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**Japan's Global Role:
Changes and Continuity**
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Japan's global role: changes and continuity

The international and regional environment for Japan's international relations has considerably changed in the 1990s and provided Japan with incentives but also the necessity to adapt its foreign policy. The big question is: Are there indications that Japan is or will live up to these challenges? What do these indications mean for Japan's global role? Optimists will mention e.g. Japan's more assertive diplomacy, the first ever foreign deployment of Japanese military forces in the Indian Ocean, the surprise visit by Prime Minister Koizumi to Pyongyang, or the economic sanctions against China in 1994 for its resumption of nuclear tests. Pessimists will point at Japan's economic crisis which saps Japan's most important foreign policy tool and may lead to grave dangers for the international financial and economic system, the weakening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the main foreign policy actor, or the constrained involvement of Japan in the anti-terror campaign and in PKO.

Changes in Japan's global and regional environment

Let me briefly summarize the main changes in Japan's global and regional environment before coming to Japan's responses:

- The end of the East-West confrontation initially enhanced Japan's fear of abandonment by the US and a concern about the uncertainties of the new era: The US was considering a reduction of troops in East Asia while bilateral trade conflicts made Americans consider Japan as the replacement of the previous 'Soviet threat'. Japan also found itself isolated from the US and the European countries in its tough policy towards Russia which aimed at using Russia's weakness to realise a return of the so-called Northern territories, while all its partners were more interested in supporting Russia's rehabilitation. Although Japan later abandoned this policy and tried to use its economic power to entice Moscow and the island inhabitants with economic support, that policy also proved unsuccessful.
- The experience of the Gulf War in 1991 showed Japan to be insufficiently prepared for the first major crisis of the post Cold War era. As a result of strong US prompting, Japan provided \$13 billion for the allied war effort, but was not able to provide human or conceptual support. Although Tokyo had to raise taxes for this financial contribution, it did not get much thanks because of its reluctant and belated nature. This experience became a lesson which shaped Japan's reaction to the 11 September aftermath and formed a perception of the uncertainties of the post Cold War era.
- The demise of the Soviet Union and the apparent US victory in the war against Iraq strengthened US self confidence as the sole complete superpower. It set into motion a development towards greater unilateralism which has come to full fruition during the current Bush administration. As a result Japan has been confronted with difficult choices concerning the Japan-US military alliance, America's missile defence plans, policies towards North Korea, the anti-terror campaign, global environmental policies (i.e. the Kyoto Agreement), the Middle East, and China.
- The major regional changes have been the rise of China and the sharpening of tensions on the Korean peninsula. The main events leading to China no longer being perceived as a benign neighbour but as a challenge were the Tiananmen massacre, the territorial conflicts in the East China Sea, China's resumption of nuclear tests in 1994, its non-transparent military modernization, and the 1995-96 crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Non-traditional security concerns enhancing this negative perception include illegal Chinese immigration, Chinese crime in Japan, and China's

increasing political and economic power and regional leadership ambitions. In the case of North Korea changes relate to the suspected nuclear weapons programme at the beginning of the 1990s and North Korea's missile tests, notably the one over Japan on 31 August 1998, and the new nuclear crisis created by Pyongyang's admission of yet another nuclear weapons programme.

- Finally, the terrorist attacks on the US on the 11 September 2001 have had an influence on the global as well as regional environment of Japan. It has enhanced American tendencies towards unilateralist and military power based approaches - the former despite all the concurrent coalition building, focused attention and energies on fighting symptoms rather than causes of terrorism, narrowed the international agenda, and forged coalitions of incompatible partners or interests at considerable potential future costs. It is still unclear what the impact of terrorism and anti-terrorism will have on the Philippines, Indonesia and Central Asia which are of direct regional interest to Japan.

Japan's responses and role

These changes led to a much wider interest in and understanding of traditional as well as non-traditional security interests to which Japan has tried to respond in a variety of ways. The Japanese are now more aware that there is no Cold War 'Peace Dividend' despite the demise of the Soviet military threat and that the country is living in a rough neighbourhood where some leaders are still influenced by Communist dogma and old fashioned Realist thinking of international relations. These changes have also led to more international demands for burden sharing. China's rising economic and political competitiveness is increasingly understood as a serious challenge to Japan's security, economic preponderance and identity. In the course of this, Japan expanded its global and regional role, but it is still primarily relying on the US for its hard security interests and using its economic tools to shape directions in a non-military and more autonomous way.

The following will show that Japan's responses are still subject to the same restraints and limitations as before, i.e.

the Japan-US alliance framework, Japan's low awareness of the outside world, a tendency towards pacifism nurtured by distrust in its political system and aloofness from the world's problems, and its focus on economic interests. In the case of Japan's regional position, its response to changes is restrained by its inability to come to terms with its past in a more convincing way as well as by the growing economic and political rivalry with China. Japan's continued insistence on its territorial demand and limited economic interest in the Far East have left Japan-Russia relations in limbo although the previous military threat has disappeared. Japan's attachment to the Cold War scenario in relation to Russia deprives it of options in the regional environment to deal e.g. with China's rising challenge, regional integration and the Korean peninsula. The difficulties in responding faster and more thoroughly are compounded by its long-lasting economic crisis and the unfinished restructuring of the political landscape which absorbs an increasing amount of time and energy of a foreign policy community which is weak at the best of times. The economic crisis reduces Japan's most important foreign policy tool, i.e. ODA, creates the image of Japan being a 'spent power', and carries the serious risk of Japan setting off or at least reinforcing a major global economic crisis. It also enhances the reform-retarding power of traditional manufacturing industry and agriculture. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the main agent of Japan's foreign and security policy has been severely damaged by revelations of corruption, bad leadership selection, and poor handling of public interests. Sectorial business interests, particularly agricultural interests, prevent Japan from playing an active role in creating a more liberal trading regime in East Asia. There are several reasons for the failure of Koizumi's bold Pyongyang visit, but one is certainly the parochial nature of Japanese politics and the inaptitude of political and bureaucratic leaders which allowed the abductee issue to become so dominant over more long-term and fundamental interests.

What have been Japan's responses to these changes?

- In the security area Japan reinforced its military alliance with the US. After the Joint Hashimoto-Clinton Declaration in April 1996 and the new Defence Programme Outline of 1995, Japan passed in 1999 the new Defence Guidelines which spells out in greater length Japan-US military cooperation in case of conflict, and it joined the R&D phase of the US missile defence project. These moves have given greater prominence and visibility to Japan's defence and made Japan a more important military ally of the US with more regional defence tasks. At the same time, Japan's greater regional role, the ambiguity of this role's geographic applicability in relation to the Taiwan area and Japan's increasing part in America's missile defence have reinforced latent suspicions with China. Japan's call for more Chinese transparency in its military build-up has suffered in its credibility. Although Japan's lively debate on the ambiguity of the scope of Japan-US defence cooperation should show the outside that Japanese support for US military action in the Taiwan area is not a foregone conclusion, China's media and leaders for obvious reasons prefer to harp on old preconceived ideas.
- The Gulf War experience and the fear of abandonment by the US also galvanised the government to push through the so-called International Peace Cooperation law in June 1992, albeit after an earlier false start under Prime Minister Miyazawa. The Law allowed the SDF to participate in UN PKO under very strict conditions which were only somewhat relaxed in November 2001, making Japan's UN PKO activities less in contravention to UN PKO Operations Rules. The Gulf War experience very much shaped the Koizumi cabinet's reaction to the US calls for burden sharing in the 'war' against terrorism: After initial hesitation, the government as the only one in the global coalition against terrorism which passed in record time a specific law to what Yachi Shotaro called 'adjuicate in a better way the gap between "what Japan should do" (nasu beki koto) and "what it can do" (Nashi uru koto) [p. 11 Yachi Shotaro]. As a result Japan has sent around 5 ships to the Indian Ocean to supply American and British ships with fuel and the air force transported some American troops to Pakistan. While this has been a major departure from the past in terms of speed and scope, it looks less impressive when compared with Germany's contribution which would be the closest equivalent as the other global civilian power: More than 1,100 German soldiers are taking part in Operation Enduring Freedom, including 100 elite troops, who are helping U.S. special forces hunt down Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and 6 ships are patrolling the Horn of Africa. Even South Korea offered 450 medical and logistic troops. The Japanese deployment is outside of the combat zone at high sea which necessitates US and UK ships to make long trips for fuel supply. Moreover, the Japanese side debated and finally turned down an American requests for the deployment of an Aegis destroyer and the P3-C surveillance aircraft which would have provided more intelligence. Ruling through a coalition cabinet, Prime Minister Koizumi could not overcome the resistance of some coalition partners. Moreover, the discussions turned yet again around the debate of whether Japan, despite a 50-year old Mutual Security Treaty, is allowed to engage in collective defence or not. The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law also addresses only this particular case, which only highlights the absence of laws for military contingencies. At the same time, Japan has been very active and generous in its humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and pledged \$500 million for the rehabilitation of the devastated country.
- As the aid to Afghanistan shows, Japan is still trying to focus on economic tools in order to bridge the gap between the system of the Peace Constitution and the system of the Japanese-American alliance. ODA has become a prime policy tool to shape its regional environment, respond to burden sharing in a non-military way, make use of its greatest asset over which it has the highest degree of national control, and recycle its huge trade surplus. ODA has been useful for a wide range of goals ranging from its engagement policy towards China, winning international support

from the Third World for its bid for a Permanent UN Security Council seat to power balancing China by stabilising Central Asia and ASEAN. Throughout the 1990s, Japan was the top ODA donor. However, its economic and budgetary crisis has forced a steady decline of its ODA budget and in 2001 it came 2nd to the US. Another reason for the decline is greater domestic scrutiny as a result of waste and corruption. Still, the position as no. 2 means still a huge amount and the 3rd largest donor, Germany, is following far behind. Moreover, US aid includes also military aid and excludes Communist countries like China. I think that Japan could considerably offset the recent decrease of its ODA budget by rationalizing its ODA bureaucracy and enhancing efficiency. However, narrow institutional interests will prevent the Foreign Ministry from easily moving in such a direction since ODA makes up 2/3 of its budget. At the same time ODA is losing its importance for Tokyo's two most important recipients: Indonesia is increasingly disintegrating, and China is economically advancing quickly and can moreover receive aid from many other donors.

- Japan has become politically more active and self-confident, globally as well as regionally. Globally it e.g. supports the Palestine Authority, helps with the rehabilitation of the Balkans and Afghanistan, and shapes the international trade regime. No international effort can succeed without Japanese financial contribution. Japan will still remain for a long time to come the second largest contributor to the regular UN budget, far ahead of no. 3, and many special UN programmes are even more dependent on Japan's contribution. When there is a dispute among countries or within countries, Japan tries to organise a conference in Japan. Unfortunately, such enterprises are more often based on financial means rather than concurrent conceptual and personnel contributions. Although regionally Japan has been very active and successful in the creation of cooperation on trans-boundary pollution, it was seen as too fixated on US adhesion to the Kyoto Protocol rather than trying to advance the realization of the Protocol. Its quest for a permanent UN Security Council seat is a symbol of this self-confidence but also the craving for international recognition. Incidentally I don't think that Japan has a chance to get a permanent seat in view of the UN reform deadlock and Japan's perceived decline. But Tokyo can take comfort from being member of another exclusive club, i.e. the G-8. Regionally, it has used its political and economic power (ODA, network economy) to promote the cohesion of ASEAN, foster security dialogues at various levels, and power balance China. Tokyo also is now more willing to express its divergent interests towards China. The changed domestic climate towards greater awareness of security issues also is expressed in the current parliamentary investigation of constitutional revision.

The rising self-confidence and nationalism has not helped to solve another traditional restraint on Japan's regional role, i.e. the legacy of Japan's past aggression. The focus on the issue of the abductees has conveniently overshadowed Japan's colonial past on the Korean peninsula. Many Japanese don't realize the contradiction between Japan insisting so much on multiple apologies for the sinking of the 'Ehime Maru' ship by an American submarine and the North Korean abductions, but refusing to do so in a more convincing way when it comes to their own past. Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni shrine in 2001 and again this year as well as last year's textbook incident considerably hurt the reconciliation process between Japan and its two immediate neighbours. True, the Japan-Korean relationship has still improved, but how much more could have been done with the most pro-Japanese Korean president ever in power instead of having to spend so much diplomatic energy on undoing the damage? In the case of Japanese-Chinese relations, opportunities provided by the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Japanese-Chinese diplomatic relations were wasted and the prime minister could not even undertake his due visit.

While the crisis on the Korean peninsula is currently the most acute problem, it is the future relationship with China which will test most Japan's traditional paradigm of acting between the confines of the abandonment-entrapment pendulum. The strengthening of the Japan-US alliance to deal with China's rise

and North Korea's more short term challenges may deal with its concern of abandonment by the US, but will also increasingly set off dynamics and create dilemmas which may be difficult to handle for Japan. There are differences between Japan and the US on how to juggle the delicate balance of the contradictory elements of engagement policy which are economic and political enticement, hedged by political and military power balancing. The US can sustain a much harsher China policy than Japan because of the power differentials involved. The current US administration takes a harder line towards China because of its comfortable position as the world's only superpower, its global outlook (e.g. on nuclear non-proliferation), and the domestically strongly supported peaceful reunification between the PRC and Taiwan. US China policy is subject to great fluctuations but also restrained by China's economic and political importance. In view of Japan's increasingly equal and interdependent economic relationship with China and Beijing becoming a more assertive geographic neighbour, another Taiwan Strait crisis could severely challenge the Japan-US military relationship. Other challenges to the alliance could be Japan's participation in missile defence, US policy towards North Korea or a major accident involving US troops in Okinawa. The current North Korean crisis will have a considerable impact on Japan's China policy because it will reinforce those who argue for more Japanese defence efforts, alone as well as together with the US, including participation in missile defence. While many proponents of more defence efforts will say North Korea, they may have more China as the long-range challenge in mind. But even without such crises, Japan will have to work much harder at coping with China's increasing political and economic competitiveness while its own economic situation is worsening and political rigidities at home make it difficult to exert political and economic leadership in the region.

Conclusions

Japan's foreign and security policy has certainly become more active and assertive. Many developments would have been considered unthinkable 10 years ago. The country's deep economic crisis should not lead us to a premature writing off although it sometimes seems now that Japan is becoming more a liability to the global financial and economic system than a solution to its problems as in the past, even as recently as in 1997. Japan's leaders should not underestimate the power of negative perceptions running far ahead of reality in a global media system where negative stories sell better than complex stories. Similarly worrisome is declining foreign interest in Japan which is not in the country's interest as it reduces foreign understanding of Japan and directly benefits Japan's main competitor, China. This decline is e.g. illustrated by the circumstance that the number of foreign journalists at FCC declined from 400 to now 330. The problem with Japan's post Cold War era policies is that they are still too much attached to the paradigm of the Cold War era, too much hampered by the same old restraints to which are now added the economic decline, and too much confined to the traditional paradigm of acting between the confines of the abandonment-entrapment pendulum of Japan-US relations. This creates potentially huge problems for the future as we have seen in the Japan-US-China triangular relationship. All this prevents Japan from playing the global and regional role it should and could play for its own benefits and for the benefit of the whole world.

In the end what counts is not whether optimist observers stress the great strides Japan has made within the last ten years or appreciate these changes considering its parochial foreign policy system, nor whether pessimist observers consider these changes and adaptations as sufficient in view of what they think the scale of the challenges is or as not enough in view of what other countries like Germany have done. We will only know later whether Japan's policies have been commensurate with the challenges, or whether Japan's leaders even had a chance to take adequate action. Rather, in the meantime we should look at the options which Japan's leaders are creating or keeping open in order to deal with likely problems in order to protect a maximum of Japan's autonomy, interests and identity. The above has shown that Japan is still more reactive than creative, and against the fast changing international and regional landscape this amounts to a gradual loss of options. But Japan still has many under-utilised and unexplored human

resources which good leadership could mobilise, including women and the growing civic sector. More than ever it is true that foreign policy has to start with domestic policies!

Mr Simon Smith

My contribution is to add some observations from the perspective of one who has worked with Japanese foreign policy makers and to share some of the conclusions I have reached. I served in the British Embassy in Tokyo from 1989 to 1992 and since July this year I have been head of the Foreign Office's North–East Asia and Pacific Department. Returning to Anglo–Japanese affairs after a gap of ten years — during which I often had close consultation with Japanese colleagues in a variety of policy areas — offers a useful basis from which to judge what has changed in that period. A lot has changed and overall the changes have been positive. I propose to illustrate that judgement by looking at developments in three policy areas: overseas development assistance, global environmental issues, and defence and security.

It is undeniable that Japanese decision-makers right across the spectrum of public life are willing to challenge many assumptions with which Japan had been comfortable right up to the end of the Cold War, but that is not the whole story. We should see things not only through Japanese eyes but through the lessons we have learnt about how to work successfully with Japan.

Where security issues are concerned, Japan's response to the Gulf War engendered a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction all round. As a Second Secretary in Tokyo, I played a part in a painstaking and wide-ranging lobbying campaign, doing the rounds of Japanese decision-makers and attempting to convince them of the case for a clear and substantial Japanese commitment to the cause of liberating Kuwait. The Japanese were constitutionally and legally restrained from making a significant military contribution and hesitant when confronted with the suggestion that, as if to compensate for the lack of a military contribution, a hefty financial contribution was expected. It was a bad experience for both sides, with many Japanese feeling that their country's huge financial contribution to the war had been received without other recognition or thanks.

Japan's contribution to peace-keeping

I contrast that experience with what has developed since. Japan has participated in peace-keeping operations in, among other places, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, and El Salvador. It has sent transport units to UN Disengagement Observer Forces on the Golan Heights. It has been involved in humanitarian operations in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and elsewhere. In 2002, we have seen further development of the role of the Japanese Self-Defence Force overseas with the Maritime Force assisting British and American ships in the Indian Ocean, and a 680-strong engineering brigade deployed to the UN peace-keeping operation in East Timor. Japan has learnt that a commitment to international security objectives can be broader and more satisfactory than simply signing big cheques.

We work better with Japan when we have made the effort to construct a genuine coalition of interests on the basis of a thorough examination of what those interests are. We do more purposeful and structured sharing of experiences than we did ten years ago. This has paid off in genuine partnerships in major initiatives such as the political and economic restoration of Afghanistan and the Balkans. We recognise that the very process of building a partnership helps us to understand each other's strengths and capacities better. That is the rationale behind the practical action programme which was agreed in July 2002 between the British Foreign Secretary and the Japanese Foreign Minister, and which ranged from Africa to the Southern Pacific region.

Overseas development assistance

We have perhaps learnt that lesson more slowly in the field of overseas development assistance. At the Embassy in Tokyo, I was responsible for seeking opportunities to collaborate with Japanese institutions and companies on ODA projects in third countries. It was not a job in which to expect quick results but even in the early 1990s there were some very good outcomes. The Crown Agents contributed expertise in procurement and help in ensuring the effective delivery of Japanese ODA programmes. It was, however, always hard work to make our procedures fit together, and the number of proposals for joint aid projects far outnumbered those brought to fruition.

Again, this is an area in which both sides learnt lessons. We know that we need to do hard work on basic questions about the philosophy, fundamentals, and objectives of overseas development assistance before we can sow the seeds of real practical co-operation. Without that groundwork, it will always be likely that differences in practice and procedure will get in the way. Genuinely shared interests provide a real incentive to change practice and procedures in order to make things happen. In the early 1990s, I sometimes felt, when talking to Japanese colleagues about Africa, that the response was close to the line that these were far away countries of which we know little. In contrast, during the past eighteen months we have seen joint UK–Japan lesson-learning missions on the health sector in Ghana and Tanzania, and a joint mission to Sierra Leone looking at the scope for co-operation in conflict prevention.

Progress on environmental issues

I was our embassy's reporter on environmental policy in Japan in the two years which preceded the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. At that time, there was a perception in London that Japan was a negative force in global environmental issues. I had a tough time making British decision-makers understand that there was an important process taking place in Japan, a growing recognition that the global environment was an area where Japan could develop a genuine leadership role. We have seen that role sustained and developed with a new assertiveness and confidence on the part of Japan, which pushed ahead with the Kyoto protocol in the absence of commitment from the United States.

We are now operating in a world in which the interdependencies of foreign policies are clearly appreciated on all sides. We face another set of issues, including another heavy focus on Iraq, which again raise serious questions for regional and international security, and about the effectiveness of the mechanisms we have developed to keep proliferation in check. Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to North Korea was the result of a careful balancing of risks and opportunities for the Japanese. The Japanese used to be regarded as risk-averse in foreign policy so we should recognise that initiative as something new and very welcome. It is going to be difficult for the Japanese government to sustain a convincing policy on North Korea in the face of some trenchant criticism and critical scrutiny among public opinion. Assertiveness in Japanese foreign policy will continue to be tied up to a large extent with what degree of public support there is for it.

Neither Professor Drifte nor I have talked much about the Japanese economy, partly in obedience to the title of this series of seminars, but to talk about Japan's global role without including its global economic role is to miss something. There is a connection. There remains a degree of unassertiveness and lack of confidence in getting to grips with some of the crucial economic reform issues that lie on the Japanese government's agenda and there is a risk that this will spread across into foreign policy. Even so, my experience had suggested that the trend is overwhelmingly in a positive direction which I hope will be sustained.

Discussion

Both speakers had dealt with Japan in relation to its Asian neighbours and to the United States but not, a speaker from the floor said, in relation to Europe and in particular to the arguably adverse effects on trade and industry of Britain not adopting the euro. Simon Smith thought that the euro itself was less important than the exchange rate and the extent of Britain's commitment to the European Union. For Reinhard Drifte the main factors determining Japanese investment policy were, in addition to the exchange rate, the relatively low labour costs in Eastern Europe and the new market there. He added that UK–Japan co-operation in all areas, not just economic ones, took place at EU level.

One participant in the discussion suggested a comparison between the EU and South–East Asian groupings of countries. Professor Drifte pointed out that conditions in the two regions were very different, but he thought that Japan could learn from the European unification process and he believed Japan could do more to encourage Asian nations to work together. He would, for instance, like to see it more active in promoting a liberal trade regime in the Asia–Pacific area.

Mr Smith said that the challenges facing Japan were different and more diverse than those tackled by the constructors of the EU and that it was unrealistic to expect the European process to be replicated in Asia. He was anxious that stress on regional matters should not diminish Japan's global role and he believed that Europe, Britain in particular, could learn lessons from Japan. 'There's a whole range of issues on which we can use our very close relationship with Japanese policy-makers to ensure that our understanding and our approach to issues in the Asian region are improved.'

The possibility of Japan over-concentrating on Asian affairs prompted another questioner to ask about the threat posed by Iraq. Was Iraq too far away for the Japanese to worry about? Mr Smith's response was a firm negative. Japan, he said, was fully engaged in the issue of Iraq, though it had a slightly different angle from that taken by Britain and the United States. Professor Drifte agreed that Japan was very concerned about Iraq, and fully aware of the implications for the whole of the Middle East and for the rest of the world.

Turning to another area of concern, both speakers agreed that Japan had an important role on the Indian subcontinent where it shares Britain's concerns and, Mr Smith said, it recognises that Britain's significant Asian population makes the subcontinent a matter of domestic interest in the UK. Dialogue between Japan and India has become much closer, said Professor Drifte, in spite of the temporary interruption when India exploded a nuclear device. Relations with Pakistan, on the other hand, were and would remain strained. Another important factor in Japan's relationship with India was balancing power between India and China.

Another speaker from the floor, referring to Japan's slowness to change, asked what would speed the process. Would it be changes in the country's political system or events in the outside world? Simon Smith believed that only when 'a fundamental reordering of the political landscape in Japan' had been achieved would there be real economic reforms. Reinhard Drifte said that outside events could make Japan change very fast; the Gulf War was an example. His experience was that significant reform came only after a crisis. He would prefer to see gradual reform, provided it was thorough.

Change can be achieved without crisis, according to another contributor. She wanted to see the Japanese government empowering organisations, particularly civic organisations, to be agents for change. She also believed that the British government should pay more heed to the things that the Japanese did well and should recognise that they could do creative things in a way that was different from that of the West. Mr Smith agreed, laying particular emphasis on the contribution that Japanese ODA had made to the

successful development of many economies in South–East Asia. ‘We should remind ourselves that we don’t have all the answers, we’re not right on everything.’

Speakers

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Simon Smith is Head of North East Asia & Pacific Department, Foreign & Commonwealth Office. He graduated from Wadham College, Oxford University, entered Department of Employment in 1981, and then joined the FCO in 1986. Mr Smith was at the British Embassy in Tokyo from 1989 to 1992 and in Moscow from 1998 to 2002, and was also Head of Nuclear Policy Section and Policy Planning Staff.