

# EU-Japan Security Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities



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## Theory and Practice of Human Security concerns in EU-Japan relations: the EU perspective

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### Abstract

*The European Union, its member states and Japan differ somewhat in their approaches to human security. Most European states tend to emphasize 'freedom from fear'. Some prefer 'freedom to take action on one's own behalf' while Japan stresses 'freedom from want'. Realists posit that these differences arise from power (a-)symmetries between the United States and its partners and/or the relative positioning of the EU and Japan vis-à-vis other powers. Liberals tend to emphasize ideational or commercial preferences in respective aid policies when explaining the commonalities and divergence between the two. Social constructivists, in turn, argue that pacifist and humanitarian self-identifications are crucial when accounting for the prominent role of Japan, the EU, its member states in this field. Drawing on this work, this paper first describes and explains the emergence of the EU institutions' positioning on the issue. It then extends this research to EU member states. A brief comparative analysis of trends of convergence and divergence with the Japanese position is conducted. It concludes by finding significant potential for a reinvigorated human security policy by EU institutions with support from some and tolerance from most of its member states.*

**Keywords:** European Union, EU member states, Japan, Human Security

### Introduction

The EU and Japan have maintained a multilayered relationship over more than four decades, reflecting the changes in the overall external policies of both partners. During the 1970s and 1980s, the relationship focused on economic and trade issues, recognizing the powerful reemergence of their economies and subsequent regulatory conflicts. In the 1990s, the relationship broadened considerably, driven by the political maturation of the European Union and Japan in the aftermath of the Cold War. As a consequence, the partners signed the 'Hague Declaration' in 1991, one of the landmark agreements in their relationship. Since the 2000s, these relations have taken a decisive global turn, as based on the common 'Action Plan 2001'. Like different generations in a family, these periods have many similarities, such as the important role of United States for their evolution, but they also carry

some important differences, such as the variation in the institutional evolution of the EU as an international actor (Bridges 1993; Abe 1999; Frattolillo 2013).

In the first stage, the relationship focused on bilateral state-to-state interactions, with the Japanese government only cautiously engaging with the European Commission in trade and economic affairs; during this period, human rights were never irrelevant – as the early conflicts regarding Japan's death penalty attest – but it was always a distant goal to be realized in the conflict with communism. The second phase was defined by the end of the Cold War. The key shift for both Japan and the EU, was the change from relying primarily on the United States to acting more independently. This change was signified in the strategic persona of the EU and the more robust Japanese support for international peace-building, e.g. in the Western Balkan region. During the second phase, human rights concerns took a much more prominent role as both partners emphasized the importance of supporting democratic institutions, citizen rights and economic reform in their respective development, foreign and security policies (Hachiya 2008; Keck et al. 2013).<sup>1</sup>

The third period arose from successes and failures of the second phase: in this phase, human rights concerns manifested themselves on the global agenda of both Japan and the EU, after humanitarian and other military interventions – such as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya – had failed to consolidate statehood and livelihood in those areas. In turn, failing states and a growing number of transnational and global challenges – such as climate change, transnational crimes, migration and global public health concerns – have prompted the EU, its member states and Japan as well as various other state and non-state actors to promote 'human security' as a broad security concept for the twenty-first century (Hosoya 2012; Mykal 2011). The concept of human security, which was first mentioned in the UN Development Programme Report 1994 and subsequently developed in the UN framework, focuses on individual human rights, in particular the freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf (UNCHS 2003).

The existing literature on human security in EU and Japanese foreign relations is surprisingly theoretical, with most analysts concentrating on either power (a-)symmetries, such as the US-Japan-EU triangle or the rise of the People's Republic of China as a push factor for a more proactive Japanese and/or European human rights agenda (Hosoya 2012), or on both partners being middle powers (de Bruyn 2013). Alternatively, particularly Japan's early adoption of a human security agenda in the late 1990s has been interpreted from a liberal perspective. In this view, liberal and pacifist sentiments in public opinion as well as Japan's UN-focused diplomacy are regarded as the main drivers for Tokyo's proactive human security policy, especially its strong support for the UN Commission on Human Security (UNCHS) and UN Trust Fund on Human Security (UNTFHS) (Inada 2005: 147-8).

In contrast to realist and liberal explanations, the third theoretical, social-constructivist, narrative argues that Japan's and the EU's self-identification as 'normative actors' or, more narrowly defined, as 'civilian powers', undergird their respective proactive behaviour (Mykal 2011: 64). This argument, however, comes in different colours: concerning Japan, Bert Edström finds in his monographic study that Tokyo's proactive behaviour and robust leadership effort can be traced back to a deliberate effort to bolster Japan's international standing and reputation (Edström 2013: 264). He is seconded by Shinoda who stresses that:

'Due to the constitutional constraints and historical disadvantages, Japan has difficulty in earning a good reputation in international cooperation concerning 'traditional' security issues such as participation in peacekeeping operations. Human security is apparently expected to enable Japan to compensate for weakness in the 'traditional' security field. The 'incumbent' permanent members of the Security Council established their status in

the 'traditional' security field, and Japan might be a leading force in a newly recognized field called human security.' (Shinoda 2004: 19)

In a similar vein, but focusing on the importance of Japan's relationship with its most significant others, Paul Evans stresses that Tokyo's leadership put a much softer face on its development assistance in the Asian region. Furthermore, he argues, this also left the US' leadership in the traditional security realm untouched (Evans 2004: 271).

For the European Union, George Christou argues that key decision makers, such as Javier Solana and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, acted as 'norm entrepreneurs' within the European Union's institutions, creating a high-tide of the concept around 2008 in the EU's rhetoric, but this left few long-lasting effects on the Union's policies thereafter (Christou 2014).

A summary of the human security practice of the European Union, its Commission and Parliament as well as that of its member states and their respective philosophical backgrounds is given below. Cooperation between the EU, its member states and Japan in various bi- and multilateral fora is highlighted with the sole aim of identifying commonalities and differences and explaining their occurrence. The conclusion outlines why a relaunch of EU-Japan cooperation on human security is probable and in which way it is likely to be designed.

### **Human security: EU institutions' and member state approaches**

Beginning with its European Security Strategy in 2003 (CEU 2003) as an alternative security concept to the Bush administration's National Security Strategy (NSS 2002), the European Union pursued a security policy premised on a broad and liberal understanding of security. The primary objective of this notion is neither state nor regime security – both are difficult to operationalize for a community of states anyway – but to safeguard citizen and individual rights. Given that these objectives require international cooperation, i.e. against global and regional challenges such as climate change, proliferation and violent intra-state conflicts emanating from state failure and economic despair, the EU supported 'effective multilateralism' and regional cooperation so as to supplement, if not supplant, militarized strategies of state security (Kaldor 2010). Only where humanitarian concerns were perceived as fundamentally threatened and all other means have been exhausted did the European Union actively supported military intervention (Matlary 2008: 138). This understanding not only clashed with US' strategy at the time leading to transatlantic conflicts over Iraq and other militarized interventions, but also placed the EU in opposition to other governments, including EU member states', which preferred a much more narrow, if humanitarian, security agenda.

#### *EU institutions*

Over more than a decade now, the practice of EU institutions on human security has evolved substantially, creating distinct understandings in the EU Commission, the High Representative's Office and the European Parliament (Christou 2014; Kotsopolous 2007; Marczuk 2007; Matlary 2008; Martin and Owen 2010; Solana 2014; Thompson 2016). Despite these differences, however, many human security-related goals have remained relatively constant, also informing the EU's responses to conflicts in its wider neighbourhood (Kartsonaki and Wolff 2015).

As a concept, human security was developed and honed through a study group driven process, initiated by Javier Solana. This process, steered by Mary Kaldor, among others, led to a string of policy reports, which, in turn, informed the human security debate inside the EU institutions and

beyond. Although the reports had quite different foci with regard to the core concepts, they constantly took the *via media* between the narrow definition, which largely restricts itself to 'freedom from fear', and which have been propagated by Canada and Norway, and the broader notion, encompassing 'freedom from want' and freedom to take action on one's own behalf, which is favoured by Japan and most UN institutions (Martin and Owen 2010: 219; Remacle 2008).

While the Barcelona Report (HSSG 2004) addressed primarily severe physical insecurity, calling for a 15,000-strong human security response force, the later Madrid Report (HSSG 2007) extended the range of security-relevant issues to organized crime, widespread human rights violations and joblessness. In turn, the Helsinki Plus Report (HSSG 2009), which was meant to initiate an EU-Russian strategic dialogue based on human security, included all three core concepts and related them to the three baskets of the CSCE-Helsinki Final Act (HSSG 2009).

In 2016, a reconfigured Human Security Study Group met under the leadership of Mary Kaldor and Javier Solana (HSSG 2016). The subsequent Berlin Report calls for a second-generation human security approach to be adopted by the EU to focus on conflict resolution through using creative diplomacy, smart sanctions, conditionality and civilian-led missions and an emphasis of justice across the entire spectrum of abuse, predatory and criminal behaviour (HSSG 2016: 3).

The term 'human security' never gained much political traction in the strategic rationale and rhetoric of the EU before 2016. The most explicit commitment to human security can be found in the 2008 'Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy' which stipulates: 'We have worked to build human security by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity' (Solana 2008). But High Representative Federica Mogherini introduced human security as an umbrella concept to the new EU Global Strategy (EU High Representative 2016). The new EU strategy, entitled 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe', mentions human security four times as a guiding principle for the Union's integrated and multilayered peacebuilding efforts (EU High Representative 2016: 9,14,28,31).

Among EU institutions, the Commission has been the most outspoken proponent of the concept during the term of Benita Ferrero-Waldner as a Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. Before joining the Commission, Ferrero-Waldner had served as a foreign minister of Austria, where she chaired the Human Security Network (HSN) in 2002 and 2003 (see below). In 2004 and 2005, she put forth a broad understanding of the concept for the European Union which included both the 'freedom from want' and the 'freedom from fear' (Ferrero-Waldner 2005). Even more forcefully, she stated in May 2006: 'The philosophy underlying the EU's approach to security, as outlined in the Security Strategy, is that security can best be attained through development, and development through security. Neither is possible without an adequate level of the other. That's why we focus on the holistic concept of human security' (Ferrero-Waldner 2006: 3). Noticeably, Waldner's fellow Commissioners were much less enthusiastic about the concept so that DG DEVCO (Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development) never integrated the term into its strategic narrative.

In 2016, however, the Commission has (re-)started to mention human security as a guiding principle for its peacebuilding efforts in the EU's Global Strategy. It has increasingly used the concept in its communications both with the EU Parliament and Council (European Commission 2016a). It has called human security the first objective of a national security system and further supported the principle as a guideline for its neighbourhood and development policy (European Commission 2016b; European Commission 2016c).

The European Parliament, under the influence of the Alliances of the Socialists and Liberals, supported and shaped the concept in much detail in a series of reports that came to a head in 2016. In

March 2016, the Parliament issued a report 'On the EU in a changing global environment – a more connected, contested and complex world' to chaperone the EU Global Strategy drafting process, insisting that 'human security should be at the heart of the strategy' (European Parliament 2016a: 7). In April 2016, the parliament tried to steer the Council towards 'a broader human security concept, bringing it closer to gender equality and human rights, and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle' (European Parliament 2016b: 8). And in November 2016, the EU's legislature in a draft report on the revision of the 'European Consensus on Development' insisted upon the 'promotion of human security' (European Parliament 2016c: 8).

### *EU member states*

The case of human security is often used to highlight the differences in strategic outlook of the EU member states. On the one hand, supporters of the concept, such as Finland, Sweden and the Human Security Network members Austria, Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands propagate an interpretation that centres on conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, including gender questions (Marczuk 2007). On the other hand, sceptics of the concept, such as France and the UK, but also some Central and Eastern European member states, have criticized its fuzziness and unclear operational consequences (Remacle 2008: 20; Christou 2014).

However, a number of member states individually and collectively pushed the concept within the EU: during its Presidency, Finland introduced human security to the training of ESDP military and security officials. In a similar vein, the Spanish, Slovenian and Czech presidencies have all promoted human security as a concept (Solana 2014: 255). Others, such as Austria (together with Norway and Canada) launched the Human Security Network, which emerged in 1999 from the Anti-Landmines campaign, and which consists of like-minded countries from all regions of the world, in order to maintain dialogue on questions pertaining to human security at the level of foreign ministers (Christou 2014).

As a consequence, the EU's approach to conflict management across its wider neighbourhood, extending towards Africa and Central Asia, clearly involves elements of a human security agenda. In a comparative case study, Argyro Kartsonaki and Stefan Wolff found that the rule of law, good governance, institutional capacity building and humanitarian aid all featured, albeit to a different degree, in EU ESDP actions in the Sahel region, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia (Kartsonaki and Wolf 2015). However, they also find that EU actions trigger overreliance on EU programmes, thereby enabling respective regimes in the wider neighborhood to pursue their own regime security needs which may or may not conform with human security principles.

### **EU-Japan cooperation on human security**

Ever since the EU and Japan started a political dialogue in 1990 and formalized the forum in the Joint Declaration (European Commission 1991), the two partners held bilateral summits (between the presidency of the Council and Commission and the Japanese prime minister), focusing on a) strengthening the role of the United Nations; and b) non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, transparency in the international transfer of conventional weapons, cooperation in energy, environmental and developmental affairs as well as interregional cooperation (European Commission 1991).

Operationally, the declaration bore little direct fruit but both partners engaged jointly in international and interregional security fora of concern to the other: in 1992 the British EU Presidency sponsored

the UN Draft Resolution to establish the UN Register of Conventional Arms Transfer which was later adopted without dissent (Mykal 2011: 78). In the mid-1990s the EU joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), whereas Japan became a Partner for Co-operation first of the Conference and then of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE and OSCE respectively).

Moreover, Japan actively participated both through funding and personnel in peacebuilding and reconstruction of the former Yugoslavian Republics and the EU became a member of the Korean Peninsula Development Organization (KEDO) to freeze and dismantle the North Korean nuclear (weapons) programme (Harnisch 2001).

But ten years after the Hague declaration of 1991 both partners agreed at their summit meeting to an 'Action Plan', entitled 'Shaping our Common Future', to reinvigorate the bilateral cooperation. As the Action Plan reflected on a decade of moderate action, it highlighted a great untapped potential for more extensive cooperation (European Commission 2001: 4). More specifically, the plan stressed the necessity for both major economic powers to advance a peaceful international order:

'Sharing responsibility for promoting peace and prosperity in the world, we will enhance human security for the benefit of all, and encourage enhanced engagement in each other's region.' (European Commission 2001: §1)

However, a series of terrorist attacks, starting with the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11), and the escalation of the North Korean nuclear crisis in 2003 somewhat distracted the dialogue on non-traditional security and redirected attention towards the partnership with the United States.

Only in 2007, in an annex to the annual summit press statement, the EU and Japan again mentioned their joint commitment to human security and called for a specific dialogue thereon. The dialogue was supposed to focus on the:

'Concrete implementation in a wider range of issues to restore the livelihoods of people exposed to challenges such as poverty, infectious diseases, post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian demining..., the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons, environmental degradation and deforestation, adaptation to climate change' (MOFA 2007).

In 2008 then, both partners agreed to jointly promote the concept of human security at the UN General Assembly. But soon after, the reporting on the implementation of the 2001 Action Plan was dispensed with. Instead, a steering group was established to ensure the 'effective and satisfactory implementation of the Action Plan' (MOFA 2008).

The following two years saw some additional activities after the European Union had overcome its constitutional crisis with the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) taking over the reign from the long-serving Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Yet despite earnest efforts to renew the EU-Japan relationship and to take it to a higher level as the decade-long period of the Action Plan came to an end, among other initiatives through establishing a Joint High-Level Group to identify future areas of cooperation, no substantial successful cooperation on human security ensued.

Fortunately, pragmatic coordinated action continued as in the case of the 2011 tsunami and Fukushima nuclear reactor catastrophe. Also, in 2012, the EU and Japan jointly promoted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) within a UN Conference framework.<sup>2</sup> But whilst the later summit meetings focused on the establishment of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and brought some additional



bilateral deliberations on space and cybersecurity issues, the 2015 Summit Press statement reiterated the joint commitment to pursue a human security agenda:

‘As leading development donors and partners, we remain fully committed to agreeing an ambitious post-2015 development agenda that will coherently address poverty eradication and sustainable development. Such an agenda must also promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights where the aspect of human security is essential and without which sustainable development cannot happen’ (MOFA 2015).

### *Japanese and EU human security approaches: convergence and divergence*

Given the reorientation in Japanese and EU foreign policy towards a less militarized security strategy, there appears to be no real conflict between their respective human security approaches. There are differences in degree but not in kind. In the Japanese interpretation of human security, the moral obligation to establish a ‘freedom from want’ plays a central role, complementing Tokyo’s efforts to cast its development aid in a more positive light. In the European interpretations of human security – and thereby reflecting the internal struggle between different institutions and member states – the legal and institutional as well as the conflict-oriented aspects of human security take a more prominent role. As a consequence, a substantial part of the European development community, including parts of the DG Development and Cooperation, remains sceptical about the concept because they equate it with the ever more robust military interventions of the EU in the 2000s.

## **Conclusion**

Human security policies of the European Union and its member states have evolved substantially over time. The single biggest change, in this author’s view, occurred with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and subsequent major terrorist incidents when the pursuit of non-traditional security issues was de-emphasized and physical protection and regime change became an explicit goal of the United States and other Western foreign policies. A second key shift may have occurred in 2016 – it is still too early to tell – after the escalation of the civil war in Syria, the mounting crises in Ukraine, Sudan and the failed intervention by some EU member states and the US in Libya, which facilitated the emergence of the transnational hybrid terrorist-rebel sectarian group, the so-called the Islamic State.

This latter shift reveals the inherent trade-offs between the different dimensions of the OECD/DAC peace-building approach underlying the different human security interpretations, especially the social and economic dimension (freedom from want) and security (freedom from fear) and governance dimension (freedom to determine once own life) (for these dimensions, see Remacle 2008: 15).

Human security, it appears, has regained prominence in the EU security apparatus because it promises to address the dilemmas of traditional EU peace-building and reconstruction efforts by averting their unintended consequences. When EU policies are mostly targeting stabilization through humanitarian assistance, mediating among warring parties and post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian assistance can easily be subverted by predatory groups. It follows that warring parties can enrich themselves and stabilize their politico-economic position in the resulting fragmented polities (HSSG 2016: 4).

Fortunately, a broad and balanced version of human security may help to legitimate inclusive and integrated EU external policies as well as build loyalty for legitimate political authority in distressed

areas. As some successful cases of post-conflict reconstruction imply, state effectiveness may be a necessary condition for legitimacy. But the promise of rule of law and good governance may only produce legitimate political authority if significant infusions of economic aid facilitate the freedom from want.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the EU and Japan stated in the Hague Declaration, against the background of the massacre on Tiananmen square, two years earlier: 'both parties will likewise consult together on the international situation and on regional matters with a view in particular to joining their efforts to bring about an easing of tensions and to ensure respect for human rights' (European Commission 1991).

<sup>2</sup> To no avail though because the United States was opposed.