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Speeches and Statements by the Prime Minister

Keynote Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at the Conference on Rejuvenating U.K.-Japan Relations for the 21st Century Jointly organized by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation and the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI)

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[H.R.H. Prince Andrew, Duke of York and the Royal Navy](#)

Your Royal Highness Prince Andrew, Duke of York,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very grateful to have been invited to this splendid gathering to consider the history of Japan-U.K. bilateral relations and its future path.

I would like to express my respect to Dr. Chiaki Akimoto, Director of RUSI Japan as well as the many others at both RUSI and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for their great efforts in convening this meeting.

We are very honoured to welcome His Royal Highness Prince Andrews, Duke of York today. I find his attendance here exceptionally gratifying as we advance the development of Japan-U.K. bilateral relations.

This year, the First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy is scheduled to visit Japan soon. As if to coincide with it, visiting Japan also is HMS Daring, one of the most advanced ships of the Royal Navy. It is very regrettable that Prince Andrew will not be able to view the joint activities that might be taking place between Daring and the JMSDF.

He could see how masterfully members of the JMSDF use semaphore, for example. I suppose that Prince Andrew, as a naval officer himself, could easily gain insight into the proficiency of the MSDF by simply viewing that, or other signalling actions such as lamps and mast flags.

Japan learned the A to Z of modern navy entirely from the U.K., and so there is no question that the members of the MSDF themselves should feel very much honoured and accomplished to conduct the joint exercise with the Royal Navy.

[An anniversary year](#)

This year marks the 400th year since the U.K. and Japan first encountered each other via the seas. It was the summer of 1613 when an East India Company ship arrived in Nagasaki and delivered to the retired shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu and the second-generation shogun Hidetada gifts and formal correspondence from King James the First. Ieyasu received a telescope at this time, as I know it.

One hundred and fifty years ago, five young men from my own home region of the country - Choshu, now known as Yamaguchi - went to the U.K. to study, unbeknownst to the shogunate, with Jardine, Matheson and Co. and others serving as intermediaries. Later known as the "Choshu Five," this group included Hirobumi Ito, aged 22 at the time, who later became Japan's first prime minister, as well as Kaoru Inoue, aged 27 at the time of his journey, who became Japan's first Foreign Minister, serving under Ito.

We must not forget that in the Great War, whose centenary since its outbreak we commemorate next year, members of the Imperial Japanese Navy executed extraordinary operational techniques to escort British ships successfully, for which they

came to be called "the guardian of the Mediterranean."

Even today, in Malta, a memorial monument dedicated to the souls of the Imperial Japanese Navy war dead who perished during these operations stands in one corner of the cemetery of the British Armed Forces, awaiting visitors.

Over the many years since that time, Japan and the United Kingdom have overcome bitter and painful memories that manifested themselves in the intervening years, channelling them into something better, bringing us back to the good relations we originally enjoyed.

An a priori partnership

So, what, then, is this original relationship between Japan and the U.K.?

It is a relationship in which together we uphold maritime security. Now, one hundred years hence, the location has changed to off the coast of Somalia or in the Gulf of Aden, but the U.K. and Japan have returned to being partners who work together to maintain the safety of navigation.

I believe that it is fitting for us to call the Japan-U.K. bilateral relationship a natural "a priori" partnership, insofar as it evolved organically, combining the two nations.

Both our nations live together with the blessings provided by the sea, and we make ocean-going commerce our lifeline.

The fact that our nations accord a respect to seamanship that is virtually unmatched anywhere is also because peace on the seas connects directly to our national interests.

The peace of the seas is something that someone has to defend, taking a sense of responsibility. Rules need to have a group of people who enforce them. Without such a group, the seas could revert to the days long ago when piracy was rampant.

It was during the era in which the Royal Navy solely shouldered that responsibility that Japan chose to be her ally. After the Second World War, the United States took on the position of controlling the waves of the sea all the world over. Japan has, together with the U.K., come to the present day pledging a firm alliance with the United States as it carries this responsibility out.

The rules governing the sea - that is to say, the Law of the Sea - has taken concrete shape in the form of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and in the present day it has instituted the norms and standards concerning the sea. It now constitutes an important part of international law. It has come to stipulate the actions of all nations in a manner that is effective for the most part.

As it is well known, the U.K. and Japan enjoy a relationship in which we continually exchange and enhance information on a mutual basis as the interpretation and operation of the Law of the Sea evolves and develops.

I believe we are able to do this because the U.K. and Japan have, over a great many years, shared such fundamentals sustaining the law of the sea as the respect for freedom of navigation and public goods, in a way that is both profound and unshakeable.

In light of this, then, it must be said that great things are expected of the Japan-U.K. partnership also in the Northern Sea Route that is about to newly open up.

In addition, there is also something that pulls us together regardless of various differences between us.

Our nations both have a monarch and a great deal of deep-rooted reverence for their households. This is the reason why we applaud Prince Andrew's very gracious visit.

If asked which they would choose, tradition or innovation, I believe the wise in the U.K. would reply that innovation is necessary if one is to safeguard good traditions. It seems that we Japanese too have continually told ourselves this very same thing since our modernization first commenced.

Japan and the U.K. are truly "a priori" partners.

Partners to what end?

But we are partners to what end? That is the next question asked of us.

I believe that the answer is already expressed with eloquence within our conduct towards each other.

The United Kingdom has been concentrating on modernizing and enhancing the capabilities of the Royal Navy despite the nation's severe financial situation.

The member nations of British Commonwealth can be found here and there all throughout an expanse stretching from the Indian Ocean over into the Pacific. And I am aware that you are now reconsidering the role to be played in this region.

Meanwhile, for quite some time, Japan has been continued to be engaged in efforts to safeguard freedom of navigation and maintain the safety of the seas from the Straits of Malacca to the Indian Ocean and the Middle East region. Just like the U.K., Japan has been giving very serious consideration to what we can do beyond that.

The East and the West have once again come to encounter each other on the sea in this way, and we are now joined through the mission we share in common, of maintaining the maritime order. I believe the answer can be found there naturally.

A landmark event in history and issues for Japan

Our two countries with such a history are poised to make a tremendous advance through our cooperative security relationship.

And that is exactly when Prince Andrew arrived. The First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy will also be coming to Japan. As the title of this symposium suggests, this year may come to be appraised by our progeny and by historians as a year in which breakthroughs were achieved.

For Japan, it has long been the case that we jointly develop defence-related components and equipment only with the United States. We recently made it possible for the first time to conduct such development with the U.K. Prime Minister Cameron and I expedited its completion so that we could conclude the formal agreement.

Our Self-Defense Forces are scheduled to participate in Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) beginning this December off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, conducting counter-piracy operations through a "zone defence." I expect that our partnership with the Royal Navy will thereby be enhanced well beyond what we now enjoy.

As for the Japanese side, since I have come to take the reins of government once again, I have been working to achieve a broad and mutual sharing of the security skyscape, seascape, and landscape with countries connected to us by the sea and countries that value the safety of outer space and cyberspace.

Of course, the United States remains our ever-unchanging primary cooperation partner. This is certainly also true for the United Kingdom. On that basis, I would like to state my eagerness for Japan and the United Kingdom to exchange knowledge and share experiences with each other and walk forward together, as partners who jointly accept responsibility for world peace and stability.

Humankind's public spaces are now becoming borderless. When the entirety of what is found there comes to be connected through a network, countries that respect the rule of law and share the same values will need to cooperate and share their wisdom with each other still more.

When such a time comes, I wish for us to continue to be a net contributor that voluntarily renders services for the sake of world peace and stability. I do not want my beloved country to be the "weak link" of the chain that sustains the peace and stability of the world.

For a long time Japan has been one of the world's biggest trading nations that has benefited from the free and peaceful international environment and from a peaceable maritime order. Accordingly, Japan has a commensurate responsibility to fulfil.

In light of that, last week, taking the opportunity of a series of meetings and speeches in New York, including my address to the United Nations General Assembly, I set forth a new self-portrait of Japan. "A proactive contributor to peace" is a banner that will both represent and guide the Japan of the future.

Within my administration, we are now assembling and examining collective wisdom regarding how best to enhance our basic foundations in ways appropriate for hoisting this banner of "proactively contributing to peace," including the establishment of a Council on National Security, the formulation of a national security strategy, the right to collective self-defence, and the relationship between collective security measures and our Constitution, among others.

Last week in New York, I used concrete examples to explain why we need to conduct such an examination at present. The text of that address has been distributed to you. I would be very pleased if you would take a look at it.

It is the speech I gave upon receiving an award bearing the name of Herman Kahn, the genius who would "think the unthinkable," from a basic theory on nuclear strategy to "Monte Carlo analysis," which is now indispensable in the financial world.

Encountering the U.K. as we walk down a single path

There is no path for us to travel down other than this. The late Margaret Thatcher expressed this idea using the initials "TINA" - "there is no alternative." This is an expression that I often borrow.

First of all, we will strengthen the economy. Nothing will get underway until we achieve that. I have said repeatedly that in order to do this, the power of women, or "womenomics," will be absolutely imperative.

The reason we will strengthen the economy is of course in order to leave to future generations a Japan that is secure and enjoys peace of mind. It is also because we strive to be a nation that is able to fulfil its duties to the world, in a manner appropriate for this banner of "proactively contributing to peace."

In this way, "TINA" is a straight road ahead that connects with everything, from the rebuilding of the domestic economy to issues involving contributing responsibly in the fields of diplomacy and security.

As we travel down that single path, Japan will encounter the U.K. in various settings and we will work together while each sharing our collective wisdom. This is inevitable because Japan and the U.K. are "a priori" partners.

Thank you very much for listening.

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