



Cambridge – Hitotsubashi Joint Seminar 2019-20

Summary

On 14 February 2020, FAMES' Japanese Studies Section had the pleasure to host the Cambridge-Hitotsubashi joint seminar, welcoming a student delegation from Hitotsubashi University. The Cambridge-Hitotsubashi event, which reached its 6th edition this year, inaugurated a new format whereby students on both sides were engaged in the ambitious task of producing a policy brief aimed at analyzing pressing questions affecting UK-Japan relations: the rise of great power competition (with a particular focus on China and Russia); the (in)compatibility of new regional frameworks of cooperation in Asia such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific; the scope for enhanced security cooperation between London and Tokyo; and – last but not least – the issue of how to deal with North Korea as a nuclear state.

Over the months preceding the joint seminar, Cambridge and Hitotsubashi students worked in thematic subgroups to produce two 40-pages long reports in which they not only outlined their analysis of these issues, but also advanced a series of policy recommendations to the British and Japanese government on how to best address them.

The Cambridge report was compiled by the undergraduate and graduate students (from both the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the History Faculty) attending the course 'The Cold War and its Aftermath in East Asia', taught by Dr John Nilsson-Wright during the academic year 2019-2020

(and coordinated by FAMES doctoral student Giulia Garbagni).

The Hitotsubashi report was written by Hitotsubashi University undergraduate and graduate students who took International Relations seminar (i.e., Japan and International Relations, Special Issues in Japan's Foreign Policy, and Japan's Foreign Policy Making) supervised by Professor Nobumasa Akiyama in 2019 Fall and coordinated by PhD candidate Yuki Miyoda, of Hitotsubashi's Graduate School of Law. Nearly half of the students who took this course visited the UK and participated to the joint seminar with Cambridge students, presenting a short summary of their paper at the joint seminar of February 2020.

After a process of exchange and adjustment to the feedback given to each other's report, in the joint seminar the two teams gave a final overview of their policy briefs. In their 30 minutes presentation, the students proposed bold and thought-provoking arguments: some called for enhanced security cooperation between the UK and Japan, others argued in favour of relaxing the current sanctions regime on North Korea, and others yet presented historical evidence to showcase the potential of the UK-Japan partnership.

In the second part of the seminar, the students split into smaller groups and discussed their approaches to each question, trying to identify ways to harmonize the Cambridge and Hitotsubashi positions – which, being based on the different standpoints of the UK and Japan, inevitably diverged at times. As the inaugural event of the initiative, this year we have not sought to fully harmonize the findings of the Cambridge and Hitotsubashi groups. Therefore, rather than producing a joint brief, we want to highlight here the impressive work carried out by the students on both sides – which resulted in two separate, yet highly complementary, reports.

The Cambridge-Hitotsubashi reports sought to provide recommendations to the Japanese and British governments arguing that Japan and the UK should enhance their cooperation on the basis of the following assumptions:

- Brexit – despite being a highly divisive issue in British domestic politics – can potentially provide an ideal opportunity for a new 'fresh start' in the UK's foreign relations, making it a particularly appropriate time for Japan

and the UK to redefine their relationship; although Brexit may pose challenges to the Japanese business community, which has enjoyed the UK as a gateway to the European market, it also opens a window of opportunity for Japan to strengthen strategic engagement by the UK to the Indo-Pacific region;

- Issues with global impact, such as climate change and terrorism, as well as cybersecurity threats, require solutions based on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, intelligence sharing and technological exchange, and the UK and Japan could further enhance coordination to lead global initiatives to cope with these challenges;
- Both Japan and the UK can play a new ‘stabilizing’ role vis à vis the growing global instability produced by the US retreat from globalism (which can be expected assuming Trump’s reelection in 2020), the North Korean nuclear threat and the centrifugal forces that might appear throughout China’s periphery (Hong Kong, Taiwan and Xinjiang) in future years; in this context, London and Tokyo can take a more active role beyond their traditional support to US-led security frameworks.

After a day of discussion and exchange of ideas, both Cambridge and Hitotsubashi students reached the conclusion that the UK and Japan share democratic values and a vision of a liberal international order, which gives them ample room for coordinating their response to the various challenges facing the current international order. The recommendations for policy coordination proposed by students at the University of Cambridge and Hitotsubashi University in this report show that a deeper strategic partnership between the UK and Japan is of great value not only to their own national interests, but also to the liberal international community, serving as an international public good. The Cambridge-Hitotsubashi Joint Seminar group looks forward to further expanding and deepening this strategic partnership between the two countries, which share common values and visions for the liberal international order.