

## Press Conference at Japan National Press Club

by Julia Longbottom, British Ambassador to Japan

on 6 April 2023

Good morning. It is a great pleasure, as His Majesty's Ambassador to Japan, to be able to speak to you today. The UK-Japan partnership is the strongest it has been in decades, and it is a partnership which the British Government values very highly.

As my Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, set out during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to the UK in January this year, the UK and Japan "have so much in common: a shared outlook [...], a shared understanding of the threats [...], and a shared ambition to use our place in the world for global good".

Russia's unprovoked and illegal invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of countries like the UK and Japan standing together against such acute threats to global security. We strongly welcome Prime Minister Kishida's leadership on Ukraine at home and abroad, especially in this year of Japan's G7 presidency.

When the UK published our Integrated Review in March 2021 - the most comprehensive review of Britain's security, defence, development and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War - we noted the acute threat to global security posed by Russia. You may remember that I spoke of this threat at my press conference in 2021. Its invasion has vindicated that judgement.

### IR23

Last month we published a refreshed Integrated Review, which we are calling IR23. It reiterates our core assessment from 2021 – that the world is becoming more contested and more volatile. So we need to drive investment in collective defence and security, increase our domestic resilience, advocate a more problem-solving global posture, and prioritise strength in science and technology.

IR2023 sets out **four campaign priorities** that will guide our national security strategy in this changing world:

- **Shape the international environment** – working with our partners – and Japan is absolutely key among those partners – to support an open and stable international order and the protection of global public goods.
- **Deter, defend and compete across all domains** – taking an integrated approach to deterrence and defence to counter both state threats and transnational security challenges to keep the British people safe and our alliances strong.
- **Address vulnerabilities through resilience** – introducing a long-term effort to address the vulnerabilities that leave the UK exposed to crises and hostile actors, improving our economic, energy and health security.
- **Generate strategic advantage** – investing in the UK's unique strengths in science and tech, innovation, AI and cyber.

IR2023 outlines where our policy has evolved since 2021, setting out key shifts on:

- **China** – a new approach based on protecting our national security, aligning with our allies and partners, engaging with China where it is in our interest to do so;
- **Economic security** – a strengthened effort to use our sanctions and wider economic tools to deter and disrupt malign activity;
- **State threats** – a new approach to countering state threats through coordinated cross-government activity;
- **International development** – newly establishing the UK's leading role on development.

In IR21, we sought to 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific region by establishing strong relationships with partners and institutions, and by demonstrating our commitment via defence engagement, trade agreements, and greater diplomatic presence. Since 2021 we have delivered on much of this commitment, and under IR23 we will put our approach to the Indo-Pacific on a long-term strategic footing.

I think you can see a great deal of similarity between the UK's IR23 and Japan's National Security Strategy published last December, as well as Prime Minister Kishida's New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific – a concept that has been adopted in our own IR 23. We share with Japan the desire to see a region where no single state dominates, but where a rich tapestry of institutions and partnerships shape a stable regional order.

## **CPTPP**

Key to a stable region is an economic order based on robust standards which level the playing field and fight against unfair and coercive trading practices. In that context we were delighted last Friday to announce the substantial conclusion of negotiations on the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

CPTPP is a trade bloc that is populated by around half a billion people, many of them in Asia Pacific, with a joint gross domestic product (GDP) of £9 trillion in 2021. Joining CPTPP links the UK to one of the most dynamic trading areas in the world. CPTPP's strong rules will benefit both UK and existing CPTPP member's businesses, and our joining will help strengthen international consensus in these areas.

CPTPP is widely recognised as one of the most progressive free trade agreements, with provisions for digital trade, e-commerce, trade in services and protection of intellectual property. It also sets very high standards on sustainability, anti-corruption and improving workers' rights.

The UK is ready to play its part in shaping the future of the agreement, which will help set the rules of the global economy so they benefit open and fair economies in a network of countries committed to free trade.

## **SECURITY AND DEFENCE**

But, as I mentioned just now, CPTPP is just one part of our increasing commitment to this region. We also want to play a meaningful role in regional security; and believe the best way to do this is through substantive cooperation with key allies and partners.

The autumn 2021 Carrier Strike Group visit, led by our aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, was a visible demonstration of the UK's commitment to further deepening defence ties with Japan. We continue to work together to promote maritime security, with two Offshore Patrol Vessels permanently deployed to the region. On land, we are one of the few nations besides the US to hold joint land exercises on Japanese soil. And our Reciprocal Access Agreement, signed in January this year, will make defence cooperation even easier by removing legal and administrative obstacles.

And in the air, we welcome unprecedented collaboration with Japan and Italy on the Global Combat Air Programme, a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our three countries to share the best of our technological and industrial capabilities to develop defence systems vital to our security and global stability.

We welcome Prime Minister Kishida's commitment to a substantial increase in defence spending, and to reinforcing Japanese capabilities. The UK is also responding to accelerating global geopolitical shifts and the security challenges this brings, including a commitment in IR23 to boost defence spending to 2.2% of GDP this year with ambition to reach 2.5% over time.

With Japan, we aim to further collaboration in the traditional domains of land, air and sea; but also seek ever-closer cooperation in emerging fields such as space and cyber. This work has strong foundations, including our annual UK-Japan Cyber Dialogues and our annual Joint Committee on Space between the UK Space Agency and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency). We must work together to secure our information and to implement Active Cyber Defence capabilities. I also welcome the establishment of a government commission to introduce a workable security clearance system for Japanese industry, which will be essential to enable our partnership to advance.

## **AUKUS**

A further concrete demonstration of the UK's long-term commitment to security and stability in the Indo-Pacific is the AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia. 18 months on from the initial announcement of the partnership, we have agreed the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, known as AUKUS-SSN, while setting the highest non-proliferation standards.

AUKUS-SSN will be the future submarine for both the UK and Australia. We anticipate that the programme will deliver its first UK-built SSN in the late 2030s and the first Australian-built boat in the early 2040s. Ahead of the new submarines, in the early 2030s Australia will explore the purchase of Virginia-class nuclear-powered, conventionally armed submarines from the US. In the interim, we will see an increase of US and UK submarine visits to Australia.

It is important to note that we have consulted the IAEA regularly, constructively, and transparently to determine a safeguards approach that sets the highest non-proliferation standard, one that strengthens the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

## **BILATERAL PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TIES**

While these government-to-government agreements and arrangements are proof of our increasingly close strategic relationship – and our determination to maintain a stable and prosperous world - it is our flourishing people-to-people links that are at the heart of our bilateral partnership.

Now that Japan's borders have reopened, the flow of business people, students, politicians and ordinary citizens which are the life blood of our relationship is moving swiftly again. That means more Japanese people studying in the UK – through Chevening and numerous scholarships – as well as more Brits coming to Japan through JET and the new Turing scheme funded by the British Government for global opportunities for training and education. It means a sustained commitment by UK organisations, including the British Council, to Japan's English Education reform agenda so that the next generation have the skills and confidence to use English. It means a growing number of partnerships between our universities, to increase the volume of joint research and the level of academic and student mobility. In the next 12 months, audiences here can also look forward to a major exhibition of work by David Hockney, one of the most innovative UK painters, and a new exhibition of work selected from the Tate Collection under the theme of light, as well as major tours by the Royal Ballet and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Our deep and longstanding partnership is also embodied in the close, historic ties between the Royal and Imperial Families. I would like to note how deeply touched I was by the outpouring of grief and kindness from thousands of people in Japan following the death of Queen Elizabeth II last September. She symbolized hope and compassion for millions of people around the world.

Next month will see the Coronation of Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort. The Coronation will reflect the Monarch's role today and look towards the future; reflecting the modern, diverse, multi-faith United Kingdom and particularly promoting the themes of youth, community, diversity, and sustainability. I believe this will be a celebration of the hope for a peaceful future for all of us.

In an interconnected world where the challenges that face us are truly global, partnerships with likeminded friends have never been more important. The UK and Japan are the closest of friends and partners, and I have no doubt that our relationship will only continue to grow from strength to strength as we work to address the challenges that we face – but also to seize the opportunities ahead of us.

Thank you very much.