democracy and a partner with shared fundamental values and strategic interests. Furthermore, our ties with Southeast Asian countries constitute a core element of peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, as our vision for a FOIP and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific resonate with each other.

Efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation also constitute an important element for this region. China is accelerating its buildup of nuclear force in an opaque manner, and North Korea continues its nuclear and missile development. It is essential that we make realistic and practical efforts toward the advancement of nuclear disarmament while addressing our security concerns.

Moreover, China and Russia are strengthening their military collaboration, even after Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Earlier this month, for the first time the two countries conducted joint flights by their bombers for two consecutive days.

Under these circumstances, the UK is critical to our efforts in the Indo-Pacific. In its “Integrated Review Refresh”, the UK announced that it would make engagement in the Indo-Pacific region a permanent pillar of its international policy and expressed support for the vision of a FOIP. It also announced its three-pronged approach on China, “protect”, “align” and “engage”, which is in line with that of Japan.

Moreover, the UK is already making concrete commitments to the region, such as through the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) and AUKUS.

The UK’s permanent engagement in the region is astute from both strategic and geopolitical perspectives. The peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific is in the interest of the UK itself, and we welcome stronger engagement of the UK in the region. Let me be crystal clear today that the UK can count on Japan as the closest of partners in the region.

### **3 The Second Principle: Building Joint Capabilities in the Face of Strategic Challenges**

Now, as I mentioned earlier, the second principle of Japan-UK cooperation is “Building Joint Capabilities”. Against the backdrop of these strategic challenges, Japan and the UK, as each other’s closest security partners in Asia and in Europe, will reinforce their capabilities to deter the threats of today and tomorrow, and respond in close consultation if necessary. This is a powerful message underpinning our commitment to the free and open international order based on the rule of law. We are seriously concerned about unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in both the East and South China Seas. Freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific is a crucial element of the stability and prosperity of the international community. There are strong calls for Japan and the UK to pursue further cooperation.

With the “Hiroshima Accord” as the new foundation, we will fully utilise the Reciprocal Access Agreement, which has just been approved by the Japanese Diet, to reinforce the interoperability of our two forces through larger, more frequent, complex and practical exercises. We will work to enhance our bilateral activities to a higher level with a view to the possible application of the Japan Self-Defense Forces’ asset protection measures on UK assets. If realised, the UK will be the third country, following only the US and Australia, to which such measures apply.

We highly welcome the UK’s commitment to deploy its Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific region in 2025. It will be a prime opportunity to reinforce our joint capabilities and showcase our robust partnership.

Deepening our cooperation in the event of contingencies is also required, including in cases such as the evacuation of our nationals from Sudan. These are examples of what Japan and the UK will do to give substance to our new defence partnership under the “Hiroshima Accord”.

With Japan-US Alliance as the lynchpin, Japan has been deepening cooperation with countries such as Australia, the Republic of Korea and the Philippines, and we will also enhance cooperation with NATO. The Atlantic Declaration announced by the UK and the US states that the two countries will strengthen collaboration with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. As our defence partnership deepens, we would also like to proactively advance security cooperation with the UK and the US.

Building our capabilities in the field of security directly feeds into our ability to shape the new era. But some may ask: what is the new era that Japan and the UK envision? Our third principle, which I will discuss next, directly addresses this question.



#### **4 The Third Principle: Inspiring Each Other for Sustainability and Prosperity**

The third principle of Japan-UK cooperation is “Inspiring Each Other for Sustainability and Prosperity”. The future Japan and the UK are striving for is the era of inclusive prosperity, founded upon economic growth and sustainability. Japan and the UK are determined to lead international efforts for global resilience, so that every country benefits from the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

This is reflective of our shared recognition that, in leading the new era, it is essential to listen to the voices of the so-called “Global South” and promote cooperation to resolve issues facing the international community such as food, development, health, climate and energy, and the environment.

We also share the confidence that we can turn challenges into opportunities by leveraging each other’s strengths. Let us take an example. The climate crisis has long been considered as a burden on the economy, but today, grave and imminent challenge as it is, it has come to be regarded as an opportunity for growth.

Japan is an important investor in UK offshore wind and clean technologies. The UK has developed considerable experience in these areas. This relationship has crystallised as the Renewable Energy Partnership agreed on the occasion of Prime Minister Sunak’s visit to Japan. With the shared goal of ensuring energy security and accelerating the clean energy transition to achieve net-zero by 2050, Japan and UK can cooperate on renewable energy development and deployment, clean energy innovation, and critical mineral supply chains. We will work to link the global efforts on de-carbonisation and energy-transition with inclusive prosperity.

I believe there is great potential for further cooperation between Japan and the UK, sharing similar backgrounds as two island nations with strong track records of innovation. We will continue to closely collaborate on the issues of economic security, as well as on science and technology and innovation, such as in semiconductors and AI.

Japan and the UK also share the commitment to a free and open rules-based international economic order. In this vein, we welcome the UK's coming accession to the CPTPP. It is extremely significant that the UK, which shares the strategic values of the CPTPP, is joining us in enhancing the economic order of the Indo-Pacific region. It is critical that Japan and the UK, together with the US, continue to proactively engage in forming a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law.

Our shared determination to leverage our strengths to deliver solutions for the world is at the core of the third principle.

## **5 Conclusion: Toward New Heights in the Japan-UK Relationship**

Ladies and gentlemen, the history of Japan and the UK goes back to the age of Shakespeare, when a British sailor named William Adams, having suffered a shipwreck, was washed ashore on the coast of Japan in 1600. Adams was known by the Japanese name, MIURA Anjin and served as a diplomatic advisor to the Tokugawa Shogunate. He contributed to the cultural and technological development of Japan by introducing navigational techniques and shipbuilding technologies.

Fast forward to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at the dawn of the Meiji era, a group of five young men from Choshu, which is largely today's Yamaguchi prefecture and my hometown, travelled to the UK to learn the latest technology and knowledge at the time. This group of young men, called "Choshu Five", became leaders of modern Japan, including those who later became Japan's first Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Since then, the friendship of Japan and the UK has been one of inspiring each other, redefining our cooperation in line with changing times.

Now, in the face of a historical turning point, we are being given an opportunity to aim even higher. Our enhanced partnership, underpinned by the “Hiroshima Accord” and the three guiding principles which I have mentioned, contributes to global peace, prosperity and resilience. Our actions, firmly supported by our commitment to our vision, will pave the way for the new era that is different from a future where power reigns. Japan is determined to take the lead, together with the UK, our indispensable partner, and others, in championing the free and open international order based on the rule of law, and to engage in diplomacy with our eyes set on the new era.

I thank you for your kind attention.