EVENT SUMMARY:

Book Launch:

Peacetime Anglo-Japanese Military Relations: Old Friends, New Partners

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Introduction by Professor Thomas French

I'll just briefly introduce the project and then hand it over to the other two speakers.

In terms of background,I previously worked on the history of the Self-Defense Forces, although my chapter in the book is actually about the 19th-century British garrison of Yokohama. This volume, and indeed this event today, is the final product of one large research grant we had on peacetime Anglo-Japanese military relations. It also bridges over to a new grant I am just beginning with a team involving Japanese, British, and other scholars from around the world about the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) just after the war in Chūgoku and Shikoku.

As for the contents of the book, Philip and Ra are going to talk about their contributions and the contents of their chapters, but there are multiple other chapters as well. These include my own on the British garrison in Yokohama, British involvement in the Boshin War, and British engagement in the late 19th and early 20th-century diplomacy and image formation surrounding Japan's legitimisation as a great power. We also have chapters about the postwar war crimes trials, the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), and military connections during the postwar period up to Brexit. If you want to hear a bit more about the content of those, feel free to ask in the Q&A.

Why did we do this project? In recent weeks, we have seen very significant anniversaries, VJ Day, as we call it in this country. This anniversary is indicative of the different treatments of the past in different countries. Different perspectives, views, and narratives are pushed by various countries in the region. Identity is involved, formed, and projected, and regime policy support is mobilised through the usage of the past, which was paraded, as it were, as part of the recent events in Beijing.

I thought it would be an interesting idea to examine the UK side of this as well. Obviously, this is not directly connected to the VJ Day anniversaries, but we have seen increasing UK-Japan defense cooperation in recent years, which the two other speakers will go into in great detail. Comments in the media, particularly in Japan, about a "new Anglo-Japanese alliance" or echoes of the past triggered the idea of looking back at peacetime military connections. We wanted to see if they had any relevance to the present, whether they can be considered useful, or if they have any kind of links. Of course, we also wanted to examine some of these connections on their own merits as underexplored areas of history that could do with a re-examination.

I will go through some of our common themes:

1. The limits of history as a policy tool
2. The importance of the UK to Japan's modern history
3. The importance of mid-tier actors in maintaining, sustaining, and developing relationships
4. Personal ties and connections
5. Image formation and identity

The first theme, of course, pains me to a degree, being principally a historian, to argue against the value of history in a sense. However, drawing connections between very different eras, timeframes, and contexts, in terms of society, culture, and the international political system, results in misinterpretations and mistakes. It is an error to draw too many direct parallels between the different eras we looked at, though there are some general principles we can draw.

Regarding the second theme: the importance of UK-Japan links and mid-tier actors. The UK was a central, incredibly important player in modern Japanese history up to the 1930s, as important as, if not more important than, the United States for many of the preceding decades. That history is still obscured, sadly, by the decline of Japanese studies in this country, the dominance of US perspectives, and the back-projection of current US dominance. That was one of the key themes we wanted to emphasise in this volume.

Another theme was mid-tier actors. They might be within organisations, or within the UK itself after the war when it was reduced somewhat in stature but remained a very important player. They influenced the relationship "middle-out", both upwards to the elite level and down to the grassroots level as an occupying power or through other forms of relationship.

Connected to that are personal ties. These form the basic substructure of the relationship. Personal links, friendships, or working relationships formed the basis of all the connections we examined. Some of these ties retained value and importance even decades after initial contact, helping to maintain, perpetuate, and support the relationship. This is highly important for today's connections in terms of maintaining and building up a new generation of people.

The last part links back to the first: image formation and identity. The UK was directly and indirectly involved in multiple ways in Japan's ascent to great power status in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This has imperial

connections, origins, and viewpoints. This is indicative of the issues when linking some of these events to the present, not least of course the Anglo-Japanese Alliance itself, which I will come back to in a moment.

To conclude:

- Past links are interesting to examine and great for generating ideas. They are often referenced by policymakers and the media, but they frequently result in oversimplified, one-dimensional parallels that do not hold up upon closer inspection.
- Reference to the past is complicated by the imperial era, many episodes of which are repugnant and distinctly unpleasant. Thus, it is difficult to use these historical links to boost present-day ties in many cases.
- A major factor here is the difficulty parts of Japanese society face in fully coming to terms with the legacy of the war and Japan's wartime deeds. Furthermore, most of the younger generation is not even aware of Japan's wartime empire due to flaws in middle and secondary school education or different curricular emphases.
- The original Anglo-Japanese Alliance is a prime example: it legitimised the imperial claims of both powers in Asia. Referring to it today can potentially irritate partners like Korea or India, with whom both powers currently seek to project initiatives and work in East Asia.

If historical examples are to be used, perhaps a more targeted approach is useful: smaller-scale, more specific examples of shared culture, cooperation, or different eras. This includes the postwar era, the BCOF project, or earlier pre-empire exchanges.

I have a few recommendations: First, there is so much going on now, such as the recent visit of the Carrier Strike Group to Japan, that there is less need to keep referring back to the past. Referring to historical facts is often a conversation starter rather than the conversation itself. The more links develop and blossom, the less need there is to refer to the past. It becomes less relevant and less important.

Second, the willingness and opportunity for both sides to cooperate is clearly there. There is no political constituency or gain to be made in either country by referring to the past in a divisive way, unlike what we see inside some states in East Asia.

Third, personal links and mid-tier connections need active support: personnel exchanges, visits, and ultimately, institutionalisation. This would be fantastic at the military forces level, the policy level, and among scholarly communities and students. In particular, we should support the study of both countries from perspectives other than popular culture: supporting politics, history, and diplomacy would be fantastic. This could support permanent structures, similar to the Jean Monnet Chairs supported by the EU around the world, which meet every few years to form permanent, ongoing networks.

Finally, while it is fundamentally important not to ignore or forget history, we should focus on remembrance, commemoration, and reconciliation, ideally going forward. In this, the UK can prove to be a positive, ongoing example of historical reconciliation and partnership with Japan.

I'll leave it there. Thank you very much.

Talk by Dr. Ra Mason

Thank you, as ever, to the team at Daiwa. Absolutely amazing as always. Thank you to Philip, of course. It is brilliant to see this book come together. It has been a long time coming, and now it is here in physical form.

Tom talked a lot about partnerships. I am going to give you one specific example of this in the security sphere. I wrote specifically about the post-Brexit UK-Japan security relationship. I have come down today from sunny Norfolk, but I hear on the grapevine that one or two people in London were not particularly pleased about Brexit when it happened. However, as it happened,and this is somewhat counterintuitive, as I realised while writing the chapter, there are actually some strange "push forces" post-Brexit that have pushed the UK and Japan closer together, particularly in the security sphere. I look at some of those in my chapter, controversial though it may be.

The first sector is straightforward military collaboration. I will look at a few quotes from different sources to give you a sense of how the language has changed.

This first quote is from the UK government this year: *"Ministers emphasised the UK and Japan's deep strategic alignment and reaffirmed an enhanced global strategic partnership."* That is incredibly strong wording in terms of the partnership itself.

Next, we have the actual military forces. The Royal Navy, when speaking about the Carrier Strike Group missions out in the Indo-Pacific and the Sea of Japan, talked very positively and spoke up a lot about it. Philip will likely talk more about this since he was actually there. The Navy described themselves as: *"currently operating in the Sea of Japan with allies, allies from the Land of the Rising Sun."*

I place emphasis on the word "allies" because, as many of you are aware, Japan officially only has one formal alliance partner: the United States. Until recently, we have normally talked about "allies and partners," with the UK categorised in the "partner" group in most contexts. But now, there is clear, open discussion of the UK as an "ally." This is an interesting and significant shift in emphasis.

We also see the practicalities represented by the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) prototypes involving the UK, Japan, and Italy. The interesting thing here is that this flagship project not only counters the US domination that Tom mentioned, but those representing GCAP are now talking about a: *"transition from national contracting to fully integrated international collaboration."*

In other words, there is an emphasis not just on public, state-level interaction, but on actual public-private collaboration. This is a very significant transformation. If we think of the basis upon which the EU was founded, integrating German and French industries alongside national governments, this project carries distinct echoes of that approach.

The second sector is AI and cybersecurity. In this sphere, there are a few interesting observations: First, UK funding bodies are actively trying to promote collaboration between the UK and Japan. We recently saw a £6 million research call. For those of us in universities, that is a substantial amount of money. While it might not sound like much at a national level, it opens up a large pool of funding for UK and Japanese actors to collaborate on AI and cyber. This is highly significant because it does not just encourage collaboration; it provides the concrete means to do it. The call has just closed, and it was administered through UKRI (UK Research and Innovation), the main government funding body for UK universities.

Second, to quote my colleague's co-authored paper, think tanks like RUSI are talking about *"momentum, enthusiasm, and opportunity."* That paper was co-authored by three of you, so we can ask Philip later whether he wrote "momentum," "enthusiasm," or "opportunity." It demonstrates a general consensus that there is a highly positive direction on both sides.

Third, at the diplomatic and embassy level, exchanges are also very positive. The chapter looks back as far as the Cameron administration and, on the Japanese side, the Kishida administration, in terms of how they pushed this in different ways. This year, a ministerial meeting note stated: *"Greater collaboration between the UK and Japan is essential as cyberattacks become increasingly sophisticated."*

This is important because it paints a clear narrative: there is a "big bad world" out there, the world of rapid AI and technological transformation, and the UK and Japan are going to be partners fighting against these common threats. This narrative is something we see across multiple fields.

The third and final area is information sharing. There have been some key changes in actual wording here. If we look at the 2023 Hiroshima Accord, signed on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, the UK and Japan established a special agreement. My colleagues and I have been involved in discussions since then with government partners who are focusing on how to translate that accord into concrete, on-the-ground changes.

Information sharing is the key to any meaningful security cooperation; it is not just about military exercises. Traditionally, national governments want to protect their technology and industry data very tightly, refusing to share it even with close partners. However, the UK and Japan are now openly pushing for greater information sharing, particularly when it comes to operationalising AI and cyber. The two nations see each other as highly trustworthy partners, believing there is minimal danger in sharing this data and massive positive gain to be had.

This has been somewhat codified in the ‘DFFT’(Data Free Flow with Trust) initiative, which outlines a vision to maximise the speed and scale of information transfer within a trusted environment. That trust exists, more than anything, between the UK and Japan.

So, there is quite a lot there. If we look across these three areas: military, AI or cyber, and information sharing, it covers a massive swathe of security, from energy security to potential combat operations. It is mostly very positive, and I think we are going to hear even more positivity from Philip.

Talk by Dr. Philip Shetler-Jones

Good afternoon. Thanks to Daiwa and everyone who helped organise this and bring us together. As you said, this book was a long time in the making, so it is really gratifying to see it published.

Our historical scope went from Bakumatsu to Brexit. I wrote my chapter around the time of the first UK Carrier Strike Group deployment in 2021, which was either just coming up or actively underway. Now, four years later, we have just had the second deployment. Some of my remarks today reflect my recent return from a conference held on board the carrier itself, where one could really pick up on the zeitgeist, the language, and the sentiment in the air.

We have moved from having cups of tea with the ambassador to gathering on the flight deck of the carrier. I have a photograph here taken when the Prince of Wales was in Yokosuka. As you can see, there is a prominent lineup of key figures, including the Prime Minister of Japan, the Japanese Defense Minister to his right, our UK Ambassador to his left, and the US Ambassador further to the left.

This was a major demonstration of the contemporary prominence of the UK-Japan relationship. It was also consciously framed in a wider sense: Britain leading a multinational carrier group. The positive way of looking at this is that it represents a larger community of common interest than just our two countries. The critic, of course, would say it is because the UK does not have enough of its own ships and aircraft to fill out a complete carrier group, so we are lucky to have friends and allies who can come together to support us.

The presence of the US Ambassador is particularly notable. There was a report in one of the newspapers here claiming that a senior member of the Trump administration asked if we could turn the carrier around and bring it back, arguing that the UK should focus all of its attention on European security rather than sending ships to the other side of the world. The fact that the US Ambassador is smiling away in this photo suggests that this view may not be fully representative of the broader US outlook.

"The Comeback" is the title of my chapter, referring to the historical alliance and earlier periods where we had very little peacetime defense cooperation. I was also interested in this idea of a "new kind of alliance", an expression that has been used a lot. I first came across it in a speech by the Japanese Ambassador to the UK around 2011 or 2012 in Portsmouth, and it made me wonder: what exactly do we mean by a "new kind of alliance"?

Our communication around the Carrier Strike Group visits very much sums up this spirit: Britain and Japan coming together on a naval theme. Historically, naval cooperation has always been a key format for our relationship. The relationship between the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy was incredibly close

from the very beginning. British industry was heavily involved in building the ships that powered Japan's rise as a regional power, including, of course, the *Mikasa*, the flagship of the fleet that defeated the Russian Navy.

Today, we see British Royal Navy and Japanese Self-Defense Force personnel pictured together in a "Top Gun" spirit of flight jackets and helmets on a carrier deck. As the Hiroshima Accord states: *"our partnership stands at a turning point in history."*

But turning from what into what? Are we turning from what was previously described as a peacetime partnership into something more akin to a wartime alliance? What kind of turning point are we in? According to Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, we are in a period of *"great changes unseen in a century."* Many interpret this to mean a turning point away from an American-led world order toward a multipolar order.

Personally, multipolarity has always been a bit confusing. I listened to a speech by the Philippines Defense Minister last week in South Korea, and he noted that he was very worried about multipolarity because it sounds like a neo-imperialist order where "poles" hold privileged interests while smaller neighboring countries have subordinate interests. This is not a favourable prospect for countries like the Philippines, making multilateralism a far better framework than multipolarity.

What about our alliance in this context? Are we in an "alliance" in the loose sense, where we recognise each other's interests and support each other if we get into trouble—or are we in an alliance in the strict, high-level NATO sense, which carries a formal, legal commitment to consider an attack on one as an attack on all?

There is currently a lot of loose language around this. In the UK, our official government statements have begun to refer to Japan as our "security ally." However, on the Japanese government side, they are still carefully using the term "security partner." This difference in terminology and intent is curious.

The Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) is designed not just as the ceiling of our achievement, but as the floor of our defense industrial cooperation. The idea is that many other projects will emerge from the trust and institutional structures built to underpin GCAP. It is the beginning of a much wider defense industry collaboration, not just between the UK and Japan, but potentially involving Italy and other countries that may join the GCAP group in the future.

This carries an implication of codependence. Once these aircraft are operational, you are bound to the same supply chain for replacements. In the event of a conflict with aircraft losses, you are part of the same community that must fill those gaps.

This raises an important question: when a peacetime partnership runs this deep in industrial production, do you build expectations or dependencies without realising it because you are hoping there won't be a war? If a war does occur, you may suddenly find yourself committed without having had a broader, conscious national conversation about it. Yet, we clearly share an exceptionally high level of trust, as reflected in sensitive national security programs like GCAP. Are we leveraging this trust to its full advantage, or are we taking it slightly for granted? This is not something you could do with just any country.

Finally, looking at what we should do next, it would be highly beneficial to audit the assumptions underpinning this relationship. The current surge in cooperation began around 2012, when the defense partnership was first articulated in bilateral agreements and accompanied by these major industrial projects. Since then, the world has changed dramatically. Chinese power has become a much more prominent feature of international security, definitely for Japan, and increasingly for us.

Furthermore, the war in Ukraine, which intensified in 2022, has brought Russia back as a connecting thread between European security and Japanese security. In fact, Japan is sending its air defense forces, F-15 jets, in the next week or two to exercise not just in the US and Canada, but in the UK and Germany. Having Japanese military aircraft flying in NATO airspace for joint exercises demonstrates the truly reciprocal nature of this relationship. It is no longer just a matter of the UK projecting power to East Asia.

Consequently, we need to more consciously set our strategic course. Are we limiting this relationship to a peacetime partnership, or are we entering into commitments and raising expectations for joint deterrence and a potential distribution of roles and capabilities for war?

If we are moving toward the latter, we need to think about the next step. Within the US-Japan alliance, they have a formal treaty, but on a practical operational level, they use "Defense Guidelines" to describe who does what in a wartime scenario. If we are entering into a similar tier of relationship, those guidelines offer a highly useful template to help us think about the respective roles we would play in each other's security.

Thank you.