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Japan and Europe:

The EU, the UK, France, and Germany

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Introduction

Relations with the United States were of overwhelming importance in Japan's foreign relations at the start of the postwar period. Consequently, the relative weight of relations with Europe declined significantly compared to the prewar period. Circumstances changed due to Japan's rapid economic growth of the 1960s, its membership in the G7 beginning in 1975, and the full return and growing role of Japan in the international community as a major economic power and relations with Europe began to once again deepen and expand. However, the focus of attention during this period was the trade friction that characterized the relationship between Japan and Europe. As a result, the history of Japan-Europe relations was frequently understood to be one of trade friction.

This situation also began to change in the mid-1990s. While economic ties continued to deepen, there was now a growing interest in political relations as dialogue and cooperation moved forward in the area of foreign policy and security. These developments led to the emergence of new forms of Japan-Europe relations. In terms of Japan's relations with the European Union (EU), the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) both signed in July 2018 marked a critical turning point. In the meantime, Japan has been deepening its bilateral ties with such major European countries

as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. These newly developed relations go beyond economic ties and the security and defense dimensions have been gaining traction in recent years. This can be seen as the emergence of new Japan-Europe relations in the age of the Indo-Pacific.

This article reviews the extent to which Japan's relations with the EU (and its predecessor, the European Communities: EC) and the United Kingdom, France, and Germany developed while also identifying the place of Europe in Japan's foreign relations.

Past developments

(1) Transformation of Japan's relations with the EC and EU

The Allied Occupation of Japan after its defeat in the Second World War was essentially an American occupation, although British and other forces did have a presence in the occupation. Japan regained its independence through the San Francisco Peace Treaty that came into force in April 1952. At the same time, the Japan-US Security Treaty (the original Japan-US Security Pact) was concluded. Thus, Japan embarked on its postwar path under the shadow of the preponderant influence of the US. In all instances, the United States led the way in realizing Japan's subsequent return to the international community. As such, the Japan-US Alliance came to serve

as the foundation for Japan's foreign relations.

It was the Cold War that triggered a renaissance in Japan's relations with Europe. Within the overarching architecture of the Cold War, the United States, Western Europe, and Japan were brought together as the principal actors of the "free world." In light of this Cold War structure, Hayato Ikeda, the Japanese prime minister who served during the first half of the 1960s, advocated the theory of the "Three Pillars" comprising of the United States, Europe, and Japan. During the 1960s, Japan successfully joined the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and was also able to transition to normal trade relations through the lifting of restrictions provided under Article 35 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Needless to say, US support played a key role in these advances but the normalization of Japan's bilateral relations with the countries of Western Europe, as represented by the Japan-UK Treaty of Commerce, were also critical in facilitating these developments. Japan's relations with the countries of Western Europe were gradually restored as Japan returned to the international community after its defeat and joined the ranks of the advanced nations.

During the 1960s when Japan was in the midst of its phase of accelerated economic growth, no noteworthy advances were made in its economic relations with Western Europe. It was in

the mid-1970s that saw a rapid expansion of economic relations, which ignited trade friction. From that point on, the Japan-Europe agenda was monopolized by the subject of trade friction. Europe recorded large trade deficits with Japan and increasingly protectionist voices in Europe were clamoring for the restriction of imports from Japan. It was at about this time that an internal document of the EC Commission came to light mocking the Japanese as "workaholics living in rabbit hutches." In the eyes of Europe, Japan was increasingly viewed as a fearsome threat and as being both enigmatic and fundamentally different than the West—the so-called "revisionist" view.

It is true that Japan at this time retained numerous protectionist measures and that it was by no means fully open to the inflow of foreign goods and capital. Against the backdrop of continued economic development, a new understanding began to grow within Japan that deregulation and the liberalization of domestic markets would actually benefit the Japanese people. As this awareness spread, Japan itself underwent major changes during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Hague Declaration signed in July 1991 by Japan and the EC rectified the singular focus on trade friction, brought common values to the forefront and marked the first step taken by the two sides toward political dialogue and cooperation. It was Japan that took the initiative in promoting an agreement

but given the intense trade friction that persisted at this time, the negotiations proved to be bumpy and difficult. There was no straightforward way to reconcile a commitment to common values with the revisionist view which emphasizes that Japan is different, and the Japanese initiative for promoting political dialogue was easily dismissed as a ploy for deflecting attention from the intense friction that characterized Europe's trade with Japan.

Ironically, it was the collapse of Japan's bubble economy in the 1990s that put an end to Japan-Europe trade friction and Europe's revisionism about Japan. As the Japanese economy stagnated, Europe no longer had reason to be overly fearful of Japan. This rendered it much easier to speak of common values and to pursue stronger ties in the spheres of foreign policy and security. However, this did not directly lead to a strengthening of political and security relations. For a number of years to come, it was said of Japan-Europe relations that "the problem is that there are no problems."

However, after the mid-2000s, China provided the "problem" for Japan and Europe. Initially, this emerged as a major agenda item on the Japanese side. From the Japanese perspective, European awareness and attitudes toward China were simply naïve and this perception led to a buildup of dissatisfaction on the Japanese side.

The debate over lifting the EU arms

embargo on China that arose around 2005 was emblematic of this difference in perception. The EU ban that was introduced as part of the sanctions levied against China following the Tiananmen Square incident of June 1989 covered only lethal weapons and was no more than a non-binding political declaration. Hence, its effectiveness was questionable. However, it was argued that lifting the embargo could send the wrong message to China. Moreover, it was feared that the actual export of arms could affect East Asian security, including military balance in the Taiwan Strait. For these reasons, Japan (along with the United States) strongly opposed the lifting of the EU ban.

This problem revealed that the EU was more or less exclusively focused on economic matters when considering its China policies and, more broadly, its Asian policies in general, and that it was not taking into account the impact of its actions on matters affecting regional security. At this time, the EU was dealing with the arms embargo as a purely economic decision. The strong opposition that this approach invited from Japan and the United States served as an opportunity for the EU to start paying closer attention to the security environment in Asia.

However, this incident deeply implanted a negative impression on the Japanese side that "Europe is irresponsibly seeking to sell weapons to China" and "Europe does not understand Asia's

security challenges.” Unfortunately, these impressions had lasting effects. But not all was negative. On the positive side, the incident led to the 2005 launch of the Strategic Dialogue on East Asia’s Security Environment and resulted in substantive discussions between Japan and the EU on security issues in Asia, including problems related to China. These developments can be viewed as a byproduct of the disagreement on lifting the EU ban on arms exports to China.

(2) Japan’s relations with the UK, France, and Germany

The EC/EU naturally plays a central role in Japan-Europe relations, particularly in trade matters. But from the Japanese perspective, the importance of Japan’s bilateral relations with such major European countries as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany must not be overlooked.

In addition to historical and cultural interests, circumstances were such that bilateral ties between Japan and individual European countries could be more readily developed in such specific areas as the exchange of students and the presence of corporate expatriate communities. However, a related problem was that Japan was unable to keep pace with the expanding competences and significance of the EC/EU. Since multilateral institutions in Asia remained underdeveloped for many years, Japanese diplomats seemed to

feel more comfortable interacting with national capitals than with Brussels.

For a variety of reasons, Japan has almost always identified the United Kingdom as its closest European partner. First, the UK has been the most pro-free trade nation among the major Western European countries, and Japan has consistently looked to the UK as its most reliable partner in ensuring an “outward-looking Europe.”

In Japan’s effort to restore its relations with Western Europe during the 1960s, the Japan-UK Treaty of Commerce, concluded in 1962, proved to be a turning point. Moreover, it was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who encouraged Japan to undertake direct investments in the EC when trade friction between Japan and Europe had become particularly intense during the 1980s. Thus, Britain played a critically important role for Japan at a time when France had adopted a particularly strong protectionist position in the EC and West Germany had also maintained a cautious stance. In more recent years, when the European Commission and some EU member states remained lukewarm toward negotiating an economic partnership agreement (EPA) between Japan and the EU, it was the UK government under Prime Minister David Cameron that pushed past this reluctance and cleared the path to negotiations. It is therefore natural that Japan has considered the UK to be its most reliable partner in Europe.

The second reason is rooted in the fact that Britain is the closest European ally of the United States. Given the prime importance to Japan of the alliance with the US, this fact has always been a source of reassurance for Japan when preparing to engage in dialogue and cooperation with Europe in the areas of politics and security. Due to these circumstances, the United Kingdom has for many years been Japan's gateway to Europe (EU). It can be said that whenever a problem arose, Japan's long-held practice was to first talk to London.

A critical turning point in Japan's ties with the UK and the expansion of this relationship into the security domain was Prime Minister Cameron's visit to Japan in April 2012 and the release of the joint Japan-UK statement entitled "A Leading Strategic Partnership for Global Prosperity and Security." The joint statement set forth a new commitment to promoting security and defense cooperation with such shared values as freedom and democracy as the foundation. One of the most important points of the document was the reference to bilateral cooperation in defense equipment which was Japan's first commitment of the kind with any country other than the United States.

Compared to the status of Anglo-Japanese relations, Japan's bilateral ties with France and Germany generally remained low key for many years. In the area of trade, Japan was particularly concerned with France's protectionist

stance. After the November 1962 visit of Prime Minister Ikeda to Europe, it was reported that President Charles de Gaulle had ridiculed the Japanese premier by calling him a "transistor salesman." Although later revealed to be apocryphal, this story accurately reflects the mood that prevailed at the time in Japan-France relations.

A major agenda item emerged in Japan's relations with Germany after the 1990s. This pertained to reforming the United Nations Security Council and the expansion of its permanent membership to include Japan and Germany. A total of four countries aspiring to permanent membership, including India and Brazil, formed the Group of Four (G4), and Japan and Germany worked to strengthen their cooperation within this framework. However, as is well known, these efforts did not bear fruit. Japan and Germany have also been pursuing opportunities for cooperation in arms control and arms reduction, primarily in the area of nuclear weapons.

Since the mid-2000s, the principal reason for Japan's persistent skepticism toward Germany has been its relations with China. While China's accelerated economic growth has led to a rapid development of ties between China and the whole of Europe, Germany has been the driving force in this process. After taking office in 2005, Chancellor Angela Merkel visited China almost every year. All the while, German interest in Japan remained low. As a result, during this

period, the perception took root within Japan that “Germany is only interested in China” and “Germany is too soft on China.” These sentiments would have a lingering negative impact on the development of relations between Japan and Germany.

Current situation and challenges

(1) New stage in Japan-EU relations

Japan-EU relations, as well as Japan’s relations with Europe in general, including both economic and political dimensions, began to shift and make large strides around 2015 as a critical turning point. There were multiple factors that brought about this shift. The first relates to China. As mentioned in the preceding section, the issue of lifting the EU arms embargo on China and the honeymoon phase of the economic ties between the two sides stood as impediments in the development of relations between Japan and Europe. To indulge in a bit of oversimplification, these impediments were rapidly transformed into facilitating factors that promoted the development of relations between Japan and Europe. This transformation was triggered by a number of events and developments, including the expansion of China’s presence in the EU market, particularly its acquisition of European companies, which gave rise to growing European fears that its technologies

were being absorbed and appropriated by China. Also, China’s assertive stance in the South China Sea and its human rights record raised concerns and criticism in Europe. As EU views on China changed, the perception gaps that had long existed between Japan and the EU on China—referred to as the “China gap”—began to shrink.

The second factor has its roots in the start of the Donald Trump administration in the US in January 2017 and the tailwinds that it generated for promoting closer Japan-Europe cooperation. Under the banner of “America first,” the new administration appeared to turn its back on the rule-based international order, including the principles of free trade. As supporters of the existing order, Japan and Europe found themselves in a position where the need for mutual cooperation was dramatically enhanced. It was no coincidence that the Japan-EU EPA negotiations, which previously appeared to have run out of steam, suddenly reached an agreement in principle in July 2017, only six months after the birth of the Trump administration. As protectionism and unilateralism threatened to gain momentum under Trump, Japan and the EU found a new strategic imperative in resisting these trends by demonstrating the enduring values of free trade to the world.

The Japan-EU EPA was formally signed in July 2018 and came into force in February 2019. At the same time, the two sides concluded an SPA that established

a broad framework for mutual cooperation, including political and security cooperation. Initially, Japan was almost exclusively interested in the EPA, to the extent that it was understood that Japan had agreed to negotiate the SPA only as a quid pro quo for moving forward on the EPA. Ultimately, however, the SPA served as a powerful driving force for raising Japan-EU relations from a mere trade and economy relationship to one with far broader horizons that included problems related to basic values and the international order.

With the relative decline of American power and its traditional leadership in supporting the rule-based international order and the rise of China as a challenger to the status quo not sharing these values, the importance of Japan-Europe cooperation has increased and their EPA and SPA have gained a new strategic significance.

Against this backdrop, the Japanese side was beginning to change the meaning of Europe in its overall foreign relations. While the relationship with Europe had been seen as just one regional category in the world, Europe emerged as one of the main partners that would always remain on the central stage in Japan's foreign policy radar screen in dealing with major international policy matters related to the United States, China, and the wider international order. In short, Europe was "mainstreamed" in Japan's foreign relations. The process of Europe's mainstreaming was pushed

forward by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who remained in office between 2012 and 2020 to become the longest-serving premier in Japan's political history. Abe developed a close personal relationship with President Jean-Claude Juncker of the European Commission and the two were instrumental in advancing the development of Japan-EU relations.

A similar change was also taking place on the European side. As it became increasingly aware of the challenges posed by a rising China, Europe realized that these challenges could no longer be dismissed as the compartmentalized problems of a geographically-distant Asian region. Consequently, Europe began to accept and adopt the novel concept of the "Indo-Pacific." Abe had been advocating for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" since 2016 and had been calling on the EU and the individual European countries to get on board. As it searched for new directions in its Asian policies, the EU was beginning to find that it needed to formulate strategies for the broader Indo-Pacific region and the value of Japan as a like-minded partner increased as a result.

From around 2015 and 2016, the Japan-EU Summit and G7 Summit meetings began expressing concerns about the situation in the South China Sea and East China Sea. References have been made to the importance of the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait since 2021. It is notable that while the United States and Canada are members of

the G7, Japan, the European countries (Germany, France, UK, and Italy) as well as the EU account for the remainder of the membership. Thus the combined relative weight of Japan and Europe in the G7 is significant, making it an important framework where Japan and Europe meet.

In light of these developments, the EU announced the “EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific” in September 2021, which Tokyo welcomed. Whereas in the past, the EU’s Asia policy was heavily tilted toward China, the new EU strategy emphasized the importance of relations with such partner countries as Japan and Australia, as well as with the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This was understood to symbolize the rebalancing of the EU’s Asia policy. Additionally, the EU emphasized the connectivity between Asia and Europe and concluded a Connectivity Partnership with Japan in September 2019. This partnership aims to promote infrastructure investment in such areas as communication and transportation, and concrete projects are now beginning to emerge. How far these initiatives can be expanded remains a challenge for the future.

(2) Japan’s changing relations with the UK, France, and Germany

In comparing Japan’s relations with the major countries of Europe, the fact that the United Kingdom is seen as Japan’s closest partner in Europe remains unchanged.

Nevertheless, the referendum of June 23, 2016 that decided Britain’s exit from the EU brought on major challenges in relations between the two countries, because Brexit means that Britain can no longer function as Japan’s gateway to the EU. With this in mind, leading up to the referendum, Tokyo lent its support in various ways to proponents of remaining in the EU. Following the referendum, Japan endeavored to ensure close and smooth ties between the UK and the EU and predictability in the relationship. The Japanese government’s main aim in its involvement in EU-UK affairs was to safeguard the interests of Japanese companies operating in the UK.

The most immediate aim of the Japan-UK EPA (Japan-UK Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), signed in October 2020, was to mitigate the negative impact of Brexit. The agreement was also intended to move post-Brexit bilateral relations in a positive direction in overall terms. However, the EPA was largely a mere roll-over of the provisions contained in the Japan-EU EPA, which actually made it possible for the two countries to conclude it in such a

short time. However, the Japan-UK EPA managed to go beyond the scope of the Japan-EU EPA in a few new areas, such as e-commerce, consumer protection and gender issues. As a strategic framework, the Japan-UK EPA also provides a foundation for stepping up British involvement in the Indo-Pacific. Such matters as cyber defense and mobile communication have also become important agenda items in Japan-UK relations.

In February 2021, the United Kingdom applied for membership in Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and its accession protocol was signed in July 2023. Meanwhile, London dispatched a carrier strike group led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Navy's brand new aircraft carrier, to Japan and the Indo-Pacific region. The March 2021 edition of the Integrated Review, the British government document on foreign, security and defense policies, sets forth a "tilt to the Indo-Pacific," while the Integrated Review Refresh 2023 published in March 2023 is committed to making the country's involvement in the Indo-Pacific as a "permanent pillar" of Britain's international policy. In bilateral Japan-UK relations, a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) came into force in October 2023, which is expected to promote bilateral defense cooperation by simplifying procedures for the deployment of troops to the partner country for joint military exercises and other purposes.

However, concerns have been voiced that the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine may have a negative impact on the future of Britain's engagement in the Indo-Pacific. In view of the UK's assistance to Ukraine and its role in reinforcing the deterrence and defense posture against Russia, the asset and resource constraints of the British military bring into question whether the UK can maintain its involvement in the Indo-Pacific. Nevertheless, Britain's Indo-Pacific engagement including its response to the rise of China is in line with the medium- to long-term interests of the UK, and this should not be seen as a matter of choosing between Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Britain, therefore, can be expected to reach the conclusion that involvement in both spheres is necessary.

In addition, AUKUS, the tripartite framework involving the United States and the United Kingdom for assisting Australia in its acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, stands as a symbol of the medium- to long-term commitment of these countries to the security of the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, the launching of the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), a multinational initiative led by Japan, the UK, and Italy for the joint development of a next-generation fighter aircraft was announced in December 2022 with deployment scheduled for the mid-2030s. GCAP features multinational cooperation not only in development and manufacturing but also in maintenance and export to third

countries, spanning decades. For the UK, GCAP, together with AUKUS, constitute an important pillar of its Indo-Pacific engagement.

Despite the continuing importance of Japan-UK relations, particularly in security and defense, it is clear that the UK cannot continue to function as Japan's gateway to Europe. This reality has sent Japan in search of prospective new gateways. Naturally, in light of their relative weight in the EU, the top candidates would be Germany and France. While other possibilities can be explored, including Poland with its key role in Central and Eastern Europe, and Italy, which is a G7 member country, the natural course of action would be to begin by focusing on Germany and France. Simply put, Brexit has enhanced the importance of Germany and France in Japan's relations with Europe.

While Germany would be the first choice from an economic perspective, France has long been Japan's most important European partner after the UK particularly in foreign and security policy terms. With territories in the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean, France is an "Indo-Pacific power" that stations its troops in various parts of the region, constituting a foundation for the country's engagement in the Indo-Pacific. In May 2021, the French Navy's Mistral-class amphibious assault ship called on a Japanese port and joined Japanese and American forces to participate for the first time in a joint land-based exercise

in Kyushu. Although not large in scale, this was nonetheless a full-fledged exercise that included amphibious exercises. Additionally, the French military has already on several occasions dispatched its naval vessels and aircraft to participate in surveillance of North Korea's ship-to-ship cargo transfers activities with the aim of ensuring compliance with the UN Security Council's sanctions against North Korea. Interaction between Japan's Self-Defense Forces and the French military is growing rapidly through such exercises and operations. France was actually the first European country to formulate a strategy for the Indo-Pacific, which encouraged countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, as well as the EU, to follow suit.

With regard to Germany, it can be said that the revamping of China policy was closely linked to its assignment of greater importance to Japan. The release of Berlin's "Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific Region" in September 2021 marked a turning point in this regard. This document places cooperation with Japan and other partner countries, as well as with the ASEAN countries, at the forefront of German policy for the region. It should be noted that this document has a lot in common with the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific that was issued approximately a year later.

Building on these developments, in the fall of 2021, the German Navy deployed

its frigate *Bayern* to the Indo-Pacific region, conducting joint training with Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force and taking part in surveillance of North Korean ship-to-ship cargo transfer activities as a demonstration of Germany's increasing engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. In the summer of 2022, for the first time in its history, the German Air Force deployed six Typhoon fighter

jets accompanied by aerial refueling and transport aircraft to the Indo-Pacific region to participate in joint multinational exercises conducted in Australia. On its way home, the group made a stop in Japan. Given that Europe's military engagement in the Indo-Pacific region has long been led by the UK and France, the growing engagement of Germany represents a notable new development.

Japan's frameworks with the UK, France, and Germany

	United Kingdom	France	Germany
Information Security Agreement	◎ (signed July 2013, effective January 2014)	◎ (signed and effective October 2011)	◎ (signed and effective March 2021)
Defense Equipment Agreement	◎ (signed and effective July 2013)	◎ (signed March 2015, effective December 2016)	◎ (signed and effective July 2017)
ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Serving Agreement)	◎ (signed January 2017, effective August 2017)	◎ (signed July 2018, effective June 2019)	○ (signed January 2024)
RAA (Reciprocal Access Agreement)	◎ (signed January 2023, effective April 2023)	△ (agreed to start negotiations May 2024)	
Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (2+2)	◎ (started January 2015)	◎ (started January 2014)	○ (first meeting held online in April 2021/first Inter-Governmental Consultations March 2023)
EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement)	◎ (effective January 2021)	◎ (Japan-EU EPA)	◎ (Japan-EU EPA)

Source: Compiled by the author from Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and others.

In comparing Japan's bilateral relations with the United Kingdom, France and Germany, there are clear indications that some aspects of these three

relations are synchronized and interconnected. The above table lists the status of various agreements that are currently in effect between Japan and these three

European countries, such as information security agreements, agreements on defense equipment cooperation, and access and cross-servicing agreements (ACSA). In most instances, Japan first entered into these agreements with the United Kingdom, followed by similar agreements concluded with France and finally with Germany. A notable exception is the Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meetings (2+2) that were first launched with France. The United Kingdom and France exhibit a certain level of competition with regard to their engagement in the Indo-Pacific, including naval deployments. Germany has also joined the fray in terms of formulating an Indo-Pacific strategy, and these three major European countries have led the way in guiding the path taken by Europe (EU) as a whole. It is possible that, in certain cases, the UK, France and Germany will continue to keep an eye on each other's movements as they move forward in their broad policies toward Japan and the Indo-Pacific region.

Having already entered into agreements on information security and defense equipment cooperation, the focus of defense-related cooperation between Japan and Europe is now moving toward concluding more substantive ones, first in the form of ACSA, followed by RAA. It should be noted, however, that these agreements only provide a basic framework for cooperation and do not mean that further cooperation will be achieved automatically. Nevertheless, the very act of building these frameworks does

signal the intent of the participating countries to develop their relations over the long term.

Security and defense matters appear to account for a relatively large share in Japan's bilateral relations with France and Germany. This impression can be attributed to the fact that most trade and economic matters are addressed between Tokyo and Brussels, and that security and defense matters attract special attention because they represent a new area of concern that has been expanding at a rapid pace. Therefore, it would be incorrect to think that security and defense have suddenly come to dominate Japan-Europe relations. The truth of the matter is that trade and economic relations still represent the principal pillars of Japan-Europe relations and most likely will remain so in the future.

Conclusion

Since the mid-2010s Japan-Europe relations have undergone significant qualitative changes and the two sides are now in the process of developing true strategic partnerships. Furthermore, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine that began in February 2022, Japan-Europe, including Japan-EU and Japan-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cooperation has developed as a result of Japan's decisions to introduce severe sanctions against Russia and to support Ukraine.

Looking to the future, two critical questions beg to be answered. First, will the mainstreaming of Europe in Japan's foreign relations really take root? Second, as the war in Ukraine is prolonged, will Europe continue its engagement in the Indo-Pacific, a region of essential and indispensable importance to its own interests? As for Japan's relations with the EU and its bilateral ties with the UK, France, and Germany, a lot depends on whether effective cooperation can be re-established between the United Kingdom and the EU (including Germany and France), which will be in the EU's own interest as well.

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