

**Dr Christopher Hughes**  
University of Warwick, UK

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### **Introduction: Where are UK-Japan Security Relations Heading?**

The UK and Japan have long enjoyed strong economic relations, especially since the influx of Japanese investment into the UK in the 1980s, and have increasingly developed a complementary set of bilateral political relations. Since the end of the Cold War, and accelerated by post-11 September events, the UK and Japan have also begun to develop a more diverse set of security relations. Japan first assisted the UK in security terms through its large-scale financial and more limited human contribution to the stabilisation of the Balkans in the 1990s. UK-Japan security cooperation has now taken on a harder edge with the JSDF's provision of non-combat logistical support for UK and other coalition forces in Indian Ocean since 2001 as part of OEF, and with the JSDF's despatch on non-combat reconstruction missions to work alongside the UK in Iraq and Kuwait since 2004. For Japan, the UK in many ways has been the long-term European partner of choice in the EU, G-7/8 and the UN.

The UK and Japanese governments, as indicated by the January 2007 UK-Japan Joint Statement, are now seeking to further expand security cooperation in their respective regions and globally. Many Japanese policy-makers have seen the UK as future model to be emulated in terms of gradually integrating their nation into international security cooperation, and for managing the opportunities and risks of a strengthening bilateral alliance relationship with the US. Japan for some has even been identified (admittedly often overly hopefully; disingenuously; or in ignorance) as the new 'Great Britain of the Far East' (see Hughes 2007). Similarly, for the UK, an expanding security relationship offers opportunities to engage Japan's still very considerable 'soft' economic power and qualitatively upgraded 'military' power in the service of shared international security goals, and to leverage UK influence in East Asia and globally. It might indeed be argued that 2008 is another opportune year for pushing forward UK-Japan security cooperation, as Japan renews its refuelling mission in the Indian Ocean; mulls the passing of a new National Security Law which may routinise JSDF participation in various 'international peace cooperation activities'; and prepares to host the G-8 summit in Toyako, Hokkaido.

The purpose of this short paper is to consider the areas of emerging opportunity for substantive and meaningful security cooperation between the UK and Japan; but also to point out areas of existing and new possible difficulties that will continue to hamper the security relationship, and thus will need to be overcome in order to chart future success in bilateral cooperation. Essentially, it argues that the UK and Japan certainly have good reason to propel their security cooperation forward, and this will be facilitated by the ongoing process of Japan's self-disentanglement from many of the past restrictions on its international security role; but that the UK will also need to be conscious of the fact that forging a new security relationship with Japan also means forging a relationship with by definition a new Japan itself. This new Japan may prove a more substantial but also more demanding security partner.

### **UK-Japan Opportunities for Co-operation**

Despite some recent signs of retrenchment in Japanese security policy with the fall from power of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and succession of Fukuda Takeo at the end of 2007, it is probable that there will be little divergence on Japan's part from its overall trajectory over the past decade of assuming the position of a so-called more 'normal' military power. Fukuda was forced to temporarily withdraw the MSDF from the Indian Ocean in November 2007 due to opposition from the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the National Diet's Upper House to the renewal of legislation enabling despatch. However, Fukuda was eventually able to use the governing Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) 'super-majority' in the Lower House to force through new legislation enabling re-despatch, even if with a contracted mandate to concentrate on refuelling and with the same time bound limit of one year for operations. Fukuda is undoubtedly more cautious than Abe on issues of national security, and preoccupied with attempting to maintain his hold on power domestically. However, there are a number of long-term factors which will continue to drive Japanese security policy forward.

#### *External threats*

Japan will of course seek to maintain engagement with North Korea and China. Nevertheless, the threat from North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes short-term, and the long-term concerns over the rise of China mean that Japan will have to continue to steel its deterrent capabilities and regional security role.

#### *US-Japan alliance expectations*

Japan is aware that the US since the mid-1990s has essentially changed the terms of their grand strategic bargain first forged at the start of the Cold War. The US is no longer content with providing security guarantees for Japan in return simply for regional bases. US global strategy now dictates that Japan and other regional allies should make their bases and national military capabilities available for supporting US regional and global deployments, and for participation in 'coalitions of the willing'. Japan's consciousness of these upgraded alliance expectations is unlikely to diminish regardless of who enters the White House in 2009.

#### *Domestic changes*

Japan is experiencing a state of relatively unprecedented domestic political fluidity, the result of long-term structural change now coming to a head. The old-style, politics of redistribution, conciliation and cooptation, practiced by the previously dominant pragmatist wing of the LDP hit the buffers with the Heisei Recession of the 1990s. It has now been replaced by a new form of hybrid neo-liberal, and even neo-conservative and revisionist form of politics. The corollary of this domestic political change has been a change in Japan's external foreign policy posture. The low-profile, low risk posture of the LDP pragmatists in foreign policy, has been replaced by the acceptance in Japan of the need for expanded security commitments, in part to meet external threats and satisfy US expectations, but also in part to restore Japan's perceived rightful place as a major power with concomitant international security responsibilities. Many younger LDP figures now argue for constitutional revision, a more equal less dependent relationship with the US, and a relationship less weighed down by the burden of history with Japan's neighbours.

#### *Oppositional politics*

The DPJ under Ozawa Ichiro's leadership has certainly been more intent on forcing the LDP from power, and has attempted to articulate a vision of security more UN and Asian-centred in nature. However, even if the DPJ were to secure victory in probable Lower House elections in the summer of 2008, or to enter into coalition with the LDP, this would not be the end of Japan's security 'normalisation'.

For sure, Ozawa would focus more on strengthening Japanese international security cooperation via the UN, and seek stronger international mandates for cooperation in US-led operations outside Japan's own region. But Ozawa is certainly not advocating the abrogation of the US-Japan alliance (and indeed arguably much of his opposition to the Indian Ocean mission can be interpreted as simply his desire to force an election for domestic political gain, rather than to deny Japan's expanding international security role), and in certain instances Ozawa may even advocate more radical options for Japan's external security role.

If Ozawa's more UN-centred security option were realised, then he has argued this should mandate the JSDF to be despatched to Afghanistan with the necessary legitimacy to use force if necessary.

Hence, for these long-term, structural, reasons it is certain that Japan will continue to expand its role in international security, even if at times this expansion remains incremental or stop-start. In terms of the UK relationship with Japan, there are thus a number of opportunities that might be exploited.

#### *UN PKO*

Japan will continue to look to the UK as an important partner from which it can gain experience and training in peacekeeping operations. Although Japan's participation in UN PKO has been strictly limited up until now to operations that involve the non-use of force, there may be scope in the future for an incremental expansion of the JSDF into more hazardous operations, and certainly for joint training in CIMIC and PRT. Japan's recent but unrealised consideration of JSDF despatch to Darfur is one instance of this.

#### *NATO and Afghanistan*

Prime Minister Abe raised NATO hopes in January 2007 when he addressed the North Atlantic Council and indicated that Japan would be prepared to make an expanded commitment to international security cooperation, including possible JSDF despatch as part of PRTs in Afghanistan. In many ways, JSDF despatch to Afghanistan itself would represent a more visible and useful contribution to post-war reconstruction than the 'floating gasoline stand' operation in the Indian Ocean. Abe's government then disappointed NATO by its failure to follow up on the proposal. As noted above, though, the DPJ has some appetite for JSDF despatch to Afghanistan, and it might become a reality if a National Security Law were passed.

Prime Minister Fukuda has talked up this possibility in 2008, following his political ordeal in attempting to pass the legislation for the re-despatch of the MSDF to the Indian Ocean. If a National Security Law were passed, then it would provide a non-time bound set of legislation, enabled by clearer standards of international mandates, which would allow for the routine and fast despatch of the JSDF overseas, and obviating the current need for separate laws for each JSDF mission.

The LDP and DPJ may have sufficient consensus between them to pass such legislation. Hence, if the UN mandates were deemed strong enough, the JSDF could indeed be despatched on certain types of missions to Afghanistan, and to work alongside UK forces (although expecting despatch to southern Afghanistan and combat zones would be a step too far to expect).

#### *Non-Proliferation*

Japan's expanding maritime capabilities and ambitions would match those of the UK in

seeking to halt exports of nuclear materials or ballistic missiles. Japan and the UK are already partners in the Proliferation Security Initiative.

#### *Arms manufacture*

Japan's defence industry is beset by the twin problems of limited demand in Japan itself (with stagnant defence budgets) and the lack of export markets and co-development partners for increasingly expensive weapons systems (a result of the 1967 and 1976 prohibitions on the export of weapons technology). Japan's defence production sector, however, is seeking to partially lift the ban on arms exports to attempt to exploit the benefits of global markets and co-production with partners from other developed states.

Inevitably, the prime target for Japanese defence industrial collaboration is the US as Japan's alliance partner. Nevertheless, Japanese concerns at over-dependence on US military technology means that there is an interest in expanding defence production cooperation longer term with European partners and especially the UK, which is seen as a safe partner due to its own close links with the US.

Japan's recent interest in the possible procurement of the Eurofighter Typhoon, for which BAE Systems holds the export and licensed production rights, is one example of this potential new type of military-industrial cooperation.

#### **UK-Japan Obstacles**

Japan's long term trajectory as a more active partner in the US-Japan alliance and its related search for additional partners in Europe and NATO should thus serve to elevate UK-Japan relations to a more central role in Japan's future security calculations.

At the same time, though, any deepening UK-Japan security relationship is likely to experience some limitations or tensions over the following types of issues:

#### *The US comes first*

Although Japan is constantly seeking to hedge/balance against over-dependence on the alliance with the US by seeking new security partners, its final allegiance remains to its security ties with the US. As long as UK-US ties remains convergent on many security issues, then there will be no likely tension between UK-Japan ties. All the same, the UK will need to remember that there may be issues or regions where its perceived vital security interests may diverge with those of the US, and in this event Japan may not be willing to provide support to the UK. Such examples may include European-centred humanitarian intervention missions.

#### *China*

Japan's optimum policy approach to China is to seek economic and political engagement, and thus has many similarities to UK policy. However, Japan continues to view China (implicitly if not explicitly acknowledged) as the greatest long-term threat to its national security and much of its military transformation and the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance is designed to counter-balance China.

In this sense, the EU's, and concomitantly the UK's, active engagement of China, with what is often seen from the Japanese perspective as an unduly soft touch on security issues, is a potential stumbling block in UK-Japan cooperation. Japan remains implacably opposed to

any lifting of the EU arms embargo on China, and would react with great disappointment at any UK move to supporting the selling of weapons to China in the future.

#### *North Korea*

Japan has certainly been thankful for the UK's professed support for the Japanese position on the abductions of its citizens. However, Japan's insistence on a resolution to the abductions issue as the entry point for bilateral normalisation with North Korea and for the provision of significant Japanese economic support for the Six Party Talks denuclearisation process has meant that Japan has threatened at times to fall out of step with the international community on the North Korean issue.

In this way, Japan and the UK might find themselves diverging if North Korea moves ahead with its denuclearisation and this triggers calls for wider support from the international community, but Japan is left isolated.

#### *Reciprocity*

The UK is certainly faced with a more active Japan as a potential international security partner. But the flipside of this is that the UK will also be faced with a possibly more demanding partner. As Japan is encouraged to do more in the international security arena, in order to live up to its status as a major developed power, so will it naturally expect greater reciprocation from its partners on issues of vital importance to itself. Japan may lose its image as an ATM providing cash when kicked for supporting international security cooperation, and instead, now that it is making a human contribution to security, expect others to bear the financial and human costs with it.

Abe's visit to NATO in 2007 was a portent of this type of Japanese thinking. He offered expanded support for international security, but also demanded (if in oblique Japanese fashion) reciprocation on issues such as China and North Korea. Japan has even made this clear in dealings with the US, expecting expanded alliance commitments to make for greater US support for its permanent UNSC bid.

The fact that this support was not substantially forthcoming only served to injure Japanese national pride. Hence, the UK must avoid similar possible tensions. If it expects more from Japan, then the price will be to give more back diplomatically and politically, and to actively and even materially support Japanese security concerns in East Asia.

#### **Conclusion: Taking the New Japan Seriously**

If the UK wishes to investigate an expanded security relationship with Japan, then it needs to continue to recognise the deep-seated domestic and international changes affecting Japan's international orientation. Japan is emerging long-term as a potentially more active security partner for the US and other developed states, including most especially the UK.

The current impasse and retrenchment in security policy under Fukuda is only likely to be short-term. The consequent terms of Japan's relationship with the US and other partners are changing. Japan may be a more reliable alliance partner of the US, but this has already been accompanied by greater Japanese assertiveness over policy towards North Korea and China (see Hughes and Krauss 2007).

The UK needs to recognise that in reaching out to the newly emerging Japan, it will have to wrestle with similar problems. Japan, although it will not lose entirely its traditional

reticence in international relations, will do more potentially for the UK, but the UK will also have to do much more for Japan; that is if they want to have a truly substantial security relationship and move beyond the niceties of much of past security cooperation and the nostalgia for the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Japan and the UK can do much together in their respective regions, and in the Middle East and Africa. But closer cooperation also brings possible risks of placing the relationship at loggerheads over issues that are closest and most essential to Japan's national security.

If the UK and Japan are serious about a deeper security relationship, then these will be key challenges for policy-makers to overcome.