



JEFFREY W. HORNING

# Allies Growing Closer

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Japan–Europe Security Ties in the  
Age of Strategic Competition



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## Preface

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In its 2018 National Defense Strategy, the United States acknowledged the reemergence of long-term strategic competition with several rivals, including China and Russia. Some of the United States' most powerful and trustworthy allies are Japan and its European partners. What is not always fully understood, or at least documented in great detail, are the types of cooperative activities these allies are pursuing in the security domain amid this return of strategic competition. This report presents the results of a RAND Corporation study examining how allies of the United States are increasingly cooperating with each other in the security domain. With a focus on the increasing bilateral security links between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and three European states—the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—I sought to build on extensive work done by European and Japanese scholars to both understand and assess developments in these relationships and why they matter for the United States. I found that, although the discrete lines of effort by these actors are at varying levels of development, their security cooperation matters and it should be both recognized and fostered.

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# Contents

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<b>Preface</b> .....	iii
<b>Summary</b> .....	vii
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	ix
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	xi
 <b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Organization of This Report .....	1
Methodology .....	2
 <b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>The Strategic Context</b> .....	5
U.S. Strategic Documents .....	5
Japanese Motivations .....	8
Conclusion .....	18
 <b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>The United Kingdom</b> .....	19
History .....	19
Defense and Strategic Dialogues .....	22
Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation .....	24
Training and Exercises .....	27
Motivations .....	31
Divergences .....	37
Conclusion .....	38
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>France</b> .....	39
History .....	40
Defense and Strategic Dialogues .....	42
Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation .....	45
Training and Exercises .....	47
Motivations .....	49
Divergences .....	55
Conclusion .....	57

CHAPTER FIVE

<b>Germany</b> .....	59
History .....	59
Defense and Strategic Dialogues .....	61
Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation .....	63
Training and Exercises .....	65
Motivations .....	67
Divergences .....	73
Conclusion .....	74

CHAPTER SIX

<b>The North Atlantic Treaty Organization</b> .....	77
History .....	77
Defense and Strategic Dialogues .....	81
Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation .....	82
Training and Exercises .....	86
Motivation .....	87
Divergence .....	91
Conclusion .....	92

CHAPTER SEVEN

<b>Conclusion</b> .....	93
Similarities .....	93
Differences .....	95
Significance for the United States .....	96
Recommendations .....	100
Conclusion .....	102

<b>Bibliography</b> .....	103
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## Summary

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In its 2018 National Defense Strategy, the United States acknowledged the reemergence of long-term strategic competition with several rivals, including China and Russia. Some of the United States' most powerful and trustworthy allies are Japan and its European partners. What is not always fully understood, or at least documented in great detail, are the types of cooperative activities these allies are pursuing in the security domain amid this return of strategic competition. This report addresses this gap through my focus on the security relationships Japan is developing with the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The objective is not only to detail the variety of activities among these actors in the security domain but to also understand the motivations behind these developments and their implications for the relationships the United States has with these countries and NATO.

To inform this research, the report contextualizes these relationships against three strategic documents released by the United States in the past few years: the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. These documents not only describe the return to great power competition with strategic competitors but also sound the need for U.S. allies. Even with the transition to a new U.S. administration in January 2021, I assume that these two factors will not change.

The analysis focuses on three variables: (1) defense or strategic dialogues; (2) defense exchanges, defense cooperation, and defense-related industrial cooperation; and (3) training and exercises. The results show that Japan–UK security ties are the most robust of the security ties examined in this study but that they lack an overarching strategy that pulls the separate Japan–UK lines of effort together into a coherent whole. Japan–France ties are significant and growing and fit well within Japanese and French regional strategies, but they lack the robust track record shown in Japan–UK ties. Japan's bilateral ties with Germany lack depth, but there is a growing convergence around strategic interests that could bring the two countries closer together. Finally, Japan's ties with NATO lack dialogues and exchanges but are slowly growing their cooperation in exercises and noncombat operations.

To understand the variance in these lines of effort, I examined motivations of each actor. The report begins with Japan, which serves as the constant variable in the report. Although it has motivations unique to each individual case, Japan maintains four primary motivations for security ties with Europe that are common across actors: (1) a desire to protect the rules-based international order, (2) support the United States, (3) expand operational knowledge and defense-related industrial opportunities, and (4) increase European awareness of Indo-Pacific security challenges. Japan's motivations largely correspond with those of the three European countries and NATO. Like Japan, all four European actors examined in this study are moti-

vated to have closer security ties with Japan out of a desire to protect the rules-based international order and to support the United States and multilateralism. Likewise, all four are motivated by variations of a similar concern to protect their regional interests or security concerns. Like Japan, France and the UK (but not the others) are motivated by an interest in seeking out defense-related industrial opportunities. The UK stands alone with a unique motivation of wanting to project its image as a regional stakeholder in the wake of Brexit.

Importantly, I found that, despite these similarities, a key divergence point is China. Despite all actors coalescing around a strategic view that China poses a challenge to the international order, the way to deal with China is by no means agreed on. Reflecting vibrant domestic debates on what their country's or organization's China policy should be, most find that Japan's approach can be too confrontational.

There is a second, albeit lesser, point of divergence with Russia. Although Europe is focusing on the renewal of Russian aggression, Japan's lack of committed interest in countering the threat appears to contradict its call to rally behind support for the current international order.

Bringing it all together, the report closes with an assessment of how the strategies of Japan and its European counterparts overlap with one another and how they benefit the United States. I argue that the growing security ties among these allies of the United States are important for six primary reasons. Specifically, these ties

- support U.S. leadership
- spread support of the international order among capable allies
- support flexible, smaller security groupings
- make U.S. allies more effective
- help strengthen Japan without having to rely solely on U.S. resources
- help connect two regions that have traditionally not been well connected.

The growing security partnerships matter for the United States because they result in a networked set of allies. General recommendations are provided on how these developments can be further supported.

The primary sources of information to support this analysis were data collected during an extensive program of field research in the summer and fall of 2019. I traveled to Tokyo, London, Paris, Brussels, and Berlin, where I conducted 56 distinct interviews with government officials and personnel from the armed forces of Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO, as well as experts on these actors. The research also relied on official documents and publications (current as of December 2019), such as treaties, agreements, statements, and speeches, to better understand the motivations behind past government decisions and the current status of security relations.



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Within RAND, Agnes Gereben Schaefer and Heather Hess were my principal contact points for ensuring that I was fulfilling the necessary RAND requirements and keeping the project within budget. For administrative support throughout the study, including the multiple trips it entailed, Chanel Skinner provided critical support to ensure that my travel was booked and timely reimbursements made. Jim Powers, the RAND National Security Research Division quality assurance manager, also read the report and ensured that it met RAND quality assurance standards. Finally, Lisa Bernard assisted with copyediting and proofreading.

Formal reviews of the report were made by Mark Cozad of RAND and Mirna Galic, a nonresident senior fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs. Cozad gave me the benefit of his deep expertise in Europe and critical understanding of Indo-Pacific affairs. Galic provided a critical read based on her own expertise on Japan's relationships with Europe. RAND colleague Scott W. Harold also provided his assistance in helping establish important European contacts prior to the field research and later provided me with critical comments of the report after an informal reading of a draft, based on his own expertise and experience in both Europe and Japan.

Collecting and obtaining the data needed for this project required a tremendous amount of support from dozens of government officials and scholars in Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and Germany. I would like to thank all these people who took time not only to meet me during my field research but to answer numerous follow-up emails. The depth of data provided in this report would never have been possible if it was not for the generosity of all of these individuals.

Finally, four people deserve special attention for their support of this research. First, Tsuruoka Michito of Keio University and Sharon Stirling, who, at the time, was with the German Marshall Fund of the United States, were instrumental in helping connect me with scholars and officials in Europe. These contacts were critical for being able to conduct the depth of research I ultimately was able to achieve. Chano Junko of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation was also important in approving funding for this project and my stay as a month-long visiting fellow at the foundation's office in Tokyo. Finally, Murata Aya, also of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, was my point of contact for the project. She proved to be not only incredibly flexible on project considerations but also extremely supportive of the research at every step of the process.



## Abbreviations

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ACSA	acquisition and cross-servicing agreement
ASDF	Air Self-Defense Force
CTF	combined task force
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
EU	European Union
FOIP	free and open Indo-Pacific
G7	Group of Seven
GSDF	Ground Self-Defense Force
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance/disaster relief
HAC	Honourable Artillery Company
HQ	headquarters
IPCP	Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program
IPSR	Indo-Pacific Strategy Report
ISA	information security agreement
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
JNAAM	joint new air-to-air missile
LST	landing ship, tank
MARCOM	Allied Maritime Command
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSDF	Maritime Self-Defense Force
NAC	North Atlantic Council

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
PKO	peacekeeping operation
PM	prime minister
RAA	reciprocal access agreement
RAF	Royal Air Force
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

## Introduction

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Japan and western Europe are often described as “natural partners” given their shared values, such as affinity for rule of law, liberal democracy, and free markets. Often underemphasized is the fact that Japan and most countries in western Europe share a similar ally in the United States, either individually or through the multilateral North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As obvious as these similarities might seem, they have not been fully documented. Through this report, I seek to address that gap by focusing on the security relationships Japan is developing with the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, and NATO. The objective is not only to detail the variety of security activities among these actors but to also understand the motivations behind these developments and the implications for the relationships the United States has with these countries and NATO. How the strategies of Japan and its counterparts overlap with one another, and how they benefit the United States, is critical given the return of great power competition.<sup>1</sup>

### Organization of This Report

This report is organized as follows. Chapter Two provides an examination of Japan’s motivation for closer security ties with the UK, France, Germany, and NATO. In it, I contextualize these ties amid the return to great power competition as described by three recent U.S. strategic documents: the U.S. National Security Strategy (U.S. NSS), the National Defense Strategy (NDS), and the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (IPSR). In Chapters Three, Four, Five, and Six, I examine the development of the security ties Japan has with the UK (Chapter Three), France (Chapter Four), Germany (Chapter Five), and NATO (Chapter Six) in greater detail. This examination focuses on three variables: (1) defense and strategic dialogues (e.g., discussions and meetings between government officials, mostly civilian); (2) defense exchanges (programs and agreements that allow military officers to visit or study in another country, including staff talks between services), defense cooperation, and defense-related industrial cooperation (collaboration between countries or defense firms on research or development of military materiel); and (3) training and exercises between their armed forces. Each chapter also includes the motivations of the three European countries and NATO for their outreach to Japan. Chapter Seven concludes by drawing out important aspects of these growing security ties and the implications

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of the President, United States, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C.: White House, December 18, 2017, p. 27.

for the entities’ relationships with the United States. It ends with specific recommendations for ways Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO can better leverage these growing ties.

## Methodology

Although the research for this report was completed in December 2019, the detailed data presented for the three variables were generally current as of June 2019. The research relied on official documents and publications, such as treaties, agreements, statements, and speeches. I also traveled to Tokyo, London, Paris, Brussels, and Berlin, where I conducted 56 distinct interviews with government officials and personnel from the armed forces of Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO, as well as experts on these actors, to better understand the motivations behind past government decisions and the current status of security relations. Because of the sensitivity of the topics discussed, these conversations were conducted anonymously and are identified only as either “expert” or “official” and the date the interview was conducted.<sup>2</sup> Some interviews included multiple people in small-group settings but are cited as individual sources.

I am aware that, at the time this report entered editing, many important areas relevant to this report had changed. Not only were there rumors that Tokyo was considering revising its 2013 National Security Strategy; Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Abe Shinzō had already resigned and been replaced by Suga Yoshihide. Additionally, the UK officially left the European Union on January 31, 2020. Importantly, the onset and spread of the global coronavirus pandemic has dominated the policy agendas of all the countries referenced throughout this report. Finally, the U.S. election in November 2020 resulted in the election of Joseph R. Biden Jr. as president. Because of editing timelines, however, I was not able to incorporate any policy changes that resulted from these events or any modifications in priorities or relationships. Regardless of any possible adjustments that might have occurred, I am confident that the broad trends described in this report are unlikely to have changed.

This report focuses on Japan’s security relationships with Europe. In the past decade, Japan has been strengthening its defense relationships with states in the Indo-Pacific region, including Australia and India. As part of forming these stronger ties, Japan has been exploring new ways to cooperate with these countries, including military exercises, defense equipment cooperation, and increasing strategic dialogues. These developments have been occurring against the backdrop of ever-strengthening defense ties with the United States, with which Japan has sought not only to increase its own defense posture but to also strengthen its interoperability with the United States and explore new roles and missions in the alliance. This effort to grow Japan’s defense relationships in the Indo-Pacific came at the same time that France and the UK have shown an increased interest in the Indo-Pacific. It was because of this interest that I chose to include these two states as case studies, curious as to whether the efforts by Japan and these two European states were occurring on separate tracks or whether there was any convergence of shared efforts. Despite Germany not showing a similar level of interest in the region, because of its status as one of the leaders of Europe, I was interested in including it as

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<sup>2</sup> The study was exempted from further Human Subjects Protection Committee review. The human-subject protection protocols followed included abiding by strictly voluntary participation in interviews and ensuring that all interviews were conducted anonymously with no identifying information that could link collected data to a specific person.

a case study to explore. Although there are examples of other states showing an interest in the Indo-Pacific region and other states with which Japan is building security ties, the inclusion of the UK, France, and Germany made the most sense given their status as leaders in international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), as well as their positions in Europe's collective institutions, such as NATO and the European Union (EU).

The decision to include NATO rather than the EU was based on the specific focus of the report on *security* ties. I am well aware of some of the areas in which the EU has been engaged in security affairs. For example, as part of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy, the Permanent Structured Cooperation seeks to achieve closer cooperation in security and defense affairs of 25 of the 27 EU members.<sup>3</sup> The EU has also been engaged in tackling security issues, such as in the Western Balkans or the antipiracy mission off the Horn of Africa, known as Operation Atalanta. The EU even signed a strategic partnership agreement with Japan, covering political cooperation and cooperation on global challenges, such as climate change and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). Despite these examples, unlike NATO, the EU is not a conventional security organization even if it does occasionally play a role in security and some European leaders push the idea of greater EU roles in security issues. The focus of the report is on security cooperation, including traditional issues related to defense, such as military exercises, defense equipment cooperation, and defense exchanges. The EU's security and defense ambitions are laudable, but they are largely anchored in soft power tools (such as development aid) rather than in military hardware, techniques, and operations (like those of NATO and NATO members). Importantly, although Japan and the EU have many common agendas and interests, Japan does not consider the EU a military actor or a security actor.<sup>4</sup> I chose to examine NATO so as to make more-accurate comparisons and contrasts of efforts among the three European states and NATO.

The focus on Japan's relations with three key European states and NATO is not to suggest that Japan's security relationships with European partners end there. Quite the contrary, in addition to its cooperation with the actors examined herein, Japan has also been cooperating with many other countries throughout Europe, as well as working with the Asia–Europe Meeting and other regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The four actors examined in this study are important because they reflect significant developments across a spectrum of security activities that were traditionally reserved only for Japan's treaty ally, the United States, and, in more-recent years, with such states as Australia and India.

Lastly, names in the text follow conventional name order in the country of origin. U.S. and European names are presented as given name first, followed by family name. Japanese names are presented as family name first, followed by given name. Names in citations and references are per standard U.S. usage.

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<sup>3</sup> Malta and Denmark do not participate.

<sup>4</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019; Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.





## The Strategic Context

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Against the backdrop of a growing China and a resurgent Russia, Japan and Europe have sought new approaches in pursuit of their own security and support for the international order. These have occurred amid changes in how the United States views the security landscape and the roles of its allies and partners.

Although Japan, NATO, and the three European states examined in this report enjoyed bilateral relations prior to 2016, the release of key strategic documents by the United States under Donald Trump's administration placed added importance on these relationships. The growing security ties among U.S. allies is occurring at a time of renewed strategic competition among great powers and a call for U.S. allies to take on more burden sharing and to network among themselves to respond to common security challenges. Even after Joe Biden is inaugurated, I assume that these two aspects will likely continue. Understanding these U.S. documents is therefore a critical first step in framing the growing security relations between Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO.

### U.S. Strategic Documents

Japan and the actors examined in this report share a common ally. As a result, their security strategies rely heavily on Washington and the strategic direction it sets out. In this regard, three strategic documents issued by the White House are critical to understanding the strategic environment within which Japan and Europe are currently growing closer: the 2017 U.S. NSS, the 2018 NDS, and the 2019 U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) IPSR.<sup>1</sup> These documents echo a similar theme: that the world has returned to strategic competition among states and that U.S. friends and allies are needed to defend interests shared by the United States.

In the U.S. NSS, the administration recognized that, "after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned," with China and Russia reasserting their influence regionally and globally.<sup>2</sup> Stating that these two countries "challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity," the U.S. NSS goes on to say that these two states "are determined to make economies less

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017; DoD, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, 2018; DoD, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, June 1, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 27.

free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it says, China and Russia

are fielding military capabilities designed to deny America access in times of crisis and to contest our ability to operate freely in critical commercial zones during peacetime. In short, they are contesting [America’s] geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this, the U.S. NSS states that the United States “must marshal the will and capabilities to compete and prevent unfavorable shifts” in several arenas, including the Indo-Pacific.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, as the administration acknowledged in the U.S. NSS, U.S. “diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic agencies have not kept pace with the changes in the character of competition” and must be upgraded accordingly.<sup>6</sup> In the U.S. NSS, the White House recognizes that this effort is not that of the United States alone, acknowledging that “sustaining favorable balances of power will require a strong commitment and close cooperation with allies and partners because allies and partners magnify U.S. power and extend U.S. influence.”<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, the White House called on U.S. allies to do more individually and collectively. Through allies, the United States is better poised to respond to mutual threats and preserve mutual interests in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>8</sup>

In the 2018 NDS, DoD acknowledges that the United States faces “an increasingly complex global security environment, characterized by overt challenges to the free and open international order and the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition between nations.”<sup>9</sup> Here again, China and Russia are identified as revisionists. The core diagnosis that flows from this is that the U.S. military advantage vis-à-vis these competitors is eroding. If inadequately addressed, this erosion will undermine the United States’ ability to deter aggression and coercion and could encourage these competitors to challenge and subvert the free and open order that supports prosperity and security for the United States and its allies and partners.

To address this, the NDS stipulates that, along with a more lethal and resilient joint force, the United States needs to focus on “a robust constellation of allies and partners . . . [to] sustain American influence and ensure favorable balances of power that safeguard the free and open international order.”<sup>10</sup> It is, after all, the United States’ “network of alliances and partnerships” that remains “the backbone of global security.”<sup>11</sup> Importantly, the NDS states that the United States “will strengthen and evolve our alliances and partnerships into an extended network capable of deterring or decisively acting to meet the shared challenges of our time.”<sup>12</sup> Although

<sup>3</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Executive Office of the President, 2017, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 8.

the NDS fails to mention the importance of interregional allies cooperating, DoD identifies in it the priority of strengthening alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to a networked security architecture capable of deterring aggression, maintaining stability, and ensuring free access to common domains, along with fortifying the NATO alliance.<sup>13</sup>

Coming roughly two years after the NSS, the 2019 IPSR lists the region as “the single most consequential region for America’s future.”<sup>14</sup> Like the White House did in the U.S. NSS and DoD did in the NDS, in the IPSR, DoD identifies China and Russia as competitors. DoD declares that a “more confident and assertive China . . . is willing to accept friction in the pursuit of a more expansive set of political, economic, and security interests.”<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, Beijing’s ultimate objective is Indo-Pacific hegemony in the near term and global preeminence in the long term.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Russia, although not seeking regional hegemony, maintains an interest and influence in the region and is engaging in efforts to reestablish its presence. Its operations and engagement are consistent with its global influence activities, which seek to advance Moscow’s strategic interests while undermining U.S. leadership and the rules-based international order.<sup>17</sup> Making matters worse, DoD recognizes in the IPSR that China and Russia collaborate, thereby multiplying their challenge.

Even though these documents were issued during the Trump administration, the trends they identify will likely remain true under the Biden administration. The challenge these states pose for the Indo-Pacific region matters because of the prevalence of U.S. interests.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. presence is important to securing the region’s sea lanes and all of its efforts helping to “frame and strengthen the international system of clear and transparent rules; peaceful resolution of disputes; and the rule of law that has been vital to the region’s relative security and growing prosperity.”<sup>19</sup> In order “to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific where sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity are safeguarded,” the IPSR explicitly states that not only must the United States sustain a credible combat-forward posture; it must strengthen alliances and build new partnerships and promote a networked region.<sup>20</sup>

The United States recognizes that it cannot sustain a free and open Indo-Pacific alone. Instead, “each country in the region has a shared responsibility to contribute and sustain [regional dynamism]—for the regional order will not survive on its own.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the United States must “cooperate with like-minded allies and partners to address common challenges” because these act as a “force multiplier for peace and interoperability.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to prioritizing Japan, DoD acknowledges in the IPSR the critical role played by some European

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<sup>13</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Namely, (1) to protect the American people, (2) to promote U.S. prosperity, (3) to preserve peace through strength, and (4) to advance U.S. influence (DoD, 2019, pp. 15–16).

<sup>19</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 16.

actors, such as the UK and France, “in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific . . . contribut[ing] vital support to upholding free and open principles in the region and globally.”<sup>23</sup> For the United States, it is through both its military presence and its network of alliances and partnerships that regional security is ensured.<sup>24</sup> As these alliances and partnerships are woven together into a networked security architecture, with shared values, habits of cooperation, and compatible and complementary capabilities, the United States can preserve sovereignty and regional peace and stability.<sup>25</sup>

## Japanese Motivations

The foregoing developments provide necessary context to understand Japan’s motivation to expand its defense cooperation with Europe, a region where it has historically had few security ties. Although some unique motivations drive Japan’s outreach to each actor examined in this study, there are also several underlying similarities. After first examining Japan’s strategic thinking and similarities for developing ties with Europe, Japan’s unique motivations for each actor are presented before moving on to the chapters detailing the discrete bilateral ties between Japan and the three European states and NATO.

### Japan’s Strategic Thinking

As stated in Japan’s only (as of October 2020) National Security Strategy (Japan’s NSS), the country upholds “universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law.”<sup>26</sup> This was important for then-PM Abe Shinzō, who made it a central plank of his foreign policy to further deepen cooperation with countries with which Japan “share[s] such fundamental values as freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law.”<sup>27</sup> His successor, Suga Yoshihide, appears to be continuing this approach, which makes sense given that Japan’s NSS describes upholding these as Japan’s national interests. Specifically, it states, “the maintenance and protection of international order based on rules and universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law.”<sup>28</sup>

More specificity on Japan’s view of the security environment is included in its 2018 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG). Like the White House does in the U.S. NSS, Japan’s leadership, through the NDPG, acknowledges China and Russia as competitors attempting to alter the global and regional order. It lists in detail China’s military development and the challenges it poses, including its engaging “in unilateral, coercive attempts to alter the status quo based on its own assertions that are incompatible with existing international

<sup>23</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> DoD, 2019, pp. 44–45.

<sup>26</sup> Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy*, December 17, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, policy speech, 190th Session of the Diet, Tokyo, January 22, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Japan, 2013, p. 4.

order.”<sup>29</sup> For Japan, the problem posed by China is multifaceted, including China’s nontransparent military modernization, coercion in the maritime domain, and unilateral challenge to the international system, rules, and norms.

Although the NDPG includes reference to Russia, that section is much shorter and less detailed than the section on China (or even North Korea). In the document, Japan acknowledges that Russia is enhancing its military posture via force modernization efforts and is in sharp confrontation with Europe and the United States over issues in Ukraine and that Russia’s military activities are trending upward in the Arctic Circle, Europe, areas around the United States, and the Middle East.<sup>30</sup> Although Japan has shown solidarity with other Group of Seven (G7) countries since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine by not recognizing Moscow’s annexation of Crimea and rejecting “any attempt to change the status quo by force or coercion,”<sup>31</sup> Japan imposed sanctions on Russia only after pressure by the United States. Even then, the sanctions were considered of limited impact.<sup>32</sup> Even after Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the Abe administration pursued diplomacy with Moscow to settle a territorial dispute over four islands north of the island of Hokkaidō (called the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kuriles in Russia) and sign a peace treaty to formally end World War II. Although some believed that Abe’s true intention in these endeavors was a strategic one—to improve relations at a time when Japan feels threatened by China and North Korea and is caught in a diplomatic quagmire with South Korea—critics argued that his approach to the issue was a “failure.”<sup>33</sup> His successor, Suga, has so far not pursued the issue as actively as Abe did, but he has indicated a similar interest.

To fulfill its national interests, in its NSS, Japan has identified three national security objectives:

1. strengthen the deterrence necessary for maintaining Japan’s peace and security and for ensuring its survival
2. improve the security environment of the Asia–Pacific region and prevent the emergence of and reduce direct threats to Japan by
  - strengthening the Japan–U.S. alliance,
  - enhancing the trust and cooperative relationships between Japan and its partners within and outside the Asia–Pacific region
  - promoting practical security cooperation
3. improve the global security environment and build a peaceful, stable, and prosperous international community by strengthening the international order based on universal values and rules.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Defense (MOD), Japan, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and Beyond*, provisional translation, December 18, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> MOD, 2018, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan, “Year 2015 as the Opening of a New Chapter in Japan–Europe Relations,” speech, Japan Trilateral Forum, Brussels, January 21, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Maria Shagina, “How to Make Sense of Japan’s Delicate Balance Between Russia and Ukraine,” *UkraineAlert*, blog, Atlantic Council, May 17, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> James D. J. Brown, “Time for Abe to Come Clean on Territorial Dispute with Russia,” *Nikkei Asia*, July 2, 2019; “Editorial: Abe’s Failed Russian Strategy in Urgent Need of Makeover,” *Asahi Shimbun*, July 2, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Government of Japan, 2013, p. 5.

This report focuses largely on the second and third of these objectives and Japan’s acknowledgment in its NSS that the country “cannot secure its own peace and security by itself.”<sup>35</sup> Toward this end, the Abe and Suga administrations have actively promoted a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).

Japan’s pursuit of a FOIP has three main pillars.<sup>36</sup>

- The first is maintaining fundamental principles of the international order, which are the foundation of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. This includes the promotion of such things as the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free trade.
- The second pillar is enhancing regional connectivity to promote economic prosperity. This includes physical connectivity, such as through infrastructure; people-to-people connectivity, such as through education; and institutional connectivity, such as those provided through common rules.
- The third pillar is a commitment to responding to challenges to peace and stability. Through capacity building to regional states, as well as noncombat support for such things as HA/DR, peacekeeping operations (PKOs), or antipiracy, Japan can help keep the region stable.

In light of these pillars together, Japan is demonstrating its commitment to regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

Because Japan sees FOIP as an inclusive construct, it is motivated to get other countries’ support. It is in line with this thinking that Japan sees Europe as having the ability to play a major role in improving the global security environment and strengthening the international order. According to then–Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, Europe takes pride of place alongside the United States because Europe, like Japan and the United States, has “acted together to protect and strengthen” values, such as “freedom, democracy, the rule of law, market-based economy and fundamental human rights” and “the United Nations and other international systems that realize those values.”<sup>37</sup> For Japan, the strength of their relationship is based on mutual trust.<sup>38</sup> It is because of this trust and mutual respect for values that Japan is prepared to work with individual European countries or collectively with an organization, such as NATO.

### **Japan’s Motivations to Expand Partnerships**

Following from this strategic outlook, in the past decade, the primary objective of Japan’s foreign policy has been to expand partnerships with states that share its outlook on and concerns about the international system. It is toward this end that Japan has made a dedicated effort to strengthen its alliance with the United States while diversifying its strategic partnerships.<sup>39</sup> These are not mutually exclusive. Both are meant to strengthen and protect the international liberal order and defend against challenges to Japan’s national interests. Under this approach,

<sup>35</sup> Government of Japan, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Japan, “Towards Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” June 2019, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Kishida, 2015, pp. 1–2.

<sup>38</sup> Kishida, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan’s Growing Hard Hedge Against China,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, pp. 97–122; Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan’s Pushback of China,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2015, pp. 167–183.



Japan has been strengthening ties with Europe. Four key motivations have driven Japan to strengthen security ties with NATO and the three countries examined in this study:

1. Protect the rules-based international order.
2. Support the United States.
3. Expand operational knowledge and defense-related industrial opportunities.
4. Increase European understanding of Indo-Pacific security challenges.

After a discussion of each of these overall motivations is a section on Japan's motivations specific to ties with the UK, France, Germany, and NATO.

### **1. Protect the Rules-Based International Order**

Japan acknowledges that it cannot preserve its security and the international order alone. Tokyo recognizes that, in addition to strengthening its alliance with the United States, it is in Japan's interest to strengthen security cooperation with other countries.<sup>40</sup> This is because Japan sees common problems that are "so big we can't handle [them] alone."<sup>41</sup> This is supported by Japan's NSS, in which Japan's leadership acknowledges the need to engage with other partners both within and outside the region, including European countries.

For Japan, this is critical because the rules-based international order is endangered. Japan wants to protect this order, but it lacks friends in its neighborhood. Having different partners changes the dynamic, strengthening Japan's position. It enables Japan to work with like-minded partners "to protect the international global commons . . . and together uphold the international principles against threats to these."<sup>42</sup> For Japan, "the more we can show it's not just the U.S. or Japan but free and open countries, it sends the right message."<sup>43</sup> Because of their mutual respect for this order, Japan sees Europe as "partners" which "together take a leading role in ensuring the peace, stability and prosperity of the international community."<sup>44</sup> Western Europe is special because Japan sees itself as sharing with it similar values and principles. As described in Japan's *Diplomatic Bluebook*, these include "freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" and "a strong commitment to maintaining and bolstering a free and open international order."<sup>45</sup>

### **2. Support the United States**

A "significant number of Japanese officials" have voiced concerns that the Trump administration "doesn't fully understand the value of alliances."<sup>46</sup> But this is part of a broader trend in which Tokyo is also disappointed that the United States is "not emphasizing its role in defending [the] global commons."<sup>47</sup> Importantly, Tokyo recognizes that these same perceptions are

<sup>40</sup> MOD, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Government of Japan, 2013, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2018*, 2018b, p. 127.

<sup>46</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

held in Europe, causing tensions in transatlantic ties. Under these conditions, Tokyo recognizes that it is “hard [for Europe] to deepen security cooperation with” the United States.<sup>48</sup> The problem for both Japan and Europe is that, in recent years, the United States is “becoming more inward looking and rejecting cooperation with other countries” at the same time as it wants its allies to do more.<sup>49</sup> With the United States not emphasizing its role in defending the global commons, the imperative to work together with Europe has become more urgent.

At the same time, Japan is aware that the United States is its only ally. As expressed by one official, Tokyo “does not mistake who is going to rescue Japan in times of difficulties.”<sup>50</sup> Despite the disappointment of those in Tokyo in the Trump administration’s view of alliances, Japan is not attempting to disparage the United States or build separate ties. One official admitted that, “when we talk about the U.S. [to European counterparts], the important thing is not to blame the U.S. but to pull the U.S. back to continue cooperation with international society.”<sup>51</sup> Another acknowledges that, when meeting with European counterparts, Tokyo not only “push[es] Europe to engage with” the United States; it also “press[es] not to present ideas separate from the U.S. alliance. . . . [W]e are stressing to be mindful of U.S. alliances.”<sup>52</sup> Tokyo’s guiding frame is that “we can’t let our closer security ties look like we are excluding the U.S.”<sup>53</sup>

Japan recognizes that “good relations with [Europe] have a good impact on the U.S. [by] sharing the burden.”<sup>54</sup> According to then–Foreign Minister Kōno Tarō, “it is important for the international community overall to help the United States through burden sharing and cooperation, and that from this perspective cooperation between Japan and Europe is extremely important.”<sup>55</sup> Cooperating with Europe enables Japan and Europe to “help with U.S. burden sharing on . . . efforts” to support such things as democracy, rule of law, and the international order.<sup>56</sup> Operationally, Japan recognizes that, if there is a fight in the Indo-Pacific region, the United States will not be the only country engaged in that fight.<sup>57</sup> It is because of this fact that Japanese officials work at “augmenting the U.S., not trying to find safety nets if the U.S. fails.”<sup>58</sup>

### ***3. Expand Operational Knowledge and Defense-Related Industrial Opportunities***

Because the United States is Japan’s sole ally, Japan remains highly reliant on it. Through decades of joint exercises, exchanges, foreign military sales, and some limited joint weapon development projects, it is understandable that Japan’s main reference point for all things

<sup>48</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> MOFA, “Extraordinary Press Conference by Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno,” February 17, 2018a.

<sup>56</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.



defense and security would be the United States. Yet, Japan is eager to learn more from other countries.

Collaboration with European countries offers this opportunity and is a third motivation for Japan. Japan's constitution renounces war and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes and declares that the country will not maintain war potential. This is significant because, although Japan interprets its constitution as renouncing *aggressive* war, not defensive war, it nevertheless constrains Japan's defense efforts to primarily areas involving self-defense. Given this self-defense focus, historically, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have not had any meaningfully operational interaction with militaries of other countries—with the exception of the United States—apart from goodwill visits or officer exchanges. As Japan's security environment has changed, however, Tokyo has sought to learn from other countries' militaries in order to meet the rapidly changing security challenges. Through exercises, for example, Japan sees an opportunity to increase the skills of its SDF, including how to cooperate with other militaries.<sup>59</sup> Working with European militaries that deploy far from home helps the SDF learn about long-distance power projection procedures because the SDF are not well versed in how to operate over long distances for long periods of time.<sup>60</sup> Japan can also learn about the behavior of Russian jets that enter European airspace, as well as the best practices that European states use to counter them.<sup>61</sup>

Japanese leadership is also looking for ways to expand the market for Japan's defense industries; the defense industry's sole market has historically been domestic. Until 2014, exporting defense equipment was not possible because of domestic restrictions. In April 2014, however, Tokyo adopted "Three Principles of Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology" to enable Japan's defense industries to engage in overseas transfer of defense equipment and technology.<sup>62</sup> This was an effort by the Abe administration "to help expand the market for parts makers and to strengthen the business base of defense-industry companies, aiming to maintain, develop, and enhance Japan's defense-related production and technological foundations."<sup>63</sup> The result of this change expanded the possibility of cooperating with U.S. allies and partners in joint technological development projects and related research and production activities for defense equipment.

This included Europe. Because Japan understands that, if it partners with only the United States, "Japanese industries will never break out of the domestic trap," partnering with Europe is an opportunity for Japanese defense industries to partner with smaller defense companies that present more-favorable opportunities for Japan.<sup>64</sup> What is more, Europe provides Japan with alternative sources of technology access.<sup>65</sup> Although Japan's alliance with the United States is special, Japanese leaders feel that domestic defense industries need to cooperate with

<sup>59</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 25, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 25, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> MOFA, "The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology," April 1, 2014c.

<sup>63</sup> Takashi Shiraishi, "The Three Principles on Arms Exports: Why Are They Up for Replacement?" *Nippon.com*, March 31, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

others if the United States is not willing to do so in some circumstances.<sup>66</sup> Japan is interested in UK combat systems and software, for example.<sup>67</sup> Japanese industries also see closer security ties with Europe as a means to expand industrial cooperation.<sup>68</sup> Europe offers a market in which Japanese technology is in demand.<sup>69</sup>

#### **4. Increase European Awareness of Indo-Pacific Security Challenges**

Associated with the understanding that Japan alone is not capable of responding to regional challenges is a recognition that it lacks situational awareness in some key areas. Japan both recognizes the interconnected nature of today's security threats and the fact that it is ill equipped to track and respond to these threats, particularly those that emanate from outside of Japan's immediate surroundings. Japan, for example, lacks access to the same types of intelligence that members of the Five Eyes signals intelligence–sharing network have. In lieu of that, Japan sees closer cooperation with Europe, particularly the UK and France, as a means to access better situational awareness. An objective voiced repeatedly by interviewees was for Japan to eventually be allowed as a member of Five Eyes. In addition to consuming this intelligence, Japan is interested in learning better collection and analysis techniques.<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note, however, that a separate discussion in Japan is how to get Europe more involved in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>71</sup> There used to be a sense in Tokyo that there was not an appropriate awareness in Europe of the security situation that Japan faces in the region; rather, Europe was focused simply on economics.<sup>72</sup> Security dialogues and defense exchanges were seen as a means to change that dynamic. These provide opportunities to inform Europe of Japan's security challenges, as well as to address shared security challenges with Europe.<sup>73</sup> Raising awareness, however, does not mean that Japanese decisionmakers expect European countries, or NATO, to come to Japan's aid in a crisis. Just as it is difficult for Japan to operate in Europe, Japanese decisionmakers understand that it is difficult for most of Europe to operate on a sustained basis in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>74</sup> This is because most European states lack the capacity to contribute much beyond Europe. That said, if European countries and NATO express a desire to do more and have the capacity to do so, such as participating in regional freedom-of-navigation transits, Japan welcomes it. But getting Europe to *want* to do more requires it to better understand the nature of the region's challenges. Greater interaction and security exchanges provide that opportunity to promote “a better understanding among European countries concerning Japan's standpoint and efforts” on various subjects.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 22, 2019; retired Japanese official, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> MOFA, 2018b, p. 128.

## Country-Specific Japanese Motivations

### *The United Kingdom*

For Japan, the fact that the UK is not a regional power but still active in the region resonates. Interviewees often acknowledged that, in contrast to the French, whose main purpose in the region is to protect its nationals and territories, the UK *wants* to be in the region. This resonates for Japan because it sees the UK as a “partner of choice” that shares strategic interests and fundamental values and a goal “to preserve [these] fundamental values.”<sup>76</sup>

Brexit has not changed that. It is true that Japan is not happy with Brexit. Japan’s former ambassador to the UK, Tsuruoka Koji was an outspoken critic of the UK’s decision to leave the EU because, long ago, Japan decided that the UK would be its primary partner in Europe.<sup>77</sup> Japan invested heavily in the UK, seeing it as Japan’s preferred gateway to the EU. Prior to Brexit, the often-heard complaint from Japan about Brexit was that more than 1,000 Japanese companies in the UK stood to lose if no deal were reached, affecting roughly 140,000 employees of Japanese firms.<sup>78</sup> With the UK out of the EU, Japan is no longer able to rely on this gateway relationship, forcing Japan to find an alternative partner to serve as that EU gateway.

Importantly, even though Brexit affects the UK’s economic ties with the EU while its alliance commitments to NATO remain unchanged, Japan sees Brexit as a possible blessing in disguise for bilateral security ties. This is because, while maintaining its NATO commitments, the UK may seek to expand bilateral ties with other countries, including in the security domain. Termed the “Tokyo Consensus,” there is a view among Japanese leadership that

post-Brexit Britain will no longer be able to identify with Europe in the way it did pre-Brexit. A soul-searching Britain will instead seek to rediscover, and reinvest in, an older self-image which holds that, relative to nations on the Continent, Britain is still a great seafaring country with global interests that cover much of the English-speaking world . . . [which will] lead Britain to recognise that now is the time to make its military and diplomatic presence more felt when and where doing so will help sustain its position as a leading world power.<sup>79</sup>

Whether or not Brexit will draw the UK and Japan closer together remains unknown. Even before Brexit, one of the primary motivations driving Japan toward closer security ties with the UK was a desire to learn certain skills. One is strategic communications.<sup>80</sup> For years, the UK has been able to maximize its global influence despite limited resources. Japan, despite being the third-largest global economy, has been unable to maximize its global influence. Cooperating with the UK provides Japan an opportunity to change that. Other practical skills Japan seeks are more operational in nature and specific to the UK armed forces. For example, although the SDF have learned a lot from the U.S. Marine Corps in the SDF’s development of amphibious capabilities, the scale and purpose of the U.S. Marine Corps are too big and expe-

<sup>76</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Lianna Brinded, “With Its Power over Britain, Japan Is Aiming to Completely Reshape Brexit,” *Quartz*, February 9, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> “Charm Defensive: Shinzo Abe Visits Britain to Firm Up Security Ties,” *The Economist*, January 10, 2019; Brinded, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Tomohiko Taniguchi, “Brexit: The View from Japan (or the ‘Tokyo Consensus’),” *In the Long Run*, August 20, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

ditionary in nature to generalize to Japan's needs. The UK's Corps of Royal Marines, by contrast, is closer in size to the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, part of Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), with approximately the same-size budget and designed to fight in a similar manner, making it a good example from which to learn.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, because the scale of a Royal Navy carrier strike group is similar to that of one of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) groups built around a helicopter carrier (formally designated as a helicopter destroyer), the MSDF is interested in learning relevant lessons from the Royal Navy pertaining to naval operations.<sup>82</sup>

### France

Japan also looks to France to contribute to the stability of the maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>83</sup> The motivation for engaging Paris, however, is slightly different from that for engaging London. Part of Japan's motivation derives from France's uniqueness as a regional power. Although the UK, France, and Germany are all countries that are geographically distant from the Indo-Pacific, France is unique in that it maintains a permanent regional presence due to the continued existence of overseas territories. It is because of these that Japan emphasizes cooperation with France: It is seen as "more serious" about engagement.<sup>84</sup> As a regional power, France has "Pacific DNA," enabling it to relate to common problems Japan faces through direct exposure to regional threats.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, although Japan benefits from France's different sources of regional information, it is interested in getting France to broaden its view beyond its territorial interests.<sup>86</sup> More importantly, Japan takes note of France's regional engagement, whether it be challenging Chinese claims or conducting exercises. This physical presence and active engagement are things Tokyo highly values. Strengthening ties with France could also enable Japan to gain broader information from a regional power with broader coverage, including satellites.<sup>87</sup>

A second motivation for Japanese security cooperation with France is that the value of France as a strategic partner has increased with Brexit.<sup>88</sup> As described in Chapter Three, Japan decided long ago to make the UK its primary partner of choice in Europe. Because Brexit means that the UK lost its EU connection, Japan lost its primary gateway to the EU and thus requires a new gateway. Although Paris and Berlin are the two obvious alternatives, as shown in Chapter Five, when it comes to the security dimension of Japan's outreach to Europe, Berlin's continued reluctance to engage heavily in security affairs makes France a preferred partner.

<sup>81</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 26, 2019; Japanese official, interview with the author, July 26, 2019; Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> MOD, 2018, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "A New Japan–France Strategic Partnership: A View from Tokyo," *Lettre du Centre Asie*, No. 75, Institut français des relations internationale, November 16, 2018b.

## **Germany**

Japan's security relations with Germany have moved slowly, so there is not much motivation to expand this partnership, apart from the broad motivations of Japan described in the previous section of this chapter. Tokyo understands that Berlin is a continental power focused on Europe and the areas closest to Europe. This has made it difficult to engage with Germany.<sup>89</sup> Because Japan is focused both on the Indo-Pacific region and the wider international order, Tokyo admits that the two capitals are still in the process of trying to find a common interest.<sup>90</sup> Still, because Japan views Germany as the leader of Europe, the main driver of the EU, and a strong promoter of multilateralism, Japan views engagement with Germany as an opportunity to get Europe more engaged in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>91</sup> This motivates Japan because it believes that getting Germany more interested in the Indo-Pacific region will help get Europe's multilateral institutions more involved.<sup>92</sup> As Germany has slowly soured on China and has become increasingly cautious of Chinese behavior, Japan's interest in Germany as a security partner has increased.

## **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

Multiple factors motivate Japan's ties with NATO. One is strategic messaging. When Japan first made a concerted outreach to NATO during the first Abe administration, Tokyo was emphasizing value diplomacy. Then-PM Abe was interested more in the strategic messaging of the relationship than in the operational, because Japan sees NATO as "the very core of the core of the West."<sup>93</sup> As a partner to this "most exclusive club in the West," it put Japan at the table, which Japan found politically desirable.<sup>94</sup> This is important because NATO plays a significant role in shaping international public opinion. Japan wanted a partner with which to deal with global issues.<sup>95</sup> Closer ties means that Japan can "share perceptions on East Asia's security environment."<sup>96</sup> The fact that the United States is a core member of NATO helped Japan decide that closer relations were in its interest.<sup>97</sup>

That is not to say that military or operational dimensions are absent. Japan is impressed by the level of interoperability among NATO members—not just the way their equipment interacts but their way of doing business with one another on a multilateral level.<sup>98</sup> Japan sees in NATO an organization that sets standards for military engagement and military exchanges.<sup>99</sup> Closer ties with NATO are therefore an opportunity to learn about standardization agree-

<sup>89</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>90</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 19, 2019; German official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 18, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>95</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "NATO and Japan as Multifaceted Partners," North Atlantic Treaty Organization Defense College, Research Paper 91, April 2013, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>99</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

ments, joint research and development, and standardization of operational terms.<sup>100</sup> Such engagement also enables Japan to better understand how multilateral planning and decision-making take place.<sup>101</sup> Still, for Japan, NATO’s “greatest comparative advantage” is the expertise it can provide Japan in terms of learning about interoperability between different countries and how to conduct multilateral operations.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

Amid renewed strategic competition, Japan has made a concerted effort to develop security ties with three key European states and NATO. The chapters that follow focus on the individual security relationships that Japan has developed with the UK, France, Germany, and NATO, respectively. In addition to highlighting the historical developments in each of these bilateral ties, the chapters focus on security ties along three specific variables: (1) strategic and defense dialogues; (2) defense exchanges, defense cooperation, and defense-related industrial cooperation; and (3) training and exercises.

Importantly, these chapters present each actor’s motivations to partner with Japan. As these chapters show, despite these security ties being at different stages of maturity, the motivations behind these developments are similar.

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<sup>100</sup>Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>101</sup>Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>102</sup>Tsuruoka, 2013, p. 6.



## The United Kingdom

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Despite having little territorial presence in the Indo-Pacific, the UK remains involved in the region, with deepening security cooperation ties to Japan. The speed and substance of bilateral ties between Japan and the UK is, according to one of Japan's leading Europe scholars, Tsuruoka Michito, "remarkable."<sup>1</sup> In addition to cooperating to realize a free and open region, the two nations conduct regular defense and security dialogues and joint exercises, cooperate in defense equipment and technology, and enjoy deepening ties between their armed forces. Moreover, the rapidly changing security environment makes each relevant to the other's strategic thinking, leading some to call these growing security ties a "quasi-alliance."<sup>2</sup> Despite the robustness of their ties, they lack agreement on how they envision these disparate ties coming together and for what purpose.

### History

Japan's relationship with the UK is unique in that the UK is the only country other than the United States with which Japan has ever had a bilateral alliance. Established on January 30, 1902, out of shared interest in containing Russia, the alliance lasted for more than two decades, ending on August 17, 1923, under increasing concerns in London about Japan's growing footprint in China. At the outset of World War II, Imperial Japan eventually conquered the British colonies of Hong Kong, Borneo, Burma, Singapore, and Malaya. The legacies of war and lingering animosity in the UK toward Japan meant that the relationship between the two countries was not close in the decades that followed the war. As common allies of the United States in the Cold War and as nations with a shared history of mutual ambivalence toward their continental neighbors, they were bound by some commonalities.<sup>3</sup> Matters began to change after Japan decided to invest heavily in the UK in the 1980s. For example, in 1985, the two countries established the UK–Japan 2000 Group (today known as the UK–Japan 21st Century Group), an advisory group to study Japan–UK cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "Japan and the UK as Strategic Partners After Brexit," *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 410, January 9, 2018a, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Shetler-Jones, "Britain's Quasi-Alliance with Japan," in Luis Simón and Ulrich Speck, eds., *Natural Partners? Europe, Japan and Security in the Indo-Pacific*, Madrid, Spain: Real Instituto Elcano, Elcano policy paper, November 2018, pp. 15–19.

<sup>3</sup> John Nilsson-Wright, "The UK–Japan Relationship: Five Things You Should Know," Chatham House, May 31, 2019a.

<sup>4</sup> MOFA, "Japan–United Kingdom Relations (Basic Data)," May 22, 2019g.

While economic ties between the two countries grew, security ties were slow to follow. Even though the UK maintained a presence in Singapore until the early 1970s and until the late 1990s in Hong Kong, it was not until the early 2000s that the UK focused on Asia in any grand strategic way; rather, London was focused exclusively on trade.<sup>5</sup> Progress in security relations arguably began in the early 2000s in Iraq when UK soldiers were tasked with force protection to assist Japanese forces conducting humanitarian engineering operations. The real first step in expanding security relations began in January 2007 with a joint statement that set out a vision for bilateral ties. Beginning with a declaration that the relationship was “the best it has ever been” and calling the two nations “natural strategic partners,” the statement listed commonalities on which the relationship thrived.<sup>6</sup> These included shared values, international interests, a common vision of peace, security and international prosperity, and a shared interest in combating global challenges. Yet the statement took a cautious approach to some specific areas of security cooperation; these were limited to broad international security concerns, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, human rights abuses in North Korea, international terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>7</sup>

The next significant step occurred in 2012, when PMs Noda Yoshihiko and David Cameron released a joint statement. Although the document retained language stressing their commitment to promoting global prosperity and security based on shared values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and a market-based approach to economic development, ties were recast as a “leading strategic partnership” with a statement that the two nations were “each other’s most important partners in Asia and Europe.”<sup>8</sup> North Korea was explicitly criticized, but China was mentioned only as “an opportunity.”<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the statement said that Japan and the UK would “cooperate on and address the issues of instability and uncertainty in East Asia.”<sup>10</sup> Importantly, the actionable items included the launch of a foreign minister–led strategic dialogue; their intention to endorse a defense cooperation memorandum; the start of negotiations on an information security agreement (ISA); their intention to jointly develop and produce defense equipment; and a commitment to explore joint exercises, training, and unit-to-unit affiliations.<sup>11</sup>

Two years later, the countries recast their relationship as a “dynamic strategic partnership” based on shared values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and open and transparent markets.<sup>12</sup> More explicit than previous statements, the 2014 joint statement was more specific in areas of cooperation, emphasizing a mutual commitment to “defend and protect the global commons, on the high seas, in cyberspace, and in outer space, to work together to support an international system based on the rule of law and international norms.”<sup>13</sup> Like their 2012 state-

<sup>5</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> MOFA, “Japan UK Joint Statement: A Framework for the Future,” January 9, 2007a.

<sup>7</sup> MOFA, 2007a.

<sup>8</sup> David Cameron, PM, UK, and Yoshihiko Noda, PM, Japan, “Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of the UK and Japan: A Leading Strategic Partnership for Global Prosperity and Security,” April 10, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Cameron and Noda, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Cameron and Noda, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Cameron and Noda, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> MOFA, “UK–Japan Joint Statement: A Dynamic Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century,” May 1, 2014g, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> MOFA, 2014g, p. 1.



ment, the 2014 one mentioned their shared commitment to a stable East Asia. Unlike prior statements, the 2014 statement detailed opportunities for cooperation, going beyond ministerial meetings to include an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA); frameworks to receive and provide support to each other's visiting personnel and assets; mechanisms for sharing information and analysis; a program of joint exercises; joint development and production of defense equipment; and the establishment of a foreign and defense ministerial meeting. Although China was absent, Russia's annexation of Crimea was included, as well as other global issues, such as situations in Syria, Iran, and the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>14</sup>

The next step forward in security ties occurred in August 2017 during a visit to Japan by then-UK PM Theresa May. May became the first European leader—and only the second foreign leader—to attend a special session of Japan's National Security Council.<sup>15</sup> At a joint press conference with then-PM Abe, May reiterated their close relationship, emphasizing the UK's "strong sense of solidarity with the Japanese people," noting that the two countries were "natural partners," and reiterating that they were "each other's closest security partners in Asia and Europe."<sup>16</sup> Importantly, the visit resulted in four joint statements, two of which are relevant to security cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

A joint vision statement upgraded bilateral ties to "global strategic partners" that share common interests in the rules-based international system and fundamental values.<sup>18</sup> Declaring that "security and defence [are] a cornerstone of [their] relationship," the statement took a forward-leaning approach, declaring a strong opposition against "unilateral actions that seek to increase tension or change the status quo by force or coercion," and noted the need to elevate their security cooperation to the next level.<sup>19</sup> Like previous documents, however, it focused on "shared challenges" in the world and in the Indo-Pacific region, including specific reference to North Korea, but did not mention China or shared challenges in areas closer to the UK, which is indicative of some divergence in security perspectives during this time period.

A joint declaration on security cooperation reaffirmed their commitment to elevating their "global strategic partnership" to the "next level" and confirmed that they would continue to promote security cooperation vis-à-vis common strategic challenges to the rules-based international system "as the closest security partners" in Asia and Europe.<sup>20</sup> The document outlined several areas for cooperation, including joint exercises, defense equipment and technology cooperation, counterterrorism, and cybersecurity.<sup>21</sup> The two countries also committed themselves to developing an action plan for 16 areas of cooperation that included exchanges of strategic assessment and relevant information, joint exercises, cooperation in defense equip-

<sup>14</sup> MOFA, 2014g, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Reiji Yoshida, "In Tokyo, British Prime Minister Stresses Solidarity on Defense, Brexit," *Japan Times*, August 31, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Theresa May, PM, UK, "PM Press Conference with PM Abe of Japan: 31 August 2017," speech, Tokyo, August 31, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Not examined here: "Japan–UK Joint Declaration on Prosperity Cooperation" (Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, and Theresa May, PM, UK, August 31, 2017a) and "Joint Statement on North Korea" (Theresa May, PM, UK, and Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, August 31, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, and Theresa May, PM, UK, "Japan–UK Joint Vision Statement," policy paper, August 31, 2017c, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Abe and May, 2017c, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Abe and May, 2017b, pp. 1–2.

<sup>21</sup> Abe and May, 2017b, p. 4.

ment and technology, and maritime security and cybersecurity. Importantly, the declaration said, “the security challenges for Japan and the UK are now intertwined,” signaling a mutual interest in each other’s security.<sup>22</sup>

Two years later, Abe and May issued another joint statement.<sup>23</sup> Although most of the content was the same as that of previous documents, this statement included more-explicit Japanese support of the UK’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific; a commitment to strengthen maritime security cooperation; a commitment to extending the defense partnership further with exercises in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific; and a framework to improve procedures to facilitate joint operations and exercises between their armed forces. Abe met with May’s successor, Boris Johnson, but, because of London’s focus on Brexit at the time, nothing substantive occurred in bilateral ties beyond continued support of the UK’s engagement in the Indo-Pacific and expressions of desire to continue to strengthen ties, including further cooperation in security and defense.<sup>24</sup> In the sections that follow, greater details on the specific areas of security cooperation are presented.

## Defense and Strategic Dialogues

Japan and the UK have a robust set of defense and strategic dialogues. Their defense ministries have engaged in discussions infrequently since the 1970s but have increased throughout the 2000s. These have been led predominantly by the UK. Starting with a February 1973 visit by Secretary of State for Defence Peter Carrington, ministerial-level UK defense officials have visited Japan 11 times.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, Japan’s first defense leader visit to the UK did not occur until April 1992, when Miyashita Sohei, then–Director General of the Japan Defense Agency (JDA), paid a call to London. Since then, six subsequent visits have occurred by JDA directors general and, later (after 2007), ministers of defense.<sup>26</sup> Ministerial-level meetings have also occurred at international gatherings, such as the Shangri-La Dialogues or Munich Security Conferences.

These have been supported by ongoing lower-level discussions. Japan’s administrative vice ministers of the JDA or MOD have visited the UK 14 times since 1966, with only three occurring since Abe returned in 2012.<sup>27</sup> UK counterparts have reciprocated four times, with the most recent in 2016.<sup>28</sup> There have also been an infrequent number of visits by the vice

<sup>22</sup> Abe and May, 2017b, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> MOFA, “UK–Japan Joint Statement,” January 10, 2019a.

<sup>24</sup> MOFA, “Japan–UK Summit Meeting,” August 26, 2019k.

<sup>25</sup> UK officials’ visits to Japan took place in February 1973, October and November 1986, April 1993, January 1996, May 2002, September 2003, September 2004, October 2011, January 2016, and April 2017 (MOD, “日英防衛協力・交流主要実績” [Japan–UK defense cooperation/exchanges, major achievements], document obtained by the author, June 10, 2019f, p. 1).

<sup>26</sup> Japan’s visits to the UK took place in April 1992, July 1997, January 2001, January 2004, January 2006, and January 2015 (MOD, 2019f, p. 1).

<sup>27</sup> The visits took place in January 1966, January 1975, January 1977, January 1983, January 1990, May 1991, September 1992, September 1994, January 1996, May 1997, January 1998, January 2013, February 2014, and February 2018 (MOD, 2019f, p. 2).

<sup>28</sup> November 1989, February 1993, July 1997, and December 2016 (MOD, 2019f, p. 2).

minister or state minister level of each country's defense ministry, with Japan visiting the UK six times and the UK visiting Japan four.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, the two countries have also enjoyed regular military–military dialogues since 2002. Held at the level of director general in both countries' ministries of defense and joined by officers of their armed forces, the purpose of these dialogues is to discuss common security concerns and strengthen bilateral security and defense cooperation.<sup>30</sup> These exchanges have been held a total of 13 times, with six occurring since 2012.<sup>31</sup>

Augmenting these discussions have been ongoing strategic dialogues held by the two countries' foreign ministry establishments. Aside from the regular diplomatic visits conducted by their foreign ministers, both sides agreed in 2012 during the Noda–Cameron summit on the need to share assessments and strategic views of the regional and international environment, leading to the establishment of a Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue.<sup>32</sup> The inaugural meeting was held in October 2012, and subsequent dialogues have been held a total of seven times.<sup>33</sup> In addition to providing the ministers opportunities to share assessments of world events, these are opportunities for the nations to reiterate their shared values and discuss issues of interest—such as North Korea, African development, and cybersecurity—as well as possible ways to cooperate in addressing them.

The two countries also enjoy a long-running political–military dialogue held at regular intervals since November 1990. Held at the level of director general in the JDA or MOD and MOFA and the UK's Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (renamed the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in September 2020) and, as needed, officers at the O6 level, the purpose is to promote mutual understanding and mutual trust through discussion of regional issues, common concerns, and possible areas of cooperation. To date, such exchanges have been held a total of 17 times, with six occurring since Abe returned to office in 2012.<sup>34</sup> Although the purpose has not changed since 1990, the importance of these meetings has grown, given the expanding areas of cooperation. Significantly, at Japan's urging, the two sides agreed at the May 1, 2014, Abe–Cameron summit to establish a ministerial-level version.<sup>35</sup> On January 21, 2015, the inaugural UK–Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting was held, or 2+2 meeting. Two additional such meetings have been held since that

<sup>29</sup> Japanese visits to UK took place in September 2010, September 2013, May and July 2014, September 2016, and September 2018. UK visits to Japan were in October 2009, April 2011, July 2013, and September 2018 (MOD, 2019f, p. 2).

<sup>30</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 10, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> July 2002, February 2004, February 2006, June 2007, October 2008, November 2009, February 2011, January and December 2013, September 2015, October 2016, November 2017, and February 2019 (MOD, 2019f, p. 4).

<sup>32</sup> Cameron and Noda, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> October 17–18, 2012; October 16, 2013; January 21 and August 8, 2015; January 8, 2016; July 21, 2017; and September 18, 2018 (MOFA, “日英外相戦略対話” [Japan–UK foreign ministers' strategic dialogue], document obtained by the author, undated).

<sup>34</sup> November 1990, March 1992, October 1993, November 1994, December 1995, June 1997, April 2002, August 2006, June 2007, November 2009, February 2011, January and December 2013, September 2015, October 2016, November 2017, and February 2019 (MOD, 2019f, p. 5).

<sup>35</sup> UK official, email correspondence with the author, December 19, 2019.

time.<sup>36</sup> A fourth one was scheduled for April 2019 but was postponed because of issues associated with Brexit.<sup>37</sup>

These numerous dialogues are critical for two reasons. First, they provide each side a venue in which to discuss security issues to sound out possible areas for cooperation. Looking at past meetings, the two countries have discussed North Korea, the East and South China Seas, Ukraine, disarmament, nonproliferation, arms control, HA/DR, UN reform, antipiracy initiatives, cybersecurity, and peacekeeping. Second, and detailed in the next section, these dialogues are opportunities to create frameworks for means by which to pursue bilateral security cooperation. For example, at the inaugural 2+2 meeting, the two countries agreed to an expansive list of areas for cooperation, many of which have since been realized.<sup>38</sup> Some of the more prominent examples of those items that have been realized include the signing of an ACSA and the launch of defense equipment and technology projects. Their second and third meetings, held in January 2016 and December 2017, respectively, have led to agreements on the need to conduct joint exercises. Additionally, during their third meeting, the two sides formulated a nonpublished action plan on security cooperation and committed themselves to pursue deeper security cooperation.

### **Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation**

Although the UK is not unique in its participation in the growing collection of dialogues held with Japan, it does stand out for the number of defense exchanges and in the areas of defense cooperation and defense-related industrial cooperation. Given that the UK is a NATO member and had virtually no strategic interest with Japan until recently, the number of means through which the two sides have maintained ties is notable.

There are two main defense exchanges. The first is at the student level. Since 1995, Japan's SDF services and civilians from MOD have sent 126 people to the UK to study, including 28 people to the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College, 38 people to the Royal College of Defence Studies, and 60 people to the different service schools.<sup>39</sup> The UK has not reciprocated with similar numbers, having sent only nine people to Japan since 1982.<sup>40</sup> The second, and more extensive exchange, however, has taken place between the two nations' armed forces. Talks between service chiefs have been frequent between all the services, including their joint staffs.<sup>41</sup> So too have staff-level talks. The UK's Royal Navy and the MSDF, for

<sup>36</sup> January 2016 and December 2017.

<sup>37</sup> "Japan and U.K. to Postpone 'Two-Plus-Two' Security Talks Amid Brexit Deadlock," *Japan Times*, April 4, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> UK–Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, "Joint Statement Annex: Areas for Cooperation," January 21, 2015b.

<sup>39</sup> MOD, 2019f, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> MOD, 2019f, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Number of visits by Japanese service chiefs to the UK: six joint, 11 GSDF, 14 MSDF, and ten Japan Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF). Number of visits by UK service chiefs to Japan: seven joint, five British Army, 11 Royal Navy, and 11 Royal Air Force (RAF) (MOD, 2019f, pp. 3–4).

example, have held staff-level discussions 26 times since their first meeting in 1977.<sup>42</sup> Although not as frequently, the other services have followed suit. Discussions between their ground service staffs have taken place 14 times since their first meeting in April 2000, and talks between their air service staffs have taken place ten times since their first meeting in December 1996.<sup>43</sup> They have even held staff talks between their joint staffs 13 times, with their first meeting having taken place in November 1993.<sup>44</sup>

For all of these exchanges, given that the UK's military commitments have been tied to Europe, maintaining this level of interaction with Japan over the years is significant, even if the absolute totals do not seem so. All of these exchanges are important because they help create regularized relationships between defense officials and armed force personnel that support the growing number of exercises and training outlined below. Significantly, although many of the service-level dialogues were infrequent in the past, they have since become more regular events, reflecting similar trends in the dialogues discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

In addition to these defense exchanges, the two countries have signed several important agreements that have advanced bilateral defense cooperation into new areas. The first step took place in 2012 when PMs Noda and Cameron endorsed the signing of a defense cooperation memorandum, which ultimately led to an agreement on defense equipment and technology transfer on July 4, 2013. The agreement was meant to foster joint research, development, and production of defense equipment and included a stipulation to protect classified information and make available to each other the arms and military technologies necessary to implement these activities, as agreed on by a joint committee.<sup>45</sup> It entered into force the same day it was signed. As detailed below, this set the foundation for defense-related industrial projects by both governments. Also on July 4, 2013, the two signed an ISA designed to ensure the reciprocal protection of classified information, thereby enabling both sides to discuss matters in more detail.<sup>46</sup> It entered into force on January 1, 2014. Then on January 26, 2017, they signed an ACSA, providing the legal framework for mutual support during a variety of activities, such as exercises and UN PKOs.<sup>47</sup> The agreement includes provisions that allow the countries' armed forces to share equipment, supplies, facilities, and services without having to draft individual agreements on a case-by-case basis. It excludes weapons but includes ammunition. It entered into force on August 18, 2017.

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<sup>42</sup> MOD, 2019f, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> MOD, 2019f, pp. 4–5.

<sup>44</sup> MOD, 2019f, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Japan and Government of the UK, "Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Concerning the Transfer of Arms and Military Technologies Necessary to Implement Joint Research, Development and Production of Defence Equipment and Other Related Items," July 4, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Government of the UK and Government of Japan, "Agreement Between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Japan on the Security of Information," Treaty Series 3 (2013), July 4, 2013; entered into force January 1, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Government of the UK and Government of Japan, "Agreement Between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Japan Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Between the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Self-Defense Forces of Japan," Japan 1 (2017), January 26, 2017.



The two armed forces have also cooperated. As mentioned above, during the Iraq War, UK troops cooperated with the GSDF in Al-Muthanna province in southern Iraq, where UK troops actively patrolled to sanitize the areas where Japanese forces were conducting their humanitarian engineering operations.<sup>48</sup> In 2013, the MSDF and the Royal Navy cooperated in the HA/DR operation that followed Super typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Particularly useful was the exchange of officers on their ships, where they could learn from one another about their respective ideas on HA/DR operations, as well as doctrines and procedures. SDF Chinooks were even authorized to operate from the HMS *Illustrious*, although this did not end up occurring.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, when Japan dispatched SDF personnel to serve as the Horn of Africa counterpiracy Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151) commander and command center staff in 2014, a UK captain served as the commander's chief of staff, enabling the two countries to cooperate in efforts to coordinate CTF 151 activities of the countries involved. More recently, and at a much more sustained level, the Royal Navy and the MSDF have worked together in waters surrounding Japan to conduct surveillance operations that are aimed at enforcing compliance with international sanctions against North Korea, looking for illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers of oil and other sanctioned goods with North Korean vessels that are prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions.<sup>50</sup> This assistance policing UN sanctions on North Korea is aided by the fact that these ships have docking rights in Japanese harbors.<sup>51</sup> Importantly, there is movement on expanding this cooperation on the high seas to include the United States. In 2016, the three chiefs of the nations' respective navies and maritime forces signed an agreement affirming their commitment to increased collaboration and cooperation, including an increase in combined patrols.<sup>52</sup>

The two countries also enjoy cooperation on cyberissues, although this is not as visible as other efforts. Driven by a series of talks called the Bilateral Consultations on Cyberspace, they not only exchange views on their respective cybersecurity efforts and strategies; they also cooperate on various issues, such as cybersecurity for major events, including the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games (originally scheduled for 2020); capacity building; the security of the internet of things; and supporting the application of the rules-based international order in cyberspace and promoting international stability frameworks for cyberspace.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, the two countries enjoy a growing list of defense-related industrial cooperation efforts.<sup>54</sup> To date, their most successful has been work on a joint new air-to-air missile, or JNAAM, that aims to integrate a Japanese seeker with the UK's Meteor missile. This began in November 2014, when they began cooperative research on the feasibility of such a missile.

<sup>48</sup> UK official, email correspondence with the author, December 16, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> UK official, email correspondence with the author, December 13, 2019.

<sup>50</sup> MOFA, "Monitoring and Surveillance Activities by UK Against Illicit Maritime Activities Including Ship-to-Ship Transfers," March 19, 2019e; MOFA, "UK–Japan Cooperation for Addressing Ship-to-Ship Transfers," April 6, 2019f.

<sup>51</sup> Erik Brattberg, Philippe Le Corre, and Etienne Soula, "Can France and the UK Pivot to the Pacific?" Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 5, 2018.

<sup>52</sup> Chief of Naval Operations Public Affairs, U.S. Navy, "US, UK, Japan Navies Commit to Increase Cooperation," press briefing, October 20, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> MOFA, "The 4th UK–Japan Bilateral Consultations on Cyberspace," March 16, 2018c.

<sup>54</sup> The detailed information provided in the paragraph is from documents received from Japanese officials (MOD, "Defense Equipment and Technology Cooperation with European Countries," *International Equipment and Technology Cooperation*, March 2019a, p. 15).

Then, in December 2018, they moved this work out of the feasibility stage and into a cooperative research program for the development of a prototype to demonstrate the technology. The missile is set to incorporate a Mitsubishi Electric radar system into European manufacturer MBDA Systems' Meteor missile, combining long range and high accuracy.<sup>55</sup> The project is significant because, unlike other efforts, the JNAAM marks the first step toward actual development and marks Tokyo's first defense project with a partner other than the United States. As successful as this project has been, it is not the two countries' only one. Their first project, a cooperative research project on chemical and biological protection technology, began in July 2013 and lasted until July 2017. Another one, started in July 2016, was a research project called Personnel Vulnerability Evaluation, which aims to verify the level of the body's vulnerability when a bullet hits someone wearing a protective vest. And then, in March 2017, they began a fourth project, a preliminary study on potential collaborative opportunities for the UK's future combat air systems and Japan's future fighter. In this endeavor, they are exploring options for jointly developing a stealth fighter. In 2018, two separate initiatives began on this. In February, they began cooperative research on the certification process of jet engines. Then in March, they began cooperative research on the feasibility of a Japan and Great Britain universal advanced radio-frequency system (JAGUAR), which is a new wideband radar sensor system.

Despite these several lines of effort, the UK is frustrated by the pace of progress, with one expert calling it "unrequited love."<sup>56</sup> Despite promises from then-PM Abe to conduct mass production of systems and export these systems to third countries, it still has not occurred; nor have promises of Japan buying UK equipment.<sup>57</sup> UK industries even went so far as to open offices in Tokyo, but, because of a lack of contracts, some have already closed their doors. Given this state of affairs, it is unclear how joint defense cooperation will develop going forward and whether the JNAAM project is an aberration or the start of a trend.

## Training and Exercises

The UK is the only country (except the United States) with which all three of Japan's SDF services have exercised with their counterparts.

### Air Self-Defense Force–Royal Air Force

In October and November 2016, the RAF sent four Typhoon fighter jets to Japan to exercise with eight ASDF F-2s and F-15s.<sup>58</sup> The event was historic because not only were these the first UK military aircraft to visit Japan since the Cold War; this was also the first time that the ASDF had trained with a country other than the United States. Called Guardian North 16, the purpose of the exercise was to enhance ASDF tactical skills, strengthen Japan–UK defense

<sup>55</sup> "Japan and UK to Collaborate on Missile Development," *Nikkei Asia*, November 24, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> The four jets were accompanied by a Voyager tanker aircraft, C-17 Globemaster and C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft, and 170 RAF support personnel. The ASDF used four F-15 and four F-2 jets.

cooperation, and enhance interoperability.<sup>59</sup> To date, this stands as the only exercise between their air forces aside from a goodwill training exercise in July 2017.

### Maritime Self-Defense Force–Royal Navy

Although exercises between the UK and Japanese navies have begun only recently, their ties are long-standing. Since 1975, Royal Navy ships have visited Japan 35 times for various purposes, such as goodwill port calls or matters related to UN Command.<sup>60</sup> They have not been planned as visits solely to visit Japan and interact with Japan's SDF. For example, after supporting UK relief efforts in the Philippines following Super typhoon Haiyan on November 7, 2013, the UK destroyer HMS *Daring* visited Japan for a goodwill visit. It was already in the region as part of a nine-month deployment and was taking part in an exercise with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia as part of the Five Power Defence Arrangements.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, visits such as these are important in that they maintained a very basic level of interaction between the two navies.

Exercises are a more recent phenomenon. Since 1980, the MSDF and the Royal Navy have conducted 19 goodwill training exercises, which are opportunities to conduct small-scale, basic training opportunities between the armed forces, usually consisting of things like tactical maneuvers or a signals exercise. During these, as well as the visits mentioned in the previous paragraphs, they frequently engage in personnel exchanges between ships.

Beginning in 2018, the two forces began to conduct more-advanced exercises, targeting specific areas. The UK sent four Royal Navy warships to visit Japan over the course of a year as part of patrols of waters around North Korea to enforce UN sanctions and to take part in exercises and port calls with UK partners as part of its demonstration to the region that the UK has interests in the region. Toward this end, the HMS *Sutherland*, HMS *Albion*, HMS *Argyll*, and HMS *Montrose* visited Japan. What is significant about these exercises is that, unlike the past goodwill port calls or basic training opportunities, in the past few years, their exercises appear to have become more advanced and operationally oriented on areas that are directly relevant to competition with China, even though the two do not characterize their exercises as such.

The first visit was by the frigate HMS *Sutherland* on April 27 and 28, 2018. With the MSDF's destroyer *Suzunami*, oiler *Tokiwa*, P-1 patrol aircraft, and submarines, the purpose of this exercise was to increase the MSDF's tactical skills. Toward this end, they conducted exercises related to antisubmarine warfare, simulated at-sea refueling, and aircraft mutual landing on ships, as well as tactical maneuver training.<sup>62</sup> The exercise was significant because it marked the first joint exercise between their maritime forces in the waters off Japan.

A second visit occurred in August 2018 when the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ship HMS *Albion* came to Japan for maintenance at U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka.<sup>63</sup> The ship was on a four-month deployment as part of London's efforts to deepen its military ties to the

<sup>59</sup> Justin McCurry, "UK Sends Typhoons to Japan for Joint Drills to Strengthen Security Ties," *The Guardian*, October 14, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> MOD, "日本・イギリス艦艇相互訪問実績" [Japan–UK ships visit achievements], document obtained by the author, July 18, 2019h, pp. 1–2.

<sup>61</sup> British Embassy Tokyo, "HMS *Daring* Visits Japan," *Gov.UK*, November 26, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> MSDF, "日英共同訓練の終了について" [Regarding the conclusion of the Japan–UK joint exercise], press release, April 29, 2019d.

<sup>63</sup> Royal Navy, UK, "HMS *Albion* Proves Big in Japan on Landmark Visit to Tokyo," August 7, 2018.



region.<sup>64</sup> It was a notable visit given that the *Albion* is the largest Royal Navy vessel to call on Japan in more than 25 years.<sup>65</sup> Once that work was completed, the HMS *Albion* and the *Shimokita* landing ship, tank (LST) carried out a joint exercise, aiming to conduct various tactical maneuver training.<sup>66</sup>

The third exercise occurred in the fall of 2018. As part of a nine-month deployment to the Persian Gulf and the Pacific, the frigate HMS *Argyll* found two opportunities to exercise with the MSDF. First, on September 26, 2018, the HMS *Argyll* conducted naval drills with the MSDF's *Kaga* in the Indian Ocean, along with the *Kaga*'s destroyer escort *Inazuma*. The focus of the exercise was tactical maneuver training and communication exercises.<sup>67</sup> A second opportunity arose on December 22, 2018, when the HMS *Argyll* exercised alongside the helicopter carrier *Izumo* and U.S. Navy assets to practice hunting a U.S. Navy submarine in the Philippine Sea. The two-day exercise was historic because it was the first time the three navies exercised their specialist antisubmarine warfare skills.<sup>68</sup> As part of this, the *Izumo* and *Argyll* both deployed helicopters to hunt the submarine.<sup>69</sup>

The fourth exercise occurred in early March 2019, when the frigate HMS *Montrose* docked alongside its host, the destroyer *Murasame*, at Harumi Wharf in Tokyo for a six-day stay.<sup>70</sup> Like the ships before it, the HMS *Montrose* had been operating in the region (since December 2018) and came to Japan to engage in naval exchanges between crews. The main purpose of the visit was a combined exercise with the United States and Japan. Like in the December trilateral exercise, the HMS *Montrose* came together with the U.S. Navy and the MSDF for an antisubmarine warfare exercise in the western Pacific Ocean on March 14 and 15, 2019. With their exercise focusing on antisubmarine warfare, communications, and aircraft mutual landing on ships, in addition to the HMS *Montrose*, it involved a U.S. Navy P-8A aircraft to operate alongside the MSDF's destroyer *Murasame*, a P-1 aircraft, and a submarine.<sup>71</sup>

### Ground Self-Defense Force—Royal Marines and Royal Army

Although exercises between their ground forces have begun only recently, they are growing quickly. Following the successes of the aforementioned exercises, a 120-person company-sized Royal Marine detachment accompanied the HMS *Albion*'s 2018 visit to Japan. Their inclusion provided the GSDF's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade an opportunity to exercise in August 2018. The plan was to conduct a joint landing exercise along with the HMS *Albion* and the MSDF's LST *Shimokita*, which would have marked the first time that foreign ground

<sup>64</sup> Tim Kelly, "British Amphibious Assault Ship Arrives in Tokyo," Reuters, August 2, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> Royal Navy, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> MSDF, "日英共同訓練の実施について" [Regarding the execution of the Japan–UK joint exercise], press release, August 27, 2018b.

<sup>67</sup> MSDF, "日英共同訓練の実施について" [Regarding the execution of the Japan–UK joint exercise], press release, September 27, 2018c.

<sup>68</sup> MSDF, "日米英共同訓練の実施について" [Regarding the execution of the Japan–U.S.–UK joint exercise], press release, December 18, 2018d; Royal Navy, UK, "HMS Argyll Hunts Submarines in the Philippine Sea," January 4, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> The *Argyll* flew Wildcats and the *Izumo* flew Seahawks alongside an MSDF P-1 aircraft and a U.S. Navy P-8A.

<sup>70</sup> MSDF, "英海軍艦艇の訪日に伴うホストシップの派出等について" [Regarding the dispatch of the host ship accompanied by the British naval ship visit to Japan], press release, March 5, 2019a.

<sup>71</sup> MSDF, "日米英共同訓練の実施について" [Regarding the execution of the Japan–U.S.–UK joint exercise], press release, March 12, 2019b.

troops other than Americans would have exercised in Japan. It was ultimately scrapped, however, because of a typhoon hitting Japan.

Despite the exercise's cancellation, two months later, the GSDF and the Royal Army made history when, in October 2018, 50 soldiers from the UK's Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) exercised in Japan with their GSDF counterparts.<sup>72</sup> The HAC is the British Army's reserve intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance regiment. Like the 2016 RAF's Typhoon visit, this was not only the first time troops from the British Army exercised with Japanese soldiers; it was the first time that soldiers other than Americans conducted an exercise on Japanese territory. Called Vigilant Isles, the exercise began with a joint helicopter drill in which roughly 100 soldiers from both countries demonstrated their rapid-reaction capability and practiced how they might survey locations of a potential enemy using a helicopter.<sup>73</sup> A longer exercise followed in which the HAC's surveillance and reconnaissance patrol demonstrated the UK's approach to joint exercises, focusing on sharing tactics and surveillance techniques.<sup>74</sup> The surveillance and reconnaissance patrol is a team of four to six specialists, and its job is to conduct static covert surveillance. The patrol members are trained and equipped both to collect highly granular information and intelligence and to deliver joint effects at range, both kinetic and nonkinetic.<sup>75</sup> In 2019, the GSDF dispatched a training unit to the UK to participate in another iteration of the exercise, marking the first time for a GSDF unit to go to the UK for such an activity.

These exercises by all the services are important for two reasons. First, they demonstrate a shared interest in each other's security. Devoting manpower and resources to exercise together sends a message to each other that they are serious.<sup>76</sup> It also sends a strategic message to the region. Called "gesture politics," these exercises show potential challengers their commitment to each other and to regional security.<sup>77</sup> With these nations being active in the region, "it says that there is not only one narrative in town," challenging any counternarrative that states like China may be promoting.<sup>78</sup>

Second, the exercises help improve mutual understanding by providing opportunities to improve interoperability and learn best practices. At a basic level, they provide increasing touch points for personnel. These are important as "getting-to-know-you opportunities," providing critical human relationships behind the growing security ties.<sup>79</sup> On an operational level, they foster an ability to plan and conduct activities together, but they are admittedly still just first steps. The exercises are not focused on capabilities that are necessary to fulfill a specific function or achieve a specific task. And apart from the MSDF–Royal Navy exercises, they are not particularly oriented to operational tactics directly relevant for competition with a state like China. They are, however, growing in complexity and real-world application. For example, the

<sup>72</sup> "HAC First British Troops to Deploy in Japan," *Military Times*, October 12, 2018.

<sup>73</sup> "HAC First British Troops to Deploy in Japan," 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Levison Wood and Dominic Nicholls, "British Troops Join Forces with Japanese for First Time on Their Soil amid North Korea Tensions," *The Telegraph*, October 2, 2018.

<sup>75</sup> "HAC First British Troops to Deploy in Japan," 2018.

<sup>76</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

UK naval ships that have cooperated with the MSDF ships are dealing in increasingly sensitive techniques, including antisubmarine warfare and amphibious landings.<sup>80</sup>

There are limits, however, to growth in this area as they have been unsuccessful in negotiating a reciprocal access agreement (RAA). An RAA provides the framework that defines the legal status of foreign forces temporarily operating in each other's territory and the legal procedures for dealing with crimes and accidents should they occur while one is in the other's territory. Without it, the nations must sign a memorandum of understanding every time they exercise that includes such things as waivers to allow the forces to bring ammunition and equipment into their countries.<sup>81</sup> The benefit of the RAA is that it is a standing memorandum of understanding that improves the administrative process and legal procedures to facilitate exercises and operations in the party countries. It includes exemptions and rules for entry and exit of foreign military personnel and equipment, as well as statutes on criminal jurisdiction.

The criminal jurisdiction issue has been the sticking point. Tokyo's position is that any foreign service member who commits an off-duty crime on Japanese soil, particularly rape or murder, should be subject to Japanese criminal jurisdiction. London opposes this because it could mean handing over a national to a country that still practices the death penalty. Neither country has shown flexibility, and it remains unresolved.

## Motivations

Japan's motivations for closer ties with Europe, and the UK specifically, were presented in Chapter Two. The UK's motivations are presented in this section. Namely, the UK seeks to (1) protect its regional interests, (2) protect the rules-based international order, (3) support the United States, (4) project its image as a regional stakeholder, and (5) seek defense-related industrial opportunities.

### Protect Its Regional Interests

The UK has a vested interest in preserving stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Then-Secretary of State for Defence Philip Hammond argued,

As a maritime nation and a country which still relies upon the world's sea lanes for the delivery of 95 per cent of our trade; as a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements, and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the world's strategic nuclear powers . . . the UK has a strong stake in the stability of this region.<sup>82</sup>

Although it is not as large as France, the UK has a limited presence in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>83</sup> In Diego Garcia, it maintains a small military contingent on its military base, which

<sup>80</sup> "Charm Defensive," 2019.

<sup>81</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Defence, UK, "The Shangri-La Dialogue, Advancing Military-to-Military Cooperation," speech, 13th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, May 31, 2014.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Lancaster, House of Commons, UK, "Military Bases: Question for Ministry of Defence," UIN 139415, May 9, 2018.

is the main island in the British Indian Ocean Territory under UK sovereignty. In Singapore, the UK maintains the British Defence Singapore Support Unit at Singapore Naval Base at Sembawang Wharf, a small logistics base, to control most of the foreign military activities there, which includes repair, refuel, and resupply for Five Power Defense Arrangements states and, on request, other states' naval vessels. And in Brunei, the British Army maintains an infantry battalion of Gurkhas and a UK Army Air Corps Flight of Bell 212 helicopters. Augmenting these is the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance (with Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Singapore) that keeps the UK enmeshed in the region's security affairs. Outside of the Indo-Pacific region, but relevant in terms of enabling the UK to respond to the Indo-Pacific region, in Duqm, Oman, the UK maintains a naval logistic center that facilitates maritime basing east of Suez and outside of the Persian Gulf, including a dry dock able to accommodate submarines and the UK's new class of aircraft carriers. And in April 2018, the UK opened a permanent naval base at Mina Salman port in Bahrain. Staffed by 500 troops, the base is designated as the UK's main hub of Persian Gulf operations and can support operations of larger ships, such as carriers.<sup>84</sup>

The UK has a national interest in stability in the Indo-Pacific region. As one official explained, "We want to stop malign influences in the region."<sup>85</sup> Its ability to do so, however, is limited given that it does not maintain any large permanent military presence, like France does—only the small military units on Diego Garcia, Singapore, and Brunei. UK officials recognize this. Then-Secretary of State for Defence Michael Fallon admitted that, at a time of growing threats,

Britain cannot do it alone. Not when countries and religions who feel denied what they see is their due place in the world are becoming increasingly assertive, looking to redraw the map or to belligerently impose their views on others.<sup>86</sup>

This is where the UK is motivated toward closer ties with Japan. Being able to meet with Japan, in dialogues and exercises, is important for the UK to learn more about Japan's own efforts and problems it faces in the region.<sup>87</sup> The UK sees Japan "as a major player for regional stability," and the efforts made at getting closer in security ties are "meant so we can respond quickly together" in the event of a regional crisis.<sup>88</sup>

### **Protect the Rules-Based International Order**

In its 2015 strategic defense and security review, the UK declares an interest in protecting the rules-based international order.<sup>89</sup> The UK shares values, such as "approaches to trade, open

<sup>84</sup> Brattberg, Le Corre, and Soula, 2018.

<sup>85</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Fallon, Secretary of State for Defence, UK, "Making Defence Policy in Uncertain Times," briefing, 15th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, June 4, 2016, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> The document says that the UK sits at the heart of this order given that it is the only nation to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council and in NATO, the EU, the British Commonwealth, the G7, the Group of 20 (G20), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank (Government of the UK, "Promote Our

markets, international security, and the preservation of the global commons” that are similar to Japan’s.<sup>90</sup> As then–UK Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson stated, the UK believes that

nations should follow agreed rules, but this is being ignored by some, and what this does is undermines the peace and the prosperity of all nations. Which is why we must work together to uphold the rules-based order, for it is this rules-based order that benefits us all.<sup>91</sup>

As shown in Chapter Two, Japan shares this sentiment. It is because of these similarities that they have come to share a “mutual perception of each other as serious countries in strategic terms.”<sup>92</sup> The statements that proclaim their shared interests are more than words. The UK considers the rules-based international system of prime importance and is committed to upholding it. For the UK, “it is not enough to speak out. We must stand up for what we believe in.”<sup>93</sup> It is because of this interest that the UK has actively monitored North Korean ships for violating UN sanctions and has sent an increasing number of naval vessels to the region, including sailing through the South China Sea and even near the Chinese-occupied Paracel Islands in August 2018. It is also why the UK has worked to develop closer security relations with Japan.

Having closer relations with Japan shows that the UK not only cares about the international order but is also trying to build partnerships to support it.<sup>94</sup> The UK sees Japan as a key pillar to upholding and maintaining this order. Japan was a natural choice because it is the “best partner” for upholding the system in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>95</sup> It is not only the “easiest Asian partner to plug in and work with,” the UK feels that it is “on the same wavelength” in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>96</sup> As affirmed in their third 2+2 joint statement, their global strategic partnership “is underpinned by common strategic interests and fundamental values,” and the two nations are “committed to maintaining the rules-based international system.”<sup>97</sup> Importantly, given Japan’s strategic activism since the advent of the Abe administration in 2012, UK leadership saw a window of opportunity to partner with Japan in order to promote UK international security interests, broadly defined.<sup>98</sup>

Although North Korea has dominated the UK–Japan bilateral agenda, the UK has come to share Japan’s perspective of China as the greatest threat to the international order. Recall

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Prosperity,” in *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom*, London, UK, November 2015, p. 14).

<sup>90</sup> John Bew and David Martin Jones, “UK Strategy in Asia: Some Starting Principles,” *Policy Exchange*, September 4, 2017, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Defence, UK, “Raising the Bar for Regional Security Cooperation,” speech, 17th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, June 3, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Shetler-Jones, 2018, p. 15.

<sup>93</sup> Williamson, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>95</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> The first half of the quote is from UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019. The second half is from UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Third UK–Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, “Joint Statement,” December 14, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>98</sup> John Swenson-Wright, “What’s the Future of the Britain–Japan Relationship?” World Economic Forum, April 28, 2015.



from above that statements and declarations failed to include China. This was because UK–China relations were considered to be enjoying a “golden era” that was ushered in under the Cameron government.<sup>99</sup> London refrained from explicitly criticizing China because the complexities of Brexit were looming. At the same time, however, a growing concern about the direction of China began in the UK, and the search began for “where the UK could put its eggs” in terms of a regional partner.<sup>100</sup> Japan became the obvious choice, seen as a “relatively low-hanging fruit” because it was an ally of the United States, claimed a special relationship with the United States, and was an economic power.<sup>101</sup>

Although UK–Japan bilateral statements do not name China, the statements and actions are increasingly designed to send a clear message to China, reflecting the fact that Japan and the UK “have found common cause in countering growing Chinese influence in the region.”<sup>102</sup> For example, in contrast with the 2015 joint statement that provided a generic reaffirmation of the “importance of peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law,” subsequent joint statements have been more explicit.<sup>103</sup> The 2016 iteration expanded both countries’ concerns to both the East and South China Seas and “opposition to any coercive or unilateral actions, such as large scale land reclamation, that could change the status quo and raise tension.”<sup>104</sup> Calling for peaceful settlement of maritime disputes in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law and supporting the exercise of freedom of navigation and overflight, the two countries also provided explicit support for the full and effective implementation of the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the establishment of a code of conduct in the South China Sea.<sup>105</sup> They have even called for the demilitarization of disputed features in the South China Sea.<sup>106</sup>

### Support the United States

Along with protecting its regional interests and upholding the international order, closer security ties with Japan is also a means by which the UK can support U.S. national security goals and strategy. Just as the UK wants to remain the United States’ most valued partner, it recognizes the importance of the alliance that the United States has with Japan. Despite some frustration with the United States during the Trump administration, the UK is “not attempting to replace” the U.S. security umbrella.<sup>107</sup> Nor is it trying to “outcompete the U.S.” in terms of its relationship with Japan.<sup>108</sup> On the contrary, the UK sees cooperation with Japan as a way to

<sup>99</sup> For a good overview of what the golden era was meant to deliver and how it fared, see Oliver Turner, “The Golden Era of UK–China Relations Meets Brexit,” *The Diplomat*, December 18, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>101</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>102</sup> “Japanese Helicopter Carrier *Kaga* Conducts Drills with British Warship, Headed for Contested South China Sea,” *Japan Times*, September 27, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> UK–Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, “Joint Statement,” January 21, 2015a, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> MOFA, “Second Japan–UK Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting Joint Statement,” January 8, 2016a.

<sup>105</sup> MOFA, 2016a.

<sup>106</sup> Third UK–Japan Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

strengthen relationships among partners of the United States, which makes the U.S.-alliance system stronger, a benefit to the UK's own national interests.<sup>109</sup>

Recognizing that reliance on the United States alone for Indo-Pacific security may be difficult, the UK sees cooperation with Japan to “share the costs” to reduce the United States’ burden.<sup>110</sup> What is more, through deepening strategic relationships with both allies, such as the United States, and others in the Indo-Pacific region, the deeper collaboration on capabilities and operations help “to spread the burden of security and to drive down its cost.”<sup>111</sup> Through this cooperation, the UK believes that it and Japan can not only show the United States that it is “willing to try to pull [its] weight” but also, more importantly, help the United States “continue to have leverage and not drain U.S. resources.”<sup>112</sup> Politically, closer security cooperation with Japan “sends a signal that we are there for the U.S.”<sup>113</sup> When UK ships come to the Indo-Pacific region, it “reinforces U.S. talking points on freedom of navigation, etc.”<sup>114</sup> Operationally, it is a means by which the UK can “show its worth” to the United States.<sup>115</sup> For example, working with Japan’s amphibious forces “helps Japan work with the U.S.,” which the UK sees as a benefit for the United States.<sup>116</sup>

### **Project Its Image as a Regional Stakeholder**

The UK’s withdrawal of its commitments and presence from Malaysia and Singapore in the late 1960s and early 1970s called into question whether the UK had global influence and whether its interests lay concentrated in Europe. Brexit amplifies these concerns because attention will be needed to maintain access to the economies and international shipping lanes across the Indo-Pacific region, which are “crucial to ensuring economic growth” now that the UK has left the EU.<sup>117</sup> Under the context of a “Global Britain,” London is seeking to engage more actively with countries in other parts of the world to demonstrate that it remains a global power and a relevant regional stakeholder despite its withdrawal from the EU. The concept predates Brexit, such as the 2015 strategic defense and security review calls for a UK with “global reach and influence,” but Brexit has co-opted the term to demonstrate that the UK is not receding from the world stage.<sup>118</sup> It is a strategy of promoting the UK abroad.

Because Brexit will alter—or weaken—the UK’s relationships with other European partners and countries throughout the world, “London is keen to establish new partnerships and reactivate dormant relationships as part of an ‘all of Asia’ strategy . . . [as well as] reinforce its

<sup>109</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> Fallon, 2016, p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>113</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> Rob Clark, “Is Increased UK–Japan Defence Cooperation Leading to a New Strategic Alliance?” *UK Defence Journal*, January 30, 2019.

<sup>118</sup> Government of the UK, 2015, p. 9.

regional presence and activities under the banner of ‘Global Britain.’”<sup>119</sup> For example, sending ships to the region is designed “to exemplify the fact that we are still very much a global player with a voice on the global stage.”<sup>120</sup> This is as true for ties with Japan as for ties with others. Assuming that the UK needs partners to demonstrate that it is Global Britain, Japan’s value increases. Closer ties with Japan are a model for the UK’s post-Brexit diplomacy because they show that the UK can play a role in a part of the world where it has not been active previously for some time.<sup>121</sup> This motivation is not without skeptics. Simon Fraser, former Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, called “Global Britain” nothing more than a “slogan” and “simplistic words” that require “much more clarity of thought” for it to have any consequence.<sup>122</sup> Academics have also taken aim at the concept. One of the most vocal has been John Nilsson-Wright, senior lecturer at the University of Cambridge, who argued that Global Britain is

an aspirational hope rather than a meaningful strategy, designed to stem the rapid loss of Britain’s reputational capital as both its immediate neighbours and its friends in Asia scratch their heads in bafflement at its seemingly self-destructive turn inwards and detachment from economic and political common sense.<sup>123</sup>

### **Seek Defense-Related Industrial Opportunities**

The UK defense industry’s interests in the Indo-Pacific are a final, often overlooked, factor in the UK’s engagement with Japan. The 2015 strategic defense and security review has a whole chapter dedicated to promoting UK defense industries and arms exports.<sup>124</sup> Not only have UK defense industries wanted access to the Japanese market; they wanted to explore defense markets together with Japanese counterparts and to directly compete for defense contracts in the Indo-Pacific region, with Japan as a diplomatic force-multiplier for entry into these markets.<sup>125</sup> The expanding list of research and development described above is critical for these industries because it gives them “an urgently needed lifeline” to avoid cuts.<sup>126</sup> Having closer defense ties with Japan also offers the UK opportunities for expanding commercial synergies through defense technology cooperation.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Brattberg, Le Corre, and Soula, 2018.

<sup>120</sup> Quote by Royal Navy Captain Paul Casson, defense attaché at the British Embassy Tokyo (Daniel Hurst, “Naval Cooperation Highlights Japan–UK ‘Global Security Partnership,’” *The Diplomat*, August 7, 2018).

<sup>121</sup> UK official, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Simon Fraser, former Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Global Britain,” testimony, UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, February 6, 2018.

<sup>123</sup> John Nilsson-Wright, “Point of View: Kono’s Warning over Fallout from a ‘Hard Brexit’ Not an Idle Threat,” *Asahi Shimbun*, July 4, 2019b.

<sup>124</sup> Government of the UK, 2015, pp. 69–79.

<sup>125</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>126</sup> John Hemmings, “UK–Japan Cooperation in Preserving the Liberal Order,” *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 411, January 11, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> Swenson-Wright, 2015.



## Divergences

In its interactions with Japan, the UK has become increasingly concerned about China and vocal about China-related issues. In addition to the concerns outlined above, there are many domestic concerns in the UK about undue Chinese influence and interference.<sup>128</sup> One of the dominant concerns is Hong Kong and Beijing's increasingly heavy hand. But like in other European countries, there is no monolithic view of the UK's China policy. There is an active domestic debate in the UK on how best to handle China given its economic dependence on that nation. What was once called a "golden era" of UK–China ties is now called "complex."<sup>129</sup> Although the UK and Japan agree on the broad challenges presented by China, as of December 2019, the UK remained hesitant to adopt language about UK–China ties being a "competitive relationship."<sup>130</sup> Much of the hesitance to explicitly criticize China stems from the economic pressures that Brexit brings to the UK.<sup>131</sup> From this perspective, "China is an indispensable partner if a post-Brexit 'Global Britain' is to succeed."<sup>132</sup> Consequently, supporters of this thinking advocate for engagement with China.<sup>133</sup> Statements by PM Boris Johnson support the argument that this thinking is growing in London, such as his public statement that his government is still committed to a golden era in UK–China relations.<sup>134</sup> Should this continue, it could negatively affect bilateral ties between the UK and Japan. At the very least, it could limit the scope of bilateral Japan–UK security cooperation should it touch on Chinese sensitivities.

Similarly, Japan and the UK diverge in their views of Russia. There is a deep antagonism between the UK and Russia, particularly since the nerve-agent attack of a former Russian double agent and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury in 2018. Like his predecessor Theresa May, PM Johnson has been clear that he will not normalize relations with Russia until Moscow ends its "destabilizing activity that threatens the UK and [its] allies."<sup>135</sup> The same cannot be said of Japan. For the UK, then-PM Abe's diplomatic outreach to Vladimir Putin regarding the territorial dispute and a peace treaty "raised concerns that Japan has not been sufficiently forceful in condemning Russia's territorial incursions in Ukraine or the 2018 nerve-agent attack."<sup>136</sup> The UK feels that, although Japan shares London's general recognition of the challenge posed by Russia to the international order, the two countries "place [a] different emphasis" on the problem.<sup>137</sup> Put another way, "when we [the UK] talk to Japan about

<sup>128</sup>Charles Parton, *China–UK Relations: Where to Draw the Border Between Influence and Interference?* London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, occasional paper, February 2019.

<sup>129</sup>Frances Perraudin, "Hammond: UK–China Relations 'Not Made Simpler' by Williamson," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2019.

<sup>130</sup>UK official, email correspondence with the author, February 26, 2020.

<sup>131</sup>"Editorial: The Guardian View on Britain and China: It's Complicated," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2019.

<sup>132</sup>Yu Jie, "Britain Needs to Decide What It Wants from China," *Nikkei Asia*, February 22, 2019.

<sup>133</sup>Tim Summers, "Britain Needs to Maintain Its Pragmatic Approach to China," Chatham House, January 31, 2020.

<sup>134</sup>Estelle Shirbon, "UK's Johnson Committed to 'Golden Era' in China Relations: Ambassador," *Business Insider*, February 6, 2020.

<sup>135</sup>Elizabeth Piper, "No Normalization in Relations Yet, UK PM Johnson Tells Russia's Putin," Reuters, January 19, 2020.

<sup>136</sup>Nilsson-Wright, 2019a.

<sup>137</sup>UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

Russia, they see it as the least needing attention.”<sup>138</sup> This is frustrating to the UK. The UK already has several allies in Europe, such as Italy, that have reached out to Russia in an attempt to try to improve relations. Yet these countries are not trying to deepen security ties with the UK, with arguments about ongoing dangers to the international order and the need to prevent those dangers from growing. Although the UK agrees with Japan in Tokyo’s advice to take China more seriously, Tokyo “balks” when London tells it to take Russia more seriously.<sup>139</sup> Although it is difficult to argue that there is a consensus in London on this point, numerous interviewees expressed frustration in the UK regarding Japanese diplomatic efforts toward China and mild receptiveness toward Russia. One interviewee called this a “contradiction” on the part of Japan because both China and Russia are threats to the status quo.<sup>140</sup> Another went as far as to say that then-PM Abe’s pursuit of a peace treaty with Russia was “a fool’s errand” that needed to be abandoned.<sup>141</sup>

## Conclusion

One description of the growing ties between Japan and the UK is that cooperation has tended to be “piecemeal, ad hoc and relatively low-profile.”<sup>142</sup> This chapter has highlighted that the strands of cooperation are substantial and meaningful. In addition to a robust set of defense and strategic dialogues held at many different levels, the two countries enjoy active defense exchanges between their armed forces, have signed several important security-related agreements, and are pursuing a growing list of defense-related industrial cooperation efforts. Importantly, although the two armed forces have enjoyed some limited operational cooperation, these are the only two countries examined in this study that have enjoyed joint military exercises by all branches of their armed forces. As originally noted in the 2014 joint statement, the Japan–UK relationship is one with a long history but firmly oriented to the future.<sup>143</sup> The various lines of effort outlined in this chapter show that the two countries have come a long way in a fairly short period of time and hold the promise of continued future growth.

<sup>138</sup>UK official, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>139</sup>UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>140</sup>UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>141</sup>UK expert, interview with the author, October 10, 2019.

<sup>142</sup>Swenson-Wright, 2015.

<sup>143</sup>MOFA, 2014g, p. 1.

## France

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France is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific. This includes 465,422 km<sup>2</sup> of territory, including Réunion in the Indian Ocean; New Caledonia and French Polynesia in the South Pacific; Clipperton off the west coast of North America; and almost 9 million square kilometers of exclusive economic zone.<sup>1</sup> With 1.6 million French citizens living in French overseas departments and territories and 7,000 soldiers permanently stationed in the region, France has a sizable presence.<sup>2</sup> In fact, France is the only European power with a permanent presence in the region—augmented by French troops stationed outside of the Indo-Pacific in the United Arab Emirates and in Djibouti—that includes power projection capabilities, long-range strike capabilities, a blue-water navy and pre-positioned forces. This puts France in “a unique position amongst European countries to contribute to the security and better governance of the commons.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, French forces regularly conduct HA/DR operations and are poised to conduct various military operations in the region, if necessary. It also makes the Indo-Pacific region “a priority for French diplomacy and . . . an essential partner.”<sup>4</sup>

As two regional powers concerned about the international order, France and Japan have come together in a relationship they call an “exceptional partnership” to promote security, growth, innovation and culture.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, the two countries celebrated their 160th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Although their relationship has fluctuated during this history, today, Japan is both France’s second-largest trading partner in Asia and the region’s leading investor in France.<sup>6</sup> In the security domain, with regional strategies that overlap and agreements to frame their security cooperation, their various lines of effort enjoy a focused approach to guide them forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, Ministry for the Armed Forces, France, *France and Security in the Indo-Pacific*, updated May 24, 2019b, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019b, pp. 2, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Céline Pajon, “Japan and France: Slowly but Surely Moving Forward on Security Cooperation,” *The Diplomat*, February 6, 2017, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Embassy of France in Ethiopia and to the African Union, “The Indo-Pacific Region: A Priority for France,” last modified June 28, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France, “France and Japan,” updated June 14, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2018.

## History

France and Japan experienced their first contact in the 17th century, but their diplomatic relationship began in the 19th century. Despite signing a Franco–Japanese Treaty in 1907,<sup>7</sup> it did not constitute a military alliance like that between Japan and the UK. As Imperial Japan pursued empire throughout Asia, it took control of French Indochina by force in 1940. After the conclusion of the war, relations were not close. In fact, the first real move in establishing closer bilateral ties came in November 1996, when President Jacques Chirac visited Japan. Chirac was a known Japanophile. A fan of sumo and Japanese art and a frequent visitor to Japan, Chirac was well placed to push Japan–France ties out of stagnation. Therefore, although the Hashimoto Ryūtarō administration welcomed multiple European dignitaries reaching out to Japan as he sought to build new Japan–Europe ties, the visit from Chirac (his 44th visit at the time, although first as state guest<sup>8</sup>) was notable in that the two sought to “contribute positively to the creation of a new framework for the international community, and aim to further strengthen cooperation between themselves” with specific mention of the UN, disarmament and nonproliferation, and development assistance.<sup>9</sup> Both Hashimoto and Chirac agreed that Japan and France played important roles “with responsibility for the international community, share common positions on many issues, and have strengthened their cooperation hand-in-hand to assume their increasing responsibility in the international community and in the relationship between Asia and Europe.”<sup>10</sup> To move their relationship forward, they signed an agreement called “21世紀に向けての日仏協力20の措置” [France–Japan 20 cooperative actions for the 21st century], which was meant to serve as an action plan for bilateral cooperation in politics and economics.<sup>11</sup> Regarding security, it included stronger cooperation on some things, such as nonproliferation, and promises to hold more-regular summits and discussions among officials, including the establishment of the political–military discussion format discussed below. Through Chirac’s visit, the two sides hoped to mark “a new acceleration in the dynamic relationship between Japan and France toward the 21st century.”<sup>12</sup>

Although political ties remained strong after the meeting, strategic ties were slow to materialize. France wanted these ties to grow closer, but, through a combination of French politics and Japan’s reliance on the United States, the relationship never developed more-strategic dimensions.<sup>13</sup> It took almost a decade before bilateral ties moved forward again in a substantial way. In 2005, President Chirac and PM Koizumi Junichirō declared a “new partnership” targeting international peace and security.<sup>14</sup> Included in their agreement was expand-

<sup>7</sup> French Third Republic and Empire of Japan, Franco–Japanese Treaty, June 10, 1907.

<sup>8</sup> Ryūtarō Hashimoto, PM, Japan, “Address by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the Welcoming Dinner on the Occasion of the Visit to Japan by President Jacques Chirac of the French Republic,” speech, Tokyo, November 19, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> MOFA, “The Significance of the Visit to Japan by President Jacques Chirac of the French Republic,” November 1996a.

<sup>10</sup> Hashimoto, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> MOFA, “21世紀に向けての日仏協力20の措置” [France–Japan 20 cooperative actions for the 21st century], November 18, 1996b.

<sup>12</sup> Hashimoto, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> French expert, interview with the author, November 5, 2019. Because Nicolas Sarkozy was trying to position himself as anti-Chirac, he was seen as anti-Japan. Sarkozy’s visit to China—without stopping in Japan—solidified this image.

<sup>14</sup> MOFA, “日仏新パートナーシップ宣言—国際社会の平和と安定及び繁栄のために—” [Japan–France new partnership declaration for the peace and security and prosperity of international society], March 27, 2005.

ing and strengthening high-level dialogue between leaders and between diplomatic advisers, cooperating under the multilateral system, and responding to threats to international society, such as terrorism and proliferation of WMD. Relations, however, did not make any significant advances following the declaration because France, like other European nations, was not focused on Asia beyond trade relations, which meant a primary focus on China.

It was not until August 2012, with the inauguration of President François Hollande, that France began to actively strengthen bilateral ties with Asian states other than China. Hollande sought to diversify French economic partners beyond China because Asia was growing. Speaking shortly after his election, Hollande admitted that “Japan has not received all the attention it deserves these past few years.”<sup>15</sup> To rectify this, and marking a shift from the China-oriented diplomacy of his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, Hollande pushed for closer ties with Japan.<sup>16</sup> In June 2013, Hollande visited Japan as a state guest, the first such visit in 17 years.<sup>17</sup>

The visit proved pivotal for elevating ties to an “exceptional partnership.”<sup>18</sup> During this visit, the two issued two important documents: a Japan–France joint statement and a cooperation roadmap.<sup>19</sup> The joint statement focused on bilateral cooperation in the three areas of politics and security, the economy, and culture, with the roadmap designed to put the content in that statement into action in the subsequent five years (2013–2018).<sup>20</sup> These were significant steps because they served to integrate defense and security into the relationship for the first time.<sup>21</sup> Setting the tone of relations that still remains today, the joint statement stressed the two countries’ common values, interests, and responsibilities by highlighting the importance of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, including freedom of navigation; agreeing on the importance of multilateralism and international governance; agreeing on the importance of working together on African development as a means of supporting security on the continent; and agreeing to explore areas of cooperation in the wider Pacific region on human assistance and disaster reduction.<sup>22</sup> Regarding security, the two sides agreed to establish a foreign and defense 2+2 ministerial meeting (examined below), to promote cyber and defense equipment cooperation, and to set up a consultation forum on export controls.

During the subsequent years, leaders have continued to deepen relations, with the next big step occurring in 2017. On March 20, 2017, then-PM Abe and President Hollande confirmed that their countries would further deepen security and defense cooperation.<sup>23</sup> This meeting resulted not only in Hollande recognizing Japan’s concerns with regard to the South China Sea and the threat posed by North Korea but also in Abe stating that Japan would like to closely cooperate with France for the stability and prosperity of the region by upholding

<sup>15</sup> Nathan Gain, “France and Japan Tighten Military Links,” *Forces Operations Blog*, January 9, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Kazunari Sakai, “Hollande and Abe to Strengthen Franco–Japanese Ties,” *Nippon.com*, July 18, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> MOFA, “Japan–France Relations (Basic Data),” September 20, 2019m.

<sup>18</sup> MOFA, “日仏共同声明” [Japan–France joint statement], June 8, 2013a.

<sup>19</sup> MOFA, 2013a; MOFA, “日仏共同声明（附属）—日仏間協力のためのロードマップ（2013–2018年）” [Japan–France joint statement (annex) roadmap for cooperation between Japan and France (2013–2018)], June 8, 2013b. They also passed a joint statement about culture.

<sup>20</sup> MOFA, 2013a; MOFA, 2013b.

<sup>21</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> MOFA, 2013a; MOFA, “State Visit to Japan by French President François Hollande,” June 11, 2013c.

<sup>23</sup> MOFA, “Japan–France Summit Meeting,” March 20, 2017a.

the free and open maritime order. In addition to Abe agreeing to explore the possibilities of providing capacity-building assistance together with France for coastal states in the region, the nations agreed to implement joint exercises by Japan, France, the UK, and the United States in the Asia–Pacific region.

Following from this, the next and most recent major development occurred on June 26, 2019, when French President Emmanuel Macron paid his first official visit to Tokyo (and the first by a French president since 2016). The meeting was significant because, in addition to the bilateral ACSA entering into force the same day (explained below), Macron and Abe issued a new roadmap, updating the previous roadmap. Called the “Roadmap on Japan–France cooperation for opening new horizons between Japan and France under an ‘exceptional partnership’ (2019–2023),” the new roadmap reiterates the two countries’ common values and interests in maintaining the international order and seeks to further develop the exceptional partnership in the next five years amid various challenges to that order.<sup>24</sup> The roadmap includes cooperation to ensure that the Indo-Pacific region is inclusive, free, and open, with an agreement to cooperate along three main pillars of maritime security: climate change, the environment and biodiversity, and quality infrastructure.<sup>25</sup> Specifically on security issues, the roadmap includes an agreement on strengthening strategic cooperation while implementing “effective interoperability” between French and Japanese armed forces; having personnel from each of their armed forces participate in exercises; cooperation in HA/DR activities, including SDF participation in French-led exercises; cooperation in maritime capacity building of Indo-Pacific littoral states; cooperation on security-related activities in Africa; strengthening their cooperative framework for joint defense equipment projects; and strengthening their cyberdialogue.<sup>26</sup>

## Defense and Strategic Dialogues

Japan and France first engaged in defense discussions in the late 1970s. Starting with the visit in June 1978 by the JDA’s then–Director General Kanemaru Shin to France, Japanese JDA directors general—and, subsequently, ministers of defense—have visited France nine times; state ministers of defense have visited three times. Importantly, out of these 12 visits, half have occurred since Abe returned to office in 2012.<sup>27</sup> These ministers’ French counterparts have visited Japan nine times, starting in September 1986, although only three have occurred since 2012.<sup>28</sup> Since 2003, they have also taken advantage of international gatherings, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue or Munich Security Conference, to meet an additional 11 times, with

<sup>24</sup> MOFA, “「特別なパートナーシップ」の下で両国間に新たな地平を開く日仏協力のロードマップ（2019–2023年）” [Roadmap on Japan–France cooperation for opening new horizons between Japan and France under an ‘exceptional partnership’ (2019–2023)], June 26, 2019j.

<sup>25</sup> MOFA, “Japan–France Summit Meeting,” June 26, 2019i. The three pillars of maritime security are maintaining the fundamental principles of the international order, enhancing regional connectivity to promote economic prosperity, and committing to responding to challenges to peace and stability.

<sup>26</sup> MOFA, 2019j.

<sup>27</sup> MOD, “日仏防衛協力・交流主要実績” [Japan–France defense cooperation/exchanges, major achievements], document obtained by the author, June 10, 2019e, p. 1. Visits took place in June 1978, August 1979, June 1981, September 1984, January 2001, January 2004, January and June 2014, June 2016, January and June 2017, and January 2018.

<sup>28</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 1. Visits took place in September 1986, April 1990, April 1992, January 1999, February 2002, March 2007, July 2014, March 2015, and January 2018.



nine of these visits having occurred during the Abe administration.<sup>29</sup> These meetings have been supported by ongoing discussions at lower levels, such as 15 visits to France by Japan's parliamentary vice minister of defense and the JDA/MOD administrative vice minister.<sup>30</sup> To date, no French counterparts have visited Japan. Also, military–military dialogues have been held at regular intervals since June 1994. Held at the level of deputy bureau chief (Japan) and deputy political director (France), as well as O6-equivalent personnel from both countries, the purpose of these meetings is to have broad discussions about security issues, including bilateral cooperation in security and defense areas, and region-specific issues, such as China, North Korea, Russia, or Iran, as well as more-concrete discussions about defense cooperation and exchanges. To date, these have been held 18 times, with the most recent held in 2017.<sup>31</sup>

Complementary discussions are also held between the foreign ministries. Although the two countries' diplomats enjoyed decades of relations, they have also held a strategic dialogue at regular intervals since the Koizumi–Chirac declaration in 2005.<sup>32</sup> In May 2011, during a summit between then–Japanese PM Kan Naoto and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the two countries agreed to raise this discussion to a Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue.<sup>33</sup> The inaugural meeting of the Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue was held in January 2012, and there have been a total of eight meetings since.<sup>34</sup> These sessions are opportunities to reiterate shared values and discuss various global challenges—such as North Korea, African development, and climate change—as well as possible ways to cooperate in addressing them.

Importantly, concurrently with these dialogues in both the defense and foreign ministries, the two countries have been enjoying a political–military strategic dialogue held at regular intervals since January 1997. Held at the level of bureau chief for MOFA and the MOD and political director for their French counterparts (and O6-equivalent officers from both countries if needed), the purpose is to have broad discussions about security issues, including bilateral cooperation in security and defense areas, and region-specific issues, such as China, North Korea, Russia, or Iran. Since the formation of the 2+2, this meeting has served as the preparation meeting for that ministerial meeting. To date, it has been held 20 times, meeting annually since its establishment except for 2000 and 2002.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 2. These visits occurred several times during the Cold War, with the first visit by a JDA administrative vice minister to France in January 1966. Subsequent meetings occurred in January and June 1977, September 1979, January 1981, January 1983, February 1989, May 1991, September 2002, September 2006, and January 2016. Similarly, the first visit by a Japanese parliamentary vice minister occurred in June 1972. Subsequent visits occurred in January 1999, May 2010, and July 2014.

<sup>31</sup> These meetings took place in June 1994, January 1997, July 1998, January 1999, June 2001, February 2003, February 2004, January 2005, February 2006, February 2007, April 2008, June 2009, October 2010, July 2011, February 2013, November 2014, July 2016, and December 2017 (Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 9, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> MOFA, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> MOFA, "Visit to the French Republic by Prime Minister Naoto Kan," May 25, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> These dialogues took place on January 13 and October 16, 2012; May 7, 2013; January 9, 2014; March 14, 2015; January 6, 2017; January 27, 2018; and January 11, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> These meetings took place in January 1997, July 1998, January 1999, June 2001, February 2003, February 2004, January 2005, February 2006, February 2007, April 2008, June 2009, October 2010, July 2011, January 2012, February 2013, November 2014, September 2015, July 2016, December 2017, and December 2018 (Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 9, 2019).

Because of the increasing number of discussions pertaining to both defense and foreign policy, Japan asked France to establish a ministerial-level dialogue between their foreign and defense ministers.<sup>36</sup> Although France was initially hesitant because it had no such regularized meeting with any country, officials realized that more could be had by such meetings from both Japanese ministries.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, French and Japanese leaders agreed in 2013 to establish a regular ministerial-level dialogue. On January 9, 2014, the inaugural Japan–France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting, or 2+2, was held.<sup>38</sup> Here, they confirmed commitments to strengthen cooperation in the security and defense sectors. Subsequent meetings have been held at regular intervals since, with the fifth 2+2 held on January 11, 2019.<sup>39</sup>

These discussions, particularly the 2+2 dialogues, are critical for the security relationship because counterparts can have frank discussions on issues important to their countries. An examination of the topics discussed at these meetings shows that officials discuss all major international issues, including maritime order, counterterrorism, countering protectionism, strengthening multilateralism, combating climate change, and international development cooperation. These meetings have proven useful in two ways.

First, they provide opportunities to reaffirm their commitment to shared values and shared approaches to security challenges. Past iterations have resulted in confirmation of the importance of international law; easing tensions in Asia and peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue; shared commitment to ensuring the freedom, openness, and safety of the seas; and the importance of building a secure and reliable cyberspace and maintaining freedom of access to outer space.<sup>40</sup> For example, during the fifth 2+2 in 2019, the countries agreed that they are “exceptional partners” sharing fundamental values and strategic interests, both maritime and Pacific nations, and would cooperate closely toward the peace and stability of the international community and in order to maintain and strengthen the free and open Indo-Pacific.<sup>41</sup>

Second, they are valuable opportunities to talk about issues that concern them and agree on areas for security cooperation. Through these, officials can obtain “an intimate understanding of interests and what is possible” for them to do together.<sup>42</sup> In this way, they serve as “key engines to developing [their] relationship.”<sup>43</sup> In the past, these meetings have resulted in agreements on ways to work more actively for regional and global peace and stability. This has included negotiations over the ACSA; a framework for dialogues on cooperation in the field of defense equipment and export controls; projects for cooperation in the field of defense equipment, such as joint development; strengthening bilateral cooperation on maritime safety; and the fight against piracy.<sup>44</sup> For example, the fifth 2+2 saw an agreement to “hold joint exer-

<sup>36</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> MOFA, “Japan–France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting (Overview of the Results),” January 16, 2014b.

<sup>39</sup> These meetings took place on January 9, 2014; March 15, 2015; January 6, 2017; January 26, 2018; and January 11, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> MOFA, “Joint Statement Released After the Japan–France Joint Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting,” January 10, 2014a.

<sup>41</sup> MOFA, “Fifth Japan–France Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting,” January 11, 2019b.

<sup>42</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> MOFA, 2014a.



cises and trainings in all military services in the Indo-Pacific region in a regular and practical manner.”<sup>45</sup>

These bilateral dialogues are likely to continue to deepen in the years ahead. Not only are the countries holding dialogues focused on specific issues, such as a cyberdialogue and a space dialogue, in which all concerned ministries participate; they also hold an annual defense equipment meeting in which all ongoing defense equipment projects are discussed and an annual meeting for intelligence-related issues.<sup>46</sup> Most recently, the two sides added a new framework to discuss maritime security and environmental issues. Following their January 2019 2+2 meeting, the foreign and defense ministers agreed to establish a Japan–France Comprehensive Maritime Dialogue to include officials from concerned ministries to expand their cooperation in the maritime domain by discussing wide-reaching maritime issues, such as freedom of navigation, sustainable development, and ocean plastic waste and pollution.<sup>47</sup> The first meeting was held on September 20, 2019.<sup>48</sup>

## Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation

Stemming from these strategic and defense dialogues and representing efforts to turn their dialogues into practical areas for cooperation, both sides engage in regular defense exchanges and have signed several important agreements to advance their defense cooperation.

There are two main defense exchanges occurring between the two. The first is at the service staff level. Since April 1963, Japanese chiefs of the three SDF services have visited France to meet with their French counterparts 31 times, more than any other actor examined in this report.<sup>49</sup> Staff talks have taken place as well, but only data for those between their navies were obtainable; those exchanges have occurred 16 times since 1996 with both France’s naval headquarters and France’s Pacific fleet.<sup>50</sup> In the past two decades, there has been a noticeable uptick in MSDF visits. France has reciprocated these visits 20 times.<sup>51</sup> Today, these meetings are important for planning areas of future defense cooperation. The second is at the student exchange level. Japan has been sending its officers to France since the 1960s, totaling

<sup>45</sup> MOFA, 2019b.

<sup>46</sup> French official, email correspondence with the author, December 6, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> “Japan and France Agree to Hold New Maritime Dialogue by Year-End,” *Japan Times*, January 12, 2019.

<sup>48</sup> MOFA, “第1回日仏包括的海洋対話の開催” [Opening of the inaugural Japan–France comprehensive maritime dialogue], September 13, 2019l.

<sup>49</sup> MSDF chief visits were in July 1967, February 1971, July 1984, May 1990, April 1995, April 2002, May 2004, June 2005, May 2009, August 2013, and May 2018. GSDF chief visits were in April 1963, October 1964, October 1967, August 1969, January 1982, October 1986, August 1989, May 1998, October 2003, and November 2017. ASDF chief visits were in January 1967, July 1998, January 2002, July 2005, and May 2010. Joint chiefs visits were in November 1972, May 1975, May 1980, July 2000, and March 2014 (MOD, 2019e, pp. 2–3).

<sup>50</sup> MOD, 2019e, pp. 3–4.

<sup>51</sup> Navy chief visits were in December 1989, October 1997, January 2004, September 2010, and March 2016. Air force chief visits were in May 1978, September 1984, March 1992, April 2000, September 2004, and June 2008. Army chief visits were in July 1989, February 1995, January 2005, and April 2019. Chief of the defense staff (*chef d’état-major des armées*) visits were in February 1977, March 1984, May 1990, March 2001, and December 2009 (MOD, 2019e, p. 2).

165 people, with an increasing number since the turn of the 21st century and the majority going to one of France's service academies or to the prestigious *École militaire*.<sup>52</sup> France has not reciprocated in similar numbers, sending only 89 French officers to Japan, with most going to the Graduate School of Science and Engineering at Japan's National Defense Academy.<sup>53</sup> Although the absolute numbers are small over the course of their relations, these exchanges are important in building contacts and helping create an understanding of strategic objectives, policies, and procedures.<sup>54</sup> This is critical to growing bilateral ties because it helps create regularized relationships between defense officials and armed forces' personnel that support the growing number of exercises and training, examined below.

In addition to these exchanges, the two countries have signed several agreements that advanced bilateral cooperation into new areas. These efforts began in May 2011, when leaders Kan and Sarkozy agreed to initiate talks on an agreement concerning security measures to protect classified information.<sup>55</sup> Even though they did not have any measurable security ties, the agreement was seen as necessary by both sides because Japan was about to open its base in Djibouti, where the French had been operating.<sup>56</sup> Because the two nations would be operating in the same area, they saw the agreement as necessary for intelligence exchange around Djibouti. The talks were quick, with the formal signing (and entering into force) of the ISA on October 24, 2011. Today, although the agreement is still used for intelligence exchanges in Djibouti, they use it for other purposes as well.

Then, in July 2014, they agreed to enhance defense cooperation through the joint development of military equipment. Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori said that France appeared interested in developing defense equipment based on robot technology, with particular reference to unmanned submarines.<sup>57</sup> Less than a year after this agreement, the two sides signed an agreement concerning the transfer of defense equipment and technology as a means of increasing cooperation and joint development of defense equipment. Signed on March 13, 2015, the agreement established a legal framework for handling defense equipment and technology that is transferred between the nations to strengthen cooperation in the fields of security and defense and the joint research, development, and production of defense equipment and technology.<sup>58</sup>

Importantly, stemming from Japan's concerns about France's DCNS (now called Naval Group) selling at least 11 sets of helicopter landing equipment to China in 2013, the agreement includes a commitment to not transfer technology and equipment to a third country without

<sup>52</sup> The numbers of SDF officers sent to France are 82 to the army academy, 19 to the naval academy, 25 to the air force academy, 34 to the *École militaire*, and five to other organizations (MOD, 2019e, p. 5).

<sup>53</sup> Since 2007, 73 French officers have studied at the National Defense Academy of Japan in four-month programs. The remaining 16 people have studied at three other organizations, but none of the SDF's service academies (MOD, 2019e, p. 5).

<sup>54</sup> Retired French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> MOFA, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> French official, email correspondence with the author, December 6, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> MOD, “大臣臨時会見概要” [Summary of minister's extraordinary conference], July 29, 2014.

<sup>58</sup> Government of Japan and Government of France, “防衛装備品及び技術の移転に関する日本国政府とフランス共和国政府との間の協定” [Agreement between the Republic of France and the government of Japan regarding the transfer of defense equipment and technology], March 13, 2015.

the consent of the country of origin.<sup>59</sup> Less than two years later, on December 2, 2016, the agreement came into force. To date, however, industrial cooperation has been limited. Only one program has been initiated, a feasibility study on next-generation mine-countermeasure technology, which began in June 2018.<sup>60</sup> France is eager to do more but understands that a possible limitation of enlarging this cooperation is Japan's heavy reliance on U.S. technology.<sup>61</sup>

Expanding the bilateral relationship even further, on July 13, 2018, the two signed an ACSA, Japan's fourth.<sup>62</sup> The ACSA enables Japan's and France's armed forces to share defense-related supplies and services, such as food, fuel, transportation, ammunition, and equipment. It does not cover weapons. Importantly, this agreement helps the two nations' armed forces strengthen interoperability, reduces the cost of mutual support services between these forces, and facilitates the conduct of future joint military interactions—both exercises and actual operations—such as PKOs and HA/DR operations.<sup>63</sup> It came into force on June 26, 2019, during Macron's first visit to Japan.

## Training and Exercises

In parallel with the growing number of strategic dialogues and defense agreements, the French and Japanese armed forces have also been upgrading relations through training and exercise opportunities. The French navy has a long history of making goodwill visits to Japan. The first occurred in April 1961, when the French frigate *Francis Garnier* visited Tokyo. Such visits, as well as French ships sailing under the UN flag, continued throughout the Cold War all the way into the present, for a total of 64 such visits, including the frigate *Vendémiaire* participating in the SDF fleet review in October 2015.<sup>64</sup> Japan has reciprocated. In June 2017, an MSDF P-1 participated in the Paris Air Show. A year later, in May 2018, an MSDF P-1 returned to France to engage in a maritime patrol goodwill training exercise, followed in August by the MSDF training ships *Kashima* and *Makinami* engaging in a goodwill training exercise with a French replenishment ship and French fighter off the coast of Brest.<sup>65</sup> Each country also has a long history of ship visits to the other country, with 61 French port calls to Japan since 1961 having now become an annual occurrence and 25 Japanese visits to French ports since 1962, which have tended to become more regular in recent years.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> The equipment is a large, perforated steel plate that allows a helicopter's grappling hook to grab, then use a guideline to draw itself down to the ship's deck. Japan fears that the equipment could boost China's helicopter landing technology and may pose a threat to its control of the Senkaku Islands ("Japan Protests to France over Military Sales to China," *Straits Times*, March 18, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> MOFA, 2019b.

<sup>61</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> MOFA, 2019b. It was Japan's fourth ACSA after those with the United States, Australia, and the UK ("Japan, France Sign Agreement to Share Defense Supplies, Deepening Military Ties," *Japan Times*, July 14, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Ministry for the Armed Forces, France, "Press Release," unofficial translation, *Defense-Aerospace.com*, July 13, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> MOD, "日本・フランス 両国艦艇相互訪問実績" [Japan–France Both countries' ships' visit achievements], document obtained by the author, July 18, 2019g.

<sup>65</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 4.

In recent years, these visits have paved the way to joint exercises. These began as Japanese observing, and then participating, in multinational HA/DR exercises led by the French Armed Forces in New Caledonia. The first, Croix du Sud (Southern Cross), included Japanese Joint Staff observers in October 2012, but SDF officers have since joined as participants in the August 2014 and November 2016 iterations (none was held in 2018).<sup>67</sup> The second, Equateur (Equator), included Japanese observers first in October 2013, but Japan has since seen participation in subsequent iterations in 2015, 2017, and 2019.<sup>68</sup> Maritime forces have also conducted several goodwill training exercises, which are more basic training opportunities. The first was held in June 2014 near the Kantō region between the MSDF and the French navy, and three have occurred since.<sup>69</sup>

The big change came in May 2015, when the United States joined Japan and France for their first trilateral exercise off Japan's western coast. In this joint exercise, called Kitsune 2015, the MSDF's Ōsumi LST, landing craft and air cushion vessels, SH-60/JK-1 helicopters, and the GSDF's CH-47J and UH-60JA joined one U.S. and two French naval ships for an exercise targeting joint amphibious maneuvers, which included practicing helicopter flights between the four ships, joint tactical maneuvers, and exchanging landing craft between ships.<sup>70</sup> Two years later, the UK joined these forces for a quadrilateral exercise. As part of France's Jeanne d'Arc mission to the region, on April 29, 2017, the French naval vessel *Mistral* visited Japan per a previous agreement to practice landing the amphibious assault carrier in Japan. Taking advantage of this opportunity, from May 3 to 22, 2017, France led the quadrilateral exercise to practice amphibious landings, delivering forces by helicopter.<sup>71</sup> The exercise was held in the air and sea space around Japan, the air and sea space in and around Guam, and the air and sea space in and around the Northern Mariana Islands.<sup>72</sup> These exercises, the first of their kind, included a mixture of ships and helicopters, including two French ships (amphibious assault ship *Mistral* and a landing craft) and 50 GSDF soldiers, 160 MSDF sailors, and approximately ten personnel from the Joint Staff, in addition to one GSDF CH-47 helicopter and one MSDF transport ship.<sup>73</sup>

Less than a year later, France sent its frigate *Vendémiaire* to East Asia, including Japan, where it and the MSDF's destroyer *Yūgiri* conducted a control-at-sea exercise in February 2018. This exercise, focusing on antisurface warfare, antiair warfare, and tactical maneuvers, was notable because it represented the first bilateral exercise that was not termed a “goodwill

<sup>67</sup> In 2012, Japan sent two (both from its Joint Staff). In 2014, it sent four (three from the Joint Staff and one from the GSDF). In 2016, it sent eight (three from the Joint Staff and five from the GSDF) (MOD, 2019e, p. 4).

<sup>68</sup> In 2013, Japan sent two (one from the Joint Staff and one from the Ground Staff Office). In 2015, it sent seven (three from the Joint Staff, one from the Air Staff Office, and one from the GSDF). In 2017, it sent one (from the Joint Staff School). In 2019, it sent three (from the Joint Staff and the Joint Staff School) (MOD, 2019e, pp. 4–5; Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 10, 2019).

<sup>69</sup> In October 2015, they conducted a second one, this time near Okinawa. They have also conducted two bilateral goodwill training activities in the Gulf of Aden: one in June 2015 and a second one in March 2016 (MOD, 2019e, p. 4).

<sup>70</sup> “Japan, France and the United States Conducted a Joint Amphibious Exercise for the 1st Time,” *defsanet*, June 1, 2015.

<sup>71</sup> Haven Daley and Audrey McAvoy, “US, Japan, France, UK Practice Amphibious Landings on Guam,” *Real Clear Defense*, May 11, 2017.

<sup>72</sup> MOD, “Joint Training Exercise Involving Japan, France, the United Kingdom and the United States (FY2017 Integrated Training in the United States),” *Japan Defense Focus*, No. 89, June 2017.

<sup>73</sup> MOD, 2017.

training exercise.”<sup>74</sup> Just over a year later, in April 2019, they did it again, with the *Vendémiaire* conducting exercises with the MSDF destroyer *Kirisame* off the coast of Kyūshū focusing on anti-air warfare, firing automatic weapons, and engaging in close maneuvers.<sup>75</sup>

Most recently, in May 2019, the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and its escorts engaged in a joint naval exercise—called La Perouse—in the Bay of Bengal with nine other ships from the United States, Australia, and Japan. Japan, using its helicopter carrier *Izumo* and destroyer *Murasame*, exercised with the French *Charles de Gaulle*, a guided-missile destroyer, two frigates, and a supply ship; an Australian frigate and submarine; and a U.S. guided-missile destroyer to practice formation sailing, live-fire drills, and search and rescue.<sup>76</sup>

Despite their relatively short history, these exercises are nevertheless significant. Operationally, these countries’ armed forces “need a lot of work” in terms of their ability to engage with each other effectively.<sup>77</sup> Although the exercises provide opportunities for that, they are not a “teaching–learning relationship”; rather, they are opportunities to “get to know each other,” which forms important “building blocks” in the operational relationship.<sup>78</sup> The hope is to not only make these exercises more systematic but, even more ambitiously, to get to the point at which they can even exchange units on ships.<sup>79</sup> The term often used is *effective interoperability*, which essentially means interoperability up to what is actually possible on both sides, understanding that interoperability between their armed forces will never be like that of NATO or the U.S.–Japan alliance.<sup>80</sup>

## Motivations

In these activities, it is clear France and Japan have developed robust security ties in a variety of areas. For its part, France has four motivations behind its outreach to Japan:

- Protect its sovereignty and regional presence.
- Protect the rules-based international order.
- Support the United States.
- Seek defense-related industrial opportunities.

### Protect Its Sovereignty and Regional Presence

French officials are quick to remind Indo-Pacific audiences that France is a resident power. For example, when speaking at the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue, French Minister for the Armed

<sup>74</sup> MSDF, “フランス海軍との共同訓練 (V I N E X 18) の終了について” [Regarding the conclusion of joint exercise with the French navy (VINEX 18)], press release, February 13, 2018a.

<sup>75</sup> MSDF, “フランス海軍との共同訓練の実施について” [Regarding the implementation of joint exercises with the French navy], press release, April 15, 2019c.

<sup>76</sup> MOD, 2019e, p. 5; “U.S., France, Japan and Australia Hold First Combined Naval Drill in Asia,” Reuters, May 16, 2019; Jesse Johnson, “Japan’s MSDF Kicks Off Second Quadrilateral Naval Exercise in Less Than Two Weeks,” *Japan Times*, May 20, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> French official, email correspondence with the author, December 6, 2019.



Forces Florence Parly spoke about French regional interests, leading with often-repeated facts presented at the beginning of this chapter about the number of French inhabitants, islands, and vast exclusive economic zones that France maintains in the region.<sup>81</sup> Key French strategic documents support this. In its 2017 *Strategic Review of Defense and National Security*, France states its interests in the region, saying that it will continue to rely “on its network of partnerships spanning the world, from Africa and the Middle East to the Asia–Pacific region.”<sup>82</sup> The following year, Paris released *France’s Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific*, which begins with “France is a nation of the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>83</sup> The point of these often-repeated facts presented at the beginning of this chapter is to reinforce the notion that the evolving security order affects France too. As a resident power, France intends “to protect its sovereign interests, ensure the security of its citizens and actively contribute to international stability.”<sup>84</sup>

As a resident power, feeling responsible to the Indo-Pacific comes naturally to France. These territories and nationals are “huge reasons” France is interested in being active in the region.<sup>85</sup> As stated by then–Minister for the Armed Forces Jean-Yves Le Drian, for France,

the issue of stability in the Asia–Pacific is not a theoretical one. It is a concrete issue, which occupies a large part of [the defense] ministry in the areas of strategic planning, monitoring regional developments, dialogue with our partners, intelligence activities, planning and operational management.<sup>86</sup>

Because of its regional presence, France “needs to address all sorts of issues.”<sup>87</sup> Paris “intends to assume fully its role as a regional power, in order to protect its sovereign interests, ensure the security of its citizens and actively contribute to international stability.”<sup>88</sup> Stemming from this, the core of France’s defense and national security strategy in the region is to defend and ensure the integrity of its sovereignty, as well as protect its nationals, territories, and exclusive economic zone.<sup>89</sup>

Like others, France expresses concern over the rapidly changing international security environment. The emerging unstable and unpredictable multipolar environment is of particular concern.<sup>90</sup> Although it names neither Russia nor China explicitly, France regularly voices its concern about the situation in the South China Sea and describes its concern as follows: “a growing number of established as well as emerging powers are increasingly displaying military

<sup>81</sup> Florence Parly, Minister for the Armed Forces, France, 18th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, June 1, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, Ministry for the Armed Forces, France, *Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: 2017 Key Points*, October 2017, p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, Ministry for the Armed Forces, France, *France’s Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific*, Paris, France, 2019a, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 7.

<sup>85</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Defense, France, “The Challenges of Conflict Resolution,” speech, 15th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, June 5, 2016, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 7.

<sup>89</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2017, p. 2.

assertiveness, involving power politics and ‘fait accompli’ [and] direct challenges to those international institutions and norms that were set up to manage the use of force.”<sup>91</sup>

To demonstrate its commitment, French naval vessels have regularly transited through and made port calls in the South China Sea. And since 2017, France has stepped up to challenge Chinese claims directly. For example, in June 2017, France and the UK conducted a joint patrol through Mischief, Subi, and Fiery Cross Reefs in the Spratly Islands. Then, in March 2018, the French frigate *Vendémiaire* conducted a patrol in the South China Sea, which was reported as a freedom-of-navigation operation–type activity, but the details were never publicized. Most recently, the *Vendémiaire* passed through the Taiwan Strait on April 6, 2019, the first time a French vessel had done so, resulting in France being disinvited from a Chinese naval parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army Navy.<sup>92</sup> French officials have also regularly encouraged other European countries to increase their presence in the South China Sea.

As strong as these signals are, France understands that it lacks sufficient capability to protect its interests, so it has expanded its regional partnerships.<sup>93</sup> Japan was one of these targets (the others are Australia and India) because it shares the same values and has the capability to do things for regional security and stability.<sup>94</sup> Importantly, it was former PM Abe’s efforts to change Japan’s defense policies and enlarge the scope of its strategic partners that convinced France that Japan had become a more serious regional security player.<sup>95</sup> France sees in Japan “a country that’s facing similar challenges; the same strategic and global issues.”<sup>96</sup> Importantly, France felt comfortable with Japan’s outreach because the two countries share the same definition of the Indo-Pacific (Africa to the Americas) and agree that there is a need to develop cooperative ties for the benefit of the region.<sup>97</sup>

### Protect the Rules-Based International Order

Because the defense of French interests in the region is closely linked to the security of the regional spaces within which its territories and nationals exist, France’s second motivation is to protect the rules-based international order. As President Macron told the U.S. Congress, the order is endangered, and, should it collapse, “Other powers, with a stronger strategy and ambition, will then fill the void we would leave empty. Other powers will not hesitate one second to advocate their own model, to shape the 21st century world order.”<sup>98</sup>

Like the UK, France has economic interests in the region. French officials are quick to note that what is at stake in the Indo-Pacific “goes beyond the prosperity of Europe and the preservation of trade links that are vital to the world. This is a question of principle.”<sup>99</sup> France

<sup>91</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, “Exclusive: In Rare Move, French Warship Passes Through Taiwan Strait,” Reuters, April 24, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>95</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Emmanuel Macron, President, France, speech, U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., April 25, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Parly, 2019, p. 3.

sees itself as having a responsibility for the international order, given that it is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a founding member of the EU, and a stakeholder in more than 20 international organizations.<sup>100</sup> This is important for France because it sees the region as interconnected with Europe.<sup>101</sup> For example, former Minister for the Armed Forces Le Drian has stated that, “if the Law of the Sea is not observed in the China seas today, it will be in jeopardy in the Arctic, the Mediterranean and elsewhere tomorrow.”<sup>102</sup> Because of this, France sees a need to protect the rules-based international order, reject unilateral ambitions and restrictions to freedom of navigation, and preserve strategic balances.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, because the integrity of the air and maritime routes is a major security issue for France, Paris sees a direct interest in safeguarding sea lanes and maintaining access to the regional commons.<sup>104</sup> Add to this France’s understanding of the need to protect vital interests below the surface of the water, including internet cables and other communication lines that run along the seabed, to protect French commercial and military freedom of navigation between Europe and the Pacific.<sup>105</sup> Because of the fear of any disruption to these, France has a lot at stake in protecting its territories and nationals living in the region.

France sees three primary security challenges to the international order writ large:

- Russia
- terrorism
- China, including competition with China.<sup>106</sup>

In the Indo-Pacific region specifically, France sees four security concerns:

- North Korea and the challenge of countering nuclear proliferation
- the South China Sea situation and issues of maritime law violation
- climate change
- terrorism.<sup>107</sup>

To deal with Russia, France has NATO. To deal with terrorism, French troops are engaged in several operations and working with other countries. Climate change and North Korea require multilateral efforts, such as those involving the UN and EU. Dealing with China and the situation in the South China Sea is more difficult. As noted above, until President Hollande, France did not view China as a security challenge. This changed as France began to see an increase in

<sup>100</sup>Sylvie Goulard, Minister for the Armed Forces, France, “Upholding the Rules-Based Regional Order,” speech, 16th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, June 3, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup>French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>102</sup>Le Drian, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup>Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup>Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 14.

<sup>105</sup>Judy Dempsey, “France’s Strategic Footprint in the Indian Ocean,” Strategic Europe, Brussels: Carnegie Europe, May 14, 2019.

<sup>106</sup>French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>107</sup>This is a combined list from two speeches by French ministers of the armed forces at the Shangri-La Dialogues (Goulard, 2017; Florence Parly, Minister for the Armed Forces, France, “Raising the Bar for Regional Security Cooperation,” speech, 17th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, June 3, 2018).



Chinese activity throughout Europe and increased military activity in the Indo-Pacific. France had “no illusion anymore of the Chinese regime” as it became “much more aware of what China was doing.”<sup>108</sup> With a renewed sense of danger from Chinese activity, Macron declared in March 2019 that the “time of European naivete is over” regarding China.<sup>109</sup> Guided by this thinking, Macron has sought to strengthen France’s ties and partnerships to counter China’s movements against the rules-based international order and protect French interests.<sup>110</sup> When looking at China’s activities in the South China Sea, France is adamant that a “fait accompli is not the fait accepted.”<sup>111</sup>

Paris sees the need to go beyond rhetoric, as evidenced by its actions in the South China Sea. France believes that it is necessary to “stand firm against actions that undermine the foundations of the international order, stand firm against the rejection of law and of dialogue,” understanding that this comes with a price but that states do not have a choice if they value order and security.<sup>112</sup> France acknowledges, however, that it needs bilateral and multilateral partnerships to better fulfill its missions.<sup>113</sup> When it looks across the region for countries that both share its vision and have the capability to act, it is confronted with “limited” options.<sup>114</sup> Japan, however, is a “natural ally” in this regard.<sup>115</sup> As Pacific nations, France sees Japan as sharing the same values and committed to peace and stability. Both are maritime powers with a regional presence, meaning that they have a vested interest in ensuring continued freedom of navigation and the safety of sea lines of communication.<sup>116</sup> France also sees Japan as a major partner for strengthening international law and freedom of movement.<sup>117</sup> Importantly, France sees both itself and Japan as consigned to the same security challenges presented by China, in that they consider China as “behaving against our global interests.”<sup>118</sup> Partnership with Japan is therefore an opportunity to promote a stable and multipolar regional order.<sup>119</sup> But, for France, it goes beyond dialogues and promises. According to one official, “it’s one thing to say we share [similar threat perceptions]; it’s another to be able to act together on that threat.”<sup>120</sup> For France, increasing the interaction between forces is critical in this regard. Although the two countries

<sup>108</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>109</sup> Jun Ishikawa, Manabu Morimoto, and Tetsushi Takahashi, “European ‘Naivete’ on China Is Over, Macron Says,” *Nikkei Asia*, March 23, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> Brattberg, Le Corre, and Soula, 2018.

<sup>111</sup> Parly, 2018, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> Le Drian, 2016, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> French Defense Minister Parly, in speaking about sailing French ships through the South China Sea, said, “the right to free passage is one we want to exercise fully” (Tallulah Lutkin and Togo Shiraishi, “France and Japan to Scale Up Military Exercises to Deter China,” *Nikkei Asia*, January 25, 2018).

<sup>117</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>119</sup> Harsh V. Pant and Vinay Kaura, “France Is Looking for New Allies in Asia,” *Foreign Policy*, July 18, 2019.

<sup>120</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

“can’t work together” now, it is recognized that “we need to be ready to react against a great power if we need to.”<sup>121</sup>

### Support the United States

France “strongly supports efforts to preserve strategic stability.”<sup>122</sup> This

used to be the responsibility of the United States, but the United States has shown itself to be less prone to being a policeman of the world and involved in all crises; instead, it has been showing its allies that it wants them to do more.<sup>123</sup>

Also, France recognizes that the world is becoming more multilateral and that U.S. bilateral relationships alone have limited strengths.<sup>124</sup> Although France values its security relationship with the United States, it has “clearly understood” Washington’s desire to have its allies and partners do more.<sup>125</sup> To address the evolving threats in the region and sustain the strategic stability once provided by the United States, France recognizes that it needs to “maintain its level of engagement alongside its partners to maintain balances of power and to guarantee stability.”<sup>126</sup> Through its partnership with Japan (and Australia and India), France can continue to maintain balances of power that support the United States. For Paris, “defending the trans-Atlantic alliance means we have to be engaged in the Indo-Pacific region.”<sup>127</sup>

In this way, France supports the United States. France supports multilateralism, but it sees U.S. involvement as critical.<sup>128</sup> For France, “the United States remains our major ally, we need them, we are close and we share the same values.”<sup>129</sup> Paris recognizes that, even though the United States is not as engaged during peacetime as it used to be, Paris expects that, in times of crisis, the United States will be. In this situation, Paris expects that Washington will turn to its allies for assistance. As an ally, Paris acknowledges that it “can’t be [an] innocent bystander,” lest it risk its alliance with the United States.<sup>130</sup> This does not mean that France is satisfied with the United States. In addition to its strategic documents and speeches by officials warning about the credibility of multilateral efforts when the United States withdraws from international agreements, interviewees for this report lamented that the United States was not as predictable as it used to be. At the same time, France recognizes that the United States has shifted its attention away from Europe to the Indo-Pacific, a trend that began before Trump, while (during the Trump administration) France had to deal “for the first time with an American president who doesn’t share our idea of the European project, and [an] American policy

<sup>121</sup> French official, interview with the author, July 12, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 16.

<sup>123</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>124</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>125</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>126</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 15.

<sup>127</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Macron, 2018.

<sup>129</sup> “Emmanuel Macron in His Own Words (English),” *The Economist*, November 7, 2019.

<sup>130</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

[that] is diverging from this project.”<sup>131</sup> Yet, France recognizes its strategic partnership with the United States, as well as those with Japan, Australia, and India, is “crucial to perverse stability in this region and to prevent unilateral logics.”<sup>132</sup>

### Seek Defense-Related Industrial Opportunities

Throughout the 1990s, France wanted to work with Japan in technology, hoping that doing so could lead to defense technology exchanges.<sup>133</sup> This did not happen, but, when President Hollande began the shift away from China toward Japan, the opportunity once again presented itself. In 2012, Asian military spending surpassed European military spending, leading to expectations in France that it could sell defense equipment to Asia.<sup>134</sup> When then-PM Abe relaxed the defense equipment export law in 2014, this “convinced the French strategic community that Japan would soon be a normalized defense partner, eager to attain the best equipment and willing to increase security cooperation and coordination even beyond East Asia.”<sup>135</sup> This led to a “great expectation of Japan.”<sup>136</sup> French companies felt that they needed Japanese technology to enhance their defense industry.<sup>137</sup> This expectation remains unfilled, however, with France blaming Japan’s dependence on the United States. France wants to cooperate on high-tech capabilities with Japan, including dual-use technology, because it views Japan as being a leader in such technology.<sup>138</sup> It is difficult to do so, however, “when the United States is the only elephant in the room” in technology cooperation, arms development, and arms sales.<sup>139</sup>

### Divergences

As important as the convergence between France’s motivations and Japan’s motivations outlined in Chapter Two, there are also two important divergences to highlight. The first is China. Although France and Japan share strategic concerns about China and a clear convergence of the type of threat it poses to the international system, their *means* of handling China differ. This stems from France’s interests with China, which are largely economic and diplomatic in nature. As described in a France–China joint action plan agreed on in November 2019, France has an interest in deepening the Franco-Chinese global strategic partnership, opening up new prospects of cooperation between the two countries, and creating new trade opportunities

<sup>131</sup> “Emmanuel Macron in His Own Words,” 2019.

<sup>132</sup> Defense Information and Communication Delegation, 2019a, p. 17.

<sup>133</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>134</sup> French expert, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>135</sup> Pajon, 2017.

<sup>136</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Japanese expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>138</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>139</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

between them.<sup>140</sup> Because of these interests, France is wary of alienating China.<sup>141</sup> Although France has shown itself to be willing and able to openly question Chinese activities that challenge the international order, this willingness is not universal among French leaders. French officials highlight the importance of engaging China, encouraging it to play a more responsible stakeholder role while discussing the future of multilateralism and global governance.<sup>142</sup> Paris does not want to be openly antagonistic toward China; nor does it want to enable an environment in which blocs form in the region.<sup>143</sup> Instead, France sees the Indo-Pacific region as inclusive of China, as long as China obeys the rules.<sup>144</sup> This means having frank conversations with China on such things as human rights and rule of law but not making China an adversary.<sup>145</sup>

This domestic debate regarding China limits bilateral security cooperation between France and Japan. For Paris, Japan's efforts and rhetoric on China "are sometimes seen . . . as being too confrontational."<sup>146</sup> Not only is Japan sometimes seen as "trying to shape everything into an anti-China narrative"; according to some in France, Japan "wants to use megaphone diplomacy" vis-à-vis China, which is "off-putting" to France, which wants to rely on quieter means to encourage China to behave in more-positive ways.<sup>147</sup> Paris prefers to take a more cautious approach to China.<sup>148</sup> It is for this reason that Paris has been hesitant to join Quadrilateral Consultations, for example: It does not want to be "trapped" in a grouping that could be interpreted as an anti-China coalition of democracies.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, France does not want to be perceived as following the U.S. approach to China.<sup>150</sup>

Like France's views on China, France's position on Russia is not monolithic. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea, France's Russia policy—both Hollande's and Macron's—has been best characterized as "dialogue and firmness": firm in its commitment to defending French security, European and transatlantic solidarity, and liberal values while maintaining and expanding dialogue with Russia.<sup>151</sup> Those who are "firm" see Russia as a "spoiler" that affects Europe "very directly."<sup>152</sup> This viewpoint recognizes that Russia seeks to weaken alliances and break what it perceives as Western encirclement. They look at Russia's behavior in Ukraine and

<sup>140</sup> French Embassy in the UK, "France and China Agree Joint Cooperation Action Plan," Beijing, November 6, 2019.

<sup>141</sup> Pant and Kaura, 2019.

<sup>142</sup> Céline Pajon, "Macron in Japan: Upgrading the Franco–Japanese Strategic Partnership in the Indo-Pacific," *The Diplomat*, June 26, 2019.

<sup>143</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>144</sup> Retired French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>145</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>146</sup> Céline Pajon, "France and Japan: The Indo-Pacific as a Springboard for a Strategic Partnership," in Luis Simón and Ulrich Speck, eds., *Natural Partners? Europe, Japan and Security in the Indo-Pacific*, Madrid, Spain: Real Instituto Elcano, Elcano policy paper, November 2018, p. 13.

<sup>147</sup> French expert, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>148</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>149</sup> French expert, interview with the author, November 4, 2019. Quadrilateral Consultations, commonly referred to as *the Quad*, consist of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

<sup>150</sup> Retired French official, interview with the author, November 5, 2019.

<sup>151</sup> Tatiana Kastoueva-Jean, "Is a 'Reset' Between France and Russia Needed and, If So, Is It Possible?" *Russia Matters*, December 9, 2019.

<sup>152</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

Crimea, as well as ongoing anecdotes of cyberactivity and election meddling, as evidence that Russia remains a danger to the international order. There are also some in French leadership who advocate for more dialogue and a reset in relations with Russia. This has become particularly strong since the summer of 2019. French Foreign Minister Le Drian, for example, has said that the “time was right to work towards reducing the distrust between Russia and Europe.”<sup>153</sup> Even President Macron has indicated that it may be necessary for France to reconsider its position with Russia and how it can deconflict on some issues or resolve frozen conflicts.<sup>154</sup> In early 2020, Macron indicated that, although Russia has not changed its behavior, a more credible way to deal with Russia may be through diplomatic engagement and “strategic dialogue.”<sup>155</sup>

The result is an active debate in French politics about Russia. Dominique Moisi, Special Adviser at the Institut Montaigne in Paris, for example, although acknowledging that rapprochement may make sense, says that Macron’s engagement carries significant risks because Russia persists in the behaviors that caused its relations with Europe to deteriorate.<sup>156</sup> And two notable European experts on Russia, James Nixey and Mathieu Boulègue, wrote a scathing opinion piece calling Macron’s actions a mistake, driven by his own hubris.<sup>157</sup> This same criticism is sometimes heard in France regarding Japan. For these people, when looking at Japan’s outreach to Russia, they see similar mistakes. Although those who feel this way do not expect Japan to “do more” with Russia, they think that Japanese leadership is naïve in constantly reaching out to Putin for a peace treaty.<sup>158</sup> Depending on where French policy goes in the future, this discrepancy in views could set limits on some aspects of bilateral security cooperation.

## Conclusion

France is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific region. It has a renewed interest “in upgrading its international leadership and expanding its security commitment in Asia, an area where it wants to be acknowledged as a responsible stakeholder.”<sup>159</sup> This chapter has shown that security relations between Paris and Tokyo are developing in a positive trajectory. In addition to a robust set of defense and strategic dialogues held at many different levels, the two countries enjoy active defense exchanges between their armed forces and have signed several important security-related agreements. Beyond these dialogues and exchanges, however, the two countries have been relatively limited in their defense-related industrial cooperation and military exercises, with just their maritime services exercising with one another. Importantly, however, the two partners have roadmaps to frame their relations and overlapping regional strategies in the years ahead. Assuming that both countries remain engaged, ties look likely to grow.

<sup>153</sup> David Chazan, “France Says ‘Time Has Come’ to Ease Tensions with Russia,” *The Telegraph*, September 9, 2019.

<sup>154</sup> “Emmanuel Macron in His Own Words,” 2019.

<sup>155</sup> D. Chazan, 2019; “Macron Calls for Better Long-Term Relations with Russia,” *France24*, February 15, 2020.

<sup>156</sup> Dominique Moisi, “What’s Right About France’s Overtures Toward Russia?” *Project Syndicate*, September 27, 2019.

<sup>157</sup> James Nixey and Mathieu Boulègue, “On Russia, Macron Is Mistaken,” Chatham House, September 5, 2019.

<sup>158</sup> French official, interview with the author, November 4, 2019; French expert, interview with the author, November 4, 2019.

<sup>159</sup> Pajon, 2018, p. 11.



## Germany

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Japan's ties with Germany are moving more slowly and remain shallower than those with the UK and France. With no regular ministerial-level dialogues, defense cooperation, or exercises between their armed forces, the relationship is different in many aspects. According to one expert, ties between Japan and Germany lack an "emotional level" of attachment.<sup>1</sup> Yet, circumstances are beginning to change in a process that one observer calls "Germany's nascent pivot to Japan."<sup>2</sup> Today, although Germany maintains close economic ties with China, some see Germany pursuing a diversification strategy in the Indo-Pacific that includes deeper ties with Japan.<sup>3</sup> Bilateral security cooperation is growing, but it is still very much in its infancy.

### History

After being allies (with Italy) during World War II and transformed into liberal democracies and market economies after their defeat, both West Germany and Japan played important roles in the capitalist bloc during the Cold War. Despite normalizing relations in 1955, they had little contact with one another beyond their economic ties. Simply put, relations were not close, although they were also not bad. This did not change until the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany, but even that took time.

It was not until the 21st century that ties between the two countries began to move substantially beyond economics. They worked together (along with India and Brazil), for example, on reforming the UN Security Council and demanded an increase in the number of permanent members in the mid-2000s. They also agreed to coordinate and cooperate with the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> It was at this point that their "mutual concerns met each other geographically."<sup>5</sup> As Japan's overseas profile expanded into the Middle East and Germany took on new roles in Afghanistan, the two nations realized that they shared similar con-

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<sup>1</sup> German expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ulrich Speck, "Germany's Nascent Pivot to Japan," in Luis Simón and Ulrich Speck, eds., *Natural Partners? Europe, Japan and Security in the Indo-Pacific*, Madrid, Spain: Real Instituto Elcano, November 2018, pp. 21–24.

<sup>3</sup> Torrey Taussig, "Germany's Incomplete Pivot to the Indo-Pacific," in Sharon Stirling, ed., *Mind the Gap: National Views of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, Washington, D.C.: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2019, pp. 23–24.

<sup>4</sup> MOFA, "Japanese–German Cooperation and Coordination in the Assistance for Reconstruction of Afghanistan," provisional translation, December 9, 2004b; MOFA, "Japanese–German Cooperation and Coordination in the Assistance for Reconstruction of Iraq," provisional translation, December 9, 2004c.

<sup>5</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.



cerns and faced the same restrictions with their militaries, forming a common foundation on which to cooperate. In the years since, they have often emphasized how they want to further advance their relationship and acknowledge each other's important roles in the peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community as the leaders of Asia and Europe. Toward that end, it is not uncommon to see summit readouts in which leaders discuss such issues as Iran and North Korea but discussions of cooperation typically fall to nontraditional security issues, such as climate change, ocean pollution, African development, and women's empowerment.

In the past several years, this has gradually changed. When leaders meet, in addition to continuing discussions on nontraditional security issues, they often discuss issues that include both European and East Asian security issues, such as terrorism, disarmament, and nonproliferation. Arguably, the situations in Ukraine and East Asia provided them an increased opportunity to strengthen ties. At their 2014 summit meeting, Chancellor Angela Merkel and then-PM Abe not only affirmed that they faced similar security challenges; they also affirmed that attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion were challenges for both countries that carried implications for the international order.<sup>6</sup> Going further, they agreed on the need to strengthen cooperation in the security domain. Toward that end, they agreed to areas in which their countries could enhance security cooperation, including holding political–military and military–military consultation meetings (examined below), exchanging information and holding consultations on export controls, and promoting information exchanges and coordination between Japanese and German military personnel dispatched overseas.<sup>7</sup> Not much came of this initial step toward deeper security cooperation because the summits and other high-level meetings in the years that followed stayed largely focused on Ukraine and North Korea and reiterated talking points that the two sides would strengthen cooperation.

Where security relations did move forward, they did so only in small ways. For example, in 2014, Abe talked with Merkel about the South China Sea and a shared recognition of the importance of the rule of law at sea and engaged German President Joachim Gauck about East Asia and enhancing bilateral cooperation in this area, demonstrating Germany's interest in regional issues beyond North Korea.<sup>8</sup> East Asia has since become a common agenda item that had never been present in the past. Also, in 2016, Abe described Japan–Germany relations as “global partners which share fundamental values.”<sup>9</sup> Although this is not an official definition like seen with the UK and France, it was nevertheless symbolic of the view Tokyo has of Berlin. Additionally, having Berlin agree that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in East Asia is unacceptable because this poses a challenge to the international order was significant given the explicit tying of East Asia to something that had previously been tied to Ukraine or general statements.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in recent years, Germany has appeared willing to use language closer to Japan's in describing its strategy. In 2016, for example, Germany agreed that Japan's policy of making proactive contributions to peace was the equivalent to the expansion in Ger-

<sup>6</sup> MOFA, “Japan–the Federal Republic of Germany Summit Meeting,” April 30, 2014f.

<sup>7</sup> MOFA, “Areas for Further Cooperation Between Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany,” April 30, 2014d.

<sup>8</sup> MOFA, “Courtesy Call on Mr. Joachim Gauck, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, by Prime Minister Abe,” April 30, 2014e; MOFA, “Japan–Germany Summit Meeting,” October 16, 2014j.

<sup>9</sup> MOFA, “Japan–Germany Summit Meeting,” May 5, 2016b.

<sup>10</sup> MOFA, 2016b.

many's proactive international contributions.<sup>11</sup> And at their 2017 summit, Abe and Merkel confirmed "the importance of securing a free and open maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region, and [of] work[ing] together to promote the stability and prosperity of the region."<sup>12</sup> Although Germany does not have an official position on FOIP (as of spring 2020), these similarities signal Germany's growing acceptance of the ideas and values that underlie the term.

The next major event occurred in July 2018, when German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas made his first visit as minister to Japan. In a speech, Maas announced Germany's strategy of an "alliance of multilateralists," a network of strategic partnerships between like-minded countries committed to strengthening the liberal international order to counter destabilizing trends caused by great power competition.<sup>13</sup> He argued that Japan and Germany had the potential to be at the heart of this grouping to, among other things, defend existing rules and international law against challengers and assume responsibilities in international organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Arguably, the biggest rhetorical jump in ties came in 2019. During Chancellor Merkel's fifth visit to Japan, language used during her summit with then-PM Abe signaled a greater convergence of thought. Although she did not define the relationship in any special terms, in response to Abe's expressed hope to elevate their partnership "to greater heights towards achieving a rules-based international order and world prosperity," Merkel said they "are leading flag bearers for a rules-based international order" that can cooperate on both bilateral and global issues.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, the leaders welcomed an agreement in principle on the conclusion of an ISA (examined below) that would enable them to further cooperate in the areas of security and defense. Also, while agreeing on expanding the horizon of bilateral cooperation, they confirmed that one area in which they would cooperate was toward the "achievement of a free and open Indo-Pacific," using Japan's preferred nomenclature in a bilateral setting.<sup>16</sup>

To date, although bilateral ties have gotten closer and security issues have become a regular part of their agenda, as shown below, there is little practical cooperation. Nevertheless, they are engaging in a broader range of topics in both of their regions than they ever have before.

## Defense and Strategic Dialogues

Reflecting the historical focus on economics, Japan and Germany have not enjoyed a long history of defense or strategic dialogues. Nevertheless, they have come to share the view that collaboration is more important as the international community faces many difficult challenges and that their close collaboration will be important to deal with these challenges.<sup>17</sup> Driven by this, they have increasingly been meeting to discuss security issues. They do not, however, categorize their relationship or try to define it. This differs from Japan's relationship with the

<sup>11</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Summit Meeting," November 14, 2016c.

<sup>12</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Summit Meeting," March 20, 2017b.

<sup>13</sup> Heiko Maas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan, speech, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Tokyo, July 25, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Summit Meeting," February 4, 2019c.

<sup>16</sup> MOFA, 2019c.

<sup>17</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting," April 11, 2017c.

UK and France. It also differs from Germany's relationship with China. In 2004, Germany characterized its relationship with China as a "strategic partnership in global responsibility," which was upgraded a decade later to a "comprehensive strategic partnership."<sup>18</sup>

The history of bilateral defense discussions is short. After the first visit to Germany in June 1978 by then–Director General of the JDA Kanemaru Shin, the only subsequent visits by a director general or defense minister were in July 1981, September 1984, and February 2009, when Hamada Yasukazu attended the Munich Security Conference.<sup>19</sup> Their German counterparts have visited Japan an equal number of times, starting in October 1985 with Manfred Wörner, twice by Volker Rühe in November 1993 and May 1997, and finally by Franz Josef Jung in April 2007.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, these have been supported by lower-level visits, usually for conferences in Germany. These include six visits to Germany by Japan's parliamentary vice minister of defense and vice minister of defense and one visit to Japan by a German parliamentary secretary of state in October 2016.<sup>21</sup> The largest number of visits has taken place at the administrative vice minister level, with Japan sending the JDA/MOD representative to Germany nine times, twice since 2012.<sup>22</sup> The German counterpart has never visited Japan.

Giving some continuity to bilateral dialogue, their foreign ministers meet often and talk about security issues. Additionally, the two sides host two separate sets of dialogues. One is a military–military consultation that was first held in June 1994. Convened at the level of director general in the MOD along with a colonel from Japan's Joint Staff and led at the deputy director general level from Germany's Federal Ministry of Defense, the purpose is to discuss regional and global security issues and areas of bilateral cooperation to explore.<sup>23</sup> To date, this has been held a total of 14 times, with the most recent iteration held in November 2019.<sup>24</sup> The second is a political–military dialogue held at regular intervals since June 1994. Held at the level of director general in both Germany's Federal Foreign Office and Federal Ministry of Defense and at the senior deputy minister level in Japan's MOFA and director general level in the MOD, the purpose is to share information on what each country is doing in defense affairs and exchange views.<sup>25</sup> This has been held 17 times, with the most recent held on November 27,

<sup>18</sup> Taussig, 2019, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 10, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> MOD, "日独防衛協力・交流主要実績" [Japan–Germany defense cooperation/exchanges, major achievements], document obtained by the author, May 10, 2019c, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> The visits from Japan to Germany at this level began in September 2010 and have been followed by visits in February 2012, September 2016, February 2017, and February and April 2018. The winter visits occurred because the Japanese dignitary attended the Munich Security Conference; while the one in April 2018 was to attend the Berlin Air Show. Prior to 2016, the only other visit to Japan by a German official at this level was in June 1990 (MOD, 2019c, p. 1).

<sup>22</sup> The visits from Japan to Germany began in February 1989 and have been followed by visits in January–February 1990, May 1991, September 1994, January 1996, September 2002, January 2005, September 2015, and July 2017 (MOD, 2019c, p. 1).

<sup>23</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 1, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> These meetings took place in June 1994, June 1995, January 1997, March 1998, March 2001, February 2003, January 2005, June 2006, July 2008, October 2010, September 2012, October 2014, June 2016, and November 2019 (Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 9, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 1, 2019. Until 2018, the MOFA representative was at the director general level.

2019.<sup>26</sup> Unlike with the UK and France, Japan does not have a 2+2 ministerial-level dialogue with Germany. This is not for lack of trying. Japan tried to establish such a dialogue with Germany, but Germany was not interested, stating that it does not have a culture of holding such meetings.<sup>27</sup>

There are two significant takeaways from these meetings. One, there is less discussion about traditional security issues than is prevalent in Japan's relationships with the UK and France. Instead, there is a lot of focus on broad international agendas, such as nuclear non-proliferation and UN Security Council reform. Although they exchange views on the regional security challenges in such places as the Middle East (e.g., Syria and Iran), the specifics on how they want to cooperate and on what specific agendas remain largely undefined.<sup>28</sup> This may be changing, however. During a visit between the foreign ministers of both countries in 2018, they agreed to coordinate their work and signed joint declarations to have closer cooperation between their diplomats, state secretaries, directors, and policy planning staff.<sup>29</sup> Doing so could allow them to develop a shared view of regional and global problems and work together toward solutions.<sup>30</sup>

The second takeaway is that each country is looking to the other's region as an area of interest. Ukraine has dominated their meetings, but there is a desire by Germany for Japan to play a larger role in European affairs. For example, Germany's foreign minister often welcomes Japan's engagement in the European region to assist with the Western Balkans.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, it is notable how much East Asia is included in their discussions. For example, in October 2018, their foreign ministers expressed concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas and opposed any unilateral action, in an apparent reference to China's increased assertiveness.<sup>32</sup> Although they do not define their relationship as a strategic partnership, the contents of their dialogues are beginning to look more strategic and wider ranging.

## Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation

Japan and Germany have exchanged defense officials and personnel for the past few decades, although not in numbers comparable to exchanges with the UK or France. Their most regular set of high-level exchanges has taken place at the service chief level. Since 1994, 12 Japanese

<sup>26</sup> These meetings took place in June 1994, June 1995, January and April 1997, March 1998, April 2000, March 2001, February 2003, March 2004, January 2005, June 2006, July 2008, June 2010, November 2011, October 2014, June 2016, December 2018, and November 2019 (Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 9, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting," February 16, 2019d; MOFA, "Japan–Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting," June 11, 2019h.

<sup>29</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> MOFA, "Japan–Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting," April 23, 2018d; MOFA, "Japan–Germany Foreign Ministers' Meeting," September 6, 2018g; MOFA, 2019d.

<sup>32</sup> "Japan and Germany Agree to Promote Free Trade, Rules-Based Order," *Japan Times*, July 25, 2018.

chiefs have visited Germany.<sup>33</sup> This has been reciprocated 11 times by their German counterparts.<sup>34</sup> Staff talks have also been held, but only data for talks between their navies, which have occurred 11 times since their first meeting in 1997, were obtainable.<sup>35</sup> At lower levels, since 1981, Japan has sent 41 people to study in Germany's Military Academy of the German Armed Forces, or Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Germany's general staff college.<sup>36</sup> Since 1992, Japan has also sent 59 SDF personnel to study in the staff colleges of the German services.<sup>37</sup> Although precise numbers of German professional military educational exchanges to Japan are not publicly available, such exchanges do exist, albeit in numbers that are likely smaller than Japanese visits to Germany.

Although the leaders of the two countries have agreed on the importance of cooperating to address issues facing the international community, Berlin remains reluctant to pursue traditional defense ties with Tokyo. In fact, despite discussions or agreements declaring the importance of working together to further deepen bilateral relations, there is often little follow-up. The result is pledges to cooperate with few concrete plans for implementation. For example, in February 2019, the two countries pledged to cooperate in democratic nation-building in Myanmar, peace and stability in Africa, support for the EU accession of Western Balkan countries, and capacity-building assistance in the field for UN PKOs.<sup>38</sup> Missing, however, was any type of action plan to ensure that these projects would be realized.

Despite this, there are a few examples of cooperation. Around the time Japan was negotiating ISAs with the UK and France, Germany sounded out Japan on negotiating one, but Japan showed no interest.<sup>39</sup> Understanding that China's actions were threatening Japan in 2010 after a Chinese fishing trawler rammed two Japan Coast Guard vessels, Germany wanted to see what it could do with Japan in the security domain without any defense capabilities that could reach the Asian theater.<sup>40</sup> Much to Berlin's surprise, Tokyo was "so distinctly not interested" that Berlin dropped it and never followed it up.<sup>41</sup> Japan's disinterest stemmed largely because the then-ruling party—the Democratic Party of Japan—was not interested in expanding power overseas, and the events that followed Japan's March 2011 disasters (e.g., earthquake, tsunami, nuclear meltdown) meant that Tokyo did not have the bandwidth for these

<sup>33</sup> MSDF chief visits occurred in May 1995, May 2002, February 2012, and May 2018. GSDF chief visits took place in September 1994, June 2000, October 2003, and February 2012. ASDF chief visits occurred in July 1998 and January 2002. Joint chief visits took place in July 2000 and September 2016 (MOD, 2019c, p. 2).

<sup>34</sup> Army chief visits occurred in November 1991, February 2000, March 2009, and April 2013. Navy chief visits took place in March 1987, October 1999, December 2005, and March 2014. The air force chief visit was in February 2003. Chief of defense and other joint visits were in July 2001 and July 2017 (MOD, 2019c, p. 2).

<sup>35</sup> MOD, 2019c, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> MOD, "ジェフリー・ホーナン氏の質問に対する回答 (防衛協力・交流)" [Answers to Mr. Jeffrey Hornung's questions (defense cooperation/exchanges)], document obtained by the author, July 26, 2019i, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> MOD, 2019i, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> MOFA, 2019c.

<sup>39</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.



negotiations.<sup>42</sup> Japan, however, brought it up a few years later, and they have been negotiating its terms ever since.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, on July 17, 2017, the two countries signed an agreement on joint development of new defense technology, Japan's eighth such agreement. Going into force the same day, the agreement enables them to conduct joint research, development, and production of defense equipment and technology, as well as transferring these materials between them as determined by a joint committee.<sup>44</sup> Because they still lack an ISA, however, the inability to handle classified information has meant that their defense industries cannot move forward on projects because of the sensitive nature of the information required.<sup>45</sup> Even if they had an ISA, however, given the poor track record of joint development programs between Japan and the UK and France, there are questions of whether Japan and Germany would be able to find projects to pursue.

## Training and Exercises

Japan and Germany do not have a history of bilateral training and exercises. Aside from three Japan–EU exercises in the Gulf of Aden that involved German equipment and nine bilateral goodwill naval training exercises since 1987, interaction between their forces has been limited to goodwill visits and port calls.<sup>46</sup> Even this interaction is limited. MSDF training vessels have visited German ports only ten times, while German ships have visited Japan only six times.<sup>47</sup> In April 2018, a Japanese P-1 did participate in the Berlin Air Show, but the two nations' armed forces simply do not interact much. That said, given the historical constraints on both countries' armed forces, one German official said that “these small things look big when you bring them together.”<sup>48</sup>

This is unlikely to change in the near term absent some major and currently unexpected disjunctive development. One reason is resource concerns. The German military, or the Bundeswehr, is not well resourced. Lack of resources has, for example, forced German soldiers to rely on civilian helicopters to provide transport in Afghanistan and to borrow body armor and has caused a shortage in equipment throughout the services.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, and unlike France and the UK, Germany also has no presence in the Indo-Pacific region. Bringing troops

<sup>42</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Government of Japan and Government of Germany, “Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology,” July 17, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019; Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> The three Japan–EU joint training exercises were held in November 2014, March 2015, and December 2017. The goodwill exercises were held in 1987, 1991, 1995, 1997, 2002 (two), 2005, 2014, and 2017 (MOD, 2019c, p. 2).

<sup>47</sup> MOD, 2019c, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> Authors of a 2018 report found that chronic shortages have meant that none of Germany's six submarines was combat ready; the navy only had nine of a possible 15 frigates available; and less than half of Germany's tanks, ships, and aircraft had been available for collaborative training purposes (Talal Hussein, “German Military Still Facing Resources Shortage, New Report Finds,” *Army Technology*, last updated January 31, 2019).

to exercise with Japan in the region is difficult because it is cost intensive to bring troops and equipment to Asia.<sup>50</sup> Add to this the acknowledgment that Germany has already overstretched its economic resources in places it does deem a primary interest—such as Africa or Afghanistan—and it is perhaps not surprising when German officials ask, given these conditions, “so what could [Germany] do in East Asia?”<sup>51</sup>

A second factor relates to practical concerns. In addition to resource concerns, Germany lacks both the capacity and capability to exercise in the region.<sup>52</sup> Past investments have meant that the Bundeswehr is undermanned, underequipped, and capable of only limited expeditionary deployments.<sup>53</sup> The hollowing out of the Bundeswehr is visible everywhere, “from grounded aircraft and unusable submarines to the pervasive lack of spare parts and staff shortages.”<sup>54</sup> Although the German navy is expecting new frigates in the next few years, these will not dramatically alter Germany’s capabilities. As Germany tries to rebuild its Bundeswehr, it expects that it will need to bear more responsibility in Europe and its immediate neighborhood as well.<sup>55</sup> This means that any existing capabilities will be limited in what can be used in other theaters.<sup>56</sup> What is more is that Germany’s strategic mindset differs from those of the UK and France in that Germany is not interested in getting involved in the Far East, particularly with military hardware.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, there are geopolitical concerns. Despite Germany slowly coming around to viewing China with greater skepticism (examined below), Russia is still Germany’s primary security threat, whereas China is much farther away and thus no immediate cause for concern.<sup>58</sup> Exercises for the sake of signaling to China are not in Germany’s interest. Moreover, China is still Germany’s largest trading partner. Sending ships to the region to exercise with Japan carries risks if doing so angers China. Germany wants to avoid this, with a frank admission by one German official that “we don’t want to upset China.”<sup>59</sup> There is still a constituency in Germany that thinks that engagement with China is possible, although it is shrinking.<sup>60</sup>

The natural conclusion stemming from these three factors is that getting “Germany to do more is simply asking too much.”<sup>61</sup> As long as this holds true, it will also mean that the two countries will likely not require any type of ACSA.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>50</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019; German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> J. C., “Why Germany’s Army Is in a Bad State,” *The Economist*, August 9, 2018; Tobias Buck, “Germany Plans to Increase Size of Armed Forces,” *Financial Times*, November 29, 2018b.

<sup>54</sup> Tobias Buck, “German Military: Combat Ready?” *Financial Times*, February 15, 2018a.

<sup>55</sup> Buck, 2018a.

<sup>56</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>59</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>62</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.



## Motivations

Whereas the previous chapters have focused on motivations driving security developments with Japan, this chapter explains the lack of depth in bilateral security relations.

The first reason is that the Indo-Pacific region has not, until recently, been a part of Germany's strategic thinking. As one German official described, "Germany has no military interest in the region. It is not our area of interest."<sup>63</sup> And because "Germany is not a Pacific power, we don't think we need to be present."<sup>64</sup> Instead, the region has been synonymous with economics and trade. Because China has played such a large role in Germany's trade, Germany's strategy in the region has been, in large part, driven by trade with China. Since 2016, China has been Germany's largest trading partner, and Germany's policies regarding China have flowed from that fact. For example, unlike the UK and France, Germany has been strengthening diplomatic and political ties with China at the same time those countries have been strengthening ties with Japan. Whereas Japan and the UK and France are holding a wide variety of defense and strategic dialogues, Germany and China have been holding regular intergovernmental dialogues at the head-of-state and cabinet levels since 2011.<sup>65</sup> They even released a program of action for China–Germany cooperation in 2014 and see each other as integral for success in their economic initiatives: Germany's Industrial 4.0 and China's Made in China 2025.<sup>66</sup>

Second, Germany has maintained a very limited footprint in Asia and does not have the resources to contribute meaningfully to the region's security.<sup>67</sup> Germany's navy, for example, is nowhere close to the size or capability to be able to deploy on a regular basis to the Indo-Pacific. Similarly, Germany is facing severe constraints in its defense spending.<sup>68</sup>

However, the circumstances surrounding these two reasons for the lack of depth in Japan–Germany relations have changed in recent years and could bode well for Japan–Germany security ties in the future. As China began buying up companies throughout Europe, anger in Germany grew as Chinese companies increasingly entered the German market while German investors remained limited in their access in China.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Chinese firms acquired German companies at a rapid pace, leading then–German Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel to state publicly that Germany was sacrificing "its companies on the altar of free markets."<sup>70</sup> Berlin was also concerned about the potential of China's Belt and Road Initiative to dilute EU investment rules and erode political unity among member states vying for Chinese investment. Berlin saw in Beijing's actions that it was not just doing business; it was "doing more to expand its influence."<sup>71</sup> And because of Germany's economic dependence

<sup>63</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Taussig, 2019, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> I-Ting Shelly Lin, "China–Germany Relations: Opportunities Emerge as Investment Ties Grow," *China Briefing*, April 23, 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Taussig, 2019, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Nina Werkhäuser, "Opinion: More Money Won't Alone Fix Germany's Military Woes," *Deutsche Welle*, July 24, 2019.

<sup>69</sup> Björn Alexander Düben, "Are the Gloves Coming Off in China–Germany Economic Relations?" *The Diplomat*, May 3, 2019; Srinivas Mazumdar, "Germany and China—Trade Partners and Competitors," *Deutsche Welle*, May 23, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Janosch Delcker, "Sigmar Gabriel's Mission to Halt China's Investment Spree," *Politico*, updated November 2, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

on China, there was a growing concern that Germany had little leverage to act. Fearful of this overdependence, the Federation of German Industries released a report in January 2019 cautioning companies to reduce their dependence on the Chinese market.

The anger turned to alarm, however, when Chinese investments began focusing on high-tech companies, leading many to fear that China was making an effort to buy up German intellectual property and technology as part of a state strategy to divert that intellectual property to China. Germany realized that “China was eating [Germany’s] lunch in the industrial sector.”<sup>72</sup> This was worrisome because of concerns in the United States about Beijing’s programs to obtain advanced technologies with both military and commercial applications, such as “new-energy vehicles, advanced information technology, biotechnology, new materials, aerospace, ocean engineering, railway systems, robotics, power equipment, and agricultural machinery.”<sup>73</sup> Concerns that this Chinese behavior would compromise Germany’s technological lead in critical sectors, particularly as China looked to use German expertise and technology to create national champions of its own, led to Germany tightening its rules for inbound Chinese investments.

The key event that pushed Germany to be more critical of China was when Chinese appliance maker Midea Group bought Germany’s KUKA. Considered one of Germany’s great innovators, KUKA is known for big industrial robots used to make such things as cars and planes and work on intelligent machines. Midea’s purchase of KUKA represented the largest Chinese takeover of a German company in a strategic sector important for the digital future of European industry.<sup>74</sup> The takeover sparked concern that sensitive industrial and corporate data would now be at risk.<sup>75</sup> In the wake of the KUKA purchase, for example, Bruno Kahl, head of the German Federal Intelligence Service, claimed that Huawei could not be fully trusted, signaling a desire to keep the 5G tech company out of Germany’s network.<sup>76</sup> Kahl is not alone. Many voices continue to warn about the dangers of Chinese investments in Germany, Chinese interference in German companies and politics, and the risks of adopting Huawei technology to build Germany’s 5G network.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Berlin—and German companies with business ties in China—are facing increasing pressure to choose principles over profit because of Beijing’s internment of Muslims in Xinjiang.<sup>78</sup>

Although Chinese investments in Europe raised awareness in Germany about the dangers of China, China’s assertiveness in the maritime domain made Germany think twice about its limited ability to involve itself outside of Europe. Although Berlin was traditionally quiet on criticizing Chinese behavior, Chinese aggressive actions in the South and East China Seas have become “much more tangible now,” making them difficult for Germany to ignore.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>72</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Bill Gertz, “Chinese Spies Engaged in Massive Theft of U.S. Technology,” *Washington Free Beacon*, April 12, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Guy Chazan, “German Angst over Chinese M&A,” *Financial Times*, August 9, 2016.

<sup>75</sup> G. Chazan, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Donahue, “German Spy Chief Says Huawei Can’t Be ‘Fully Trusted’ in 5G,” *Bloomberg*, October 29, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Yasmin Samrai, “Trading with the Frenemy: Germany’s China Policy,” European Council on Foreign Relations, October 30, 2019; Ray Wong, “Don’t Be Naive, Germany,” *Zeit Online*, October 17, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Austin Davis, “China Cables: Germany Under Pressure to Respond to Beijing’s Uighur Internment,” *Deutsche Welle*, November 25, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> German expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

Moreover, Berlin has grown nervous about any potential conflict that could close regional sea lanes, which would hurt Germany's economy. But it is not just China. As Foreign Minister Maas explained, Germany sees the global challenges in Asia, from the South China Sea, to the East China Sea and North Korea.<sup>80</sup> These have led Germany to slowly reassess its stance in the region, shifting away from its strictly neutral position. For example, Chancellor Merkel has said that Germany was concerned about sea routes in the South China Sea remaining free and safe.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, then–Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has criticized countries that see the world as a zero-sum game and take approaches built on domination or creating political and economic dependencies.<sup>82</sup> And Foreign Minister Maas has criticized China for wanting to “shift the geopolitical balance of power to its own advantage and is demanding . . . allegiance from many countries in its neighborhood.”<sup>83</sup>

Despite the noticeable shift in views of China in Germany, this does not represent a monolithic view of Germany's China policy. The criticisms of China outlined above are tempered by pro-business pressures for access to China. Despite the alarms being sounded about Huawei, for example, as of spring 2020, Berlin has largely rejected demands to fully ban the company's operations as Germany remains “locked in an increasingly fierce political debate about this issue that shows no signs of abating.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, during Chancellor Merkel's visit to China in the fall of 2019, joined by a large delegation of German chief executive officers, she sounded apologetic about her government's moves to shield German companies from Chinese rivals while avoiding sensitive issues, such as Xinjiang and Hong Kong.<sup>85</sup>

It remains to be seen whether Germany's economic dependence on China will force Germany to reverse its tough approach to China.<sup>86</sup> And, at the time this report entered editing, it was still unclear what effect China's actions throughout 2020 will have on Germany's thinking, such as about the crackdown on Hong Kong. Without question, the shift in German views after the sale of KUKA has benefited Japan. As views of China have changed, Japan and Germany are increasingly bridged by “similar interests” in Russia and China.<sup>87</sup> The list of activities outlined above demonstrates that Germany and Japan have a converging set of interests. The debate over Germany's China policy, however, is likely to mean that there are limitations on Japan–Germany bilateral security cooperation. Nevertheless, Germany has three primary motivations behind its acceptance of Japan's growing outreach:

- Protect the rules-based international order.
- Protect its regional interests.
- Support multilateralism.

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<sup>80</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>81</sup> “Angela Merkel Worried About ‘Serious Conflict’ in South China Sea,” *The Guardian*, October 29, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defense, Germany, “Opening the 55th Munich Security Conference,” speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 15, 2019, pp. 2–3.

<sup>83</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Björn Alexander Düben, “Try as It Might, Germany Isn't Warming to Huawei,” *The Diplomat*, January 9, 2020.

<sup>85</sup> Noah Barkin, “A Vulnerable Germany Finds It Hard to Say No to China,” *Berlin Policy Journal*, September 9, 2019b.

<sup>86</sup> Noah Barkin, “Is Germany Going Soft on China?” *New Atlanticist*, blog, Atlantic Council, August 31, 2019a.

<sup>87</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

### Protect the Rules-Based International Order

Despite being slow to recognize it, Germany today acknowledges the return of great power competition. As then–Defense Minister von der Leyen stated, “Whether we want to [be] or not, Germany and Europe are a part of this competition. We are not neutral.”<sup>88</sup> Germany is no different from others in this study in its support for the international order. Joint statements, summits, and dialogues demonstrate that Berlin shares the recognition that attempts to change the status quo by force are unacceptable and is interested in working with others “to maintain an international order that is based on the rule of law.”<sup>89</sup> This is important for Berlin because “the power of law must prevail over the law of power.”<sup>90</sup> Foreign Minister Maas declared, “If we stand idly by and allow neighboring countries to be intimidated or the rules of international law to be broken, then the order that we’re talking about here is actually already forfeit.”<sup>91</sup> Germany therefore benefits from this order; it “cannot just stand on the sidelines and watch.”<sup>92</sup>

For Germany, the threats to this order are numerous. Russia predominates discussions. Germany looks at Russia as “increasingly projecting power with military means” and, through these actions, putting into question the rules-based order.<sup>93</sup> Other officials acknowledge that the threats to this order extend beyond Russia. Foreign Minister Maas, for example, said that not only has Russia “openly challenged the world order through its illegal annexation of Crimea and its conduct in the conflict in Syria and elsewhere” but also China “wants to shift the geopolitical balance of power to its own advantage.”<sup>94</sup> This inclusion of China is new, particularly after the KUKA shock. Although Germany’s concerns with Russia’s activities are long-standing, it is only recently that “Germany has awoken to [the challenges posed by] China.”<sup>95</sup> As Chinese aggressive actions in the East and South China Seas became more tangible, Berlin came to view China similarly to how it views Russian behavior in Crimea.<sup>96</sup> Today, it is not uncommon to hear German officials say that China’s Belt and Road Initiative

stands for an attempt to establish a comprehensive system to shape the world according to China’s interests. . . . China is developing a comprehensive systemic alternative to the Western model that, in contrast to our own, is not founded on freedom, democracy and individual human rights.<sup>97</sup>

As noted above, however, debate about Germany’s China policy continues.

<sup>88</sup> Von der Leyen, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> MOFA, 2016b.

<sup>90</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defense, Germany, “New Dimensions of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism,” speech, 17th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, June 3, 2018, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> “Germany Must Play Active Military Role, Says Defense Minister,” *Deutsche Welle*, November 7, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> Von der Leyen, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>95</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> German expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Sigmar Gabriel, Foreign Minister, Federal Foreign Office, Germany, speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 17, 2018.

This is where Japan plays an important role. Leaders from both countries have agreed that, in order to maintain and strengthen this order, they must cooperate more closely.<sup>98</sup> Because Germany and Japan are “too small to be able to call the shots on their own,” Germany sees the need to “stand shoulder to shoulder” with Japan because of their shared values.<sup>99</sup> Not only does Germany understand Japanese concerns about the negative effect Chinese actions have on the international order; Germany and Japan share “common interests” in what Russia is doing in the Far East.<sup>100</sup> Believing that Japan and Germany “both depend on multilateral connections,” Berlin sees cooperation with Japan as an effort that “can help sustain [the] international order.”<sup>101</sup> This is because, according to one German official, Japan is viewed as a “go-to partner because it is a front-line state to the rise of China.”<sup>102</sup> Germany wants to support those states that are on the front line battling those that threaten the international order.

### **Protects Its Regional Interests**

For Germany, its main strategic interest, and thus the focus of its defense efforts, is on Europe and the Atlantic region and NATO’s strength to defend these.<sup>103</sup> Russia’s aggression against Crimea and Ukraine in 2014 was a wakeup call for Germany to do more for its own defense and to contribute more to NATO.<sup>104</sup> None of the experts interviewed for this study indicated that Germany has any military interests in the Indo-Pacific region that extend as far as Japan. Instead, Germany’s most important security interests lie closer, in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, as well as the Middle East, such as the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. For Germany, its “biggest security concerns” are in this area because it is an “extended geography” of Germany.<sup>105</sup>

At the same time, Germany recognizes that nations’ security is interlinked, making “stability and security in East and Southeast Asia” a concern it shares with the region.<sup>106</sup> Germany also sees mutual overlap with Japan’s interests closer to Germany’s core interests as problems emanating from the Middle East, such as terrorism and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, “spill over into other parts of the world.”<sup>107</sup> Importantly, because former PM Abe was much more focused on reaching out to Germany, including multiple trips to Europe, than his predecessors were, Merkel read this as a signal that Germany needs to consider Japan when it considers its own interests.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> MOFA, 2016b.

<sup>99</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>101</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>102</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>103</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>104</sup> Von der Leyen, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defense, Germany, “Strengthening Regional Order in the Asia-Pacific: Towards More Active Conflict Resolution and Cooperation,” provisional translation, 14th Asia Security Summit, International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, May 31, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

Because China has shown that its interests are not aligned with Germany's and Germany lacks a regional presence, Berlin needed to find other, more like-minded partners to help protect its interests. This was further supported by the fact that Berlin was concerned about isolating itself among its European partners as they increasingly took a harder stance on China.<sup>109</sup> Germany needed "a partner in Asia to watch the security situation to talk for [it], to bring up [German] positions."<sup>110</sup> Japan fulfilled this role "by default" because it is "one of the few [regional countries] with political weight and is a democracy."<sup>111</sup>

### Support Multilateralism

A final motivation for Germany stems from its strong belief in multilateralism. Germany's "DNA is multilateralism, not bilateralism."<sup>112</sup> For harnessing opportunities and protecting its citizens from risks, partners are important to Germany.<sup>113</sup> In the past, this was not an issue because its major international partners shared this objective. Since the Trump administration began, Germany has tended to believe that it is not able to rely on the United States in Europe to the same extent it has in the past.<sup>114</sup> For example, Foreign Minister Maas told a crowd in Tokyo that there was increased uncertainty about the United States under Trump, "who also calls alliances that have developed over decades into question in 280-character tweets."<sup>115</sup> His predecessor, Sigmar Gabriel, also expressed concern, saying, "We're not sure whether we still recognise our America of old. Is it deeds, words or tweets that we have to measure America against?"<sup>116</sup> This is particularly true when it comes to multilateralism. Germany has traditionally viewed the United States as both Europe's and Asia's primary arbiter for security and stability but, because of Trump's decisions to withdraw from multilateral agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and nuclear deal with Iran, there is a heightened distrust in Germany in long-term U.S. strategy.<sup>117</sup> "Offended" by these actions, Berlin feels that Trump's election was "a repudiation of Germany's worldview regarding Western unity and keeping the European project going."<sup>118</sup> But it is not just Trump alone; it extends to longer-term trends and concerns. German thinking is dominated by the growing U.S.–China competition and the emerging new bipolarity that brings risks for Germany of being asked to pick sides.<sup>119</sup>

Here too, Japan plays an important role in Germany's strategy to offset what it sees as a deterioration of multilateralism. Germany's focus is to keep the EU together.<sup>120</sup> Germany does

<sup>109</sup> German expert, interview with the author, October 11, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> German official, interview with the author, July 27, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>112</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>113</sup> Von der Leyen, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> Maas, 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Gabriel, 2018.

<sup>117</sup> Taussig, 2019, p. 22.

<sup>118</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>119</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>120</sup> German official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.



not have confidence that the United States will remain a strong friend as it has been.<sup>121</sup> Chancellor Merkel has even gone as far as to say that “the times when we could fully rely on others have ended.”<sup>122</sup> In Germany, this “others” is seen as code for the United States.<sup>123</sup> Yet, Germany has not given up on the United States. Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, for example, has expressed a willingness for Germany to contribute more to cover NATO’s operational costs to take some of the burden off the United States.<sup>124</sup> And Foreign Minister Maas has said that Germany has “no interest in a trans-Atlantic rift or a division of the West.”<sup>125</sup> Backed by rising concerns with Russia and China and because Germany’s “inherent impulse is to go multilateral,” Germany will likely continue to rely on the United States, even if the forms of partnership may change.<sup>126</sup> Because Germany is interested in keeping the system of multilateralism strong, it wants “to work with like-minded countries.”<sup>127</sup> Japan is such a country, which is why Foreign Minister Maas launched the “alliance of multilateralists” in Tokyo.

## Divergences

As important as the slowly growing convergence between Germany’s motivations and Japan’s motivations is, there are also two important divergences between the two nations’ views of regional security and the value of defense cooperation worth noting, apart from their divergent opinions on China described above.

The first is Russia, which is Germany’s primary security concern. Like other European actors, Germany is concerned about Russia’s aggression against former Soviet countries that are seeking to deepen ties with Europe and the United States.<sup>128</sup> Because of this aggression, Germany tends to focus on Russia more than on any other threat. Although Germany and Japan share an interest in protecting the international order, “the Abe approach to Russia [was] a bit of an issue with Germany” because Abe was seen as being “opportunistic” and “inconsistent” in wanting to get serious about international order and norms with China but not Russia.<sup>129</sup> Although it is unclear how his successor, Suga, will approach Russia, some in Germany are concerned that Japan may make deals with Russia that are not in Europe’s interest, although whether this represents consensus opinion in Germany is murky. For people sharing this concern, there is a “general suspicion” that Japan “is not as value driven as Germany”; rather, it is “more practical and opportunistic, if it benefits Japan’s security interests.”<sup>130</sup> This

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<sup>121</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Angela Merkel, Federal Chancellor, Germany, speech, European Parliament, Strasbourg, Germany, November 13, 2018.

<sup>123</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>124</sup> “Germany Commits to NATO Spending Goal by 2031 for First Time,” *EURACTIV*, November 7, 2019.

<sup>125</sup> Heiko Maas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan, speech, 55th Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 15, 2019.

<sup>126</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>127</sup> Retired German official, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Speck, 2018, p. 21.

<sup>129</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>130</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

opportunism, in turn, “puts a bit of a cap on cooperation” with Germany because Japan’s calls for protecting norms and values get heard in Berlin as “just China focused.”<sup>131</sup>

The second divergence is the “how” of security cooperation. Germany views security cooperation as being much more than military. However, in areas that affect Germany’s primary security interests in or close to Europe and have NATO involvement, Germany is willing to dedicate some of its limited military forces for these more traditional security missions.<sup>132</sup> This is not true for areas outside of Europe and that do not involve NATO. Although Japan also views security cooperation as being more than military, as its cooperation with the UK and France have shown, it is also willing and able to cooperate in more-traditional security areas, engage in exercises between their armed forces, and pursue defense-related industrial projects. So although there is synergy with Germany and Japan in some areas, such as security-sector capacity building, humanitarian assistance, development assistance, arms control, and UN projects (e.g., training security forces in Africa), Germany is more likely to go no further than these with Japan. Moreover, given Germany’s penchant for multilateralism, any security cooperation that may occur will likely go through international organizations, rather than being purely bilateral. This is particularly true now that Japan and the EU signed the security partnership agreement because the EU is the vehicle “Germany wants to [use to] get closer with Japan” in security.<sup>133</sup> As noted in Chapter One, however, the EU is outside of the purview of this study.

## Conclusion

Germany is in a state of strategic flux; it remains a largely Eurocentric economic power. At the same time, Russia’s aggression against Ukraine was a wakeup call reminding Germany of security threats to Europe, while China’s actions in Europe have led to changes in German perceptions of China. Germany appreciates the interconnected nature of today’s global security challenges more than ever before. And Japan has benefited from this. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the bilateral relationship between Japan and Germany lacks many of the elements seen in Chapters Three and Four. The pair not only lacks a robust suite of dialogues on defense and strategic issues; their armed forces have not exercised together, and the two countries are not pursuing any joint defense development projects. Beyond limited dialogues and exchanges, there is not much substance to bilateral security ties. Indeed, the relationship is “way behind that of France and the UK.”<sup>134</sup> Despite this, they have come to share the view that collaboration is more important, a critical first step toward deepening security cooperation. With more strategic convergence than at arguably any time in their relationship, bilateral security ties are

<sup>131</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 11, 2019.

<sup>132</sup> This includes 450 Bundeswehr soldiers and 30 tanks in Lithuania as part of NATO’s “enhanced forward presence” in the Baltic region; provision of the main support ship for NATO’s deployment to the Aegean Sea to conduct reconnaissance, monitoring, and surveillance of illegal crossings in Greek and Turkish territorial waters; roughly 980 soldiers in Afghanistan to train, advise, and assist the Afghan security forces and institutions; and being the second-largest contributor to NATO’s Kosovo force to maintain a safe and secure environment in that country (Lewis Sanders IV, “How Does Germany Contribute to NATO?” *Deutsche Welle*, March 9, 2018).

<sup>133</sup> German expert, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

<sup>134</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

growing, but, as this chapter showed, there are also some very real impediments that may limit progress and future growth.



## The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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Japan's relationship with NATO is unique among Japan's international partnerships in that it is a relationship with an organization that is a formal treaty alliance of which Japan is not a member. Over the years, bilateral relations have slowly shifted from a focus on nontraditional security issues, such as HA/DR, to more-traditional security issues, such as maritime security and cyber. Today, the relationship is strong and developing along several lines of effort. Despite having an overarching framework and an agenda for cooperation, however, bilateral security ties are "not regular or purposeful," and cooperation "comes and goes," depending on the situation at hand.<sup>1</sup>

### History

Japan is NATO's longest-standing non-European partner, but that partnership is still relatively new. During the Cold War, NATO and Japan faced similar sets of challenges in their parts of the world. Their relations, however, did not develop, despite sharing a common ally and being members of the capitalist bloc. European states were focused on countering the Soviet threat in Europe, and the NATO alliance was limited to that geographical region. Convergence began to occur with Japan's economic rise, which revived an interest in international affairs and a desire to broaden engagement with the transatlantic community.<sup>2</sup> This led to informal interactions during the last decade of the Cold War. With U.S. support, the Nakasone Yasuhiro administration even reportedly tried in 1983 to establish an informal consultation arrangement with NATO, but it was ultimately blocked by France, partly because of NATO's geographical limitations to Atlantic and Mediterranean nations.<sup>3</sup> European nations were still too preoccupied with security in Europe to contemplate establishing NATO ties with Japan.

Things changed after the Berlin Wall fell as NATO reexamined its role in the world and created mechanisms for partnering with nonmember countries. As part of this, NATO explored opportunities it had previously overlooked with Japan and other Asian nations.<sup>4</sup> Japan too sent strong political signals that it wanted to engage with NATO, which were well-received

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<sup>1</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Randall Schriver and Tiffany Ma, *The Next Steps in Japan–NATO Cooperation*, Project 2049 Institute, November 23, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Scott Stokes, "France Blocks Japanese Bid for Informal Ties to NATO," *New York Times*, April 2, 1983, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Schriver and Ma, 2010, p. 4.

by NATO because it saw a like-minded partner.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, Japan and NATO began interacting more (examined below). But because NATO was still focused on Europe and trying to integrate countries of the former communist bloc into its organization via the Partnership for Peace program, there was not a concentrated effort to develop security ties with Japan. And because of Japan's constitutional restrictions on its own armed forces, developing interoperability was not an area of mutual interest, limiting relations largely to dialogues.<sup>6</sup>

It was not until the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States that NATO and Japan came together in more-meaningful ways; the event was a forcing function that pushed the two together.<sup>7</sup> Clearly this was not planned; instead, the development of their security ties was “accidental.”<sup>8</sup> Prior to the attacks, the two “lacked a common agenda,” but the attacks forced them to recognize that “international security threats and challenges had become truly global in nature.”<sup>9</sup> Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Japan authorized the deployment of the SDF for a noncombat reconstruction role, which required the Japanese armed forces to work with NATO member forces, such as those of the UK and the Netherlands. Then, in Afghanistan, where the two cooperated (examined below), their bilateral relations “matured”: Their activities helped bring them “beyond political dialogue.”<sup>10</sup>

Relations took a big step forward on May 4, 2006, when then–Foreign Minister Asō Tarō became the first Japanese foreign minister to attend a North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting. At the time, the MOD was worried about the trip, concerned that appealing to NATO would draw Japan into the Afghanistan war.<sup>11</sup> These fears were heightened when, in his opening statement, Asō conveyed Japan's intention “to work more closely with NATO.”<sup>12</sup> Echoing a message touched on by then–Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in his April 2005 visit to Japan, Asō called Japan and NATO “like-minded peers” that “value the virtue of democracy, human rights, and rule of law.”<sup>13</sup> Citing terrorism, piracy, human and narcotics trafficking, and proliferation of WMD, Asō called on Japan and NATO to work together, saying they share a common intention “to contribute actively toward [the] peace and stability of the international community.”<sup>14</sup>

Signaling a growing mutual interest, Abe (during his first stint as PM) became the first Japanese PM to visit NATO in January 2007, when he too gave a speech to the NAC. Like de Hoop Scheffer and Asō before him, Abe emphasized that “Japan and NATO are partners” that share common fundamental values, such as “freedom, democracy, human rights and the

<sup>5</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Tsuruoka, 2013, pp. 1–2.

<sup>8</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Tsuruoka, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, July 19, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Tarō Asō, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Japan, “Japan and NATO in a New Security Environment,” speech, North Atlantic Council, Brussels, May 4, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Asō, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Asō, 2006.

rule of law.”<sup>15</sup> Given this commonality, Abe declared that it was “only natural” that Japan and NATO cooperate in protecting and promoting these values and that Japan was not only committed to do its part but “eager to collaborate with NATO” in these endeavors.<sup>16</sup> Where Abe’s speech diverged from those previous speeches was in his call for NATO and Japan to go beyond cooperation in counterpiracy, terrorism, and Afghanistan. Calling on Japan and NATO to “move on to a new phase of cooperation,” Abe called for more-practical cooperation in some areas, such as peace building, reconstruction, and disaster relief.<sup>17</sup> The visit was critical for developing ties because it “made NATO members realize [that] cooperation with Japan was possible,” something they had not seriously considered before.<sup>18</sup> This also came at an opportune time, given that NATO was looking for partners that could help with out-of-area operations, such as those in Afghanistan. As examined below, Japan did provide substantial assistance to this operation.

Viewing Japan and NATO as “natural partners” that are “like-minded” and “share the same security challenges,” according to then–NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the two signed a joint political declaration on April 15, 2013. Serving as the first political document between NATO and Japan, the declaration characterized the foundations of their relationship being shared values; shared strategic interests in a rules-based international order; and common security challenges to the “security, prosperity and stability of both the Asia–Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic regions, and beyond these regions.”<sup>19</sup> The declaration’s objective was to strengthen their partnership in areas of mutual interest “through enhanced political dialogue and greater practical cooperation.”<sup>20</sup> Importantly, the declaration staked out a desire on both sides to formalize their partnership.

On May 6, 2014, this formalization occurred when they entered an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (IPCP), the vehicle through which Japan and NATO agree on what to do together. Stating that international security challenges are growing more globalized and interlinked, the IPCP agreement acknowledges their “shared strategic interests in promoting global peace, stability and prosperity, through pursuing a rules-based international order that promotes the peaceful settlement of disputes” and the need to cooperate in the face of global and emerging security challenges.<sup>21</sup> It also acknowledges their shared commitment to safeguard such values as freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, and the security of their respective populations. Meant to materialize commitment that was established in the 2013 declaration, the IPCP agreement states that Japan and NATO would strengthen high-level dialogue and promote defense exchanges, including Japan’s participation in NATO’s

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<sup>15</sup> Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, “Japan and NATO: Toward Further Collaboration,” speech, North Atlantic Council, Brussels, January 12, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Abe, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Abe, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> “Joint Political Declaration Between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,” April 13, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> “Joint Political Declaration Between Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,” 2013.

<sup>21</sup> MOFA, “Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme Between Japan and NATO,” May 6, 2014h, p. 1.



Partnership Cooperation Menu activities and participating in NATO exercises. Importantly, it laid out a commitment to promote practical cooperation in nine specific areas:<sup>22</sup>

- cooperation and sharing lessons learned from cyberdefense
- cooperation on HA/DR
- counterterrorism
- disarmament (particularly related to small arms and light weapons, arms control, nonproliferation of WMD, and their means of delivery)
- maritime security (especially counterpiracy)
- a comprehensive approach to conflict management
- defense science and technology
- public diplomacy initiatives
- mainstreaming a women, peace, and security perspective in peace missions.

On May 31, 2018, Tokyo and Brussels revised the IPCP agreement. Although it largely echoes the same language regarding common values and strategic interests, it placed a new emphasis on maintaining and strengthening “a free and open international order based on the rule of law” and on promoting information sharing.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, unlike the 2014 IPCP, the 2018 iteration not only emphasized participation in each other’s exercises (as opposed to just Japan participating in NATO’s); it also included language indicating that NATO might consider “contributing assets to Japanese exercises in the Indo-Pacific region.”<sup>24</sup> Also different is that the nine areas of practical cooperation were trimmed to seven, with counterterrorism and comprehensive approaches to conflict management dropping out.

Emblematic of the growth in ties, Japan and NATO continue to describe their bilateral relations as rooted in shared values and shared interests. A 2017 joint press statement, for example, between NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and PM Abe characterized Japan and NATO as “reliable and natural partners, sharing common values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”<sup>25</sup> Also, on July 1, 2018, Japan established an official mission to NATO, colocated with its embassy in Belgium.<sup>26</sup> Although this was symbolically significant as a signaling device to show that Japan sees NATO as important, as the “Mission of Japan” to NATO, the upgrade enables Japan to now participate in some meetings it could not before, when it was just the Embassy of Japan in Belgium.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, leaders have also increasingly expressed shared interests in each other’s geographic regions and the interdependent nature of the security challenges they face. For example, Abe talked about the connections between Europe’s security concerns with Russia and Japan’s with China. In addition to framing the Ukraine issue as “a global issue that also impacts Asia,” Abe said, “We cannot

<sup>22</sup> MOFA, 2014h, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> MOFA, “Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme Between Japan and NATO,” May 31, 2018e.

<sup>24</sup> MOFA, 2018e, p. 3. This important point was made in Mirna Galic, “Navigating by Sun and Compass,” Policy Brief 1: “Learning from the History of Japan–NATO Relations,” Japan Institute of International Affairs, June 11, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, and Abe Shinzō, PM, Japan, “Joint Press Statement,” October 31, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> MOFA, “New Establishment of the Mission of Japan to NATO,” July 1, 2018f.

<sup>27</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

accept changes to the status quo by force or coercion.”<sup>28</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Secretary General Rasmussen who said that “there is no doubt that the security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific regions cannot be treated separately.”<sup>29</sup> Then-NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow echoed this, saying not only that both “East Asia and Europe face an increasingly volatile security environment” but also that “we have become increasingly dependent on each other’s stability and prosperity” and therefore needed to work together to meet new challenges and manage crises.<sup>30</sup> Today, the two are in agreement in their “opposition to unilateral coercive actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions,” regardless of where they take place.<sup>31</sup>

## Defense and Strategic Dialogues

Although Japan–NATO political relations have been growing closer since the 1990s, the number of strategic dialogues have not kept pace with those with the UK and France, despite a call by then-Foreign Minister Asō for Japan and NATO to “start talking to one another more often and much more on a regular basis, with a view of possibility for operational cooperation in the future.”<sup>32</sup> The first visit by the director general of the JDA to NATO took place in 1979, followed by similar visits in 1981, 1984, and 1992.<sup>33</sup> This never kept pace, however: Only two Japanese defense ministers visited NATO in their official capacities (in 2007 and 2017). Five of the six NATO secretaries general have visited Japan, a significant fact given that Japan is not a NATO member.<sup>34</sup> The first visit to Japan was in September 1991, by Manfred Wörner. In the years since, four others have done so.<sup>35</sup> These visits are augmented by infrequent high-profile visits, such as Japanese foreign ministers to NATO or NATO deputy secretary general visits to Japan. There was even a 2005 visit to NATO headquarters (HQ) by General Hajime Massaki, then-Chairman of Japan’s Joint Staff Council (today, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff).

These infrequent interactions have been matched by the lack of a robust set of dialogues. In 1990, at the request of Japan’s MOFA, Japan and NATO established a track II (unofficial) security conference called the NATO–Japan Security Conference to enhance informal ties and expand the range and depth of discussions on global and regional security issues. Composed of officials and practitioners from MOFA, JDA/MOD, and NATO officials and attended by

<sup>28</sup> Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, “Japan and NATO as ‘Natural Partners,’” speech, North Atlantic Council, Brussels, May 6, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Secretary General, NATO, and Shinzō Abe, PM, Japan, “Joint Press Point,” NATO, May 6, 2014. Mirna Galic drew slightly different comparisons between this and Abe, 2014, noting that Abe was seeking ways for his message to resonate in Europe and Rasmussen lending credibility to Abe’s approach. See Galic, 2019, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander Vershbow, Deputy Secretary General, NATO, “NATO and East Asia,” speech, Institute for Security and Development Policy, Stockholm, June 12, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Stoltenberg and Abe, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Asō, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Masashi Nishihara, “Can Japan Be a Global Partner for NATO?” Tokyo: Research Institute for Peace and Security, Policy Perspective 2, December 2006, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> I thank Mirna Galic, who pointed this out during her review of the report.

<sup>35</sup> In October 1997, Javier Solana; in April 2005 and December 2007, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer; in April 2013, Anders Fogh Rasmussen; and, in October 2017, Jens Stoltenberg.

academics, it was held only five times until 1999, with a final sixth one in 2007.<sup>36</sup> In the years since, bilateral ties have been managed largely by the only regular standing dialogue, called the Japan–NATO High-Level Consultations.<sup>37</sup> Established in 1993, the format consists of NATO’s assistant secretary general for political affairs and security policy, MOFA’s senior deputy minister for foreign affairs, and the MOD’s director general for international affairs.<sup>38</sup> The annual gathering is an opportunity to discuss their strategic environments, what they are doing to address security challenges, and areas of cooperation. As of May 2017, this had been held 15 times.<sup>39</sup> Other dialogues exist, but not much information is available about them. For example, there are cooperative security staff talks between the NATO International Military Staff and the SDF. There is also a regular cyberdefense talk between NATO and MOD counterparts to assess current cyberthreats and policy developments, with the two most recently holding these discussions in October 2019. These dialogues, but particularly the high-level consultations, are the connective tissues that keep security cooperation moving forward and help facilitate mutual understanding of each other’s evolving priorities.

### **Defense Exchanges, Defense Cooperation, and Defense-Related Industrial Cooperation**

Because NATO is a treaty alliance, some of the variables present with the UK, France, and Germany are not present in Japan–NATO ties. For example, NATO as an organization has not engaged in discussions with Japan on joint defense development projects because NATO does not have any defense-related industrial sector of its own. Similarly, although individual NATO members send their officers to study in Japan, NATO as an organization does not. Japanese SDF officers go to the NATO Defense College, but not in numbers comparable to those Japan sends to the UK or France. Since 2006, only 27 SDF officers have attended courses there.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, although the SDF Chairman of the Joint Staff Council (or, since 2006, the Chief of Staff, Joint Staff) visited NATO six times, no information was obtained on NATO military counterparts visiting Japan.<sup>41</sup>

As bilateral ties between Japan and NATO have grown, so too have the willingness and capacity to cooperate. Compared with its relationships with the UK, France, and Germany, Japan’s record of cooperation with NATO in real-world operations is the most advanced, although it is limited and the two have not engaged in combat operations or discussed operational issues.

Japan’s first notable interaction with a NATO-led operation was in efforts to stabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina, although it was not direct cooperation, nor did it leverage the SDF.

<sup>36</sup> These meetings took place in 1990, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999, and 2007 (NATO and Japan, “Fifth NATO–Japan Security Conference at NATO Headquarters on 15 October 1999,” joint press statement, press release 133, October 15, 1999; Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> These are also referred to as High-Level Staff Talks or High-Level Strategic Talks.

<sup>38</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 12, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019.

<sup>41</sup> The dates of these visits are June 1991, October 1992, March 2002, May 2005, March 2014, and March 2018 (Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019).

Although NATO took the lead in the multinational force, Japan's efforts were primarily that of a donor nation contributing to the peace efforts that came afterward, although Japan did provide support to the response effort.<sup>42</sup> In addition to supplying safe water, restoring schools and hospitals, and promoting agriculture, Japan provided assistance in the Western Balkans to support the social integration of soldiers returning from the war and to assist with mine clearing, as well as assistance to support democratization efforts.<sup>43</sup> These efforts cost a total of approximately \$1.4 billion. These efforts, although significant, were in parallel to, rather than collaborative with, NATO's operations.<sup>44</sup>

Following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, both Japan and NATO deployed forces to Iraq and Afghanistan. Although tasked with different missions, the situation was fortuitous because NATO's activity in combat operations led it to "bump into Japan," which was providing noncombat assistance to both wars.<sup>45</sup> In Iraq, as mentioned above, NATO member states worked with the SDF in protection roles. In Afghanistan, the cooperation extended beyond member states to cooperation between Japan and NATO as an organization.

Japan's role as donor coordinator for Afghanistan reconstruction and development is well known, having begun a biennial funding conference in 2002 that rotated among donors and aligned with NATO efforts. Since 2001, Japan has contributed approximately \$6.6 billion in support to Afghanistan.<sup>46</sup> This aid has included approximately \$668 million in reconstruction assistance for efforts carried out by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) provincial reconstruction teams, such as infrastructure development, public health and medical assistance, and education support, as well as \$165 million to support the peace process, including election assistance and administrative cost assistance.<sup>47</sup> This aid also included Japan's lead role in programs that indirectly supported ISAF by improving Afghanistan's security. Specifically, Japan provided \$209 million in support for police; counternarcotics; mine countermeasures; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts of former armed forces; and the disbanding of illegally armed groups.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Japan provided financial support to Afghanistan's security forces and institutions, including the following:

- the NATO-run Afghan National Army Trust Fund: \$55,301 million<sup>49</sup>
- the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan: \$442.51 million<sup>50</sup>
- physical security and stockpile management: \$3.9 million (approximately; Japan gave €3 million).<sup>51</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Javier Solana, Secretary General, NATO, "NATO's Role in Building Cooperative Security in Europe and Beyond," remarks, Yomiuri Symposium on International Economy, Tokyo, October 15, 1997.

<sup>43</sup> MOFA, "Japan's Actions Towards Construction of Peace in the Western Balkans," July 2004a.

<sup>44</sup> Galic, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019.

<sup>47</sup> MOFA, "Japan's Contribution to Afghanistan," March 2007b, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> MOFA, 2007b, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> NATO, "Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund," media backgrounder, November 2018c.

<sup>50</sup> Japan is the fund's largest donor (UN Development Programme, "Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA)—Support to Payroll Management," June 30, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 25, 2019.

Japan also provided rear-area operational support for NATO member states in Operation Enduring Freedom. Operationally, while NATO led the ISAF in Afghanistan, Japan provided maritime replenishment in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea (2001–2010) for Operation Enduring Freedom coalition forces. The MSDF refueled other ships 939 times, for a total of 517,054 kL worth of fuel; refueled shipborne helicopters 85 times, for a total of 1,200 kL worth of fuel; and provided 11,125 tonnes worth of water 195 times.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the United States, the countries that received this fuel and water were NATO member states: the UK, France, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Denmark.<sup>53</sup>

Japan's efforts made it a key interlocutor for NATO, resulting in its regular inclusion in discussions related to NATO's long-term support to Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup> This interaction was critical because it helped "establish familiarity and made them relevant quantities for one another."<sup>55</sup> Without this cooperation, there is certainly a strong possibility that "any progress in relations would have been much slower or even non-existent."<sup>56</sup> NATO took note, creating a flexible framework to involve Japan in broader NATO discussions about Afghanistan. Beginning in 2008, for example, Japan was invited to NATO summit meetings on Afghanistan, "the only non-troop contributing, non [NATO] ally so designated."<sup>57</sup>

Japan and NATO members also have cooperated in numerous noncombat operations. In the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights, the SDF cooperated closely with NATO member countries, such as Canada, Poland, and Slovakia.<sup>58</sup> In particular, there was some coordination between the SDF and Canada regarding military logistics.<sup>59</sup> The same occurred when Japan dispatched the SDF to assist in election monitoring in East Timor in 2002, coordinating with other NATO-member personnel who were also dispatched. Numerous other examples exist, demonstrating that, as both Japanese and NATO forces have increased their participation in out-of-area, noncombat operations in the past two decades, they have also been cooperating alongside each other on a more frequent basis, albeit mostly in bilateral formats of Japan and a NATO member country.

Still, the increased interactions between Japan and NATO members were significant in pushing Japan–NATO ties forward. Following a NATO proposal in 2007, Japan and NATO

<sup>52</sup> MOD, "旧平成十三年九月十一日のアメリカ合衆国において発生したテロリストによる攻撃等に対応して行われる国際連合憲章の目的達成のための諸外国の活動に対して我が国が実施する措置及び関連する国際連合決議等に基づく人道的措置に関する特別措置法に基づく対応措置の結果" [Results of response measures based on the Special Measures Law regarding humanitarian measures based on UN resolutions, etc. and measures taken by Japan in response to the activities of other states to achieve the purpose of the UN Charter to respond to the terrorist attacks that occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001], submission to the Diet, January 2008, p. 5; MOD, "テロ対策海上阻止活動に対する補給支援活動の実施に関する特別措置法に基づく補給支援活動の結果" [Results of refueling support activities based on the Special Measures Law regarding the implementation of refueling support activities to the anti-terror maritime prevention activities], submission to the Diet, April 2010, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> MOD, 2008, p. 16; MOD, 2010, p. 12. Nonmember states included Pakistan and New Zealand.

<sup>54</sup> Lisa Picheny, "A Growing Partnership Between NATO and Japan," in Luis Simón and Ulrich Speck, eds., *Natural Partners? Europe, Japan and Security in the Indo-Pacific*, Madrid, Spain: Real Instituto Elcano, Elcano policy paper, November 2018, p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> Galic, 2019, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Tsuruoka, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Galic, 2019, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Asō, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Japanese official, email correspondence with the author, December 12, 2019.



began negotiations over an ISA to strengthen bilateral ties.<sup>60</sup> After three years, on June 25, 2010, the two signed an agreement on the security of information and material.<sup>61</sup> The agreement was important because it allowed the two parties to share classified information. Importantly, it has been used to help bring ties between Japan and NATO—as an organization—closer. For example, until the agreement was signed, NATO documents on Afghanistan were releasable only to NATO or countries that contributed troops to the NATO mission. The agreement enabled NATO to release these same documents to Japan.

In the years since their efforts in Afghanistan, operational cooperation has continued between Japan and NATO, but it has been less frequent. For example, in August 2010, a NATO vessel and an MSDF helicopter worked together to thwart a pirate attack on a Greek ship.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Japan and NATO are growing their cooperation in other areas. In March 2019, Tokyo sent a MOD official who specializes in legal affairs to join the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Estonia.<sup>63</sup> With this, and the cyberdefense staff talks mentioned above, Japan now views its cyber cooperation with NATO as quite “substantive.”<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Japan has been appointing personnel to NATO offices. In 2014, Japan became a member of the NATO Interoperability Platform, which has the objective of increasing interoperability between NATO and currently 24 selected partners and an added benefit of increasing access to some NATO committees and bodies held in the Interoperability Platform format.<sup>65</sup> Japan has been particularly interested in training and developing interoperability in the area of maritime security.<sup>66</sup> Since 2014, Tokyo has contributed an SDF officer to the Office of the Secretary General’s Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security at NATO HQ.<sup>67</sup> In June 2019, Tokyo appointed its first liaison officer to NATO’s MARCOM in London; this liaison officer doubles as the defense attaché at the Japanese embassy.<sup>68</sup> And although Japan’s appointment of an liaison officer to NATO’s Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) was included in the 2018 IPCP alongside MARCOM and the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, Tokyo had (as of spring 2020) yet to appoint one. Instead, the two SDF officers in the Japanese embassy act as representatives to both NATO and SHAPE.<sup>69</sup> Com-

<sup>60</sup> MOFA, “日・NATO情報保護協定の署名・締結” [Signing and conclusion of Japan–North Atlantic Treaty Organization information security agreement], June 25, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Government of Japan and NATO, “Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the Security of Information and Material,” Brussels, June 25, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> NATO, “NATO–Japan Cooperation Thwarts Pirate Attack in Gulf of Aden,” August 16, 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019; MOD, “防衛省職員のNATOサイバー防衛協力センターへの派遣について” [About the dispatch of Ministry of Defense personnel to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s Cyber Defense Cooperation Center], March 8, 2019b.

<sup>64</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> NATO, “Partnership Interoperability Initiative,” June 7, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> NATO, “Relations with Japan,” September 12, 2018b.

<sup>67</sup> The first officer was at HQ from 2014 to 2017 and the second from 2017 to 2019. As of November 2019, the third one was expected to be dispatched soon (Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019).

<sup>68</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019; MOD, “Dispatch of the Defense Attaché to the Embassy of Japan as a Liaison Officer to NATO Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM),” June 7, 2019d.

<sup>69</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

bined, these appointments “serve to familiarize Japan with NATO bureaucracy and procedures and to enhance information exchange and/or interoperability.”<sup>70</sup>

## Training and Exercises

Japan and NATO do not have any regular schedule of exercises. In line with the 2014 IPCP, NATO and Japan held their first military exercise on September 25, 2014. The exercise involved the MSDF destroyer *Takanami* and a P-3C plane, operating as part of CTF 151 of the Combined Maritime Forces, and the Danish Navy combat support ship *Esbern Snare*, the flagship for NATO’s counterpiracy mission in the Gulf of Aden (Operation Ocean Shield).<sup>71</sup> The exercise focused on counterpiracy operations skills. The forces not only demonstrated the full spectrum of communication interoperability, exercising tactical data links, satellite communications, voice communications, and visual signaling; they also focused on tactical operations, such as boarding.<sup>72</sup> Two months later, on November 26, the same ships conducted a follow-on exercise, also in the Gulf of Aden. Like the first, the exercise focused on enhancing skills, such as communications, the use of tactical data links, and tactical operations.<sup>73</sup> Live-firing gunnery exercises were also conducted.

A few months later, in February 2015, NATO and Japan were back together exercising in the Gulf of Aden. This time, the exercise took place between the Turkish corvette *Buyukada* (F-512), which is also employed in NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield, with the MSDF destroyer *Harusame*, of CTF 151.<sup>74</sup> The two ships tested common procedures and maneuvers.

The revised IPCP in 2018 continued the forward momentum on combined exercises. Three months after the revision, on August 1, 2018, Canada’s *Ville de Québec*, part of Standing NATO Maritime Group 2, conducted a passing exercise with the MSDF training ship *Kashima* and the destroyer *Makinami* off Spain in the western Mediterranean. The goal was to increase interoperability between NATO and the MSDF, as well as to strengthen ties between NATO and partner nations. Specifically, they practiced ship handling, radio procedures, and replenishment-at-sea approaches.<sup>75</sup> An SDF SH-60 helicopter from the *Makinami* also landed on the *Ville de Québec*, providing an opportunity for the air detachment and the shipborne air controllers of Canada to operate with a foreign aircraft. Later that month, NATO naval forces from Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 conducted a passing exercise with the same MSDF squadron in the Baltic Sea.<sup>76</sup> The objective was to enhance telecommunication skills with

<sup>70</sup> Galic, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> MOFA, “Joint Exercise in Counter Piracy Activities Between Japan and NATO,” September 26, 2014i.

<sup>72</sup> “First Combined NATO/Japan Counter-Piracy Exercise in Gulf of Aden,” *DefenceWeb*, October 2, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> “NATO, Japanese Maritime Forces Strengthen Relations in Gulf of Aden,” *Naval Today*, November 28, 2014; MARCOM, “NATO and Japan Counter-Piracy Forces Strengthen Relations in the Gulf of Aden,” November 27, 2014.

<sup>74</sup> “NATO Warship Exercises with International Navies,” *DefenceWeb*, February 16, 2015; Combined Maritime Forces, “CMF and NATO Warships Meet at Sea,” February 16, 2015.

<sup>75</sup> Béchard, lieutenant, Royal Canadian Navy, “Passing Exercise with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force,” *Maple Leaf: Defence Stories*, August 7, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> NATO, “NATO Maritime Group Sails with Japanese Training Squadron,” 2018a.



other navies.<sup>77</sup> Despite the IPCP agreement's revised language that stated that NATO would consider contributing assets to Japanese exercises, to date, none has occurred.

Although both sides have expressed an interest in exercising more, it is acknowledged that “more is not easy because Japan is not in Europe and NATO is not physically in the Indian Ocean anymore” like it was during the Afghanistan operations.<sup>78</sup> Japanese officials also lament that, despite what was written in the 2018 IPCP agreement about NATO participating in exercises in the Indo-Pacific, “NATO doesn't put it as a priority because it is withdrawing back to its own theater [and] focusing on its member country concerns.”<sup>79</sup> Despite recognizing the interconnected nature of their theaters, interviewees raised scarce resources—both manpower and financial—as the primary challenge to increasing exercises, particularly when NATO is refocusing on a resurgent Russia in Europe.

## Motivation

Japan's motivations for closer ties with NATO were presented in Chapter Two. In this section, NATO's motivations are presented. Specifically, NATO seeks closer security ties with Japan as a means to

- Protect its security concerns.
- Protect the rules-based international order.
- Support the United States.

### Protect Its Security Concerns

NATO as an alliance has not historically seen the Indo-Pacific region as a priority. During the Cold War, as a transatlantic alliance, NATO's purpose was territorial defense of Western Europe against the threat posed by the Soviet Union. After this threat evaporated, NATO struggled to find an identity and a purpose in a world in which the Soviet Union did not exist. NATO was confronted with a stark choice: Either go out of area or go out of business.<sup>80</sup> Recognizing that countries outside of Europe contributed to Europe's security, NATO began partnerships with non-NATO countries.<sup>81</sup> This resulted in NATO shifting its focus to crisis management beyond its borders.<sup>82</sup> The 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States accelerated this, particularly as NATO became involved in Afghanistan and required assistance with its operations outside of Europe. For NATO, it was clear that it mattered less where a country sits on a map than whether a country was willing to tackle common security challenges together.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 24, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, July 10, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, “How NATO Adapts to a Changing World,” lecture, Leiden University College, The Hague, April 19, 2018.

<sup>81</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Rose Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General, NATO, “Adapting to a More Dangerous World,” speech, Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest, March 22, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary General, NATO, “Global NATO: Overdue or Overstretch?” speech, Security and Defence Agenda conference, Brussels, November 6, 2006.

As Secretary General Stoltenberg said, “from Crimea to North Korea, and from Syria to the South China Sea,” increasing global power competition affects everyone in the world.<sup>84</sup>

This is where one motivation for closer relations with Japan arose. Initially, in the 1990s, when NATO was searching for purpose, it was simply trying to multiply its relations with others around the globe, particularly like-minded countries.<sup>85</sup> Japan was the “natural entry point for Europe” into Asia because it was an economically powerful country, like-minded, and had a professional military.<sup>86</sup> It helped that Japan pushed hard for a relationship with NATO.<sup>87</sup> As NATO became involved in Afghanistan, it needed help with operations outside of Europe, and it looked to partners to help reduce their burden, both in military operations and in development assistance.<sup>88</sup> This raised Japan’s attractiveness as a partner.

This remains true today. China’s rise has piqued NATO’s interest because it has proven to directly affect NATO’s security interests. Despite NATO’s traditional focus being on the Soviet Union and Russia, China’s rise is having an impact on NATO partly because of Chinese activity closer to Europe. As articulated by Secretary General Stoltenberg,

We see them in the Arctic, we see them in Africa, we see them investing heavily in critical infrastructure, also in Europe. We see them in cyberspace and we also see that decisions by China and Chinese investments in new modern military capabilities have direct consequences for us.<sup>89</sup>

For NATO, because the “geography of danger has shifted,”<sup>90</sup> “the challenges of the 21st century are too complex for any one nation to face alone.”<sup>91</sup> Although NATO recognizes the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the challenges presented by China and sees a role for itself in addressing these, NATO does not have a strategy for the region.<sup>92</sup> Nor is NATO moving “into the Pacific.”<sup>93</sup> Instead, NATO prefers to work closely with its regional partners, such as Japan. NATO’s interest in North Korea and increasing interest in China have meant a need for strong partnerships with trustworthy partners, such as Japan.<sup>94</sup> For NATO, Japan is a trusted source of information on regional developments. NATO sees close ties with Japan as a way to increase its situational awareness and better understand what is important in the

<sup>84</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, remarks, Lowy Institute, Sydney, August 7, 2019b.

<sup>85</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, July 23, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Stoltenberg, 2019b.

<sup>90</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, “The Geography of Danger Has Shifted,” speech, Japan National Press Club, Tokyo, October 31, 2017a; last updated November 2, 2017.

<sup>91</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, “Press Point,” Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul, November 2, 2017b.

<sup>92</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> John Mair and Colin Packham, “NATO Needs to Address China’s Rise, Says Stoltenberg,” Reuters, August 7, 2019.

<sup>94</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

Indo-Pacific region.<sup>95</sup> Importantly, NATO now feels more comfortable with outreach to Japan, given that former PM Abe transformed what the SDF can do legally.<sup>96</sup>

### **Protect the Rules-Based International Order**

Despite being a transatlantic alliance, NATO is interested in upholding the international order. Since its creation, “NATO has been a resolute guardian of the international order . . . [and understands that NATO] must do our utmost to protect it.”<sup>97</sup> NATO officials regretfully acknowledge that the international order is threatened. In 2019, Secretary General Stoltenberg told the Munich Security Conference that the “rules-based order is under pressure . . . [and, with this,] we also see more uncertainty and more unpredictability.”<sup>98</sup> Mirroring the domestic debates occurring in NATO-member capitals, activities by Russia and China are seen as some of the most serious challenges to this order. NATO is concerned about the activities these states take and the effect on the rules-based order.<sup>99</sup>

Not surprisingly, NATO is focused primarily on Russia’s resurgence. Russia’s actions in 2014 forced NATO to shift its focus back to Europe after more than a decade on Afghanistan. For NATO, a more assertive Russia “is destabilising the European security order.”<sup>100</sup> At the same time, NATO increasingly recognizes the challenge posed by China. Secretary General Stoltenberg has been vocal in this regard. Not only has he argued that China’s rise is a key driver in the shift in the international system’s balance of power, but this rise also has implications for the global rules-based order and for NATO security—a challenge seen in Chinese behavior in the South China Sea, in cyberspace, and in Chinese investments in critical infrastructure.<sup>101</sup>

Although NATO is poised to act against Russia to protect Europe, NATO leaders have cautioned that the alliance is not seeking a direct role in the Asia–Pacific region.<sup>102</sup> For example, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg did not mince words when he said, “There’s no way that NATO will move into the South China Sea.”<sup>103</sup> That is where interest in Japan arises. Although there is a recognition that Japan can do little to directly contribute to European security and that NATO can do little to directly contribute to Asia’s security, together the two can help preserve the balance of power in the international system.<sup>104</sup> The increased caution about

<sup>95</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 6, 2015; last updated February 9, 2015.

<sup>98</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 15, 2019a.

<sup>99</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>100</sup> Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General, NATO, speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 13, 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Stoltenberg, 2019a; Stoltenberg, 2019b.

<sup>102</sup> Picheny, 2018, p. 37.

<sup>103</sup> Holly Ellyatt, “China Is ‘Coming Closer’ but We Don’t Want a New Adversary, NATO Chief Says,” CNBC, December 2, 2019.

<sup>104</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

China in Europe generally, and within NATO specifically, has created opportunities for more cooperation with Japan, providing bilateral security ties with “a strategic anchor.”<sup>105</sup>

In 2014, then–NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that NATO’s relationship with Japan was “based upon shared values, a shared commitment to international peace and security, and to the principles of the United Nations and international law.”<sup>106</sup> Echoing this, then–NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow described the two as “united by common values and a common commitment to the international rules-based order.”<sup>107</sup> NATO does not expect Japan to use force; nor did any official or expert interviewed for this study indicate a desire to have Japan deploy alongside NATO members or be actively involved in European affairs. But with challenges to the international order, having a like-minded state, such as Japan, with which to cooperate is important from a normative standpoint. NATO looks to Japan to be a partner in shaping norms and standards that form the foundation of the international order.<sup>108</sup> Whether it is cyber; women, peace, and security; nonproliferation; or antiterrorism, NATO sees a like-minded partner to help uphold the order they both seek to support.

### Support the United States

Although criticism of NATO by President Trump has bothered many NATO member states, discussions about rebalancing burden-sharing arrangements are not new. At the same time, NATO officials from European member states often emphasize the strength that Europe and the United States enjoy together and the continued need to stand together in an uncertain world. Secretary General Stoltenberg, for example, in speaking about the EU’s defense initiatives, has commented that there is no alternative to the transatlantic bond and that nothing can replace it.<sup>109</sup> This same sentiment is inherent in NATO’s approach to strengthening security ties with Japan.

In “The Tokyo Declaration on the U.S.–Japan Global Partnership,” the importance of intensifying “dialogue” between the United States, Japan, and Europe is explicitly emphasized, including political dialogue between Japan and NATO.<sup>110</sup> NATO officials are cognizant of the importance of closer NATO–Japan ties, particularly for the purpose of supporting the United States. For many NATO officials, stronger bilateral ties with Japan can be seen as supportive of the transatlantic alliance because regular interaction is a way to educate Japan about Europe and Europe’s strategic concerns.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, having closer ties with Japan helps NATO “better understand what others are doing.”<sup>112</sup> NATO recognizes that there are “lots of things

<sup>105</sup>NATO expert, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>106</sup>Rasmussen and Abe, 2014.

<sup>107</sup>Vershbow, 2015.

<sup>108</sup>NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019; NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>109</sup>Stoltenberg, 2019a.

<sup>110</sup>George H. W. Bush, President, United States, and Kiichi Miyazawa, PM, Japan, “The Tokyo Declaration on the U.S.–Japan Global Partnership,” Tokyo, Bush Tokyo visit text, January 9, 1992.

<sup>111</sup>NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>112</sup>NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

happening” in the Indo-Pacific that have “implications for the U.S.”<sup>113</sup> NATO wants to cooperate with others in the Indo-Pacific because it sees the interconnected nature of today’s security challenges. Having closer ties with Japan “helps keep other regions in our purview.”<sup>114</sup> This, in turn, is seen to benefit the United States because increased cooperation would help it “deliver on what it says it wants to do” in the region.<sup>115</sup>

## Divergence

Mirroring the situation among member states, there is a divergence between Japan and NATO regarding China and Russia. Like Japan, NATO is concerned about Chinese activities. Whether it be Chinese military exercises in the Mediterranean or in the Arctic with Russia, the establishment of the 17+1 dialogue with central and eastern European countries, or the security concerns raised by Huawei, China as a security issue has grown within NATO. As evidence of this, in December 2019, the NATO leaders’ meeting released a declaration that recognized “that China’s growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance.”<sup>116</sup> In NATO, “the naivety regarding China is moving away.”<sup>117</sup> China “is a motivation to have security ties with Japan” given Japan and NATO members’ similar concerns and belief that China will continue to be more active in global affairs.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, there are views of Japan among NATO members as being very “keen to engage NATO for its own reasons” that include messaging to China, something of which NATO remains somewhat cautious.<sup>119</sup> NATO as an organization does not view its partnerships as being directed against any one country.<sup>120</sup> Nor does it see security cooperation with Japan as directed against China or Russia. When NATO members see the United States push the China debate in NATO, European members—particularly Germany and France, which do not want to see the alliance leveraged against China—are reluctant to follow.<sup>121</sup> Consequently, as long as Japan–NATO conversations regarding China stay at the global, non–strategic cooperation level, then NATO will have no problems with building closer ties with Japan. Should Japan push for actions to contain or harshly name and shame China, NATO may be reluctant.

Despite an interlude after the end of the Cold War when NATO began to look for roles outside of Europe, after the events in Georgia and Ukraine, NATO returned to its historical focus on the defense of Europe. NATO looks at Russia and sees a country that illegally annexed Crimea, continues to destabilize eastern Ukraine, and has attempted to interfere in

<sup>113</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> NATO, “London Declaration,” press release (2019) 115, December 4, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>118</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>119</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>120</sup> NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

<sup>121</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 7, 2019.

the domestic political processes of many NATO countries.<sup>122</sup> Because of this, NATO’s priority remains the defense of Europe. Japanese officials admit that there is “not 100-percent overlap” with NATO in their views of Russia because “Russia shows Japan and Europe difference faces in different parts of the world.”<sup>123</sup> Although Japan is not naïve as to what Russia is doing, it still cannot justify being as hard on Russia as NATO is. Although NATO does not expect any role for Japan in deterring Russia, officials nevertheless recognize the divergence between Japan’s strong advocacy of norms and values vis-à-vis Chinese actions while pursuing peace talks and negotiations over the disputed islands with Russia.

## Conclusion

Japan is largely seen as being the driver of closer relations between Brussels and Tokyo, with the demand signals from Tokyo for stronger ties being received loud and clear.<sup>124</sup> NATO has generally been receptive to these calls because NATO has had an incentive to maintain security ties when considering China, North Korea, or any other host of security threats.<sup>125</sup> The pace of the growth of security ties, however, has been incremental and, at times, accidental and often opportunistic. Although, historically, Japan and NATO have not pursued frequent defense interactions or regular dialogues on security issues, they have taken advantage of world events to not only engage in exercises but also to cooperate in noncombat operations, such as those in Afghanistan. And although the two are not actively pursuing any joint defense development project and have only one defense element in their agreement on the security of information and material, their ties are growing closer through an increasing number of Japanese officials being appointed to NATO offices. With NATO returning to a focus on Russia in Europe, where and how quickly bilateral security ties will develop in the future is unclear.

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<sup>122</sup>Stoltenberg, 2019b.

<sup>123</sup>Japanese official, interview with the author, July 29, 2019.

<sup>124</sup>NATO official, interview with the author, November 7, 2019; NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

<sup>125</sup>NATO official, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.



## Conclusion

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As shown in Chapter Two, the U.S. NSS indicates that the United States will pursue cooperation and reciprocity together with its allies and partners. This report shows that its allies are doing just that. Despite the geographic distance, Japan and the UK, France, Germany, and NATO are cooperating in the security domain. These relationships continue to develop and include activities that are directed at upholding the international order against a mutually perceived set of security challenges, including those by China. As these allies increasingly cooperate and pool their resources across activities, the security burden of the United States may have an opportunity to become lighter. Although these emerging partnerships share similarities, they are not the same; clear differences in lines of effort exist. This chapter examines where those similarities and differences are and assesses how these matter for the United States.

### Similarities

#### **The Importance of Protecting the International Order**

Evident throughout this report is that Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO share the same values and principles. These values and principles also lead to a common worldview about the importance of the current international order. Every actor examined for this report shares a strong preference for maintaining the current international order against today's challenges. This preference for protecting the international order, in turn, informs their strategic interests and policies. It is these broader strategic interests in which the actors examined in this study define their cooperation and the ultimate rationale for strengthening security ties across the numerous variables examined above. In this sense, although value-based arguments are politically appealing and are indeed important, the shared interests are driving the varying levels of security cooperation seen throughout this report.

#### **China**

Although Japan has long been cautious of China and its behavior and strategic approach in the region, European governments and NATO have not always shared such a view. Instead, European states tended to highlight the gains from economic trade with China while ignoring the security implications of heightened dependency on China. This is changing, however: European states and NATO have come to increasingly share Japan's concern, both in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe itself. Today, Europe's position is less focused on prioritizing economic ties and more balanced to include greater cautiousness with respect to Chinese investments and

greater criticisms of Chinese behavior that threatens the international order, norms, or regional interests.

Yet, as shown throughout the report (and highlighted below), differences of opinions with respect to how to address the China challenge have made it difficult to take explicitly tough positions on China. Europe remains divided over the issue of China. There is a general convergence around the idea that China is one of the main challengers to the international order. There are also sensitivities to Chinese activities in Europe. Yet, also evident is that the UK, France, Germany, and NATO take nuanced positions on China, reflecting domestic debates. Although the UK, France, and Germany see China as challenging the international order and an economic competitor, they also see China as an economic partner and do not want to alienate it. And NATO does not view its alliance as targeting China. This complexity in views on China leads to more hesitance in explicitly calling out China or leveraging NATO as an organization against China. This implies that, although there is convergence between Japan and the four actors discussed in this report on seeing China as a security challenge, there may be limits on how far security cooperation can go regarding China, particularly for France, Germany, and NATO.

### **The Importance of the Indo-Pacific**

As a resident power directly involved in many of today's regional security issues, Japan's interest in the Indo-Pacific is self-evident. With the exception of France, no European state is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific maintaining any significant number of permanent forces in the region. But even some of France's territories are far from the areas where today's regional security challenges are playing out. Nevertheless, as this report has shown, the regional interests of the UK, France, Germany, and NATO, and the efforts tied to protecting those interests, have grown. For all four, there is a recognition today of the interconnected nature of world affairs that extends beyond economic relations, making them view the region with more importance. In NATO, the UK, and France, there has been a marked growth of both interest and willingness to be more involved in regional affairs, including strengthening partnerships with like-minded partners. Change is evident even in Germany, particularly after the shock of a Chinese company purchasing German giant KUKA, as detailed in Chapter Five. Importantly, Europe's growing interest in the region converges with that of Japan, given the latter's proactive efforts to have more states interested and involved in regional security affairs.

For both Japan and the four actors examined above, greater bilateral engagement in the Indo-Pacific comes at a cost, in terms of both time and money. This means that maintaining a dedicated flow of resources and political capital to both upkeep of and strengthening these bilateral security ties may be difficult. Although they share a genuine interest in upholding the international order, maintaining—or growing—current levels of effort will likely mean difficult domestic political choices for all of these actors.

### **The Primacy of the United States**

Japan, the UK, France, Germany, and NATO view the United States as an important strategic ally. There are no indications that any of these actors want to replace the United States or change the role it plays. In fact, the opposite is true. Stronger security ties with another U.S. ally are seen as a way to bolster one's bilateral strategic relationship with the United States, which not only reinforces but also complements the U.S. alliance system. Only in Germany was a slight variation of this found, where outreach to Japan was rooted in its support for

multilateralism. Even here, however, there was a strong recognition of the value of the United States, but there were concerns about its future direction, whether it will remain a reliable partner, and what that will mean for Europe and multilateralism. Cooperating with Japan is a way to address some of those concerns.

## Differences

### Different Lines of Effort

Despite the common interests in upholding the international order and supporting multilateralism, there is no effort to coordinate the disparate lines of effort among the actors examined in this report. Instead, their efforts are separate bilateral endeavors, resulting in different levels of achievements. Japan's security ties with the UK and France are the most advanced. They go well beyond strategic dialogues and defense exchanges and consist of robust sets of dialogues, growing exercises between their armed forces, defense-related industrial cooperation, and an increasing number of agreements meant to draw the countries closer together in the security domain. But even here, Japan's exercises and defense-related industrial cooperation with the UK far outpaces its activities with France. Japan's bilateral security ties with Germany pale in comparison, with most of these venues of cooperation missing or far less advanced. Even Japan's bilateral ties with NATO are different. Although exercises have occurred, the two actors have cooperated in more real-world operations than the three European states, although, even here, much of this cooperation is with NATO members, not NATO as an organization. Importantly, although all actors examined in this report have expressed concern about China's activities in the maritime realm, cooperation in standing up to the challenges China poses is occurring at different levels. For example, all actors have rhetorically committed themselves to protecting the international order and the values and principles of which it consists, but only the UK and France actively have challenged Chinese maritime claims with their naval assets. Although Japan occasionally provides a presence in the South China Sea, it has refrained from challenging Chinese claims. Germany appears reluctant to contribute even this much.

### Approaches to China

For most of the post-Cold War period, the three European states viewed Russia as their primary threat and China as an economic opportunity. This led to an almost solitary focus on the Russian threat to the east and an increasingly strong web of economic ties between Europe and China, negating any need for security ties to balance against any potential military threat posed by China. Despite these three European states and NATO having recently become more cautious about China since its activities in the South China Sea and in Europe that have raised concerns, these four actors generally want to maintain constructive relations with China. This is particularly true of Germany. In turn, this has moderated these actors' approaches to China, leading the three European states and NATO to refrain from explicitly naming China a threat or strategic competitor. Officials in all four entities are increasingly criticizing Chinese behavior, albeit usually in indirect ways.

Japan, on the other hand, has shown itself much more willing to name and shame China, actively work to counter—or at least blunt—Chinese influence and power, secure partnerships with like-minded nations, and maintain a strong defensive posture to defend and deter against China's military activities. It is also notable that Japan, the UK, and France are active in the

South China Sea to proactively affirm the principles of and rights to freedom of movement at sea and in the air, in accordance with international law, while Germany and NATO are not. These differences in China policies are important in that they could divide Japan from its European partners, as well as exacerbate tensions between Europe and the United States.

### **Approaches to Russia**

There is not perfect overlap in the ways in which Japan and Europe view Russia. Whereas the UK, France, Germany, and NATO all view Russia as a serious violator of international laws and norms and as their greatest threat that demands attention, Japan does not appear to see Moscow this way. This is evident in its diplomatic outreach to Russia, particularly during the Abe administration, to settle a lingering territorial dispute and obtain a peace treaty to formally end World War II. This does not mean that Japan does not share a concern about Russia or is naïve about Russian activities in Europe. It is generally aligned with the position of the G7, which reproached Russia and supported Ukraine, even if its statements are not as strong or quick as Europe might like. When it comes to Russia in the Indo-Pacific, however, Japan does not see the menacing “European Russia” that violates international rules and principles. It sees the “Asian Russia” that is not a major regional actor. This is why Japan feels comfortable engaging in dialogue and courting Moscow for a peace treaty.

### **Significance for the United States**

The United States’ engagement in both Europe and the Indo-Pacific region is rooted in its long-standing security alliances. In the Indo-Pacific specifically, the IPSR reviewed in Chapter Two acknowledges that U.S. alliances and partnerships provide the United States “a durable, asymmetric strategic advantage that no competitor or rival can match.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, “[t]hrough focused security cooperation, information-sharing agreements, and regular exercises,” the United States is able to connect intent, resources, and outcomes and build closer relationships between its military and the militaries of its partners and allies.<sup>2</sup> There is no reason for this to be less true for United States’ allies who work closely together. As shown in this report, Japan, NATO, and three key European states are doing the very same thing the United States is doing with its allies and partners. As a result, these actors are building closer relationships that benefit the United States’ strategy, particularly because these relationships augment the United States’ bilateral relationships and the U.S. alliance system. They do not limit U.S. policy options; instead, they help build what the IPSR calls “an extended network capable of deterring or decisively acting to meet the shared challenges of our time.”<sup>3</sup> This extended network is significant for the United States in six ways:

- These partnerships support U.S. leadership.
- They support international burden sharing.
- They support flexible, smaller groupings of partners.

<sup>1</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> DoD, 2019, p. 44.

- They make allies more effective.
- They strengthen Japan without using U.S. resources.
- They connect regions.

### **Partnerships Support U.S. Leadership**

First and foremost, cooperation between Japan and key European states and NATO supports the United States' international leadership role. Yes, U.S. allies' interviewees for this study expressed dismay at the direction of Washington's policies in recent years. Whether it be for disparaging alliances or appearing to walk away from multilateralism, there is a consistent voice expressing disappointment with and concern about the intentions of the United States. The view in Europe is best expressed by a UK expert who said that "the U.S. has vacated international order leadership."<sup>4</sup> There is also a view that the United States does very little to engage or synchronize dialogue and activities among its allies and partners. Despite this perception of the United States relinquishing its former role, the U.S. allies reviewed in this report are not interested in walking away from the United States. Rather, their security ties are seen as efforts to strengthen the United States' role in world affairs, even if political relations with Washington have become somewhat more strained. That said, there is a general understanding among interviewees that the world has become more multilateral in nature than the United States appears to appreciate. Having networked allies willing to work together and support the United States is critical to sustaining U.S. leadership at a time of strategic competition. Despite the frustration with the United States during the Trump administration, interviewees emphasized that every actor examined in this report consistently mentions its relationship with the United States in international fora, understanding the centrality that the United States plays amid the growing multilateralism. According to one Japanese official, "We can't let the U.S. fail."<sup>5</sup> This is welcome news to the United States: As long as security cooperation between its allies continues to support it, the growing bilateral security ties will continue to be of extremely high value for the United States and its interests.

### **Partnerships Support International Order Burden Sharing**

The types of security cooperation outlined in this report complement U.S. efforts to uphold the international order. Although differences exist between Japan's approach to China and those of the other actors surveyed here, the commitment to the rules-based international order and freedom of navigation by three key European states and NATO is a firm foundation on which to build strong security ties to promote the maintenance of a stable and inclusive regional order. Considering that only a few actors are actively working to address security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region to uphold the international order (e.g., Japan, Australia, France, and the UK), the United States benefits from having more of its allies actively involved.

Having like-minded partners with which to work is important in three primary ways for burden sharing in support of the international order:

- The existence of more actors enables the United States to send a stronger signal that there is a broad-based international coalition in support of its actions and therefore enables it

<sup>4</sup> UK expert, interview with the author, November 3, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Japanese official, interview with the author, November 12, 2019.

to apply stronger pressure with greater legitimacy on those that would challenge the liberal international order. NATO likes to use the language of “projecting stability.” Indeed, having more actors advocate the same message supports stability in the region.

- Allied efforts could free up U.S. naval assets. When Japan and European states conduct patrols to demonstrate freedom of navigation through contested waters or cooperate to monitor illegal ship-to-ship transfers to uphold UN sanctions, for example, these reduce the need for U.S. naval assets to do the same operations. Realistically, the effects are likely to remain insignificant for the foreseeable future, given the small numbers of European assets in the region and the handful of activities being done together by Japan and European navies.
- Having like-minded partners with which to work helps the United States in that it diversifies how pressure can be applied, creating a situation in which the United States and its allies can divide roles and missions, thereby giving the United States more resources on which to draw. In turn, this helps free the United States from having to engage in pressure campaigns by itself with its own resources. Different partners have different strengths, resources, and political capital that will matter for different situations. Because bigger or more-complex problems will require more partners, having close allies actively involved creates a situation in which they can leverage their strengths in the most effective way. This may not always be military assets—it may be diplomatic or economic—but, by having more actors working toward the same goal with their own resources, the United States’ share of the burden will be reduced, if even in small amounts. The various levels of effort by the actors in this report in the South China Sea is a perfect example.

### **Partnerships Support Flexible, Smaller Groupings of Partners**

Understanding that an alliance or coalition of democracies across the world may be a politically loaded concept that some in Europe may find difficult to commit to joining, the United States can still leverage these closer ties among its allies in smaller settings, such as trilaterals or quadrilaterals. The more that its allies become comfortable working with one another in different regions and on different issues, the more opportunities there will be for the United States to create more-flexible arrangements. This is particularly useful for the United States given that its alliance system stretches the globe. Should an issue erupt in one region, greater security cooperation among allies positions the United States to assemble smaller groupings of partners that are both capable and willing to respond. The exercises reviewed in this report that involved the United States is one example. Another is the growing trilateralism among the United States, the UK, and Japan. On October 20, 2016, the chief of the MSDF and chiefs of the U.S. and UK navies signed a trilateral cooperation agreement that committed all three to closer cooperation and increased exercises and joint patrols.

### **Partnerships Make Allies More Effective**

Today, the exercises Japan has had with the UK, France, and NATO are few and far between, thereby limiting their operational importance. But that is not where their primary importance currently lies. As initial efforts, these are critical in that they provide opportunities to forge human connections. These increasing touch points between Japan and Europe are also important for strategic messaging purposes. Exercises in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in the South and East China Seas, demonstrate to China that a group of like-minded countries share similar interests and are mutually concerned about regional security challenges.



This is important for the United States. Increasing touch points among defense and military counterparts helps U.S. allies learn from each other in how they conduct threat assessments. They also provide opportunities to better understand effective means by which to defend themselves against these threats, including insight into how other countries deploy and operate particular systems. These efforts help build mutual understanding among and between critical U.S. allies. Crucially, they are opportunities to exchange information on issues. For example, as a resident power with assets capable of obtaining detailed information on Chinese and Russian regional activity, Japan often uses its meetings to share information with its European counterparts. What it shares depends on the closeness of the bilateral relationship, but, assuming that Japan's information on China, for example, is more detailed than that of its European interlocutor, these kinds of activities help U.S. allies achieve a more equal understanding of security issues, enabling more-effective responses. Similarly, given its advanced ballistic missile defense system, Japan could provide critical lessons learned to Europe from its experience of both building and operating such defenses.

In the long term, as these exercises become more robust and take on greater operational significance, these U.S. allies may become more capable of maintaining stability and ensuring free access to the global commons. Should the exercises continue to grow in number and complexity, and increase cooperation in security operations and sharing sensitive data based on their information-sharing agreements, these U.S. allies will experience better interoperability.<sup>6</sup> Although this is very much in the early stages, the forces of these U.S. allies are learning how to communicate with one another in the field, share sensitive data, and act together coherently and effectively. This may not amount to much today but, according to one expert, "it doesn't matter until it would matter."<sup>7</sup> What may be dormant or latent potential today may be a real capability in the future.

This last point is important. The United States enjoys interoperability with both its NATO allies and Japanese allies. If Japan and the three European states or NATO ever want to do anything operational in the future, they must start somewhere. Given Europe's concerns about North Korea and China, combined with the fact that the UK and France are UN Command sending states that could be called on in the case of a resumption of hostilities on the Korean peninsula and that NATO could be called on to act if the United States is attacked in the region, one can imagine that Europe might play a role in some future contingency. The likelihood of such activity involving Japan is just as high in light of the fact that the UN and Japan have a signed status-of-forces agreement that enables UN sending states to use UN-designated bases in Japan. As a result, being able to operate with Japan could become a critical component to operational success. Thus, the exercises these actors are taking today could pay dividends in some future scenario.

### **Partnerships Strengthen Japan Without Using U.S. Resources**

The United States has long wanted Japan to do more for its own and regional security. NATO and the three European states examined in this study view Japan as a natural partner with which to engage in the Indo-Pacific region. This makes it easier to have dialogue with Japan and progressively build stronger ties across the range of variables examined above. These grow-

<sup>6</sup> DoD, 2018, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> NATO expert, interview with the author, November 8, 2019.

ing security ties, in turn, are productive in helping support Japan to become more strategically inclined beyond its immediate region and to see its SDF as a viable policy tool. More importantly, their growing ties help Japan build critical knowledge for its SDF and defense policies. For example, naval exercises with the UK and France help the MSDF train different communication skills. Likewise, GSDF ties with the British Army help it develop covert forward surveillance and reconnaissance skills, while ties with the Royal Marines aid its efforts at strengthening its amphibious capabilities because the scale and structure of the UK force is closer to that of Japan's. Additionally, Japan's interaction with NATO—both as an organization and with its member states—is critical for Japan to learn more about technical matters related to alliance management in a multilateral setting. It helps Japan go beyond its bilateral comfort zone with the United States and learn how to work with others in a multilateral construct. The same is true of industrial cooperation with the UK and France because it learns about different contracting vehicles. Finally, through its ISA with the UK, London can help socialize Tokyo's intelligence community to Five Eyes' standards to improve its methods of intelligence classification, storage, and sharing.

### Partnerships Connect Regions

The United States has a vested interest in both the European and Indo-Pacific regions. Despite the NDS highlighting the priority to expand Indo-Pacific alliances and partnerships and fortify the transatlantic NATO alliance, it misses the importance of strengthening ties *between* them. Yet, as shown throughout this report, that is exactly what is happening. Having like-minded U.S. allies get closer together in the security sphere and play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific region helps build a more closely networked set of partners performing security cooperation.<sup>8</sup> This aligns with the interests of the United States. Significantly, this networking helps makes U.S. allies more aware about other regions to which they have not historically devoted much attention. Although the UK, France, Germany, and NATO have come to appreciate the interconnected nature of Indo-Pacific affairs on their own security, thereby expanding their awareness beyond Europe, so too has Japan come to appreciate the issues with which Europe is engaged. Although the UK and France, and, to a lesser extent, Germany and NATO, have become more actively engaged in Indo-Pacific security affairs, Japan is not actively engaged in European security. The security ties help pull both sides closer together and form the basis of better understandings of their respective regions and the interconnection between them. Importantly, because the United States is a global power with security interests in both of their regions, having its allies better understand the issues with which it is engaged makes them better allies because they can better understand the United States and support it, if possible.

### Recommendations

The growing strategic partnerships among U.S. allies support the United States and strengthen the U.S.-led alliance system. There is scope for greater multilateralism among U.S. allies.

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<sup>8</sup> Scott W. Harold, Derek Grossman, Brian Harding, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Gregory Poling, Jeffrey Smith, and Meagan L. Smith, *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation: Deepening Defense Ties Among U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-3125-MCF, 2019.

Although the individual actors examined in this report are responsible for fostering a specific bilateral relationship, all actors could amplify their own efforts by supporting the broader efforts being pursued by Japan, NATO, and the three European countries examined above. Below are some general recommendations on how the developments seen thus far can be further supported:

- **Be patient.** Although the symbolism and strategic messaging are strengths of current bilateral security cooperation, the practical areas of cooperation are growing. ISA and ACSA frameworks are critical foundations that create the legal frameworks to getting armed forces to work together. And the more the armed forces exercise together, the greater the likelihood that they will develop functional levels of interoperability. Should these types of activities continue, today's efforts—although small—will pay dividends in the future. As these areas of cooperation grow, these U.S. allies will be better positioned to plug their cooperation into the U.S.-led security architecture and help with regional security.
- **Support signaling and symbolism.** Even though current bilateral security cooperation activities do not carry high operational value, there is value having more U.S. allies increasingly work together in contested spaces in that it increases the cost on states that engage in revisionist behavior. All actors surveyed in this study are intent on preserving the fundamental values and principles that make up the international order. This unified front needs to be better leveraged: The signal it sends is powerful.
- **Temper expectations.** Security relations have gotten closer, and continue to grow, but there are obstacles that need to be overcome for ties to grow even closer:
  - For all actors, financial and human resources are real limitations on the extent to which forces can be sent for exercises and officials dispatched to engage in dialogues.
  - For all actors, Japan's heavy reliance on the United States for defense equipment limits the areas of possible industrial cooperation.
  - Without an RAA, both the UK and France will continue to be reluctant to exercise in Japan because of the possibility of putting their nationals in legal jeopardy.
  - The effects of Brexit on the UK's bandwidth and prioritization of resources for engagement is unknown.
  - In Germany, not only does public sentiment oppose bigger roles for the military and expanded security interests outside Europe; political leadership is not united on Germany's position vis-à-vis China and what Germany wants of Japan. Should closer security ties with Japan cause problems in Germany's relationship with China, it will be difficult for Germany to do more with Japan.
  - Russia's resurgence in Europe has forced NATO back to its borders and to focus on the alliance's traditional responsibility, giving it little bandwidth to focus on the Indo-Pacific like it did during the war in Afghanistan.
  - For NATO, allowing Japan to participate in exercises is difficult because NAC approval is needed. Some NATO members oppose because they use classified information during exercises that they do not consent to release to Japan.
  - For Japan, domestic laws still restrain some aspects of what it could do militarily with European states, and more-direct involvement in some areas, such as Ukraine, would be too politically sensitive.

- **Encourage areas to grow.** Despite challenges, the limits of bilateral cooperation have yet to be reached. In the meantime, there are practical areas in which bilateral ties should be encouraged to grow. Examples include the following:
  - Strengthen less controversial areas of nontraditional security cooperation, such as HA/DR exercises, coordinating development assistance in Africa or capacity building in Southeast Asia, and antipiracy.
  - Develop coordinated strategies for more-traditional security issues, such as North Korea, maritime security, and nonproliferation activities.
  - Before exercises grow in complexity, Japan and the UK or France should focus on some semblance of a regular exercise schedule to give continuity to their efforts.
- **Focus on future threats.** In areas in which Japan and Europe are trying to build interoperability and practical cooperation, their focus remains on the physical domain. Yet, future threats are likely to be in the cyber and space domains. Although greater cooperation in the physical domain is important, it is likely to remain small for the near future because of the challenges mentioned above. Some new domains, such as countering disinformation in the cyber realm or attaining greater space domain awareness, might be areas that are less sensitive. Converging around a more unified opinion regarding Chinese technology, such as Huawei, is likely to be more challenging but needed.
- **Coordinate subregional strategies.** All entities examined in this report are active in the Indo-Pacific region in one way or another. Much of this activity, however, exists in parallel without a coordinated, coherent strategy. Although action plans are useful for laying out areas of cooperation, having more-focused strategic discussions between the bilateral partnerships that frame their relations and overarching objectives would be beneficial to forming more-coherent strategies moving forward, in both the traditional and nontraditional security domains.

## Conclusion

The world has changed since the end of the Cold War in ways that directly affect the allies of the United States. Whereas the transatlantic NATO alliance used to be the most important relationship to Washington during the Cold War, the rise of the Indo-Pacific has caused a shift in attention. Security challenges have always been global in nature, but today they increasingly require a multilateral response. As a result, it is better to have partners with which to work. With a return to strategic competition, this is a strength that only the United States and its allies enjoy. Extra value comes when those partners work together. Despite real constraints, the U.S. allies examined in this report are doing just that. The levels of cooperation differ, but they are cooperating to overcome security challenges and finding ways to overcome some of the constraints that limit that cooperation. Although the increased interest and interaction among the actors examined above is critical for their own security, having more partners active in each other's regions ultimately helps support the international order. At a time when there are calls for U.S. allies and partners to do more to support this order, this report shows that that is exactly what they are doing.

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Some of the United States' most powerful and trustworthy allies are its European partners and Japan. This report presents the results of a RAND Corporation study examining how Japan, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and three European states—the United Kingdom (UK), France, and Germany—are increasingly cooperating in the security domain in this age of growing strategic competition.

Seeking to build on extensive work done by European and Japanese scholars to assess and understand developments in these relationships, the author utilized official documents and publications and an extensive program of field research in Tokyo, London, Paris, Brussels, and Berlin that included 56 interviews with officials, armed forces personnel, and subject-matter experts.

The analysis focused on (1) defense and strategic dialogues, (2) defense exchanges, defense cooperation, and defense-related industrial cooperation, and (3) training and exercises. The results show that Japan–UK security ties are the most robust but lack an overarching strategy that pulls the separate lines of effort together into a coherent whole. Japan–France ties are significant and growing, and they fit well within the two countries' regional strategies, but the track record is less robust than that of Japan–UK ties. Japan's bilateral ties with Germany lack depth, but there is a growing convergence around strategic interests. Finally, Japan's ties with NATO lack regular dialogues and exchanges, but they have a growing record of cooperation in exercises and noncombat operations.

These discrete lines of effort matter, and closing recommendations offer ways they can further be fostered.

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