

# EU-Japan cooperation on global and regional security - a litmus test for the EU's role as a global player?



# IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

## EU-Japan cooperation on global and regional security - a litmus test for the EU's role as a global player?

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### ABSTRACT

Within their partnership, the EU and Japan recognise each other as being essentially civilian (or 'soft') powers that share the same values and act in the international arena solely with diplomatic means. However, the evolution of the threats they face and the unpredictability now shown by their strategic ally, the US, have led both the EU and Japan to reconsider the option of 'soft power-only' for ensuring their security. They have both begun the — albeit long —process of seeking greater strategic autonomy. The EU's Global Strategy adopted in 2016 aims clearly to 'develop a more politically rounded approach to Asia, seeking to make greater practical contributions to Asian security'.

Like the EU, Japan has identified 'a multipolar age' in which the rules-based international order that has allowed it to prosper is increasingly threatened. In line with its security-related reforms, Japan has decided to 'take greater responsibilities and roles than before in order to maintain the existing international order' and resolve a number of global issues. The EU and Japan may increase their cooperation at the global and strategic level and in tackling these challenges at the regional or local level. The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the EU and Japan will provide opportunities for such cooperation, which should also be open to others. This is an opportunity for the EU to demonstrate that it is a consistent and reliable partner, and a true 'global player'. The Council Conclusions of 28 May 2018 on 'Enhanced security cooperation in and with Asia' are a step in this direction but need to be translated into action.

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## 1 Japan and the development of the security concept

Though the unpredictability of US President Trump may be a source of concern for Tokyo, Japan's reliance on the **US for guarantees of its security** since the Second World War (under the Yoshida Doctrine<sup>1</sup>) leave it with little choice other than to support the US administration. However, the challenges presented by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (**DPRK**) nuclear and ballistic missiles tests since 2006, along with **China's** maritime ambitions and territorial claims, have led Tokyo to enhance its capacity to react.

The Japanese government launched a series of **reforms** in 2015 under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 'three arrows for security'<sup>2</sup>: 1) bolstering defence capabilities, 2) revamping the alliance with the United States; and 3) cooperating with other democracies in the region and beyond. However, these were not the first attempts by Tokyo to adapt to a more politically hostile environment. As early as 2010 the Japanese government approved a 'mid-term defence programme' and 'new directives' to **reinforce cooperation** with Washington (under the 2011 agreement on sharing the cost of stationing US troops). Since 2013, the **defence budget** has been increased to 1 % of Japan's GDP, with provisions for six new submarines equipped with improved sensor technology. A separate coastguard budget has also been increased to allow Japan to expand its patrol fleet for better surveillance of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. However, for historical and political reasons linked to the Second World War, the country cannot yet launch the construction of more strategic assets such as aircraft carriers or nuclear-propelled submarines (despite Tokyo's proficiency in the technology for such assets)<sup>3</sup>.

Most importantly, in 2015 after tense debates, a Cabinet decision 'reinterpreted' the 'pacifist' Article 9 of the Constitution to allow **collective self-defence** to be exercised on three conditions: 1) when Japan's survival is threatened; 2) as a last resort; 3) as long as the use of force is limited to the minimum needed. The 2016 **security legislation** derived from this interpretation allows the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) to be deployed more quickly in UN-led peace-keeping operations (while still under strict conditions); military assets to be defended, including US warships and 'a foreign country in a close relationship with Japan'; and weapons to be used when rescuing Japanese citizens held hostage overseas, in accordance with UN standards.

The reforms also included the establishment of a US-style National Security Council (NSC) and Secretariat, and the adoption of a **National Security Strategy** (NSS) to give the Ministry of Defence more power over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will ultimately allow Japan to strengthen its geopolitical position and play a more **proactive role** in regional security, thus countering President Trump's criticism of US allies in this respect.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is planning a **revision** of Japan's pacifist constitution by 2020. It has been untouched since its inception seven decades ago. The revision would explicitly define the role of the SDF in the face of the 'deteriorating security situation'. It would apparently follow a '**minimalist**' approach and consist of adding one sentence to Article 9 mentioning (and legitimizing) the SDF. This would be symbolic in **re-appropriating** what has been seen as a US-imposed text. The revision should follow a referendum to be held in principle in 2019, to coincide with a number of other important events, namely the abdication

<sup>1</sup> Japan's foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II was delineated by then-Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. The strategy, named 'the Yoshida Doctrine' after him, saw economic reconstruction as Japan's top priority and was based on three main principles: development of international economic relations to rebuild the domestic economy, limited intervention in international politics, and reliance on the United States for security.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573939/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)573939\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/573939/EPRS_BRI(2016)573939_EN.pdf);

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.frstrategie.org/publications/recherches-et-documents/implications-des-ambitions-maritimes-des-etats-puissances-et-des-innovations-navales-04-2018>;

of Emperor Akihito and the enthronement of his son and heir Naruhito, legislative elections (House of Councillors and Upper House), and the G20 presidency.

## 2 Global security and peace: similar challenges, leading to common approaches and possible cooperation?

Within the framework of their partnership, the EU and Japan see themselves and each other mainly as **civilian ('soft') powers**, sharing the same values and acting in the international arena essentially through diplomatic means, with what is often described as an 'aid and development-oriented' foreign policy. However, the evolution of the threats that they both face, on the one hand —be they hybrid, conventional or nuclear — and the unpredictability and neglect of decades-old alliances by their **strategic ally, the US**, on the other hand, have led the leaders on both sides to reconsider their 'soft power-only' choice in seeking to ensure their security. While this search for **more autonomy** as far as security and defence are concerned will take time, because of the longstanding and strong reliance of both Japan and the EU on their US ally, they have both begun the process.

The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) of 2016 emphasises **security and defence** in particular as one of the key strategic priorities. Soft and hard power now go 'hand in hand' for a more pragmatic EU, reinforcing its partnership with NATO, but also seeking '**strategic autonomy**'. As regards Asia, the EUGS is clear; it aims to 'develop a more politically rounded approach to Asia, seeking to make greater practical contributions to **Asian security**'. The 28 May 2018 EU Council Conclusions on 'Enhanced security cooperation in and with Asia'<sup>4</sup> are a step in this direction, hinting at the possibilities for deepening cooperation in the fields of security and defence with partners such as (but not only) Japan, South-Korea, India and China. This illustrates the '**principled pragmatism**' line developed in the EU Global Strategy, leading to a potential '**variable-geometry**' **foreign and security policy** that the EU may need to develop and apply in the new geostrategic environment surrounding it.

Like the EU, Japan has identified today's 'multipolar age' presenting increasing **challenges** to the rules-based international order that has enabled its prosperity. In line with its security-related reforms (including the Constitution, collective self-defence, and the SDF) it has decided to 'take **greater responsibilities** and roles than before in order to maintain the existing international order'<sup>5</sup>.

Japan aims at 'lending a helping hand' to resolve a number of **global issues** where it could partner with the EU but in some cases the regional or local manifestations of these challenges may also lead to **cooperation**, in the form of sharing experience, pooling resources and (diplomatic and political) energy, or taking joint action.

### 2.1 Nuclear disarmament

Japan has the ambition to act as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon states, with a world free of nuclear weapons as its ultimate goal. The EU is divided on this issue, having both nuclear and non-nuclear Member States. However, it could **join forces** with Japan in trying to preserve the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and avoid a new **nuclear arms race** (in both the European and Asian contexts).

The most pressing issue for Japan is the crisis with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (**DPRK**). Until recently, Japan sought to normalise relations with Pyongyang, but faced with the increased **threat** from

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35456/st09265-re01-en18.pdf>;

<sup>5</sup> FM Kono, 22 January 2018, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp\\_a/page3e\\_000816.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp_a/page3e_000816.html);

the DPRK's missiles and nuclear developments (three nuclear tests and 40 ballistic missile launches in the past 24 months, including some with ICBM range and many flying over Hokkaido), Japan has reinforced its **air defence** and is considering revising its 2013 national security strategy in 2018.

Prime Minister Abe has seized each and every opportunity offered to him in recent months (and has taken his own initiatives), starting with US Vice-President Pence's visit in February 2018, to display a **hard-line stance** vis-à-vis Pyongyang (and Seoul) and make clear that Japan would not be fooled by fake overtures without any concrete and verifiable sign of denuclearisation. Tokyo has been disappointed in the past by the attitude of both China and Russia, as it believed they could have exerted stronger **pressure** on the DPRK. Like the US, Japan's position has been that 'all the options are on the table', implying the existence of a **military one**.

However, recent developments with high-level contacts at both intra-Korean and DPRK-US level, unilateral declarations by Pyongyang on freezing its nuclear and missile testing and the destruction of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, with positive reactions from the White House, raised concerns in Tokyo that it had been **side-lined**. The Japanese prime minister's recent and repeated visits to Washington, which were intended to ensure that the long standing **multilateral approach** (Seoul, Tokyo and Washington) vis-à-vis Pyongyang still stood, seem to be reassuring but it is not yet clear whether deeds will follow words. The summit between the Korean leaders in April and May, and the unilateral reactions from the White House as to a possible meeting on 12 June between Trump and Kim Jong-un, did raise fears in Tokyo that the allies had been **divided**, handing an apparent initial victory to the DPRK. The **transactional** approach of the US president may also be a cause for concern, with the press echoing in recent months the possibility that US support for Seoul or Tokyo during the DPRK negotiations may come at a price in terms of trade deals. Ironically, such a risk, if taken seriously by Tokyo, may lead to Japan getting closer to **China** on this issue.<sup>6</sup>

The EU applies the UN Security Council (UNSC) **sanctions** against Pyongyang and also imposes 'autonomous' EU sanctions that go further (such as a total ban on exports of crude oil and refined petroleum products). In April 2018, the EU added four names to its DPRK black list of persons whose assets are frozen and who cannot enter the EU. In line with Japan's position, the EU wants to maintain **the pressure** on the DPRK, conducting demarches with 24 Asian and African countries to press for the strict implementation of UNSC Resolutions. The EU position is **firm**: the DPRK must abandon its nuclear weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner, cease all related activities, and return to the NPT and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. However, unlike Japan, the EU insists on finding a solution exclusively through **peaceful means**.

In the context of upcoming high-level contacts — and possible peace talks — Japan expects the EU to act as a **'facilitator'** at this stage, relaying messages or providing venues and /or logistics for meetings, rather than as a mediator. If there are positive developments, the EU may be asked to support the implementation of a peace agreement and provide humanitarian and economic assistance at a later stage. A later role for the EU as a peace-mediator should not be ruled out, if the parties request it. The EU could offer practical expertise (legal verification, denuclearisation), on the basis of its successful involvement in brokering the Iran nuclear deal — the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). There is also a human rights dimension, as the issue of the abduction of Japanese citizens is important to Japan in determining its relations with DPRK and the EU may also offer its expertise in resolving this issue.

As regards the **JCPOA with Iran**, the current tensions with the US could lead to useful cooperation and joint efforts between the EU and Japan. With a view to non-proliferation, Japan and the EU want to **preserve** the JCPOA. However, as the US decided to pull out of the agreement, Japan could come together with the EU and other actors, such as India, South Korea, or even China and Russia, in an ad-hoc coalition

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.38north.org/2018/04/dbob042318/>;

to stand firm towards the US. Two key objectives would be: to give a strong political signal that options other than the US-driven one are possible, and to try and preserve as much of the agreement as possible, thus convincing Iran to stick with the JCPOA.

## 2.2 Peace and stability

With challenges to international peace and stability, Japan wants action at **global (UN) level first and foremost**.

Japan aims to preserve and further improve **multilateral tools**, including the security architecture developed during the cold war (such as the NPT), and international law in general (including in the area of maritime trade and security, where China's aggressive attitude is seen as creating a global challenge to world trade). The EU shares these goals and the two partners may further enhance their cooperation in seeking to preserve the **rules-based international order**. This cooperation may also extend to reforming the UN system, including the UN Security Council (on which Japan would like a seat as a permanent member). However, agreements on the need to reform certain frameworks for cooperation could also prompt the two partners to develop and propose reforms or even new instruments (for instance in the field of cyber-space).

Operationally, Japan also aims to continue its development activities in the framework of the UN (the Sustainable Development Goals) and the OECD (with Official Development Assistance — ODA). The EU is in many instances a **partner** of Japan in terms of development aid (and was the world's leading aid donor in 2016) so cooperation and coordination may be reinforced in this area, at both bilateral and multilateral (UN) levels. One example could be the security/terrorism situation in the **Sahel**. Japan has already supported EU efforts in building security capacities in Niger and Mali with its ODA assistance projects. It also contributed to pledges at the fund-raising event in Brussels on 23 February 2018 to equip the G5 Sahel anti-jihadist joint force. Civilian missions in post-disaster situations also provide potential for EU-Japan cooperation, and joint training exercises could be an interesting way to kick-start such team-work.

Both Japan and the EU also have an interest in **Arctic**-related issues and this could be another area with global stakes where the two partners could rapidly develop their partnership.

However, Japan is also faced with more **local challenges** to its security.

### **East Asian security**

**China** is both an important partner and a source of concern for Japan because of its economic and military rise and its more assertive attitude in the region. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's questioning of international maritime law have led Tokyo to take a counter-balancing initiative, the '**Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy**' (FOIPS) in order to 'contain' China. Aimed at 'maintaining and strengthening a free and open maritime order'<sup>7</sup>, the Japanese approach is based on three pillars: 1) freedom of navigation and rule of law principles; 2) economic prosperity via enhanced connectivity efforts; and 3) development of maritime law enforcement capabilities to guarantee peace and stability. The 'Indian' dimension has for years been important for Japan to broaden cooperation to an important actor in Asia, trying to balance the Chinese influence.

The EU is also firmly attached to maritime security and respect for relevant international law. It could state its **support** for Japan's objectives under its FOIPS, in particular the first two pillars. The EU is a longstanding supporter of regional integration as a factor for stability and prosperity, and thus an effective tool to tackle global issues and common challenges. In recent years, it has initiated or participated in a number of

<sup>7</sup> The foreign minister Mr Kono, addressing the Diet on 22 January 2018.

security-related initiatives in Asia, in the EU-ASEAN and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) frameworks. The EU could play a **facilitating role** between Japan and regional organisations such as ASEAN, where the traces of the Second World War are still present and could hamper Tokyo's efforts to develop its initiatives. The role of India as a key partner in the region, advocated for by Japan, is also recognised in the EU Council Conclusions of 28 May which mention India as one of the EU's Asian Strategic Partners with whom security cooperation should be developed. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), a regional forum promoting cooperation on trade and social development, is mentioned as a new forum for cooperation on maritime security<sup>8</sup>.

### **South and East China-Sea disputes**

The dispute over the **Senkaku** (Diaoyu in Chinese) **islands** relates to some uninhabited islands in the Ryukyu archipelago (East-China Sea), claimed by Japan, China (PRC) and Taiwan (ROC). Possible oil reserves and fishing resources as well as their geo-strategic position have caused tensions to rise over the years. Since the Second World War, Japan has relied on its alliance with the US to ensure its territorial integrity. The Abe-Trump joint statement in February 2017 reiterated that Washington stood on Japan's side in connection with this dispute which is covered by the 1951 US-Japan Security Treaty. However, following the recent increase in Japan's defence budget (now amounting to 1 % of GDP) a separate coastguard budget has also been increased to enable Japan to expand its **patrol fleet** to better monitor the situation off the coast of the disputed islands.

The EU's Member States have little military presence in the region and the EU has adopted what some experts call '**principled neutrality**'<sup>9</sup> on the various maritime disputes involving the countries bordering the South and East China Seas. Statements issued after EU-Japan summits make no mention of the issue. The EU calls for the relevant international law to be respected, knowing how much its wealth depends on open and safe trade routes with Asia.

Although Japan does not have a border in the South China Sea, it has important economic interests that depend directly on its **freedom of navigation**. Its exports through the South China Sea represent around USD 141 billion<sup>6</sup>. Japan is therefore an active player in the South China Sea and is building up its influence. Tokyo has expressed serious concern over **China's military presence** and illegal constructions in the area. Prime Minister Abe called in 2017 for the peaceful settlement of the disputes, on the basis of international law, and encouraged ASEAN and China to establish a legally binding **code of conduct** for the South China Sea waters<sup>7</sup>. Japan is also taking action. It is providing coast guard ships for patrols along the shores of ASEAN countries<sup>10</sup>. In May 2017, Japan sent its Izumo helicopter-carrying warship to the South China Sea for three months to escort USS Ronald Reagan. This was the first time a Japanese warship played such a role in the region since Japan passed its new security legislation<sup>9</sup>. The latest illustration of Japan's concerns is the new 'basic policy plan on ocean policy' adopted by the government in May 2018<sup>11</sup>, which shifts the focus from ocean resources to maritime security (including radar and satellite surveillance and remote islands protection, also mentioned under 'maritime domain awareness').

### **Japan's territorial disputes with Russia**

Russia and Japan have never signed a **peace treaty** since the end of the Second World War. The most contentious issue is that of the '**Northern Territories**' (Kuril Islands), annexed by the USSR at the end of the war. Japan has recently been pragmatic and flexible in relation to this issue, seeking to avoid increased

<sup>8</sup> While India is a full member with 20 other states, Japan, China, France, Germany, the UK or the US have 'dialogue partner' status.  
<http://www.iora.net/en/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/misc/SIPRIIPB1502d.pdf>;

<sup>10</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/asean-japan-coast-guard-cooperation-in-the-spotlight-with-philippines-exercise/>;

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/4d4bd7ec-5801-11e8-bdb7-f6677d2e1ce8>;

tensions on its northern border (and enabling it to focus on Chinese challenges on its western and southern borders). Prime Minister Abe and President Putin have agreed to conduct some joint economic activities on the four disputed islands, starting in 2018. Tokyo's objective is still to negotiate the return of the Northern Territories to Japan, and to sign a peace treaty with its northern neighbour. However, President Putin reinforced **Russia's military presence** (with new missile hardware) on the islands in 2017, justifying this with the increased US military build-up in the region (the THAAD air defence system in South-Korea). He also expressed the view that should the island one day return to Japan, there was a possibility that the US would deploy troops there. Press reports in February 2018 that the Russian Air Force had taken control of a civilian airport on the island of Iturup (Etorofu in Japanese)<sup>12</sup>, will no doubt further reinforce Japanese concerns, and possibly accelerate Tokyo's efforts to take a more active role in its own security.

The EU is not in a position to offer direct support other than diplomatic support in this specific context. However, at strategic and tactical levels, some similarities with the situation in Kaliningrad in terms of Anti-Access/Area Denial (i.e. deployment of similar BAL and Bastion missiles in 2016<sup>13</sup>) could lead to some useful **intelligence cooperation**, such as exchanges of information and analysis, whether within or outside the framework of NATO cooperation.

## 2.3 Hybrid threats

**Hybrid threats** is a term applied to both Russian and Chinese strategies. China uses such tactics to impose its influence in the maritime security field (in the East and South China Seas, using armed fishermen, establishing control over islands or building new ones) or over the Taiwan issue<sup>14</sup>. Russia employs them to impose its rules on its immediate neighbours (for instance with the 'little green men' in Crimea), and to meddle in the internal politics of EU Member States in order to reduce what it perceives as 'threatening' Western influence. So far, Japan has been flexing its muscles in the **cyber-security** sphere, and also using economic and financial diplomacy (cooperation projects, in particular with Russia) to tackle such challenges and reduce threats. For its part, the EU has adopted a **tougher** stance vis-à-vis Russia, in particular with **sanctions**. While Japan has sided with the EU, experts consider its sanctions to be more of a symbolic nature<sup>15</sup>.

In the field of cyber security, an EU-Japan **cyber dialogue** already takes place but enhanced cooperation could see the two partners working together more actively towards the creation of global norms for cyberspace. Cooperation could also take the form of triangular cooperation with **NATO**, as shown by the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, which Japan joined in January 2018. EU proposals in this field could also result from the adoption of the future strategic document on **connectivity between Europe and Asia**, currently in preparation, as security policy is just one dimension to be taken into account.

Political leaders in Japan and the media have been paying more attention to **propaganda** and **fake news** and took awareness-raising measures ahead of the recent Upper House elections. There has also been discussion of the need to add media-literacy classes in schools. The EU has been sensitised to this issue for some time, and has taken steps to counter such messages (at national and EU level). While both partners want to maintain a free and open internet, they may join forces to discuss and negotiate with internet providers on the best ways to detect and eradicate the manipulation of content. They may also want to

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/03/national/hopes-with-world-war-ii-peace-treaty-russian-military-muscles-onto-kurils/#.Ww7HI02wdeU>;

<sup>13</sup> <https://medium.com/@DFRLab/having-a-bal-219c9ac9926b>;

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/49e1bee2-3eb0-11e8-b7e0-52972418fec4?segmentId=6132a895-e068-7ddc-4cec-a1abfa5c8378>;

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaicom1811.pdf>;

establish a framework for **exchanges of best practice** in countering propaganda, including the East and South Stratcom teams based in the European External Action Service (EEAS).

## 2.4      Terrorism and the conflicts that fuel it

**Terrorism** is another major challenge facing Japan, despite the fact that it has not been directly affected by terrorism (although two Japanese citizens were murdered by the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria in 2015). However the fact that Tokyo will host the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Olympic and Para-Olympic Games in 2020 spurred the government to adopt a controversial '**anti-terror law**' in June 2017. An International Counter-terrorism Intelligence Collection Unit was also created, reporting to the prime minister's office.

Japan also sees terrorism as a **threat to open trade**, which contributes to increased protectionism. Japan still relies heavily on oil and gas imports, especially from the **Middle East**. This also explains Japan's recent announcement that it was strengthening its policy on the Middle East, at both the economic and the political level, with the aim of increasing stability, and therefore prosperity. Japan hopes to be able to use its neutral position in terms of religious and ethnic issues to secure acceptance as a legitimate partner, and help counter violent extremism (CVE) and also contribute to economic development. Japan held its first political dialogue with **Arab League** countries in September 2017, when the foreign minister, Taro Kono announced '**four principles**' for such engagement: 1) intellectual and human contribution'; 2) investment in people; 3) enduring efforts; 4) enhancing political efforts.

**Intelligence sharing** and participation in bilateral or multilateral Counter Terrorism and Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) platforms, at both strategic and operational levels, are possible ways of enhancing cooperation with the EU. The EU Council Conclusions of 28 May include a reference to cooperation with regard to Foreign Terrorist Fighters and radicalisation in prisons.

Japan may become important as a partner for a more pro-active EU as regards several aspects of stability in the Middle-East. The **counter-terrorism** dimension (including countering radicalisation and violent extremism and the financing of terrorism) is an obvious aspect. However, **economic development**, education, governance and institution-building are also areas where more will need to be done following the refugee crisis resulting from the Syrian and Iraq wars, and the reconstruction that is needed in both these countries. Japan may also see the EU as a partner in the context of the **Israel-Palestine** conflict, where the US now appears discredited in the eyes of many Palestinians. The growing political and economic interest of India in the region is relevant here. (Prime Minister Modi was in Palestine in February and had welcomed Prime Minister Netanyahu to Delhi previously). This points to possible new configurations (such as EU-Japan-India) of countries able to play a role in regional or even global crises.

## 3       Future cooperation on security: towards a new type of strategic partnership?

The **Strategic Partnership Agreement** (SPA), which the parties are expected to sign at the next EU-Japan Summit, in July 2018, is a key development for Japan, which has until now been strategically dependent on the US. **Implementing** the security aspects of the SPA will pose a number of challenges but will also present opportunities.

Operational security cooperation between the EU and Japan is not new, as Japan already worked with the EU in the Western Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and in 2014 in anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa. However, such activities have always been **ad hoc**, with no formal basis. That flexible

approach might explain Japan's reluctance to sign the security-related '**Framework Participation Agreement**' (FPA)<sup>16</sup>, similar to the agreement with South Korea in 2014. One of the **challenges** in implementing the partnership will be the need to adapt to quite different approaches. The very formal and procedural nature of the EU's approach might need to be tuned to the more practical, delivery-focused and ad-hoc Japanese approach. Managing time scales, given the importance of keeping **long-term perspectives**, may be an area where Europeans could usefully learn from their Asian partners. And Japan may need to learn how to navigate the EU's very structured and slow-paced procedures. Both sides will need to be able to understand each other quickly and learn from one another. **Staff exchanges** between the main institutions on both sides (or what the EU used to call 'twinning' in other circumstances), or training (as proposed in the EU Council Conclusions on 28 May, for instance in the European Security and Defence College) could be helpful in this context.

This however does not preclude the further development of cooperation in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (**CSDP**). Areas mentioned in the new Japanese security legislation, such as **intelligence** cooperation, or capacity-building in fields including military medicine, could be built upon, for instance in the framework of the EU's new Capacity Building for Security and Development (CBSD). **Industrial cooperation** in the field of defence may also be a topic for discussion, following developments in the EU such as the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, and in Japan where recent security reforms have enabled Tokyo to export Japanese-made defence items. **Defence research** for instance may become an area for cooperation.

Yet the Japanese people's traditional **reluctance** regarding the use of force means that, despite recent developments, political as well as legal obstacles will continue to restrict Japanese participation in missions or operations with strong military dimensions.

In the case of Japan, the traditional FPA-type agreement may not suit the specificities and complexity of the country. Experience also shows that the FPA is not essential in order to cooperate in CSDP missions and operations. This may be the opportunity for the EU to develop what Thierry Tardy at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) recently called a **Security Compact**<sup>17</sup>, where CSDP cooperation and other security cooperation aspects coexist and are **mutually reinforcing**. As seen above, security cooperation can extend well beyond CSDP. For instance, the Japanese and EU approaches to Russia and China seem to **mirror each other**: Tokyo engages with Russia while the EU adopts a tougher stance and Japan is tough on China while the EU employs a softer approach. This situation could lead the partners to **complement** one another, exchange and work towards developing a 'joined-up' team-work approach, whereby each partner uses its specific tools and strengths to complement those of the other. The situation with China could provide a test case for such innovative approaches. The EU could explain to Japan the reasons which led it to join the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) — to try and influence its governance if not the projects. Japan could consider allowing the EU to join — or at least have observer status with — its '**Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy**' (FOIPS), and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) project with India, Australia and the US<sup>18</sup> and allowing some of the EU Member States, such as France, to take part in them. The QUAD seems to some observers to be no more than a means for some countries which are economically increasingly dependent on China<sup>19</sup> to send strong political signals to

<sup>16</sup> The FPA is a detailed document, touching upon issues such as financing, personnel, or transfer of operational control during EU CSDP missions and operations (for instance anti-piracy ones).

<sup>17</sup> EUISS, Brief Issue January 2018, 'Revisiting the EU's security partnerships'.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.frstrategie.org/publications/notes/testing-times-for-security-in-east-asia-evaluating-one-year-of-the-trump-presidency-05-2018>;

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.fiai.fi/en/publication/the-us-japan-india-australia-quadrilateral-security-dialogue>;

Beijing. In this context, having the EU on board may help give additional weight to the message, but deeds are also needed. The ongoing work in the EU on a '**Connectivity strategy linking Europe and Asia**'<sup>20</sup> could provide a useful framework and orientation for such cooperation, at a time when some experts 'read' in China's strategic approach (for example its Belt and Road Initiative) the implementation of 'Global connectivity politics'<sup>21</sup>. The support of our Japanese partners would be invaluable to ensure that we have the appropriate 'reading' of the Middle Kingdom.

Nonetheless, the EU-Japan partnership faces challenges of a '**larger than life**' nature. Accordingly, the partners need to show that they are open to extending their cooperation — on certain issues — to **other global or regional powers**, and that they can attract smaller countries (such as members of ASEAN). This entails communicating about their initiatives and offering an alternative path to countries unwilling to choose between the US and China, for instance. The EU may see the SPA with Japan as the first tool to operationalise what could be a **strategic policy on Asia** (which the 28 May EU Council Conclusions do not provide but perhaps anticipate), with the aim of persuading the 28 (or the 27 since France does not need to be persuaded) Member States of the importance of having an ambitious and coherent approach in the Indo-Pacific region, where so much is at stake in terms of trade and economy. In the global 21st century, **geopolitics** are back to the fore in Europe and in the Middle-East. Why would this not be the case in Asia, where major tensions inherited from the Second World War or the Cold War have never completely disappeared?

A **new framework** for cooperation in the security sphere is needed to take account of the recent developments on both sides and of their cooperation with NATO. This is all the more necessary given the rapidly unfolding **crises**, where 'red-lines' are tested, as in Syria, the South-China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait<sup>22</sup>. The fact that this is happening under the Trump administration should be no surprise. President Trump has made no secret of his disregard — if not outright contempt — for traditional alliances or established regional policies inherited from the past and he has no inhibitions about causing divisions or transgressions. Russia or China may see the new configuration in US decision-making that resulted from the 2016 presidential election as a unique opportunity to dispense with the constraints imposed by past US supremacy.

For the EU, Japan will remain a **reliable and predictable partner**, but with a new maturity and sense of responsibility as far as world affairs and challenges are concerned. The EU should both **accompany** this trend and **build** on it to meet the threats they both face. The EU should also reciprocate in terms of reliability: it needs to deliver swift and **concrete solutions** to the rapidly evolving challenges. This would demonstrate the EU's capability as it aspires to be recognised as an effective 'global player'. As the security and defence aspects of the SPA may well be among the **first** to be applied under the agreement (on a provisional basis pending full ratification), no time should be lost in engaging directly on these issues. The EU High Representative / Vice President, Federica Mogherini, and the Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono confirmed this when they met on 25 April 2018 and discussed 'additional opportunities to collaborate on security and defence matters'<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-698599\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2018-698599_en);

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/chinas-global-connectivity-politics/>;

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/49e1bee2-3eb0-11e8-b7e0-52972418fec4?segmentId=6132a895-e068-7ddc-4cec-a1abfa5c8378>;

<sup>23</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria/43513/federica-mogherini-meets-foreign-minister-japan-tar%C5%8D-k%C5%8Dno-after-conclusion-negotiations-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria/43513/federica-mogherini-meets-foreign-minister-japan-tar%C5%8D-k%C5%8Dno-after-conclusion-negotiations-eu_en)

### **Role of the European Parliament**

The EU-Japan **Strategic Partnership Agreement**, to which the EP has to give its consent, is expected to include a parliamentary dimension. Reinforcing **inter-parliamentary dialogue** would help to further strengthen the relationship.

In accordance with its long-standing approach to security and defence, the EP could insist that the EU should apply its **integrated approach** effectively to its enhanced relationship with Japan. The EU's goal should be to establish its credibility and reliability as a **global player and partner** for Japan, by making the most of the range of EU tools available, in order to deliver effectively and in a timely manner, while remaining innovative. Here too, the EU should apply the **principled pragmatism** and **strategic autonomy** heralded in its Global Strategy.

The EP has been instrumental, formally and informally, in pushing forward the important developments in CSDP that have taken place over the past 18 months. Through its debates, reflections and initiatives, it could continue to play this **stimulating** and 'catalyst' role as far as Asia in general and Japan in particular are concerned. As seen before, the partnership with Japan provides huge **potential for cooperation** on global and regional challenges.

The next **Asia Europe Parliamentary Partnership** (ASEP) meeting on 27-28 September 2018 in Brussels, scheduled to take place after the SPA is signed in July, could be an opportunity to **test** the new EU-Japan strategic partnership in a multilateral context in the wider Asia region.

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