In response to the Committee’s questions no.7 and no.8, I believe it is useful for the UK Government to be informed on the Arctic policy of Japan, one of the Asian states that became a new Permanent Observer of the Arctic Council. You will find my recent article on Japan’s interests in the Arctic, titled “Future-Proofing Japan’s Interests in the Arctic: Scientific Collaboration and a Search for Balance” at: http://nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=765

The main points presented in the article are:

1. Japan is no newcomer to the Arctic. This is backed by its long history of engagement in the Polar Region, both Arctic and Antarctic. The country’s primary aim of engagement in the Arctic is to understand and protect the natural environment. However, a strong, influential shipping industry lobbies the government to ensure that scientific knowledge is used to bring economic benefit to the Japanese economy, for instance through the use and development of the Northern Sea Route (NSR).

2. Japan views the Arctic Council as an appropriate forum to participate in discussions on Arctic governance. It did not see the need to discuss security problems, which are not dealt with at the Arctic Council, at the time of application. However, with the changing geopolitical/security situation, particularly with Russia, Japan may begin to perceive the limitations of the Arctic Council.

3. Japan sees scientific research as what it does best as a technologically advanced industrial nation and this is what the Arctic Council expects it to do. Japan also seeks opportunities/partners for cooperation to better contribute to Arctic governance and Arctic science.

4. In choosing an Arctic partner, Japan was forced to choose between Russia and the United States. Until the Ukraine crisis it appeared that Japan leaned more toward Russia than the US for political and economic reasons. The Ukraine crisis and the subsequent hardening of attitude of Russia have made Japan’s cooperation in business development in the Russian Arctic difficult.

Drawing from this, the points that are of relevance for the United Kingdom are:

1. It would be useful for the UK Government to study the possible options of effectively using science and technology as a diplomatic tool to gain more influence in the existing and (possibly) future Arctic governance structures. Japan views science as the key for it to gain more presence in Antarctic governance and would like to replicate this experience in the Arctic to a certain degree.

2. In doing so, furthering scientific cooperation with Japan and its research institutes formally and informally would be of great advantage. Japan is a democratic, well-established industrial nation, has a long, established history of Polar research, and is a like-minded country of the United Kingdom, above all respecting the rule of law. China has established a China-Nordic Arctic Research Center in Shanghai with various Nordic Arctic stakeholders, however so far its political merit has exceeded its scientific research results. The UK could
consider setting up a similar forum with countries such as Japan to engage political, business and scientific communities on the Arctic, or play a more active role in existing forums such as IASC with this in mind. Japan already has made bilateral agreements with Canada and Germany to prioritize Arctic research, and the United Kingdom might consider something similar.

3. Japan respects the rule of law and signalling this to the international community is a diplomatic objective of Japan as an island, maritime nation with more than a few territorial disputes. Japan understands the significance of securing Japanese personnel at relevant international organisations, such as the International Maritime Organisation and International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. In this regard, some aspects of Japan are very similar to those of the United Kingdom. This would help create a sense of solidarity between the two countries when discussing possible areas of furthering cooperation.

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