

FRS – Japan Program

NAVIGATING COMPLEMENTARITY: BETWEEN BILATERALISM AND MULTILATERALISM

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Question 1: The international society is questioning the role of the United States as it seems to be receding from its responsibilities to maintain the international liberal order. In that context, do you think that Japan will continue to rely on its bilateral security relations with the United States?

I believe that for Japan, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty will remain as a cornerstone of its security policy as is clearly mentioned in Japan’s National Security Strategy adopted in 2013. On the other hand, I would like to note that after

the end of the Cold War, Japan-U.S. Security Treaty relations have come to bear the task of not only defending Japan’s security but also of becoming the regional security guarantor. I am hastening to add that the latter is also included in the treaty since the beginning but it has been looming larger in recent decades.

This evolution has been triggered by the changing security situation in Northeast Asia particularly after the end of the Cold War. This point has been acknowledged in remarks by both nations. As an illustration, on April 17th 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Clinton announced

the “Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security – Alliance for the 21st Century”, where the two agreed that, in addition to the national security of Japan, the alliance bears the role of “maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century.” This aspect of the Treaty has been sustained ever since. More recently, on January 19th 2020, Japan and the United States commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the revised Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. On that occasion, Prime Minister Abe stated that “the US-Japan Security Treaty is a pillar that is indestructible, a pillar immovable, safe-guarding peace in Asia, the Indo-Pacific and in the world, while assuring prosperity therein.” These remarks reflect the unshaken importance of the Treaty for the security of Japan as well as the security of the region as a whole.

Against the background of the geopolitical transformation, I trust that Japan will further look into a future evolution of Japan-U.S. security relationship for its own security and for peace, security and prosperity of the region and beyond.

Question 2: In that context, is there any room for cooperation between Europe and Japan?

Certainly, there are ample opportunities, some of which have already been materialized. When threats are more transnational and complex as exemplified by climate change or the recent outbreak of the new coronavirus (COVID-19), a single country is unable to defend itself from a whole spectrum of threats. The impact of threats does not stop at borders.

As Japan’s National Security Strategy states, Japan has been keen to promote cooperation with like-minded countries

and institutions. For example, Japan has been participating in counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia since 2007 and has worked closely with the European Union (EU), NATO and European countries. The Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) joined CTF151 (Combined Task Force 151) in 2013 and took commanding position on a rotational basis in 2015. Through counter-piracy operations, Japan and European countries and institutions had political dialogues as well as joint trainings.

In 2018, Japan concluded a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with the EU to implement further security cooperation such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, cyber security and capacity building, etc. I expect this partnership to open avenues for tangible cooperation, for instance, in the field of capacity-building assistance and maritime domain awareness in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.

With NATO, as mentioned by Ms. Gwendoline Vamos, NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, at the FRS seminar on “New Threats to the Liberal Order: Common Perceptions and Answers”, Japan has been strengthening its relations with the organization in order to address shared security challenges since the early 1990s. The Japan-NATO Joint Political Declaration in 2013 has triggered further cooperation with Japan, establishing its mission to NATO in Brussels, with sending its Self Defense Forces personnel to the Secretary General’s Special Representative Office on Women, Peace and Security, as well as with dispatching a liaison officer to NATO’s Maritime Command in addition to other initiatives. Japan is also collaborating on Cyber Defense by sending experts to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. On a

personal note, I am participating as an academic in the drafting of NATO's doctrine on cultural property protection.

Security threats now expand from national, regional to global. Threats are complex and multiple, spanning from military to human security ones. Our common perceptions and answers should respond to these changing natures of threats which are more complicated than in the Cold War days. Some use the metaphor that security threats were under a "fixed exchange rate system" during the Cold War, while they are now under a "floating exchange rate system" where we have to be prepared, observing new threats emerging at the same time. Thus, Europe and Japan ought to work together if we want to address these threats effectively and efficiently.

Question 3: Between multilateralism and bilateral cooperation, which do you think is more effective in addressing security threats? Would Japan rather pursue multilateralism or bilateralism?

Both. Today bilateral security cooperation has come to embrace not only respective national security objectives, but also regional and global security objectives. Multilateralism, on the other hand, embraces a network of bilateral cooperation in certain instances and offers opportunities for bilateral contacts and consultations at its margins. Combinations of bilateral cooperation sometimes form a web developing into multilateralism. Thus, the two can generate synergy.

At the same time, security threats are becoming more transnational and involve multiple areas, creating shared interests as well as demanding common responses. Boundaries, both national and thematic, are blurred. Security challenges are not

only transnational but also broadening from military to non-military ones such as climate change, cutting-edge technology, and others. Thus, our responses ought to combine areas such as security, economy and development. However, at the same time, the importance of traditional security threats has not diminished, with the proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles.

Thus, I believe that multilateralism and bilateralism are not an exclusive choice to choose from. Given these circumstances, Japan, in my view, seeks both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in security as well as in trade and economy. This has been demonstrated by Japan's leadership in concluding, for example, the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) with countries in Asia-Pacific as well as the Economic Partnership Agreement and Strategic Partnership Agreement with the European Union. Japan's vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is another example of Japan pursuing both bilateralism, plurilateralism and multilateralism.

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Question 4: Talking of Indo-Pacific, which you have alluded to, what does Japan want to achieve through its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision? Is FOIP a way to compete against Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or even to contain China?

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision has originated in Prime Minister

Abe's policy speech at the Parliament of India on August 22, 2007, when he presented his vision of a new regional order by combining the "two Seas", namely the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The FOIP's origin can also be found in Prime Minister Abe's proposal in his article to *Project Syndicate*, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond", published in December 2012. At that stage, Japan's Indo-Pacific concept was perceived as security-focused and as quadrilateral among Japan, the United States, India and Australia.

When Prime Minister Abe proposed FOIP at the TICAD conference in Nairobi in 2016, he, however, emphasized the importance of combining not only the two seas but also two continents in bringing stability and prosperity to the region and beyond. The Japanese government considers that there are three pillars to the FOIP, namely (1) promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. (2) pursuit of economic prosperity, and (3) commitment for peace and stability. The FOIP has been an attempt to shape a regional order embracing values such as democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

Although FOIP was initially perceived in some quarters as a way to contain China or to compete against China's Belt and Road Initiative, Japan's FOIP has evolved from a competitive to a more cooperative, comprehensive and inclusive approach. This evolution has been demonstrated when Japan dropped the word "strategy" from FOIP in summer 2018 and started promoting the notion of "vision" instead. This change helped to tone down criticism against FOIP's role as a strategy for containment.

FOIP seems to be the first Japanese foreign policy initiative that has gathered interest if not momentum in capitals in the region and beyond, including Paris, Canberra, Washington DC, New Delhi, and ASEAN, with some distinct differences. For example, Japan has a Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, Washington has an Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canberra has developed an Indo-Pacific Concept and ASEAN has the Indo-Pacific Outlook. France is the only European country to have published an official document: "France's Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific".

Although there are differences in respective concepts and geographical footprints in Indo-Pacific, the common thread is maritime security, infrastructures and, most notably, connectivity, including ports, bridges and roads as well as digital connectivity. Cooperation has already been underway for connectivity (for example with the Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure between the EU and Japan).

I would like to suggest that FOIP can also be a shared vision for France and Japan to collaborate further in defending the liberal order as indispensable powers in the international society.

Question 5: Why should France/Europe and Japan cooperate in security?

For Japan, it is vitally important to collaborate with partners who share common interests and values. We may not share all of the interests and some of them are even distinct. Japan aims at working with normative powers which have led norm-setting. As we have entered a new age without a clear map with so many uncertain and changing factors, it is vitally important to collaborate with those whom we trust and share values and interests.

While the global geopolitical map is under transformation, the indispensable powers should join hands to create or adapt the liberal order and contribute to its preservation.

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