

# REASSESSING EU-JAPAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: EU'S ENGAGEMENT IN ASIAN SECURITY AND JAPAN'S PROACTIVE PACIFISM

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## Abstract

*EU and Japan have been constantly updating their cooperation through joint declarations and summits. Yet, in spite of the fact that this year they will finally conclude an economic agreement and a strategic partnership, the cooperation is restricted to non-military sectors. Thus, a particular attention is given to economic cooperation and promotion of a non-proliferation regime, while both actors are refraining from extending their cooperation at a military level. Taking into account EU's global strategy and its overall normative power projection, as well as Japan's redefined proactive pacifist stance, the aim of this research is to explore these sectors of cooperation and to find explanations for the limits. Therefore, the paper will focus, on the one hand, on the firmly institutionalized bilateral cooperation between EU and Japan, mostly based on economic and political agreements. On the other hand, the paper will analyse the relations between EU member states and Japan and will show that these arrangements are far more comprehensive and are focusing more on military aspects of security than the ones concluded between the EU institutions and Japanese government.*

**Keywords:** EU-Japan strategic partnership, foreign policy, proactive pacifism

## Introduction

European Union has been constantly reshaping its policies, especially those related to defence in order to address security challenges. Recently, European Union has been facing unprecedented security threats that came from both within and outside its borders. For that reason, issues as Brexit, refugee inflow, rise of populist parties and a reluctant position of the U.S. regarding the military and economic involvement in Europe have been constant topics of discussion on Brussels agenda. Against this background, the member states have deepened their defence cooperation and reaffirmed their security commitments by adopting a new framework, Permanent Structured Cooperation (EEAS 2018). Furthermore, as a response to these challenges and, in accordance with its global strategy, EU has been fostering its relations with the other global partners.

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One such example is Japan: due to their similar interests in preserving an open maritime system and a non-proliferation regime (Kirchner, 2017), EU and Japan have reaffirmed their commitment to improve the relations by issuing several joint declarations and by updating their security cooperation. Nonetheless, over the last years, Brussels and Tokyo have established a framework for regular bilateral meetings and have paved the way for the conclusion of both an economic agreement and a strategic partnership, agreements that will be signed this year. However, a closer look at the two partners reveals that the collaboration is limited to non-military sectors. Thus, a particular attention is given to economic cooperation and promotion of a non-proliferation regime, while both actors are refraining from extending their cooperation at a military level, by adding regional security on their common agenda.

Taking into account EU's global strategy and its overall normative power projection, as well as Japan's redefined proactive pacifist stance, the aim of this research is to explore these sectors of cooperation and to find explanations for the limits. Therefore, the main research questions examine EU-Japan relations: *which are the factors that influence and promote/constrain EU-Japan cooperation? Are they internal, arising from domestic policies and the interests of the member states of the EU? Or are the exogenous factors, such the influence of other regional actors, more important in shaping the convergence in threat perception of both EU and Japan?* The main assumptions highlights on the one hand the complex dynamics between EU and Japan and, on the other hand, Japanese domestic constraints and Asian regional security context. Consequently, in spite of a firmly institutionalized bilateral framework, for the time being, EU member states have more comprehensive security arrangements with Japan than EU has with the Asian state. Moreover, due to its self-imposed limits and regional dynamics, Japan is not showing at the moment willingness to extend cooperation with EU beyond the current economic and normative collaboration.

On the grounds that the paper is dealing with the study of a complex security relationship between an international organization and a state, and more precisely with the examination of specific policies and behaviours, a foreign policy analysis (FPA) is indicated in this context. FPA, as a bridging discipline and a sub-field of the international relations theories, connects systemic variables with domestic environment (Hermann, Kegley and Rosenau, 1987). Moving beyond individual, state-centric or systemic explanations, foreign policy analysis emphasizes simultaneously actors' intentions, objectives and actions and the response of other units of the international system to these patterns of behaviour (Gerner, 1995). In fact, FPA is not a homogeneous body of literatures and makes use of multiple theories. In doing so, the analysis is not restricted to the outcomes, but it is also concerning the processes- how a policy is formed, who is the actor proposing the policy and why the policy is drafted (White, 2001, 29). This framework becomes particularly useful since the paper not only makes a policy analysis of a state-Japan-, but it also pertains to the area of EU studies and EU foreign policy. In clarifying this latter concept, Brian White moves from a state-centric approach and differentiate among EU policies and the actions of the member states. In other



words, he outlines a European foreign policy system, based on three pillars: community foreign policy, defined through the external actions, a Union foreign policy (CFSP) and the national foreign policies shaped by the interests of the member states of the EU (White, 1999, 44).

In order to address the research questions and validate the assumptions, the paper will rely on White's foreign policy framework, as the analysis will be structured on two main sections: the first one will evaluate EU-Japan relations and will focus their institutionalization through joint declarations, common operations and regular summits. Furthermore, the empirical investigation will examine the factors influencing the security agenda of both EU and Japan and it will briefly address cooperation between Japan and member states of the EU, more precisely Germany, France and UK. Ultimately, the focus will switch to Japanese domestic limitations and recent policy developments invoking a proactive pacifist strategy. In doing so, the research will mainly analyse the documents outlining the landmark EU-Japan decisions (joint statement and other official declarations), but also those pertaining to the internal security policies of both EU and Japan. Overall, for the data collection, open and written sources will be employed for a relevant analysis. Nonetheless, with regards to the methodological limitations, the language barrier is the most important one, as the analysis only used documents written in or translated into English.

## **1. EU-Japan- evolution of security relations**

As mentioned in the introductory part, interactions between European Union and Japan have mainly economic and normative bases. The relations were officially established in 1958, just one year after the creation of the European Community (EC). Having in common security dependency on the United States, economic and diplomatic ties came as a natural development. Both Japan and the members of the European Community, quickly realized that the most convenient strategy during the Cold War period was to rely on U.S. Security umbrella and to focus instead on economic reconstruction; as such, Japan was following Yoshida Doctrine, a strategy which promoted strong ties with the U.S, restricted rearmament, a prohibitive policy on export of arms, a limited 1% of GNP defence spending, a clearly articulated defence modernization program and most importantly, concentration of resources on economic sector and not on development of military capabilities. Furthermore, at the domestic level the law creating the Self Defence Forces in 1954 and subsequent 1957 Basic Policy for National Defence operated within the self-imposed constraints of a limited defence principle. The former came as a result of a constitutional reinterpretation, which allowed for the creation of military forces, on the basis that they would employ minimum force required for individual self-defence (Self-Defence Forces Act, 1954). Nonetheless, before its enactment, the Diet took precautionary measures, by adopting a resolution which banned collective security initiatives, and thus avoiding any international obligations. The latter defined "prevention of direct and indirect aggression" as ultimate strategic objective, and, at the same time, called for



a gradual expansion of Japan's defence capabilities, "within the limits necessary for self-defence" (Basic Policy for National Defence, 1957). Additionally, the law practically codified Japan's reliance on the U.S., by identifying the strategic partnership as the basis for protection against foreign aggression (Basic Policy for National Defence 1957).

In what regards the European Economic Community, the Treaty of Rome does not include foreign and security policy, yet some capabilities, such as the role of the EEC in trade and development, was mentioning external affairs (Treaty of Rome, 1957). Therefore, diplomatic ties were further strengthened during mid to end of the '70s though establishment of bilateral permanent missions, firstly in Tokyo in 1974 and then in Brussels in 1979. That was the period when both Japan and EC were concentrating all their resources into developing and promoting their own economic capitalist models. In turn this competition had given rise to trade frictions and weakened the political links (De Prado, 2014, p. 3).

However, the situation changed drastically after the end of the Cold War. In July 1991, an enlarged European Community in comparison with the original 6 members, signed a joint declaration with Japan, through which both parties were promising to upgrade their diplomatic ties and expand cooperation and dialogue in areas of mutual concern, be it political, economic, scientific or cultural (European Community, 1991). Furthermore, for the first time, the two partners were establishing a framework for enhanced political dialogue (annual consultation in both Europe and Japan) and were clearly pinpointed the core liberal values that both parties still uphold on the international arena: freedom, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and market economy (European Community, 1991).

This common agenda was further upgraded in 2001 at the Brussels Summit, when the two partners came forward with an Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation. In comparison with the other documents, this is the first that included an assessment of the international environment and significantly expands the agenda of cooperation to issues such as international terrorism, arms control, non-proliferation, conflict prevention and peace-building in the areas neighbouring the two partners- Balkans respectively Korean Peninsula-, bilateral trade, multilateral trade and investment partnership, co-operation on information and communication technology, strengthening the international financial system, fight against poverty, education, environment, energy and infrastructure (European Commission, 2001). Same extended agenda was maintained in 2003, when the objectives were as follows: promoting peace and security, strengthening economic partnership and cultural cooperation (EEAS, 2003).

The broaden agenda comes as no surprise, taking into account security transformations and regional developments for both EU and Japan. For the later, post-Cold War period cemented the shift from a territorial perception of security, constricted to the defence of Japanese archipelago, towards a more outward looking policy, which enlarged the operational range of the SDF. Closely related with this development is the North Korean nuclear quest. As such, 1993 crisis and even more importantly, the 1998 Taepodong debacle represented turning points for Japan, at least in what concerns its nuclear free policy. Yet, as Richard Samuels argued, the



North Korean crisis as a whole was in fact just a “catch-all proxy threat”, which justified the security transformations of Japan and its security (Samuels, 2007, p. 137). While Japan was facing an emerging North Korean threat, European Union was facing its own security issues in the neighbourhood. Gambling on its transformative power and after an initial reluctance, EU got involved into Kosovar state-building process. Therefore, intervention in Kosovo was based on three explanations: firstly, in order to find a sustainable solution and to avoid future regional conflicts; secondly, the European leaders wanted to assure the international community that they were ready to assume regional tasks (in contrast with the embarrassing situation in 1999); and thirdly, they saw the engagement as an opportunity to bolster the CSDP’s stance (Pohl, 2014, pp. 77-78).

Nevertheless, the approval for the two missions, European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and the European Union Special Representative (EUSR), came shortly before the Kosovo declaration of independence, in 2008. As the largest CSDP mission, EULEX’s mandate focuses primarily on rule of law. More precisely, it seeks to accomplish advisory tasks, but also executive responsibilities in order to ensure an independent judiciary, to enhance law enforcement, to safeguard the implementation of the international standards regarding human rights and to strengthen the fight against corruption (Council of the European Union, 2008).

Nonetheless, when it comes to the outcome of this broad agenda, the implementation of these policies was rather modest. The 2001 Plan significantly enlarged the cooperation framework, yet neither Japan nor EU managed to expand their collaboration beyond the initial parameters. What is more, this implementation failure translated into low expectations (Tsuruoka, 2008, p. 113).

However, another policy change occurred after 2010. Published initially in 2008, EU adjusted the Guidelines for East Asian region in 2012. In the document, EU leaders raised the stakes for the region by mainly invoking trade rationale (Council of the European Union, 2012). Coupled with this increased interest in East Asian affairs, the relation with Japan was also improved and first steps were taken beyond the usual annual summits. In 2010, an EU-Japan High Level Group was established, having as main objective further institutionalization of the security relations. In this manner, in 2011, this forum was already preparing the start of negotiations for concluding economic and political agreements between the two entities.

The latest document that also takes into account the evolution of the EU-Japan relations is EU’s Global Strategy. As in the previous documents, the focus is on economic diplomacy and the expansion of EU’s trade network, including in Asia (Council of the European Union, 2016).

If until now the analysis took into account the first two pillars of European foreign policy system, defined through EU’s external actions and Union foreign policy, when inquiring into EU-Japan security relations, it is mandatory to look also at the member states and how their national interest shape the cooperation with Japan. For instance, France and UK have already concluded separate defence cooperation agreements with Japan. After the 2012 Memorandum related to Defence Co-operation, in 2017, UK and Japan issued a joint declaration on security



cooperation through which they pledged to improve and extend their partnership, in various areas, ranging from traditional joint exercises, defence equipment and technology cooperation, peacekeeping operations and counter-piracy to humanitarian assistance, capacity building and cyber security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). Moreover, the two states are closely collaborating on air defence projects: besides a potential partnership with U.S., a traditional ally for both countries, related to the development of a fifth-generation stealth fighter aircraft for the Japanese air forces, Japan and UK are already working on a Joint New Air-to-Air Missile (JNAAM), with high expectations of finishing a prototype this year (Gady, 2018).

Another important European partner in promoting Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy and its proactive stance is France, with whom Japan holds annual ministerial meetings and closely collaborates on issues pertaining to maritime security. At the fourth defence security talks, held this year in January, the defence ministers of the two states agreed to upgrade the relations and to organize the first joint maritime exercises between the two states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). Furthermore, in regards to technology cooperation and defence industry, Japan and France are working on their first cooperative project on research on the next-generation mine-countermeasure technology (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan).

Such agreements and joint military operations, between Japan and its European partners, go beyond the guidelines outlined in the joint statements EU-Japan (Ueta, 2013, p. 2). Likewise, same can be observed in the case of Germany. Due to their similar development and democratization experience, Japan and Germany have already strong political and economic ties. Similar to the case of UK and France and mostly as a result of the fairly recent Japanese legislative changes in the defence field and the subsequent regulations on arms export<sup>1</sup>, Japan and Germany concluded an agreement in July 2017 on joint development of new defence technology (Aibara, 2017). What is more, a similar agreement related to technology transfer was signed with Italy.

Taking all these into consideration, due to the internal legislative changes and the proactive stance on international arena, Japan has been making important steps in normalizing the security relations with its European partners. Collaboration came especially in form of joint military exercises between the Japanese Self Defence Forces and their strategic partners, especially in the case of UK and France. As such, besides the traditional ally, U.S., Japan has established a solid strategic dialogue with these two states. Another important dimension is defence technology sharing, where joint projects have been developed with all the major European players in this area: UK, France, Germany and Italy. In this case, an important role was played by Japan's legislative decision of lifting the ban on exports of military technology and equipment.

<sup>1</sup> According to the new regulations, named "Three Principles on Defense Equipment and Technology Transfer", defense equipment can be exported in support of international peace and stability



## 2. Japan's proactive pacifism and EU agenda

When making a general assessment of Japan's security policy, Peter Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara underline the prevalence of the domestic factors over the international balance of power (Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993, p. 86). In other words, the authors dismiss the systemic explanations and rather focused on the domestic structures and the normative context prescribing behavioural standards. At the other end of the spectrum, George Friedman and Meredith LeBard exaggerate the impact of the systemic constraints, as they predicted an inevitable confrontation between Japan and the United States (Friedman and LeBard, 1991, p. 403). Neither side seemed to be right: as it will be detailed in the next sections, alongside the internal dynamics, exogenous factors influenced Japan's conception on security. Furthermore, in the unipolar world order, Japan did not challenge the American hegemony. On the contrary, the strategic partnership was rather strengthened through the revised Guidelines in 2015.

As a general remark, the Cold War struggle was the ultimate impetus for the establishment of a strategic partnership between Japan and the United States and a pacifist policy of non-involvement. Following Waltz's logic, one can assume that Japan followed this pattern of alignment as a response to the communist threat in the region. It is true that the treaty came at the end of the American occupation, but it was also influenced by regional dynamics. To be more precise, its enactment was closely related to the outbreak of the Korean War. Furthermore, taking into account on the one hand the Japanese minimal commitments towards the alliance and, on the other, the extended American responsibilities, Japan's security strategy had at its core a heavy reliance on the U.S. security umbrella. All in all, Japan's post war conception on security relied on 8 interconnected "noes": no collective self-defence, no overseas deployment, no power projection capability, no arms export, no nuclear weapons, no military expenditures over 1% of the budget, no military use of space and no sharing defence technology (Pyle, 1992, p. 8).

Along these lines, Akitoshi Miyashita went even further as he equated this minimalist perspective on security, limited to the Japanese territory with the Cold War stability (Miyashita, 2007, p. 113). More precisely, instead of relying on the normative explanations (the peaceful constitutions and the norms derived from it), he rather looked at systemic explanations. Considering the attention given to the polarity of the system, when constructing his argument, Miyashita was in fact following the neorealist logic pertaining to the stability of a bipolar system. Nonetheless, this stability transferred to the level of a particular state was in fact applying Gaddis's assumption on "the long peace" (Gaddis, 1992, p. 21). That is to say, during the Cold War, Japan was able to preserve the narrow conception on security due to the systemic balance between the two superpowers.

Nevertheless, these explanations seemed to lose their validity in the post-Cold era. In spite of its status of world economic power, Japan did not convert this economic prowess into military assertiveness. Nor did it balance again the hegemon. In the post-Cold War framework, contrary to the expectations and in spite of North Korean threats since mid-1990s and the imminent rise of China,



Japan did not immediately pursue a policy of remilitarization. Nor it significantly expanded its security cooperation with other states. Illustrative in this case are the relationship with the EU member states and the cooperation with EU institutions. Even if EU and Japan have reaffirmed their commitment to improve the relations by issuing several joint declarations and by updating their security cooperation, the relationship did not move beyond non-military sectors. Instead, Japan's threat perception and subsequent actions were and are rather influenced by 3 interconnected exogenous factors: alliance with the U.S., rise of China and the North Korean nuclear quest.

The economic growth was not the only issue signalling the "rise of China". Besides the military modernisation, Chinese assertiveness threatened the fragile regional balance (Christensen, 2001, p. 6). To give just one example, China's response to regional crises was more hostile, as it was reflected during the Third Taiwan Crisis. Similar things can be inferred about the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Due to the Chinese assertiveness, the American administration announced in 2011, a new strategy, the pivot attempting to reaffirmed the American primacy in the region (Clinton, 2011, p. 57). One consequence was that this new strategic outlook led to a reassessment of the Chinese threat. If back in 2009, Obama was in fact praising "the rise of a strong, prosperous China, as a source of strength for the community of nations" (Obama, 2008, p. 11), the Asian pivot was in fact containing this rise.

However, the Japanese initial response was to reject any offensive practices, to strengthen the security alliance with the US and rather upgrade the defensive capabilities (Oros and Tatsumi, 2010, p. 16). What is more, the principle of separating politics and economy continued to dominate Sino-Japanese relations (Mulgan, 2014). Therefore, rise of China was in fact just an incentive for realignment and enhanced cooperation between the two allies. But it also affected EU-Japan relations. Discussions related to EU arms embargo imposed on China at the end of the Cold War, in 1989, dominated the strategic talks between EU and Japan throughout the 2000s. As such, both Japanese and American policymakers were concerned that taking into account the economic ties between EU and China and the rapid development of the latter, the EU would lift its embargo, and recommence and even increase its military technology exports to China, thus supporting Chinese efforts to modernise its armed forces.

Moreover, in this context of relative instability, the North Korean nuclear quest affected to a lesser extent the regional balance of power, by bringing into discussion the nuclear factor. This also had important effects upon Japan's conception on security and its relations with other actors, such as EU member states: as in the case of the Chinese threat, it strengthened the U.S.-Japan alliance, but it also put a question mark on Japan's nuclear free policy.

In spite of the constitutional prohibition on the use of force, Japanese military capabilities have not been neglected by domestic policymakers. For instance, it is sufficient to mention the significant changes occurring immediately after the end of the American occupation. In this context, one can highlight the security alliance with the U.S. (established by the 1952 Security Pact, revised in



1960) along with the creation of Self Defence Forces and of a Defence Agency. What's more, the implementation of the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Cooperation (adopted in 1978 and amended in 1997 and 2015) has altered the security ties between the two partners and has entailed an increased Japanese commitment to the alliance.

Equally important are the post-Cold War developments, especially the shift from a Cold War resistant phase, characterised by a modest and defensively configured military, to a reluctant stage, which introduced the idea of a functioning Japanese military force, able to uphold international order, and ultimately, to the post 9/11 stage, which reinforced the idea of Japan as an active state and pushed for an assertive diplomacy (Arase, 2007, p. 561). Furthermore, during this last stage, the Diet has been passing a significant amount of security-related legislation, regulating international and alliance contributions, with direct implications for the management of SDF. Along these lines, an assessment of the qualitative and quantitative improvements of the armed forces has even greater relevance when it is correlated with foreign pressures and domestic structural and legal incentives.

If the last decade of the 20th century translated into a reluctant abandonment of some of the Cold War limitations (the ban on the overseas dispatched was lifted), the post 9/11 period was marked by significant transformations. During this stage, the Diet has been passing an important amount of security-related legislation, regulating international and alliance contributions, with direct implication for the composition and the role of armed forces.

As a matter of fact, this period continued the outward looking trend, by further expanding Japan's security interests. Hence, the 9/11 shock led to the enactment of an emergency legislation package (the 2001 antiterrorist law and the 2003 Law concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance) (Pempel, 2010, pp. 470-1). The immediate outcome was that these legislative transformations significantly expanded the capabilities of armed forces. To be more precise, GSDF, previously used solely for national defence and occasionally for regional peacekeeping operations, were deployed in 2003 in Iraq. Furthermore, these bills authorized the actions of the naval forces in the Indian Ocean.

All things considered, one can highlight a surprising paradox: Japan was incontestably expanding its international commitments, by adopting a more outward looking policy, but, at the same time, this development was not accompanied by significant structural military changes. Just by looking at the composition of the armed forces and the overall military spending, one can confirm this tendency. As an illustration, one can simply compare the overall capabilities in terms of number of active soldiers. Therefore, one can easily observe that there are not noteworthy differences between the Cold War figures and the most recent ones (Military Balance 2007/2014/2015).

Recently, Japanese security practices have regained attention mostly due to the attempts of constitutional revision. Thus, the proposal of a constitutional revision from April 2012, coming from the Liberal Democratic Party who was back then in opposition, the adoption of a national security strategy in 2013 and its



emphasis on “proactive pacifism”, the July 2014 reinterpretation and, more importantly, the amendment of Japan-U.S. Defence Cooperation Guidelines in 2015 have reinforced the debates concerning the prospects of military active Japan and its impact on the regional competition. After reclaiming prime ministership in December 2012, Shinzō Abe have not only implemented a series of strategies for stimulating the Japanese economy (known as Abenomics), but also have been revisiting Japan’s policy towards China, changing it from competitive engagement to constructive balancing (Wijaya, 2017, p. 10). Moreover, in September 2015, for the first time since the end of the World War II, the Japanese Diet legitimized the use of military force in overseas conflicts even if the attack per se was not related to Japanese territory (Borah, 2015).

From that moment on, through a series of official documents, Japan started to reconsider the previous security stance and except for the nuclear capabilities, it gradually modified the other 7 “noes”. Since December 2013, under a new doctrine of “Proactive Contributions to Peace”, it was established a National Security Council which made public a National Security Strategy. In July 2014, the Cabinet presented a historical reinterpretation of Article 9, approved by the Diet in September 2015, which authorized the exercise of collective self-defence and the deployment of SDF under the guidance of three restrictive conditions: the Japanese interests dictate the support given to the ally, the primacy of the diplomatic mechanisms and the “bare minimum” use of force (Glosserman, 2014).

Additionally, the 2013 National Security Strategy, first of its kind, made reference to “attempts to change the status quo by coercion” (*National Security Strategy*, 2013). That is to say, more than the parties involved in the dispute, Japan was reacting to the South China Sea disagreements and, to a lesser extent to Chinese military assertiveness in the area. To give just an example, one cannot indicate a clear official position of the Indonesian authorities: some of the policymakers condemned the Chinese claims and demanded a military presence in the area, whereas others denied the existence of the territorial disputes and advocated for closer economic ties (Chang, 2014). Coming back to Japan, one can assume that it equated Chinese assertiveness with a strategy of pursuing regional influence, and more importantly, with one having direct effect on their own Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute. In doing so, one can argue that the Japanese policymakers were in fact following a neoclassical realist reasoning, as they viewed beyond the mere accumulation of power and the former policy of prioritizing economic ties over political relationship.

If one strictly looks at the 2011 NDPG, the 2013 National Security Strategy and 2015 Diplomatic Bluebook, it can immediately observed that all documents mentioned among their core objectives, an enhanced cooperation between Japan and United States, in a wide range of areas, including ballistic missile defence. Therefore, one cannot pinpoint significant deviations from the previous trend: the focus was still on joint trainings and on international peace cooperation activities (*National Defence Program Guidelines*, 2011). The novelty came from the introduction of the multi-layered security cooperation section, which for the first time, moved beyond the framework of a bilateral arrangement. Having at its

cornerstone the alliance with the U.S., these documents brought attention to future policy directives regarding the relationship with other American allies, such as Australia and South Korea. Furthermore, Japan adopted in December 2016 new guidelines for MSDF, allowing them, besides the regular anti-piracy operations, to protect US navy vessels.

Thus, under Abe's administrations, Japan's foreign policy has revealed a more proactive approach, by getting more involved in shaping the international order. This paradigm was emphasized in the Diplomatic Bluebook from 2014, where the strategy called for a normalized security conception, which is not based exclusively on the alliance with the U.S., but also takes into account broader regionalism, based on the security ties with India and Australia. However, this proactive approach does not have significant impact on EU-Japan security cooperation. As shown in the previous section, Japan's legislative decision of lifting the ban on exports of military technology and equipment has significantly improved the security cooperation with several European partners: UK, France, Germany and Italy. Yet when it comes to political and security relations between Japan and the EU, both show a lack of a sense of urgency and they rather endorse a trade and business agenda. This is not particularly surprising given the fact that throughout the years, both the EU and Japan preferred to enhance their normative and economic cooperation and leave security policies for bilateral discussions between EU member states and Japan.

## Conclusions

The evolution of the EU-Japan relations is deeply connected to regional challenges as well as internal dynamics. If in the case of EU, the complex foreign policy system is influenced by community, union and national policies, fact indicated through White's foreign policy framework, analysis showed that in the case of Japan, policies are shaped by systemic incentives and the duality between political constraints and constitutional reinterpretations. In this sense, coming back to the main research question of the paper, which inquired into the factors influencing and promoting/constraining the EU-Japan relations, the analysis demonstrated that the cooperation between EU institutions and Japanese government is based on both endogenous and exogenous factors. As such, the firmly institutionalized political and economic exchanges are influenced on the one hand by the domestic policies of Japan and the interests of the member states of the EU and, on the other hand, by regional actors and outcomes. Accordingly, the empirical investigation showed that the cooperation agenda between EU and Japan is rather restricted to non-military sectors (economic agreements and normative collaboration based on the core liberal values that both EU and Japan promote and uphold: freedom, democracy, rule of law, human rights and market economy).

Furthermore, after decades of impassiveness, Japan finally made the first steps toward the "normalization" of its security policy. Hence, the domestic politicians attempted to amend the peaceful constitution, particularly the notorious article 9, and to put an end to its antimilitarist stance. The current paper also



addressed the recent Japanese policy and its impact upon EU-Japan Strategic Partnership. However, even if EU and Japan have reaffirmed their commitment to improve the relations by issuing several joint declarations and by updating their security cooperation, the relationship still did not move beyond non-military sectors. Therefore, one may question the nature of these international commitments, especially when the current administration is promoting “proactive pacifism”.

Consequently, the main finding of the paper is that in spite of a firmly institutionalized bilateral framework, for the time being, EU member states have more comprehensive security arrangements with Japan than EU has with the Asian state. Moreover, due to its self-imposed limits and regional dynamics, Japan is not showing at the moment willingness to extend cooperation with EU beyond the current economic and normative collaboration. Nonetheless, the fact that EU and Japan just recently signed an economic agreement, the biggest ever negotiated by the EU, seems to confirm this last assumption, but further evidence is needed in order to support this affirmation, which is why the paper re-opens up further discussions on the complex cooperation between EU institutions and Japan, on the one hand, and EU member states and Japan, on the other hand.

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