

Vol.18 Dr Hugo Dobson (University of Sheffield)

written in March 2020

**Dr Hugo Dobson**

Professor of Japan's International Relations, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield

Biography

- 2009 – present Professor of Japan's International Relations, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield
- 2005 – 2009 Senior Lecturer in Japan's International Relations, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield
- 2001 – 2005 Lecturer in Japan's International Relations, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield
- 1999 – 2001 JSPS Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Tokyo
- 1995 – 1998 PhD in Japanese Studies and International Relations, School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield
- 1993 – 1995 Daiwa Scholar
- 1992 – 1993 MA in Modern International Studies, University of Leeds
- 1989 – 1992 BA in International History and Politics, University of Leeds

Difficult second album syndrome may not be a real medical condition but it is something that preys on the minds of musicians and threatens to sap their creative juices. In the same way that they may struggle to follow up on the success of their first album, one of the greatest challenges for a young academic is identifying a new research topic and then making the transition from the doctoral work that has dominated your life so far.

I submitted and defended my PhD towards the end of the 1990s, which was a decade in which the Japanese Self-Defence Forces went through a momentous change by participating in United Nations-sponsored Peacekeeping Operations. This meant that despite its Peace Constitution, Japanese personnel were dispatched overseas for the first time in the postwar period to contribute to the international society's efforts to restore peace in countries like Cambodia and East Timor. These developments were what piqued my original interest in Japan's role in the world and I certainly enjoyed my time as a doctoral student, dividing my time between the Universities of Sheffield and Tokyo. However, I never considered life after the PhD and what I would do next.

Then in the Summer of 2000, the Group of 8 (G8) summit took place in Okinawa. To be honest, I had never really paid much attention to these summits of world leaders, presuming that they were largely talking shops that had little impact either on solving global challenges or people's day-to-day lives. The G8 summit in Okinawa demonstrated that this was not true. On the one hand, with Japanese leadership, it resulted in the establishment of the Global Fund for fighting some of the world's deadliest infectious diseases that has save millions of lives since. On the other hand,

the summit clearly impacted on the lives of people living in Okinawa, either as an opportunity to highlight to the world through protests the burden it shoulders by hosting an overwhelming number of US bases, or as a chance to exploit the attention that the world placed on Okinawa for three days for economic and reputational benefits.

Eight years later in 2008, I was able to attend my first summit as an accredited journalist when Japan hosted the G8 again in Toyako, Hokkaido. Since then, I have followed the development of these summits from the creation of a Group of 20 (G20) leaders' summit in response to the Global Financial Crisis through to the suspension of Russia's membership of the G8 in 2014 as a result of its annexation of Crimea and its reconfiguration as the Group of 7 (G7).



Being interviewed on Canadian TV at the end of the 2018 G7 Summit in Quebec, June 2018.

Voice! from Alumni member

More recently I have participated in two official stakeholder groups – the Think 7 and Think 20, which are described as the ‘ideas bank’ of the G7 and G20 respectively and seek to make policy recommendations that are reflected in the final declaration issued by the leaders at the end of every summit.

As should be the case, my research began to inform my teaching. Working closely with colleagues from across the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield, we established the Global Leadership Initiative in 2015. This is a unique learning and teaching opportunity that allows students to work as accredited policy analysts at global summits for the internationally reputable Global Policy Journal. As a result, teams of staff and students have attended a number of summits, including the 2016 Ise Shima Summit of the G7 and the 2019 Osaka Summit of the G20. These teams have had the chance to attend press conferences given by the world’s leaders, engage with journalists also working in the media centre and produce a number of blogs and policy briefs covering events as they unfold in real-time.

This is the value of the support that the JSPS provides to early career researchers – the time and space to think about new directions in your research and in the process hit on a topic that may well last long beyond that difficult second album.



Working with student analysts for Global Policy Journal in the International Media Centre at the G20 summit in Osaka, June 2019.

JSPS Alumni Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (RoI)

Please join the JSPS Alumni Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (RoI)!

As a former JSPS Fellow, we would like to ask you to join the JSPS Alumni Association of the UK and the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Our Alumni Association was established in 2003 and carries out a number of activities throughout the UK and RoI with numerous benefits for members. One of them is “The JSPS London Symposium and Seminar Scheme.” The aim of this scheme is to provide support for members holding a symposium or seminar and to create high quality collaboration in cutting edge/ internationally competitive areas at institutional or departmental level between research institutions in the UK or RoI and Japan. Under this scheme, JSPS London will partially support the following matters*:

*The detailed support is subject to change.

1 Costs for inviting symposium/ seminar speakers from Japan

2 Costs for hiring a venue, printing materials, advertising and so on*

3 Strategic support to help advertise and organise the event.

The application details of this scheme will automatically be e mailed to registered Alumni members during our next call. For further information please contact JSPS London by email at enquire@jspm.org. Again, this is exclusively open to the JSPS Alumni members. So why not join us today?

JSPS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
UK & IRELAND

Joining us

Simply register your membership here
https://www.jspm.org/alumni_about/
Once registered you will receive an ID number and password to access the Alumni Association web pages and can start networking.