

Japan, Europe and East Asian Regionalism¹

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Introduction

The global order is presently undergoing a process of multipolarization, owing to the rise of regional powers such as Russia, China, and India, and the growth of dynamic developing markets such as South Africa, Indonesia, and Brazil. In addition, regional power blocs have made distinct gains in importance. While the European Union is generally seen as the epitome of institutionalized regional integration, other areas in the world have been marked by enhanced “regionness” as well, through regional institution-building and the development of a multidimensional form of integration.² Regional integration in Asia, in particular, has progressed at a remarkably fast pace, resulting in widespread perceptions of “the rise of Asia” at the global level. It is clear that Asia’s growing economic and political weight has widespread repercussions for the environment, social systems, regional security, and global governance.

More than anything, Asia’s ascendancy has been marked by China’s regained centrality as a major regional power and as a key factor shaping a “new Asian order.” Showing impressive economic growth, the country overtook Japan in 2010 as the world’s number two economy, and could surpass the United States in terms of size of GDP within the next twenty to thirty years. China’s increasingly assertive stance in regional affairs and rapidly escalating military spending focus global attention on regional hotspots such as the East China Sea and South China Sea. It also turns the spotlight on China’s neighbor, Japan. Views of that country as an economic powerhouse and references to “Japan as Number One,” once so prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, now seem like a distant memory. During the past decade, Japan has made efforts to redefine its place in East Asia, revive its economy, and take a stronger stance in regional security. Caught between an economic superpower (China), a security superpower

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² This form of regional integration is sometimes referred to as “new regionalism.” A former generation of regionalism was mainly trade-oriented and exemplified by the European Economic Community. At the global level, it gave rise to group-to-group dialogues, often EU-led and focusing on economic cooperation, of which the bilateral links between the EC and ASEAN that started in 1978 is a prime example. The newer type of regionalism is more complex, comprehensive, and political than previously, and includes regions that become more pro-active, engage in inter-regional arrangements, and aim to shape global governance (Söderbaum and van Langenhove 2005, pp. 255–57).

(the United States), and a diplomatic superpower (ASEAN),³ Japan's actions are compounded by its historical legacy and the region's lingering sensitivities towards the country's pre-war expansionist policies and efforts to establish the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere. Regardless, it is the increasingly strong presence of China in particular that can explain Japan's more visible presence in the East Asian regional project.

To a certain extent, Europe (defined as the European Union, or EU) faces a similar predicament to Japan. In Europe, the perception is widespread that the global center of gravity has been shifting away, with its own power gradually eroding. The global financial crisis and awareness of an "Asian Century" has without doubt strongly affected Europe's self-confidence, perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Germany, as well as France, turned towards China in search of ways to alleviate the crisis (see Gaens et al. 2012). Second, Europe, like Japan, has turned increasingly inward in order to overcome internal economic and political challenges. The recent global financial crisis of 2007–2008 has led to introspection and numerous allusions to the EU's decline. A third similarity between Europe and Japan is the necessity for a broader outlook in view of the palpable power shift, and a need to engage in regional cooperation and integration. For Europe, the only way out of the Eurozone crisis seems to be increased political integration and a further allocation of powers to the supranational level. For Japan, it is vital to promote regional integration in Asia in order to revitalize its economy and to address security issues, including territorial disputes. Fourth, Japan also increasingly resembles Europe in profiling itself as a "global civilian power." Both players emphasize civilian and "soft" strengths, rather than military means, in order to exert influence, shape the global agenda, or even stake claims for leadership in the international community.

In view of these similarities, do Europe and the EU play a role in Japan's increasingly active attempts to steer Asian regionalism? If "the rise of China" has driven forward Japan's policy for East Asia, and if the security alliance with the United States is still the "cornerstone of Japanese diplomacy and security," how does Japan view Europe as a partner, an influence, a source of ideas, or a reference point for the development of Japanese political philosophies? After outlining recent developments in East Asia regionalism and sketching Japan's changing stance towards regional integration, this paper explores how Japan has looked upon Europe from a twofold angle. It examines, first, how Japan has positioned itself in interregional encounters with the EU in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) since 1996, and second, which role Japan has attributed to the EU and Europe in its own recent proposals for East Asian regional diplomacy and in its views on regional security.

³ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, albeit weakly institutionalized, is seen by many as the region's "leader by default," as it is at the core of most regional free trade agreements, and serves as a broker in the regional order through ASEAN-run multilateral structures, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). The term "diplomatic superpower" was introduced by Mahbubani (2009, p. 310).

The Rise of Asia and Increased Regionalism

First, it may be useful to examine in slightly more detail the so-called rise of Asia and the progress of regionalism. The enhanced weight of a broadly defined Asian region seems beyond doubt, when looking at economy and trade, institutionalization, and ongoing processes of “Asianization.” From the perspective of trade and economy, one of the most conspicuous developments has been the sharp increase in intra-Asian trade. Merchandise trade among Asian countries has grown from around 20% in 1960 to over 50% in 2011 (WTO 2013). The region has furthermore become the focal point of trade-liberalizing measures, leading to a “noodle bowl” of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). Asian countries were party to half of all Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) signed in the last ten years (WTO 2011), and in East Asia alone, the number of FTAs soared from just three in 2000 to around fifty in 2011 (Kawai and Wignaraja 2011). Moreover, it is telling that the global financial crisis has seemingly had a milder effect on East Asia (Pollet-Fort and Yeo Lay Hwee 2012: 4). European exports to Asia, for example, were affected much less than the average drop in the EU’s global exports, indicating that the purchasing power of Asian countries remained relatively stable.⁴

Second, Asia’s growing “regionness” can also be witnessed in the proliferation of regional institutions. A remarkable shift from a focus on confidence building during the 1990s to an action-oriented, multilayered network of regional institutions has taken place. After the Asian Financial Crisis (1997–98) heightened the awareness of the need for cross-regional cooperation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) established a summit meeting with the three Northeast Asian countries in 1997, marking the beginning of the ASEAN+3 (APT) process. In 2005, the APT became the core of the East Asia Summit (EAS), further including Australia, New Zealand, and India (ASEAN+6), and since 2011, also Russia and the United States (ASEAN+8). A recent addition since 2008 is the Trilateral Cooperation between Japan, China, and South Korea, which has shown that economic cooperation and progress towards an FTA can coexist with strained diplomatic relations among the three countries.

Third, in political/diplomatic terms, a process of “Asianization” is evident. It is clear that, from the vantage point of identity, no single definition of “Asia,” or no overarching Asian consciousness, exists. Pekka Korhonen (2012) has recently argued that at present, Asia is no longer a geographical concept, but rather “a political commonplace, used as a strong and positively loaded linguistic asset in political rhetoric in the Asian Pacific area for various kinds of regional integrative purposes.” Nevertheless, increased ambition to be “part of the club” has led to widening definitions of the Asian/East-Asian/Asia-Pacific region. For instance, China’s rise has triggered U.S. aspirations to reassert the country’s influence in the Asia-Pacific. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s article in *Foreign Policy* (Clinton 2011), heralding “America’s

⁴ Both the EU’s overall exports and imports fell by over 14% in 2009 (WTO 2011), but exports to Asia only decreased by 5%. Interestingly, while trade with Asia decreased in absolute terms in 2009, the region’s relative importance grew, indicating that trade with other regions in the world has been affected much more.

Pacific Century,” for example, clearly stated Washington’s ambitions to form a counterweight to China, and to take on a leading role in a region “eager for US leadership and business.” Russia, increasingly focused on the Far East, seeks recognition as an East Asian power, while India is also progressively involved in the East Asian regional architecture. India’s “turn to the East” has intensified economic integration and strengthened its image as a great power, even as a possible counterweight to China (Wagner 2006: 56–57). ASEAN is at the core of most regional free trade agreements, and serves as a broker in the regional order. Australia is seeking to balance its close alliance with East Asia, while safeguarding the role of the United States as security provider.

Japan and East Asian Regionalism

These developments, then, bring Japan’s role as a regional actor to the fore. In the post-war era and throughout the Cold War, Japan’s position in East Asia has been guided by the Yoshida doctrine, according to which Japan focused on trade and economic development, while remaining under the U.S. security umbrella. The politically and diplomatically low-key profile remained at the heart of the Fukuda doctrine of the late-1970s, emphasizing Japan’s pacifist and non-interventionist stance in the region, while aiming to improve Tokyo’s relations with Southeast Asia through economic aid.

Further, after the Cold War, Japan retained a low-key profile and an ambivalent, ambiguous, or hesitant stance towards East Asian integration. As Blechinger (2000) has argued, Japan displayed “deliberate ambivalence” towards the Malaysian proposal to promote East Asian regionalism in the form of an East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC). On the surface (as its “façade” or *tatema*), the Japanese attitude opposed the EAEC in order to avoid straining its relations with the United States, whereas on a less obvious level (of “true feelings” or *honne*), the Japanese government supported the creation of a regional consultative grouping as a supplement to the APEC process. Moreover, Japan has often been seen as being more Western than Asian, and as performing a delicate balancing act between dynamic economic relations with Asian countries on the one hand, and a close adherence to the security alliance with the United States.

Japan’s postwar tendency to stay clear of hard power politics, and instead take a passive, non-confrontational, and minimalist stance continued to a large extent after the end of the Cold War (Kamiya 2000: 248). However, especially since the start of the twenty-first century, Japan has taken on a much more active role in East Asian diplomacy and political integration, driven by a strongly emerging China, as mentioned earlier. Sino-Japanese relations have, since the late-1990s, often been described as “cold political relations, hot economic relations” (*seirei keinetsu*), that is, competitive and confrontational political relations standing in marked contrast to close and mutually beneficial economic relations. The main reason for strained diplomatic relations

is China's military build-up⁵ and the country's increasingly assertive stance in the South China Sea and, more importantly for Japan, the East China Sea, in particular the Senkaku (Diaoyutai) islands. During the past five to six years, the cold diplomacy had a limited negative effect on economic relations. Total trade with China in 2010 still increased by 30% to 301.9 billion USD compared to the previous year, making China Japan's top trade partner, while the companies entering the Chinese market decreased by almost 14%.⁶ Nevertheless, in 2012, China still accounted for approximately 18% of all of Japan's imports and exports.

At the diplomatic level however, Japan has actively promoted regionalism by first engaging China and later aiming to dilute its influence. The ASEAN+3 (APT) serves as an example. The APT was indirectly a Japanese initiative, based on a proposal in January 1997 for an ASEAN-Japan summit, which ASEAN thereafter broadened to include South Korea and China (Hughes 2009: 846). Japan thereafter used the APT to promote cooperation in the field of currency and financial affairs (Shiraishi and Sy Hau 2009: 37). The New Miyazawa Initiative of 1998, for example, included a proposal for the establishment of an Asian Monetary Fund. While the proposal was rejected, it did result in the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) of 2000, consisting of strengthened bilateral currency swaps between the ASEAN countries and China, Japan, and South Korea. However, after China openly voiced support for the APT to develop into a basis for a thirteen-country FTA in 2000, Japan, fearing China's dominance, proposed another forum for diplomatic regionalism. Supported by Singapore and Indonesia, Japan's proposal for a comprehensively-defined East Asian community prevailed, resulting in the first East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2005 (Goh 2011: 898).

Europe as an Interregional Partner

Against this background, what role, if any, has Europe played in Japan's shifting Asia policy? The European Union is still the world's largest economy and a major economic player in East Asia, thanks to the strong bilateral trade relations between EU member states and Asian countries. An FTA with South Korea materialized in 2010, while free-trade negotiations with India and Japan are underway. The total volume of EU trade has doubled compared to ten years ago, and the relative importance of the East Asian region has increased to 28%. However, the EU's importance for East Asia has declined (DG Trade 2005, 2007, 2012) and may continue to do so, as intra-Asian trade and integration in the region progresses further. In political terms, the EU has been largely absent from Asia, mainly for two reasons. First, although since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 collective representation has appeared more in

⁵ Chinese military spending recorded a yearly double-digit growth between 1989 and 2013, with the exception of 2010.

⁶ Figures are provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, based on the China Trade and Foreign Economic Statistical Yearbook 2010.

the foreground, the EU does not have a single voice. Member states are reluctant to further pool their sovereignty and the supposedly more unified EU foreign policy has had trouble maintaining a coherent policy stance. Second, the EU has failed to live up to its ambition to become a “normative power” (Manners 2002: 239–42) in Asia, and promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The EU can rightly be criticized for being pragmatic and inconsistent, and for adjusting its insistence on human rights, for example, according to the relative economic power of its counterpart.

In spite of this minor role as a political player, the EU cooperates with Asian countries organized as a regional grouping in a wide range of fields, including diplomacy, trade, and culture. The main forum for this comprehensive cooperation is the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), a summit-level, yet informal, dialogue forum created in 1996 with a view to advancing interregional relations between Europe and Asia. ASEM was a Singaporean initiative, but the renewed focus on the Asian region by leading EU member states, and the publication of the European Commission’s Asia Strategy in 1994, were equally important driving forces. Since 1996, biennial ASEM summits have taken place alternately in Asia and in Europe. Asian-organized summits took place in Bangkok (1996), Seoul (2000), Hanoi (2004), Beijing (2008), and Vientiane (2012), while the U.K. (1998), Denmark (2002), Finland (2006), and Belgium (2010) organized the summits and peripheral meetings during their six-month rotating Presidency of the European Council. The first summit had twenty-six participants, namely fifteen EU member states plus the European Commission and seven-member ASEAN, in addition to China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. Over the years, ASEM has evolved substantially in terms of membership, currently consisting of fifty-one partners.⁷

Japan has used the meetings with “Europe” in the ASEM framework for a threefold purpose: to promote its economic interests; to draw competing Asian states closer into multilateral cooperation; and to place its stamp on the institutional development of interregionalism to suit its own vision of “inclusive regionalism.” First, Japan’s position in ASEM has been marked by a drive to promote its material interests. From the beginning, ASEM offered Japan the opportunity to promote the country’s direct bilateral economic interests with Europe, while at the same time addressing issues on trade and economy with its Asian partners. The first summit yielded several highly promising results, including a Senior Officials’ Meeting on Trade and Investment (SOMTI), a Finance Ministers’ Meeting (FinMM), and an Economic Ministers’ Meeting (EMM). These led to the concrete realization of an Investment Promotion Action Plan (IPAP), a Trade Facilitation Action Plan (TFAP), and an Asia-Europe Business Forum (AEBF). Japan was actively involved in these. Tokyo organized the first meeting of

⁷ Ten new EU member states joined in 2004, while the Asian group enlarged to include Cambodia, Laos, and Burma/Myanmar. India, Pakistan, Mongolia, and the ASEAN Secretariat entered the partnership in 2006, after the EU had further come to include Romania and Bulgaria. The total reached forty-eight after Russia, Australia, and New Zealand joined the gathering in 2010. Bangladesh was added to the Asian side in 2012, while non-EU states Norway and Switzerland joined the European grouping. Croatia will likely become the fifty-second member in 2014.

ASEM Economic Ministers in 1996, and acted as facilitator for the working group on custom procedures aimed at promoting simplification, harmonization, and transparency. Japan has furthermore organized and co-sponsored seminars on government procurement and IT, digital opportunity, multilateral and regional economic relations, and Public Private Partnership.⁸ After the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005, Japan-sponsored events focused on energy efficiency, adaptation to climate change, and community-level actions for the global environmental agenda.

Second, Japan has pursued its interests in the political and security sphere, especially regarding its relations with China and Russia. In retrospect, interregional meetings with the EU have served as a venue for “socializing China” and integrating the country into the regional order. While ASEM is a good example of China’s successful integration in regional institutions (cf. Gaens 2009), it has also served as a barometer to measure the strains in Sino-Japanese relations. Within ASEM, Japan has acknowledged China’s re-emergence as a global power, but issues such as high school history textbooks, Yasukuni Shrine visits, and the territorial dispute surrounding the Senkaku islands, continue to strain relations. At the very least, ASEM provides a venue for Japan to gather support for its regional policies, including through “proxy diplomacy,” by getting the EU to voice proposals espoused by Japan (Hook et al. 2012: 274).

A similar strategy to draw competing states within the diplomatic order in order to promote their compliance with international rules applies to Japan’s strategy to “Asianize Russia.” Japan’s support for Russia’s participation in ASEM, which materialized in 2010, can be seen as an example of efforts to align Russia with institutions of global governance. In the words of Ogoura (2008: 118), Japan’s earlier endorsement of the Russian candidacy for participation in APEC and the G8 aimed at “giving Russia international responsibility and drawing it into Asia and into the global management of international issues, in the hope that this would prompt Russia to resolve bilateral issues in line with international rules.” Here, in particular, the conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan⁹ and the territorial dispute surrounding the Northern Territories¹⁰ are salient underlying issues.

Third, Japan has played an important role in steering ASEM’s institutional development. As region-specific preparations took place ahead of ASEM summits, they promoted cooperation and dialogue with Japan’s regional neighbors. Julie Gilson (1999: 742) has argued that Japan has fully played the Asian card at ASEM, promoting intra-Asian relations without direct

⁸ Intergovernmental initiatives and state-to-state collaborative projects are at the core of ASEM, and all are self-sponsored by member states. They revolve around “issue-based leadership” as a guiding instrument. ASEM partner countries form leading “shepherd” groups, which drive a number of related initiatives in a particular area, based on interest, expertise, and willingness to financially support the projects.

⁹ See, for example, former Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo’s speech on the occasion of the 14th International Conference on the Future of Asia, May 22, 2008 (“When the Pacific Ocean becomes an ‘Inland Sea’: Five Pledges to a Future Asia that ‘Acts Together’”).

¹⁰ See, for example, former Prime Minister Asō Tarō’s speech on the occasion of the 15th International Conference on the Future of Asia, May 21, 2009 (“Overcoming the Economic Crisis to Rekindle a Rapidly Developing Asia”).

involvement of the United States. ASEM meetings have allowed Japan to meet Asian neighbors bilaterally and in a regional setting.¹¹ Japan has without doubt placed its stamp on the shaping of the Asian regional grouping. Japan lobbied for the forum's enlargement in order to balance China's rise. Ever since former Prime Minister Koizumi proposed an East Asian Community in Singapore in 2002, Japan has been a strong supporter of "inclusive integration" in the form of an expanded East Asian Community, with the inclusion of Australia, New Zealand, India, and Russia, as an effective balance against China's potential domination. In a 2002 speech, Koizumi noted that ASEAN, Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand needed to be core members. Furthermore, the community was ideally based on practical cooperation with those outside the region—primarily, the United States. China criticized this as an attempt to dilute ongoing processes of integration (Bowden 2005). Within ASEM, Japan successfully supported the gradual development of an inclusive Asian grouping in order to keep the EU member states involved as part of a Eurasian framework, rather than allowing ASEM to develop into a region-to-region or bloc-to-bloc construction. Japan was also the prime mover behind the initiative to establish an ASEM Virtual Secretariat (AVS), endorsed by the Seventh Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2005 in Kyoto. For Japan, the AVS averted the potential construction of an Asian Secretariat, which could have changed ASEM into an overly exclusive region-to-region construction. At the same time, it satisfied the proponents of gradual institutionalization, while keeping open the option to develop ASEM into "an organization with greater geopolitical perspective" (Togo 2004).

In sum, interaction with the EU and its member states within the interregional Asia-Europe Meeting has allowed Japan to promote its material (economic) interests. At the same time, the meetings served political goals by engaging upcoming regional powers, including China, in multilateral cooperation. As such, ASEM had intra-regional significance, contributing to strengthening cooperation within East Asia. ASEM also offered Japan the chance to lobby for European support for its policy stance. Finally, Japan has been successful in steering the forum's set-up in line with Tokyo's regionalist views, molding a broad and inclusive Asian regional grouping.

"Europe" in Recent Japanese Proposals for East Asian Regionalism

In addition to cooperating in an interregional context, what role has Europe played in Japan's vision for regional community building? Two recent and entirely discrepant visions have made significant reference to Europe, namely Abe Shinzō and Asō Tarō's "value-based diplomacy" and Hatoyama Yukio's "fraternity-based East Asian community."

¹¹ This has been conducive to the formation of the ASEAN+3 in 1997.

Values-based diplomacy

Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō was the first to suggest a “community that acts together and advances together” in 2002, rooted in relations between Japan and ASEAN, but also in security relation with the United States. When that community took its first cautious steps in 2005, in the form of the East Asia Summit, there were no doubts that Japan had cast itself in a steering role within a broader defined Asian community. Asō Tarō, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Koizumi cabinet, described the East Asia Summit in 2005 as a “Council of Optimists.” In his view, Japan has been the world’s leading optimist for many years in the post-war era, and should now take on the role of “thought leader” (*sōto rīdā*) for Asia: “(A) thought leader is one who through fate is forced to face up against some sort of very difficult issue earlier than others. Moreover, because the issue is so challenging, it is difficult to solve. But as the person struggles to somehow resolve the issue, he/she becomes something for others to emulate.” In other words, Asia should recognize Japan as a “practical forerunner” (*jissenteki senkusha*) that, for its innovative ideas and expertise, can function as a model for Asia to emulate.

When these references to potential Japanese leadership based on soft power claims failed to make an impression, new Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, by way of the same Foreign Minister Asō, launched a “values-oriented diplomacy” in November 2006, appealing to values and norms that included democracy, freedom, human rights, rule of law, and market economy as the basis for foreign policy. The proposal aimed to strengthen cooperation with other like-minded countries in order to help establish “the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” (*jiyū to han'ei no ko*) in Eurasia. According to Asō, the Arc “would start from Northern Europe and traverse the Baltic states, Central and South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, then cross Southeast Asia finally to reach Northeast Asia” (MOFA 2007: 2). The core goal of this concept was to strengthen cooperation and links with like-minded partners, such as the United States, and Australia in the East, India in South Asia, and EU and NATO in the West. The proposal refrains from referring to Japanese leadership in a comprehensively defined East Asian community, but does argue that Japan can be seen as “one of the true veteran players out there on the field” when it comes to honoring universal values. Rather than a “practical forerunner,” Japan profiled itself as an “escort runner,” supporting countries along the Arc in their democratization processes. Northern Europe was singled out as a leading example in the fields of development assistance and peacekeeping, and the proposal included the suggested creation of a “Northern Europe Plus Japan” forum, modeled on the “Visegrad Four and Japan” (V4+1) dialogue forum (including Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia).

The Asō-Abe proposal was short-lived, as the latter had to resign as Prime Minister in September 2006, and the cabinet formed by his successor Fukuda Yasuo did not pursue the concept. The proposal was criticized as being a less than candid effort to contain China’s growing military power and “encircle” the country (Hosoya 2011: 17; Hughes 2009: 854). India, for example, gave the proposal a lukewarm reception, in order to avoid straining relations

with China. Alternately, Tokyo's proposition has been interpreted as an attempt to get Russia back to the negotiating table over its territorial dispute with Japan, by appealing that Japan (and its ally, the United States) would increase diplomatic capital in Eastern Europe and in former Soviet countries (Taniguchi 2010: 2). Nevertheless, the underlying goals of the proposal, namely, to "brand" Japan as a democratic nation and as a reliable partner for the United States and to widen Tokyo's strategic position by reaching out to other like-minded democratic countries such as India, Australia, and Europe (Taniguchi 2010:1), made a comeback late in 2012 after the reemergence of Abe Shinzō as Prime Minister.

On December 27, 2012, Abe laid out his proposal for Asia's "Democratic Security Diamond." His strategy to form a diamond-shaped security alliance between Japan and Australia, India, and the United States was explicitly linked to China's assertive behavior in both the East and South China Seas and the threat this posed to maritime security. Interestingly, he reached out to European states Britain and France to participate in Asian security. He furthermore expressed Japan's ambition to join the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) between the U.K., Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Closer strategic ties with Britain materialized in practice in July 2013, with a Defense Equipment Cooperation Framework and an Information Security Agreement between Japan and the U.K. Compared to his previous term in office, "Abe 2.0" seems to place a similar emphasis on cooperation with partners that share "democratic values," but the focus now lies more on bilateral cooperation with individual European countries that can play a role in hard security. In addition, stronger Japanese cooperation with NATO, including its European members, can also be seen as an outcome of Japan's search for a partnership with global players who share Japan's perceptions and approaches (see Paul 2013).

"Fraternity" (*yūai*)

This strategic reach-out to "like-minded" European countries in order to complement the Japan-US security alliance has thus marked Japan's Asia strategy since 2006. Further, Hatoyama Yukio's 2009 ground breaking proposal for the creation of an East Asian Community, wedged between the 2006 "Arc" and the 2012 "Democratic Diamond," was rooted in synergies with the West. However, the proposal, launched after the victory by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the general elections of August 2009, and the subsequent government under Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio, was entirely different in underlying ideas and the role given to Europe. It constituted a remarkable attempt to integrate European regionalist ideas into Japan's "grand scheme" for East Asia. Hatoyama published the proposal in the monthly journal *Voice* just before the DPJ's landslide election victory over the LDP.¹² Hatoyama found his inspiration in the EU's experience with reconciliation and cooperation in Europe, and was in

¹² This was followed by an abridged op-ed piece in *The New York Times* (27 August 2009).

particular influenced by the ideas of Count Richard Nikolaus Eijiro von Coudenhove-Kalergi.¹³ Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1972) was born in Tokyo; he was the son of an Austrian diplomat and Aoyama Mitsuko, the daughter of a wealthy merchant and antiques dealer in Azabu. Coudenhove-Kalergi was the first to propose a Pan-European union in 1922, convinced that the only way to overcome Europe’s post-war problems and avoid a new war was cooperation along the Germany-France axis and a political union in Europe.

Hatoyama based his policy specifically on Coudenhove-Kalergi’s concept of “fraternity” (*yūai*), which was defined as independence and co-existence linked to a community-spirit, and rooted in respect for human dignity. For Coudenhove-Kalergi, freedom and equality, two core ideals of the French Revolution, can lead to excesses in the form of left-wing or right-wing totalitarianism (i.e., communism or national socialism). Accordingly, freedom and equality need to be balanced by fraternity. Hatoyama aimed to apply this reasoning to contemporary Japanese politics, including its domestic and external dimensions. First, Hatoyama criticized U.S.-led globalization as having resulted in market fundamentalism. He called for fraternity as a guiding principle that could moderate the excesses of the capitalist system. For him, “fraternity” was the banner under which to expand Japan’s social safety net, address wealth disparities, promote the public (non-profit) sector, and protect local communities and traditional economic activities. A vital tool to achieve these goals was another EU-derived concept, namely subsidiarity, or the idea that matters should be dealt with at the lowest possible practical level. Localization and decentralization were therefore key concepts of his domestic policy.

Second, he alluded to the end of U.S.-led globalism and the start of an era of multipolarity. Seeing East Asia as Japan’s “basic sphere of being,” he espoused EU-style integration in order to create an East Asian community based on rapprochement between Japan and China. Fraternity here was to function as a tool to promote trust and overcome nationalism through an East Asian Community. For Hatoyama, regional integration, including a possible future common Asian currency, could defuse territorial disputes and address historical and cultural conflicts, just as it has done in Europe. Hatoyama envisioned Japan taking on a proactive role in this project, as a bridge between the countries of Asia. Similar to the European community deriving from a common market for coal and steel production, the East Asian community would start from fields in which cooperation was most viable, such as FTAs, finance, currency, energy, environment, and disaster relief.¹⁴

Hatoyama’s proposal ended in failure. Domestically, his proposals met with sharp criticism for being lofty and overly idealistic. It was seen, in the words of Inoguchi (2012: 240), as “a grandiose and extremely vague idea.” More importantly, his proposal met with a highly critical response in the United States. His allusions to the decline of U.S. power, especially at a time

¹³ Hatoyama hereby followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Hatoyama Ichirō, prime minister between 1954 and 1956, who translated one of Coudenhove-Kalergi’s books into Japanese and adopted Coudenhove’s idea of fraternity as his main political slogan.

¹⁴ Address delivered at the 64th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, September 24, 2009.

when the United States was launching its re-engagement to East Asia through the so-called pivot, and his implication that the United States would be left out of his envisaged East Asian Community, did not go down well at all in Washington. Eventually, Hatoyama was forced to resign, after failing to achieve his election campaign promise, which was symbolic of an equal alliance with the United States, to move the U.S. Air Force base at Futenma out of Okinawa, or even out of Japan. In spite of this, his proposal was a revolutionary attempt to renegotiate Japan's identity as a country situated in Asia but closely tied for its security to the United States. Importantly, it aimed to apply lessons from European integration to promote prosperity and stability in East Asia, thereby offering an interesting case of the adaptation of political ideas between Japan and Europe.

Conclusion

Against the background of increasing global multipolarization and regional power shifts, the EU and Japan show certain similarities in their predicament. Describing themselves as “global partners sharing common values,” the EU and Japan are currently in the process of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement. Undeniably, the EU remains first and foremost an economic power, and in Asia, it is most often regarded as an important partner for business and trade. In theory, however, the EU could play a stronger role in terms of East Asian security and diplomacy. For countries such as Japan, for example, the EU could be a useful political and foreign policy partner, offering expertise in maritime security, or as an operational partner collaborating in post-conflict nation-building and peace-keeping missions (Tsuruoka 2011: 37–42).

This paper has examined two roles played by the EU from the perspective of Japan, namely, as a dialogue partner in region-to-region cooperation, and as a reference point in Japan's foreign policy and in proposals to advance East Asian regionalism. Within the interregional Asia-Europe Meeting, Japan originally placed prime focus on the promotion of economic interests, but Tokyo has also used meetings with the EU to engage China in multilateral and intra-regional cooperation, or to rally for European policy support, including for the formulation of the Asian regional grouping in line with Japan's inclusive vision.

Furthermore, Europe and the EU have been given varying roles in Japanese foreign policy. First, in the Abe-Asō “values-based diplomacy” dating back to 2006, Europe was seen partly as a model and cooperation partner from which Japan could learn, and partly as the locus of countries sharing similar (universal) values with which Japan could form a Eurasian alliance, as part of a balancing strategy against rising regional powers such as China and Russia. These alliance-creating attempts continue in a more recent version of the “values-based diplomacy” after the return of Abe Shinzō as prime minister, inviting individual EU members France and Britain to take on a stronger military defense role in East Asia. On the other hand, Hatoyama Yukio's 2009 proposal for an East Asian Community based on “fraternity” aimed to promote

rapprochement between Japan and China. It portrayed Japan as a member of East Asia, rather than as a partner in a Eurasian alliance that relied firmly on the United States to safeguard its security. Hatoyama's failure to explain the philosophical foundations of his domestic policy more clearly and to more explicitly link theory with practice, led to increasing criticism. More importantly, his proposal's alleged anti-Americanism doomed it to failure. Nevertheless, the fact that it looked to Europe as a possible model for integration and community building in East Asia reveals that the EU's experience can be relevant for other regions as well.

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