

Speech at the Portsmouth Naval Reception

by H.E. Keiichi Hayashi,

Ambassador of Japan to the Court of St James's,

23 July 2013

Lord Lieutenant, Lord Mayor, Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome and thank you for joining us at this reception on board JS Kashima, co-hosted by Rear Admiral Kitagawa and myself.

Let me also express my warmest welcome to the officers and crew of the Japanese Training Squadron as well as the 180 newly-commissioned officers from Japan, who are on a five-month-long ocean training cruise, traversing the vast Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans.

May I also join the British people and many millions in Japan in extending a big welcome to the Baby Prince, who was just born yesterday to TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

If I may reminisce a little. Back in July 1977, I was a sort of midshipman after completing the two-year Foreign Service's language training and received my first assignment as a political officer with the honourable rank of Third Secretary in our Embassy in Singapore. One of the first jobs I was given a few months later was to coordinate the visit of the Japanese Training Squadron to Singapore. Because there was no Defence Attaché in Singapore at that time, I was suddenly elevated to be an officer in charge.

It was not an easy job: liaising with the squadron, the Port of Singapore Authority and a Japanese shipping agent as well as organising a big reception exactly like this one on board JS Katori, this vessel's predecessor. As Katori was anchored offshore at Singapore, there had to

be a big operation for transporting the guests by launches; and I tend to easily get sea-sick!

However, I still have fond memories from my encounters with the ships and crews representing my country. It was not just because we had a splendid sing-song party with the commander and his staff at the end of the successful reception. It was more because I could recognise the very important role the Japanese Training Squadron played as a goodwill ambassador for Japan, despite the then still-lingering bitter war memories in the country they were visiting. It still plays the same role, hopefully in this voyage, too.

Admiral, crew members and midshipmen, you have come to Portsmouth on a very special occasion. This year represents two remarkable landmarks in the history of relations between Japan and the United Kingdom. It marks the 400th anniversary of the start of bilateral trade relations, way back in 1613. Four centuries ago last month, the merchant ship *Clove*, the first English ship ever to reach Japan, arrived in Nagasaki at the end of a voyage of over two years.

It is also the 150th anniversary of the arrival in the UK of the Choshu Five, five daring young men from Choshu, the present-day Yamaguchi, who, risking their lives, sailed from Japan for five months in 1863 to reach the shores of the UK to study this country's advanced technology for the pressing mission of Japan's modernisation.

Among those five young men, Hirobumi Ito became Japan's first prime minister and Kaoru Inoue was appointed as our first foreign minister. I am honoured to

serve as the ambassador on this occasion as I happen to hail from Yamaguchi. And Captain Kitagawa, my Defence Attaché, is also from Yamaguchi. So too is the current Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Shinzo Abe. I wonder if this is a little more than a coincidence!

Ladies and gentlemen, let me now briefly turn to our naval relations. When Japan chose to take its place among the modern nations through the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it made the decision to adopt the mantle of “Enrich the Nation and Strengthen the Country”. In that regard, we cannot forget that the Royal Navy was chosen to be the role model for the newly-born Imperial Japanese Navy. Our Navy learned from the Royal Navy its spirit and ethos as well as its technology.

In the 19th century, during our technological infancy, we purchased most of our major naval ships from the United Kingdom. Among them, the Battleship Mikasa, now the memorial ship Mikasa in Yokosuka, is considered to be the Japanese version of HMS Victory here in Portsmouth.

Mikasa was built by Vickers, now part of BAE systems, in 1877 and she made a great contribution in the Battle of Tsushima Strait in 1905, our version of your Battle of Trafalgar.

Nor can we forget the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was in effect from 1902 to 1923. With next year marking the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I, I would like to remind you that Japan participated in that conflict as one of the UK’s allies. The Imperial Japanese Navy made an especially great contribution in support of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean Sea.

In fact in 1921 the then-Crown Prince Hirohito laid a wreath on the graves of about seventy Japanese Naval officers and sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice during these operations when His Imperial Highness made a port call at Malta with a pair of battleships named none other than Katori and Kashima.

By mentioning the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, I am not seeking merely to dwell on past glories. Surely we had the tragedy of another war which we fought against each other and have always to squarely face. However, we are now nurturing a new partnership in the defence and security areas, which perhaps we can call a new type of alliance.

On 4th July, Foreign Minister Hague and I signed two agreements to which most of you tonight will relate. They were the Information Security Agreement and the Framework Agreement on Joint R&D and Co-Production.

Meanwhile, our navies have been co-operating on counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2009, and in this context the Training Squadron will visit Djibouti later on their tour. Moreover, in late autumn The First Sea Lord Admiral Zambellas will visit Japan aboard HMS Daring, the newest Type 45 Destroyer.

All of these developments represent our common commitment to further enhancing our bilateral defence and security cooperation.

Our two countries have much in common other than being an island nation neighbouring a continent: the very

popular Royal and Imperial families, for one. More fundamentally we share core values such as democracy under the rule of law and a free-market economy. More practically, a common ally, the United States.

Hence our two Governments cooperate closely on virtually every major global issue, and our commercial links through investment and trade are thriving while interactions at the grass-roots level are vibrant. We Japanese can still learn a lot from the UK, including its openness to the world and its doggedness in defending its core principles.

Let me thus reaffirm my strong confidence in the continued and ever-flourishing mutually beneficial relationship between our two countries and peoples.

I hope that you young officers and crew members from Japan will take back not just wonderful memories of your brief stay in the United Kingdom but something more from this visit.

May I conclude by inviting all the guests to enjoy the famous Japanese Naval famous hospitality. Thank you.