

FRS – Japan Program

Post-Covid EU-Japan Relations: New Perspectives for Cooperation?

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Professor Endo obtained a D.Phil in Politics at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, in 1996; was Visiting Professor, University of Tokyo (2003-16), Fernand Braudel Senior Fellow, European University Institute (2009-10), Visiting Professor & Japan Chair, Sciences Po, Paris (2005 & 2010), Taiwan MOFA fellow (2018). His main publications are: *The Presidency of the European Commission under Jacques Delors: The Politics of Shared Leadership* (Macmillan, 1999) and *The End of Integration* (Iwanami, 2013, in Japanese), for which he was awarded the 15th Yomiuri-Chuo Koron Yoshino Sakuzo Prize. He served as one of the two commissioning editors of Iwanami's 8 vols (c100 articles), on Japanese security (2014-15).

Professor Endo was a member of study groups at the Japanese MOFA's policy planning unit (2012-13, 2013-14). He also works as a member of 1.5-track Japan-Korea policy dialogue (2012-) and organizes similar events on Sino-Japanese relations, in cooperation with the MOFA. Since 2015 he has been sitting on the MOFA's policy evaluation committee and from 2017 on he has led a project on Europe at the Japan Institute of International Affairs. Active in engaging in wider civic forums, Prof. Endo is a founding member of the Hokkaido Dialogue, where civic leaders from Japan, China, South Korea and Taiwan discuss issues of common interest.

Question 1: The Covid-19 pandemic provoked disruptions in the international system. What role could Japan and the EU play together to contribute to a positive reshaping of the international system?

With the Covid-19 crisis and the events in recent months, two things have been made clearer.

China is getting more reclusive and repressive. When the Covid-19 pandemic erupted at and around Wuhan, China did not disclose, and even concealed, information necessary both for those inside and outside the country to tackle this crisis. On the contrary, the authorities intended to spread disinformation, sugges-

ting that the origins of the virus came from Italy and that the China model was a subject of admiration for the world to follow. The 'politics of generosity' (Josep Borrell) or 'mask diplomacy' was systematically conducted. When the other nations asked for a review of the origins of the pandemic, China retaliated by threatening countries most vocal in their demands. Australia was in effect denied some 40 % of beef export to China. When the UK banned Huawei from its 5G telecommunication infrastructure building, China also threatened the UK, saying it would have 'consequences'.

Evidence of ethnic repressions in Xinjiang has been exposed. The introduction of the

National Security Act in Hong Kong sparked criticism, yet China went on to arrest civic activists and journalists.

The US in the meantime is not entirely reliable. While a pretty wide consensus has emerged across the political spectrum in the US as to the need to confront China, US President Trump is more interested in securing his own reelection than in human rights issues.

Against this background, Japan and Europe do share the same interests not to let the Chinese authoritarian model spread its global influence. Both the EU and Japan could take initiative in economic statecraft. For instance, any unilateral pressure on a country targeted by China, particularly in the field of trade and investment, should be considered an offence against all like-minded countries sharing the same values, and should be dealt with in a coordinated manner. Separately, both sides should find ways to run counter to disinformation. There is a number of areas in which both Japan and Europe would gain from enhancing cooperation.

Question 2: Japan and the EU signed a FTA and a SPA. What would be the relevance in the post-Covid-19 world?

These two agreements form the platform on which we could upgrade our cooperation. There is a big potential in these two agreements to reinforce cooperation between Japan and the European Union, from security through environment to trade and investment.

Of particular importance is cooperation in the regulatory domain. Both Japan and the European Union, as socially matured markets, have an incentive to preserve high quality standards and regulations in the fields of environment, working conditions, health and social security. Obviously this is not an easy task, as each side has its own sensitivities. Yet, given the

integrated global economy that both want to preserve, it is necessary to jointly defend their social and economic models by coordinating the standards and regulations.

Question 3: For Japan what is the importance of the EU in a post-Covid world where Sino-American tensions are increasing?

Authoritarianism is on the rise. Its influence infiltrates into democratic societies. It is imperative for Japan to find ways to keep its liberal democratic specificities. For this, it is important to cooperate with other like-minded countries. The US seems less reliable as a liberal democracy attached to multilateralism and less predictable to stand up against authoritarian challenges. Japan needs to diversify its allies in spite of the fact that, like other countries in Asia, it still depends heavily on the US for its security. This is where Europe comes in, just like Australia and Canada do, sharing a common vision of a free and open world, strongly attached to liberal values and principles.

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