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## **Navigating by Sun and Compass** **Policy Brief Three: The Future of Japan-NATO Relations**

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Although Japan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have enjoyed formal relations for nearly thirty years, the relationship has followed an uneven growth trajectory. After establishment in the early 1990s, it plateaued through the early 2000s before ramping up precipitously to direct practical cooperation in 2007. The growth of Japan-NATO relations accelerated under the tenure of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, with Japan and NATO conducting their first joint military exercises and establishing an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme in 2014. These developments, along with security reforms passed in 2015, appear to provide Japan and NATO with the platform necessary to move their relationship to a new phase; whether they will do so remains to be seen. As Japan navigates changing regional and global power dynamics, its growing alignments with non-U.S. partners have taken on increasing significance. Just where NATO fits into this schema has been unclear, however. While relations continued to progress in the late 2010s, with Japan establishing a formal mission to NATO in 2018, policy-makers and scholars have expressed doubts about how much further the relationship can deepen, given priorities, resources, and practical realities on both sides, including Japan's constitutional restrictions on the use of force.

This policy brief is the third in a series of three seeking to explore the future trajectory of Japan-NATO relations. The first brief focused on the history of the Japan-NATO relationship in order to provide context for its current state. It found that Japan and NATO will have to actively create opportunities for practical and operational cooperation to continue the growth of such cooperation going forward. The second brief examined how Japan's security reforms create space for greater Japan-NATO military cooperation. It found that the authorities created by these reforms provide a new basis for military exercises between Japan and NATO, one form of operational cooperation the two sides could pursue. This third brief reviews the benefits and untapped potential of the Japan-NATO relationship, identifying both topical and geographic areas of overlapping interest, as well as the constraints that limit the exploitation of these various options. It finds that the constraints - primarily priority and resource constraints - while significant, are not always immutable and that the solidification by both sides of well-developed, coherent strategic visions for the development of the Japan-NATO relationship could impact priorities and increase efficiencies in the use of resources. The brief then goes on to explore several examples of possible Japanese strategic visions and the differing approaches they could produce.

## *Benefits of Japan-NATO Cooperation*

NATO is part of an array of Japanese institutional alignments in Europe that include the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Council of Europe. For Japan, the general benefits of political and security cooperation with Europe accrue from all these alignments. These benefits include a platform for multilateral cooperation, propagation of shared norms and the rules-based international order, a venue for influencing European views and policies (here Japan has a particular interest in greater European support for concerns involving China), and the signaling Japan is able to project globally and especially regionally through its endorsement by and partnership with such institutions.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, NATO and the EU provide a foil through which Japan can participate in international peace and security operations outside of the United Nations, elevating their status in the pantheon of European institutions. With NATO's membership overlapping largely with the EU's and, thus, NATO engagements invariably adding to interoperability with EU partners (and vice versa), it is easy to lump these two institutions together in the realm of security cooperation. There are some distinct and important advantages to security cooperation through NATO specifically, however, where NATO can add value for Japan above that of the EU.

In addition to providing a unique European platform for security cooperation with Japan's most important security partner, the United States, NATO is, after Brexit, a unique European platform for security cooperation with the United Kingdom, arguably, Japan's second most important security partner. Given the significance of Japan-United Kingdom defense cooperation and its increasing scope and pace, this is not a trivial benefit of NATO in terms of Japan-Europe security cooperation going forward.<sup>2</sup> NATO is also a premier global security institution and the premier European security institution, with superior capabilities to the EU in multilateral planning and operations, command and control, coordination of troop contributions – including from non-European partners, and availability of comprehensive capabilities and assets.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the kind of major international crisis that would create political and security imperatives for Japanese, U.S., European, and/or other country engagement – the kind that might spur the utilization of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) authorities discussed in the previous brief – would almost certainly be addressed under NATO, rather than EU, auspices (and, if recent trends bear out, perhaps under NATO rather than United Nations auspices as well).<sup>4</sup> This should make NATO a critical security actor for Japan. Relatedly, NATO is an exemplar of multilateral security and defense cooperation that can provide illustrative mechanics for Japan in this area. Japan, whose regional frameworks for security and defense cooperation are weak and whose participation in security operations outside of United Nations peacekeeping has been limited, can learn much from NATO on the planning and coordination of multilateral operations and the enhancement of multilateral interoperability that can be distilled to meet its interests in a regional context.<sup>5</sup> This is not to suggest that security cooperation with the EU does not also have its own benefits – principally, the EU's strength in civilian missions that well complement Japan's preference for conflict prevention and mitigation via

diplomatic, political and economic measures. NATO remains irreplaceable as a security partner, however.

Japan, for NATO, is, similarly, one of several Asia-Pacific alignments the Alliance has pursued in recent decades, along with Australia, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. Here too, there are general benefits for NATO from its engagement with these “Global Partners,” as they are referred to, writ large.<sup>6</sup> These include practical and operational cooperation for NATO initiatives, legitimacy and credibility for NATO as an actor of global relevance, a platform for access into a strategically key region of the world, interoperability with U.S. treaty partners, information-sharing, and propagation of shared norms and the rules-based international order.<sup>7</sup> There are also particular attributes that make Japan an attractive partner for NATO. The first policy brief discusses the shared values and complementary strategic orientations between Japan and NATO.<sup>8</sup> Relatedly, Japan is the most prolific financial contributor, among the Global Partners in the Asia-Pacific, to NATO initiatives and trust funds.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, there appears to be greater awareness and stronger positive perception of NATO in Japan than in the other Asia-Pacific Global Partner countries, with NATO having had the highest visibility and most positive portrayal in the Japanese media.<sup>10</sup> This, along with its role as a lead actor in the Asia-Pacific and the broader Indo-Pacific, makes Japan an important potential champion for NATO in the region. Despite the traditional restrictions on its use, discussed in the second brief, Japan also has an advanced, well-equipped, and capable military.<sup>11</sup> According to the Global Firepower annual ranking, Japan’s SDF constitutes one of the most powerful militaries in the world, beating that of any NATO Ally or partner except the United States.<sup>12</sup> This places Japan in the “contributor” rather than “recipient” category of partners in NATO’s estimation, according to one NATO official.<sup>13</sup> Japanese expertise and capabilities in the security sphere provide a welcome complement to NATO’s. For example, Japan, which has more naval assets than most NATO Allies, has extensive experience in maritime operations and particular expertise in specialized areas like demining and underwater medicine.<sup>14</sup> As one study noted, “[a]s many NATO member countries are land-force dominated, partnership with Japan could bring complementary technical expertise to the benefit of NATO maritime forces.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the SDF has expertise in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, given the country’s history of natural disasters.<sup>16</sup> Japan’s defense capacity building assistance is also well-developed, as exemplified in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond the benefits accrued by both sides through their association, there are a number of areas of shared interest between Japan and NATO laid out in the Japan-NATO Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP). Priorities identified in the IPCP include maritime security, cyber defense, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and non-proliferation, but maritime security, detailed in the first brief, and cyber have been the most developed areas of collaboration thus far.<sup>18</sup> With regard to the latter, Japan is in the process of joining the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (COE) and has seconded an expert to the COE since March 2019.<sup>19</sup> Japan has also participated in the

COE's multilateral cyber defense exercise Locked Shields and the NATO Allied Command Transformation major cyber defense exercise Cyber Coalition, participating in Cyber Coalition as a full participant, rather than an observer, for the first time in 2019.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Japan and NATO have held Expert Staff Talks on Cyber Defense.<sup>21</sup> Both Japan and NATO have recognized cyber as a new operational domain (like land, sea, and air) and are working to translate this into their defense operations and planning. Both also face cyber threats from the same potential adversaries, principally, China and Russia. Although Japan is working closely with the United States on cyber within the context of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, NATO has additional expertise to lend on cyber security cooperation given its focused efforts in this area since large-scale Russian cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007.<sup>22</sup> NATO's innovation of policy and practice on cyber defense within a multilateral framework provides an attractive potential platform for partner countries like Japan that prioritize collaboration and the formulation of international rules and norms for the cyber domain.<sup>23</sup> NATO is also focused on education and training in the cyber domain and on enhancing interoperability between Allies and partners on cyber defense.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, NATO's work with the private sector on cyber security through the NATO Industry Cyber Partnership may help inform Japan's own domestic efforts in this area.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Untapped Potential of Japan-NATO Cooperation*

There are also plenty of shared interest areas not covered in the IPCP with potential for fruitful Japan-NATO coordination. Some of these have been examined in good detail elsewhere, including dealing with aggressive incursions into respective territorial waters and airspace (primarily by China, but also by Russia, for Japan and by the latter for NATO) and addressing anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) challenges (stemming from China's and Russia's capabilities to compromise the access and operational potential of opposing forces).<sup>26</sup> Others, discussed below, divided into topical and geographic sections, are particularly interesting given their relevance to the evolving international security environment or because they have been insufficiently explored. The topical areas include intermediate-range missiles, extended deterrence, joint development/production of defense equipment and technology, and space. The geographic areas include the Indian Ocean and its peripheries, the Arctic, and China (although China is more topical than geographic in its application to Europe).

Intermediate-range missiles are pertinent again in the Asian and European contexts due to the 2019 United States withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia, which banned missiles (both nuclear and conventional) of a certain range and type. The proliferation of such weapons in Russia's arsenal would impact not only Europe, but also Asia, given the country's geographic expanse, and fears about Russian intermediate-range missiles being redeployed from Europe to Asia were a historic driver of Japanese engagement with NATO, as noted in the first brief.<sup>27</sup> Adding to the Asia-Europe connection, U.S. concerns about the INF treaty relate to both China and Russia's development of relevant weapons, since the Chinese have amassed missiles that

would have been in violation of the treaty had China been a party.<sup>28</sup> Although the potential for future use of and regulations on intermediate-range missiles remains unclear, Japan and NATO could benefit from discussing areas of mutual relevance. One of these is potential U.S. interest in deploying intermediate-range missiles to allied countries in Europe and Asia (with Japan a likely target in the latter) and its impact.<sup>29</sup> Another is the question of a Russian-proposed, INF-related moratorium and whether it would encompass both Europe and Asia or only the former.<sup>30</sup> A third is the inclusion of China in any INF treaty successor regime; both then-Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg have separately called for China to participate in future arms control deals in the context of the INF debate.<sup>31</sup>

Also critical in both the Asian and European contexts is U.S. extended deterrence, on which both Japan and NATO rely. Although Japan and NATO each consult independently with the United States on extended deterrence and nuclear extended deterrence mechanisms are different between the two alliances (NATO participates in nuclear sharing - the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Ally countries and the readiness/capacity of Ally aircraft to deliver such weapons - while Japan does not), the topic remains ripe for cross-pollination between the two.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Japan is interested in NATO's experience and decision-making on extended deterrence.<sup>33</sup> NATO's longer history of consultation over nuclear extended deterrence with the United States may be instructive for Japan, as may be the fact that while most NATO Allies don't participate directly in nuclear sharing, many still participate in nuclear deterrence through conventional military support, a more palatable notion from the Japanese perspective and one clearly normalized in the European context.<sup>34</sup> For its part, Japan has expertise to offer on nuclear deterrence theory and policy, on which it has been called "...among the most sophisticated and nuanced of all allies..." by the former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy.<sup>35</sup> More generally, the question of tactical nuclear weapons and their shifting role in U.S. extended deterrence is of interest to both Japan and NATO. The United States has taken differing approaches over time on tactical nuclear weapons for its Asian versus European alliances (sea-based, previously eliminated for the former; air-delivered, extant for the latter), producing some angst in Japan about the impact of such bifurcation.<sup>36</sup> The U.S. posture on this issue appears set to shift again, given proposals in the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review to reintroduce sea-based tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>37</sup> Japan-NATO scholar Michito Tsuruoka has also advocated for "consultations between NATO and [U.S.] allies in Asia to ensure unity and synergy" on increased nuclear saber-rattling by Russia in the context of U.S. extended deterrence.<sup>38</sup> Issues such as these provide plenty of fodder for mutually beneficial dialogue between Japan and NATO on extended deterrence.

Another topical area with potential for future Japan-NATO collaboration is the defense equipment and technology sphere. Based on a new, more permissive, policy on arms exports issued in 2014, Japan is able to participate in international cooperative development and production ventures for defense equipment and technology with partner countries.<sup>39</sup> The influential Keidanren (Japanese Business Federation) related proposal for defense

industry policy emphasizes cooperative development and production of defense equipment with NATO specifically, as well as with individual European countries.<sup>40</sup> In 2015, Japan reportedly considered joining NATO's Sea Sparrow Missile Consortium, whose missiles the SDF already employ.<sup>41</sup> Although there has not been any visible forward momentum on the NATO consortium idea since the possibility was raised in 2015, the unsuccessful 2019 bid by Japan to join the multinational F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program as a full partner could act to reinvigorate interest in the NATO project.<sup>42</sup> With the closure of the F-35 avenue, the NATO consortium could be the most readily available platform for Japan to gain experience with multinational military industrial partnerships, although the actual expected benefits from Japan's participation would need to be closely evaluated.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, Japan has signed defense equipment and technology transfer agreements with major NATO Allies France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, opening the door to bilateral development and production opportunities that could benefit broader NATO defense capabilities.<sup>44</sup>

Rounding out potential topical areas of collaboration is space. With the possibility of disruptions to critical military, civilian, and commercial capabilities from attacks on satellites, defense and deterrence policy and practice regarding space has gained increasing attention in recent years.<sup>45</sup> Japan and NATO also both prioritize maintaining an edge in the use of space over potential adversaries, particularly China and Russia.<sup>46</sup> NATO launched a space strategy in June 2019 and aims to "play an important role as a forum to share information, [and] increase interoperability" on space-based defense and cooperation.<sup>47</sup> It is also working to integrate space elements into military exercises as well as education and training and has designated its Joint Air Power Competence Centre as the NATO COE for space support.<sup>48</sup> Japan launched its own space defense unit, the Space Operations Squadron, within the SDF in May 2020, which is expected to reach full operational capacity by 2023.<sup>49</sup> Although Japan is interested in promoting partnership and cooperation in the space domain, NATO has not, thus far, been prominent on Japan's radar for such cooperation.<sup>50</sup> Now that NATO has an official space policy and both Japan and NATO are becoming more active on space, there are opportunities for both sides to reevaluate cooperation potential in this area. Adding potential impetus, the United States has also recently put increased focus on military space policy, which could have eventual implications that both Japan and NATO will have to navigate as alliance partners.<sup>51</sup>

Much is made of Japan and NATO's physical distance, but there is overlap between their geographic areas of interest. Although NATO is an actor of global reach and interests, it places great focus on challenges from its southern (Middle East and North Africa) and eastern (Russia) fronts.<sup>52</sup> NATO's formalized partnership categories, the Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative also reflect these regional priorities.<sup>53</sup> For Japan, China and North Korea remain its primary security concerns, although attention is also focused on Russia's posture in its eastern reaches and the disputed Northern Territories/Kuril Islands.<sup>54</sup> These priorities are included in Japan's traditional focus on the Asia Pacific region, as well as its more recent focus, as evidenced

by the formalization of Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" vision (FOIP), on the broader Indo-Pacific region.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, Japan has established a SDF facility in Djibouti, which has been reconceptualized from a counter-piracy hub to a platform for "regional security cooperation and other activities."<sup>56</sup>

These respective geographic focus areas of Japan and NATO meet in the Indian Ocean and its peripheries, a general area where, according to former Japanese Ambassador to Belgium and Representative to NATO Masafumi Ishii, Japan and NATO "... have more potential for joint cooperation from now on."<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the Indian Ocean has already been a site of Japanese operational cooperation with NATO and other international partners, both in ongoing counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters and past Japanese refueling support to U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>58</sup> In addition to being a physical meeting point for Japanese and NATO interests, the Indian Ocean hosts critical sea lines of communication (SLOC) for Europe-Asia trade and Japanese energy supplies from the Middle East, making it an area of strategic importance in its own right.<sup>59</sup> As summed up by Europe-Asia scholar Luis Simón, "Europe and Japan share two fundamental geostrategic objectives: the security of the Indian Ocean [SLOC] and the existence of a balance of power on the Indian Ocean 'rimland,' particularly in the Persian Gulf."<sup>60</sup> Successive attacks in 2019 on oil tankers in the nearby Gulf of Oman, including ones operated by Japanese and Norwegian shipping companies, underscore this point.<sup>61</sup> In early 2020, Japan dispatched a destroyer to the surrounding waters as part of a year-long information-gathering mission aimed at protecting the safety of Japan-related shipping in the Middle East, once again showing Japan's ability to maintain a presence in this region.<sup>62</sup>

Another geographic area with relevance to both Japan and NATO is the Arctic, where changing climate conditions are expected to open access to new energy reserves, as well as new SLOC between Europe and Asia.<sup>63</sup> The region is largely governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and agreements between the eight states making up the multilateral Arctic Council.<sup>64</sup> Five of those eight states are NATO Allies and two more are NATO partners, while Japan, which has an articulated Arctic strategy focused on scientific research, sustainable economic development, and the rule of law, has observer status on the Arctic Council.<sup>65</sup> Japan and NATO's mutual interest in ensuring respect for international rules and norms comes into play in the region. This is particularly relevant given the involvement of China, another Arctic Council observer, which is extending its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) into the Arctic and does not have a good history with UNCLOS; Russia, which has increased its military posture in the region over the past decade and near whose coastlines the most feasible new SLOC would run; and Russia-China development cooperation in the region.<sup>66</sup> However, despite doing military exercises in and around the Arctic, NATO does not have an official Arctic policy, at least in part because of sensitivities about encroachment among NATO Arctic Allies like Canada, leaving NATO Allies and partners, in their national capacities and through the Arctic Council, to lead on policy and information exchange in the region.<sup>67</sup> As a result, there is not much scope for non-military exercise-related cooperation with NATO on the

Arctic at present, a relevant consideration given intermittent recommendations for Japan-NATO Arctic cooperation.<sup>68</sup> Still, NATO's involvement on the Arctic is likely to evolve over the coming years given increasing international interest, potentially opening up greater space for Japan-NATO coordination in this area.

Although China and its immediate geographic surroundings still do not resonate with NATO in the way that they do with Japan, NATO, and Europe as a whole, is beginning to wake up to the reality that China's assertive behavior is not confined to its geographic region. This has been made evident through China's extension of the BRI into Europe, with twenty-one NATO Allies signing BRI-related memoranda of understanding with China as of 2017.<sup>69</sup> BRI investments in critical infrastructure, such as ports, and in strategic industries, such as energy and transportation, have raised concerns from both a security and political perspective in Europe. China's investment in European air and sea ports, for example, has raised questions about its potential impact on NATO's ability to deploy troops and equipment.<sup>70</sup> China's growing presence in Europe has also increased concerns about espionage and cyber threats, issues of direct pertinence for NATO's sensitive intelligence and information-sharing processes.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, China's influence campaigns, of which BRI is a component, have been credited with weakening the EU's consensus positions on China vis-a-vis such issues as human rights and the rule of law.<sup>72</sup> Scholars have posited a similar potential watering-down effect on future decision-making in the NATO context if China's influence is left unchecked.<sup>73</sup>

Faced increasingly with China on NATO's European doorstep, NATO leaders appear more ripe for moving toward strategic thinking on the potential impact of China's growing global presence than ever before. Indeed, China was mentioned for the first time in a NATO summit-level declaration in 2019, where NATO heads of State and Government recognized that "China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance."<sup>74</sup> NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has begun regularly mentioning the growing military and economic might of China in speeches and statements on the Alliance since 2019 and has noted that "...more and more European allies are aware of the different dimensions of the rise of China, including the challenges. And one thing that reflects that is that, in NATO, we have now started more systematic work on analysing and assessing the security consequences and the challenges."<sup>75</sup> This more systematic effort on China is evident in the report of the group of experts appointed by the Secretary-General to assess ways to strengthen NATO for the future, "NATO 2030: United for a New Era," released in late 2020.<sup>76</sup> The Secretary-General has also stated that NATO needs to work "together with partners, not least in the Asia Pacific, including Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand," to address the security consequences of China's rise.<sup>77</sup> For Japan, which has long viewed NATO as a potential platform to inform and influence European thinking on China, the situation presents a clear, new opportunity to input into discussions of common challenges on China and engage an audience that is suddenly much more interested.<sup>78</sup>

All in all, for Japan and NATO as partners interested in cooperation, there is plenty of substance to work with. This does not mean, of course, that Japan and NATO don't have other potential partners in any such issue areas that may take precedence over their mutual engagement (most prominently the United States) or that all of these topics are equally interesting or beneficial for collaboration. Much more pertinently, Japan and NATO each have priorities and resource needs competing for their attention with the issue areas addressed in this and the previous section, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

### *Constraints on Japan-NATO Cooperation*

While the benefits of and potential for Japan-NATO cooperation are many and varied, the constraints are relatively basic. The main constraints on cooperation and the further deepening of the Japan-NATO relationship are the closely aligned issues of priorities and resources. For both Japan and NATO, their mutual relationship is important; for neither of them, however, is it a relationship of *prime* importance and this is reflected in their relative allocations towards its pursuit. Priorities and resources create issues on both sides that manifest in complex ways, but for the purposes of discussion, they can be broadly summarized. For NATO, priority and resource constraints are most evident where it comes to consensus on the Asia-Pacific region and the Asia-Pacific Global Partners, defense posture and capabilities, and investment in NATO partnership programs and exercises. For Japan, they are most readily visible in internal political discourse, a focus on regional security imperatives, and a strain on staff capacity in relevant Japanese institutional structures.

Despite NATO's outreach to and semantic support of Japan and the other Asia-Pacific Global Partners and despite general acknowledgement of the significance of the Asia-Pacific as a dynamic and critical region of the world, there has been no agreement among NATO Allies on the priority of the Asia-Pacific to NATO or of Asia-Pacific Global Partners specifically.<sup>79</sup> This stands regardless of the fact that the Asia-Pacific Global Partners make up the largest regional group within the Global Partners category and share NATO values and political orientations. (In a promising development, the NATO 2030 expert group report recognizes this shortfall vis-a-vis the Asia-Pacific Global Partners and calls on NATO to deepen consultation and cooperation with them.<sup>80</sup>) NATO has long been split on its level of ambition vis-a-vis the Global Partners in general. One scholar puts the Allies into three groups: the "Anglo-Saxon camp," which favors a global orientation for NATO with deeper engagement of Global Partners; "major European Allies such as Germany and France," whose reservations about strengthening NATO ties with Global Partners stem from concerns about political cohesion, NATO's traditional geographic scope, and the reactions of China and Russia; and countries with security concerns about Russia, who "support the notion that, instead of venturing out of its area, NATO should go back to its core business."<sup>81</sup> Another scholar posits, "[t]he pressures of retrenchment within NATO after the long and arduous ISAF mission in Afghanistan have led to a situation in which the [G]lobal [P]artners are perceived to be of less immediate relevance to NATO's security

needs...”<sup>82</sup> Such priority constraints limit options in an organization like NATO whose decisions are made on the basis of consensus. The difficulties in generating consensus within NATO have not gone unnoticed in Japan, with one official noting that it can be easier to cooperate with individual countries rather than going through NATO given disparate interests within the Alliance.<sup>83</sup>

Even if NATO Allies do come to an agreement about the importance of the Asia-Pacific region as a NATO area of interest or the importance of increased engagement of Asia-Pacific Global Partners, resources present an issue in their own right. Although NATO’s counter piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters showed that a number of Allies besides France and the United Kingdom can deploy assets long-distance, such deployments require funding and must compete for resources with other missions closer to Europe.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the long-term defense investments needed to expand such capacity are on the back burner in light of a renewed focus on European and territorial defense since the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine. As one scholar cautions, “The crisis in Ukraine may stimulate an increase in defence investment, but the theme so far is speed (rapid response force) rather than distance - let alone stamina. We are unlikely to see resources go into sustainment or long-range maritime capability.”<sup>85</sup> Another notes the lack of focus in NATO on developing “...the strategic enablers that would allow the European allies to project power into the Asia-Pacific.”<sup>86</sup> Japanese officials are well-aware of the resource problems for NATO with respect to greater engagement in their region, although they remain interested in operational cooperation with NATO.<sup>87</sup> As one official noted of maritime security cooperation in the region, “Currently, there is cooperation with the [United Kingdom] and France. The next goal is to get the involvement of NATO, but it is difficult for NATO to send ships to the Pacific.”<sup>88</sup>

More broadly, NATO has not invested resources necessary for more meaningful engagement of Global Partners like Japan into its partnerships programs. NATO’s partnership activities, the trainings and courses it makes available to partner countries, are geared toward NATO’s formalized partnership categories, the Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.<sup>89</sup> NATO has opened up Partnership for Peace activities to Global Partners, but, even while some of them may be relevant to countries with sophisticated militaries like those of Japan and other Asia-Pacific Global Partners, they are not developed with the needs or interests of these partners in mind.<sup>90</sup> As one Japanese official noted of the partnership program options, “It’s clear that one-size fits all doesn’t work, but, bureaucratically, this is how it is done.”<sup>91</sup> Moreover, most partnership activities are held in Europe or North America, limiting their accessibility to Japan.<sup>92</sup> As another Japanese official summarized, “NATO’s partnership activities are not always that useful for Japan geographically.”<sup>93</sup> Similarly, although many NATO military exercises are open to partner countries, they are also largely held in Europe.<sup>94</sup> Expanding standard NATO exercises to broader geographic areas like the Indo-Pacific would require a process of evaluation by military planners and cost-benefit analyses, and any such proposed exercise involving assets and personnel would need to be endorsed by

the NATO Military Committee and approved by the North Atlantic Council, making this a potentially complex endeavor.<sup>95</sup> An out of area Allied-led exercise under a NATO flag, such as one in the Indian Ocean, which would be more readily accessible to Japan (and more accessible to European partners than other areas of the Indo-Pacific region), could be less complex to organize than a standard NATO exercise, but would still require Military Committee approval.<sup>96</sup> While there are clear limitations in this regard in NATO partnership activities and exercises where Global Partners like Japan are concerned, as one NATO official pointed out, it is difficult for the Alliance to provide partner-specific content for individual countries with so many partner countries to take into account.<sup>97</sup>

The onus is certainly not all on NATO; Japan too, despite the enthusiasm it has shown for relations with NATO, has priority and resource issues that limit its engagement with the Alliance. As noted in the second brief, there is a deep attachment to the defense-oriented posture of the SDF among the Japanese public and significant sensitivities among both the public and politicians regarding risks to SDF personnel and the deployment of the SDF abroad, limiting the kinds of engagement options with NATO that Japan considers relevant.<sup>98</sup> Japan also has differing levels of interest in engaging with various NATO Allies, with Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and, of course, the United States, topping the list, as evidenced by Japan's bilateral arrangements with these countries.<sup>99</sup> General interoperability and multilateral security and defense cooperation benefits aside, not all NATO engagements thus have equal added value for Japan. Additionally, there are disagreements within Japan about a global orientation versus a focus on the immediate region that mirror those within NATO, what Michito Tsuruoka calls "global Japan" versus "Japan first."<sup>100</sup> While former Prime Minister Abe was certainly in the globalist camp, Tsuruoka notes, "this is not a battle between the ruling coalition and opposition parties or between the conservatives and liberals. The policy competition between the Japan first and global Japan schools can be seen within the government and the ruling coalition, as well as within the opposition parties."<sup>101</sup> Most pertinently, with China and North Korea on its doorstep, Japan has oriented much of its defense capacity to these regional threats. What spare capacity remains for cooperative activities is also focused in the region, as well as in service of maintaining Japan's alliance with the United States.<sup>102</sup> In the words of a former Ministry of Defense official, this situation "...leads to difficulties in cooperating or exercising with NATO in practice because resources are tied up."<sup>103</sup> Indeed, Japan-NATO military exercises involving assets have only taken place incidentally, taking advantage of existing operations or plans - on the sidelines of multilateral counter-piracy operations and as part of intermittent Japanese maritime training cruises near Europe.<sup>104</sup>

In addition to their direct impact on engagement, priority and resource constraints are further reflected within Japanese institutional structures. In the Ministry of Defense, for example, the International Policy Division of the Defense Policy Bureau, which handles engagement with NATO, has also been responsible for external coordination with all countries other than the United States.<sup>105</sup> This has created a strain on staff capacity,

especially as Japan's international partners increase and the number of countries requesting defense engagement with Japan grows.<sup>106</sup> In June 2020, the Ministry of Defense announced a plan to create a new division within the Defense Policy Bureau for external coordination with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Pacific islands, in an effort to reduce some of this burden.<sup>107</sup> However, similar issues with strain on staff capacity exist within the SDF itself.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, there may be an information gap for Japan with respect to the plethora of NATO programs and activities for partners, an issue related to the strain on staff capacity at the Ministry of Defense, as well as Japan's mission to NATO, that limits the country's ability to evaluate, plan, budget for, and otherwise take advantage of relevant NATO resources.<sup>109</sup>

Although priorities and resources create clear constraints on Japan-NATO relations, there are important nuances worth exploring. Where priorities are concerned, there is a difference between those that are relatively fixed and those which may be more malleable. The former might include priorities constrained by the prevailing security situation, such as those related to Japan's regional situation vis-a-vis China and North Korea or NATO's vis-a-vis Russia. The latter, meanwhile, might include the current lack of Allied consensus for a NATO exercise in the Indian Ocean, which perhaps could be changed through, for example, consistent advocacy by Asia-Pacific Global Partners, support from friendly Allies, and NATO's own shifting evaluations and perceptions regarding the rise of China. Where resources are concerned, there is both the question of maximizing benefits within current resource allocations and reaching a maximum feasible resource allocation. With regard to the former, it would be difficult for an outside observer to say, determinatively, that Japan and NATO are not already maximizing benefits within current resource allocations, but the notion that improvements could be made, at least at the margins, implies that they are not fully there. For example, an information gap on the Japanese side about NATO programs and activities could probably be shored up through various low or no cost interventions such as consultations with Japanese experts or discussions with Ally missions at NATO about the various opportunities available, particularly the U.S. mission. Meanwhile, it is not clear that either side has actually reached the maximum of its feasible resource allocations for the relationship, meaning more resources could, theoretically, be made available if, for example, priorities were to shift.

### *The Importance of Strategic Visions*

The idea of identifying malleable priorities and how they might impact resource allocations points to another constraint on Japan-NATO relations, the absence of well-developed, coherent strategic visions on either side for the development of the Japan-NATO relationship. Japan and NATO do have their IPCP, and its significance, as both a guideline for their cooperation and a broad statement of intent, should not be discounted. However, the IPCP constitutes a tactical more than a strategic document, per se. For NATO, the shortfall in terms of a strategic vision for the development of its relationship with Japan dovetails with the broader lack of NATO clarity regarding the priority of the Asia-Pacific

region, as well as of the Global Partners generally. NATO's evolving posture on China and efforts within the Alliance to spur thinking on how NATO will need to strengthen itself for the future should eventually lead to greater clarity on the nature of NATO's interests vis-à-vis the Asia-Pacific and on how it can maximize the valuable partnerships it already has in the region. In the meantime, however, there is likely greater space for the development of a strategic vision for the Japan-NATO relationship from Japan than from NATO, particularly given the Alliance's nature as an organization of thirty disparate states and the need for consensus-based decision making within NATO. This creates a burden for Japan, but also an opportunity to evolve its thinking in a way that may influence NATO's future moves in this direction. Japan has a way to go, however.

Discussions with current and former Japanese officials reveal little detail of a broadly agreed strategic vision driving Japan's development of its relationship with NATO or guiding and uniting various practical policy decisions related to the relationship. Rather, it seems Japan is still in the process of working towards solidifying such an approach.<sup>110</sup> There are certainly elements that appear to be coalescing. For example, discussions and research consistently reveal emphasis on non-geographically specific cooperation opportunities (primarily cyber thus far), interest in cooperation/coordination with NATO in the Indo-Pacific, views of NATO as a platform for sharing Japan's views on its region and informing European views, and preferences for maintaining access and visibility within NATO through various appointments, engagements, and special-status arrangements.<sup>111</sup> The relative importance of these various elements is not clear, however. Moreover, not all of them appear fully developed, either in terms of their specifics or ideas of how to achieve them, particularly Indo-Pacific cooperation/coordination and the more complex aspects of access and visibility. On the latter, for example, Japan has been proactive about appointments (deploying an expert to the Cooperative Cyber Defence COE in Estonia; staff to the NATO Headquarters Consultation, Command and Control Staff and the office of the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security; and liaison officers to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and Allied Maritime Command), improving access and visibility, but higher-level platforms at NATO, such as the Enhanced Opportunities Partner status, have thus far eluded it.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, an element that appears to be lacking is a more strategic approach by Japan to the other Asia-Pacific Global Partners on NATO. According both to U.S. and Japanese officials, Japan could take better advantage of coordination with regional partners as an advocacy tool with NATO.<sup>113</sup> Such a strategy could amplify Japan's voice on certain issues and be a more effective method of advocacy for activities relevant to the region (like cooperation/coordination with NATO in the Indo-Pacific) than the efforts of any single country. Given differing perceptions regarding NATO among partners in the region, as well as tensions between Japan and the Republic of Korea, incorporating a regional-block approach to engagement with NATO may not be quite as straight-forward as it sounds, but common ground could surely be found.<sup>114</sup> A Japanese role in consulting with regional

partners about shared views, goals and interests vis-a-vis NATO could also enhance its regional leadership.

Overall, the solidification of a clear Japanese strategic vision for its relationship with NATO should become easier over time as Japan gains more information, analysis and evaluation regarding its options. There are three important reasons to accelerate this process, however. First, a clear strategic vision could provide a clearer rubric for evaluating the various benefits and potential of the Japan-NATO relationship and narrowing down which areas should be prioritized. Second, it could provide guidance that would increase efficiencies in the use of resources and in practical decision-making related to the relationship. This would include by facilitating cost-benefit analyses of various avenues of engagement that have differing levels of resource intensity (such as engagement involving assets versus engagement involving only personnel or dialogue and consultation) and by preventing resource allocations or evaluations of opportunities for engagement from being made through bureaucratic silos or even in a broader policy vacuum. Third, a clear strategic vision for the relationship could impact the assessment of priorities and resources related to the relationship by broadening the perspective from which they are analyzed, for example, if the strategic vision were to incorporate an element of coordination with regional partners not currently considered related to the Japan-NATO relationship. To demonstrate the potential impact of a Japanese strategic vision on the relationship, it is useful to consider several examples of possible visions and the differing approaches they could produce. These notional visions are illustrative only and not meant to capture the necessary complexity of an actual national strategic vision.

#### Notional Japanese Strategic Visions

In the first example, referred to as *Example A*, NATO is viewed as a potential collaborator in intermittent security crises and as a relationship - one of several in Europe - of which the primary advantage is political, although with meaningful and important benefits on the security/defense side. The main goals of the relationship are signaling regionally and globally, maintaining political support for Japanese security concerns from Europe, establishing moderate gains in multilateral security and defense cooperation and learning, and maintaining minimum operational interoperability. There is no effort to coordinate with other Asia-Pacific Global Partners. In the second example, referred to as *Example B*, NATO is viewed as a vehicle through which Japan can pursue its interests - in the region, in relation to its alliance relationship with the United States, and with respect to international security. NATO is recognized as facing similar issues and pressures as Japan from its status as a U.S. alliance partner and is seen as a forum in which to compare notes in this regard and share information. Additionally, NATO is viewed, like the United Nations, as a framework through which Japan can participate in international security crises demanding its attention, one that provides a more structured and consistent format than informal, coalition style engagements. Signaling, political support, multilateral security and defense cooperation/learning, and operational interoperability continue to be goals of the

relationship, but Japan is also focused on engagement and activities with NATO that would provide practice for the kinds of participation and support it could contribute under the 2015 peace and security legislation, as well as areas listed in the IPCP. Under *Example B* there is also an effort on Japan's part to engage other Asia-Pacific Global Partners on NATO, to determine any shared goals or interests vis-a-vis NATO and the region and facilitate coordination on them. In the third example, referred to as *Example C*, NATO is viewed as a priority platform through which Japan can increase its regional and global leadership and underscore its value as a U.S. Ally. The goals of the relationship encompass those of *Example B*, but also include greater participation and influence within NATO. Under *Example C*, engagement and coordination with Asia-Pacific Global Partners is prioritized.

Each of the three examples lends itself to differing types and levels of asset and personnel engagement and dialogue/consultation. In *Example A*, ambition for engagement and dialogue/consultation is moderate in scope, focused on keeping Japan on NATO's radar, allowing Japan and NATO to maintain the connections and relations they have built up, and enabling a modicum of operational interoperability, all at relatively modest resource expenditure levels. Japan and NATO are able to rely, as they currently do, mainly on incidental opportunities for operational engagement, particularly biennial Japanese Maritime SDF training cruises passing Europe and exercising along the way with NATO standing maritime groups in the area. However, these incidental opportunities are an expected and understood component of the relationship and both sides endeavor to make the absolute most out of them, with the clear understanding that other regular opportunities are not available. Bilateral or multilateral exercises involving NATO Allies like the United States, United Kingdom, and France primarily fill out the asset engagement element of Japan-NATO relations, providing some measure of interoperability between Japan and NATO. Japan and NATO also continue to come together for relevant international crises, as in the past cases of piracy and Afghanistan, providing intermittent opportunities for increased operational engagement. The focus of engagement involving personnel is on already identified and established channels, such as the Cooperative Cyber Defence COE and the NATO trainings or courses currently familiar within the Japanese bureaucracy and for which budgeting and planning processes are already understood. In terms of dialogue and consultation on topic areas of mutual relevance, lower level dialogues are limited to key interests like cyber, but may be expanded if and when the political or security environment merits. In addition to the political and security environment, other factors that might be evaluated when considering a potential opportunity for engagement are whether such engagement is necessary to maintain the current level of the relationship and interoperability.

In *Example B*, security and defense are treated as a full aspect of the Japan-NATO relationship rather than as a secondary benefit, as in *Example A*. In this regard, NATO offers Japan a way to further develop and practice military capabilities that would be utilized with countries other than just the United States, per its 2015 legislation. As such,

although operational engagement under *Example B* continues to take advantage of incidental opportunities, filled out with bilateral or multilateral exercises involving NATO Allies, where a standard NATO exercise is identified that could develop capacities envisioned under the 2015 peace and security legislation, Japan considers joining such an exercise, despite geographical distance. Under *Example B*, Japan also works with other Asia-Pacific Global Partners to determine whether there is shared interest in advocating for a NATO exercise in the Indian Ocean. Given interest, an approach to an Ally with a regional presence is considered, most likely the United Kingdom or the United States, for an Allied-led exercise under a NATO flag, and a coordinated advocacy approach is made at NATO. Personnel engagement, meanwhile, is stepped up to include a quasi-asset engagement element in the form of Japanese observation of NATO military exercises and vice versa (on a quid pro quo basis), which could also involve other regional partners if desired. Opportunities for more regular personnel engagement and dialogue/consultation are evaluated on the basis of how an opportunity helps with regional interests/partners, how it helps in terms of the alliance relationship with the United States, and how it is better than a bilateral or other multilateral approach. Dialogue and consultation, for example, could be expanded beyond cyber to also include relevant issues facing both Japan and NATO as U.S. alliance partners on which there can be mutually beneficial exchange or learning, such as extended deterrence and space. It could also explicitly examine how Japan and NATO might be called on to operationally cooperate in the future, how Japan would be able to engage under the 2015 legislation, and what kinds of support or engagement from NATO could facilitate readiness in this area.

For *Example C*, asset engagement is on the higher end of the spectrum identified under *Example B*, with Japan regularly participating in at least one existing NATO military exercise and working actively with NATO Allies and regional partners towards an Indian Ocean NATO exercise. Additionally, Japan offers support, in the form of a ship, submarine or maritime patrol aircraft, at least for one tour, to Sea Guardian, NATO's maritime security operation in the Mediterranean Sea focused on maritime situational awareness, counter-terrorism, and security capacity building.<sup>115</sup> Japan utilizes its participation in this operation to make a case for its ascension to NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner status, which offers enhanced access at NATO, including in information sharing.<sup>116</sup> Personnel engagement under *Example C* follows the outline set out in *Example B*, but also goes beyond it in an effort to ensure visible Japanese placements at NATO through additional voluntary national staff contributions and COEs. Japan also offers itself as the location for and provides support personnel to a NATO liaison office for the Asia-Pacific region, to serve as a hub for information sharing and practical engagement with Asia-Pacific Global Partners.<sup>117</sup> This would, of course, require NATO's willingness and ability to budget for at least one liaison officer, but coordinated engagement by the Asia-Pacific Global Partners in favor of such an idea at NATO could encourage NATO action. With respect to dialogue and consultation, *Example C* expands the scope beyond that under *Example B* to include addressing security consequences and challenges posed by China's rise and areas of shared Russia-China challenge, such as A2/AD and aggressive incursions into territorial waters

and airspace. In addition to the factors utilized under *Example B* for evaluating potential opportunities, *Example C* also adds how an opportunity helps Japan gain influence within NATO or within the region.

The three examples require different levels of resource expenditure, but these are in line with the priorities incorporated in each strategic vision. For instance, *Example B* involves more resources than *Example A*, but Japan is more proactively engaged in utilizing NATO to address its specific interests/needs in *Example B* than in *Example A*. In adding a regional element with the engagement of Asia-Pacific Global Partners, *Example B* and *Example C* also potentially change priority evaluations of NATO by ensconcing Japan's regional priorities within its NATO relationship. *Example C* requires the highest level of resources, but also creates the potential for considerable political, defense and prestige advantages from Japan's relationship with NATO. Importantly, the examples also provide a way in which to evaluate resource expenditures (as well as engagement opportunities more generally) based on the strategic vision itself - the political and security environment and the necessity of maintaining the current level of the relationship or interoperability in *Example A*; regional interests/partners, the alliance relationship with the United States, and utility versus a bilateral or multilateral approach in *Example B*; and same again along with influence within NATO or the region in *Example C*. In this regard, although *Example A* looks much like the status quo of Japan-NATO relations, it actually provides more clarity on the relationship than the status quo by delineating the contours of the relationship and being explicitly modest in its level of ambition, clarifying expectations and providing a straight-forward rubric for evaluating engagement.

### *Conclusions*

Maintaining the growth and further deepening of the Japan-NATO relationship will be facilitated by Japan and NATO's ability to actively create opportunities for practical and operational cooperation, as noted in the first brief. Along with military exercises, addressed in the second brief, the topical and geographic areas discussed in this brief, alongside those already identified in the IPCP, provide many potential options from which to choose. Indeed, part of the attractiveness of Japan-NATO relations is that there is so much scope for potential. This potential is not as open-ended as it may seem, however. Not all the options discussed in this brief or other papers on this topic may be equally useful or necessary for Japan and NATO, however interesting they may seem from an academic perspective, and the plethora of options can create distraction. It will be important to narrow these options down to a more targeted focus that takes into account the priority and resource constraints on both sides and adheres to clear, well-developed strategic visions for the development of the relationship.

The solidification of such visions, along with an assessment of the priority constraints identified - their relative mutability and the potential influence on the availability of resources - is an important challenge for Japan-NATO relations, one that will have lasting

impacts. Japan has relatively more flexibility than NATO, at present, to pursue the solidification of a strategic vision for the relationship and the required due-diligence of reviewing Japan's relations in the post-Abe era, starting with the new administration of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, presents an opportunity for accelerating such a development. This does not relieve the responsibility on NATO, however. At the very least, NATO should welcome and encourage the solidification of a Japanese strategic vision for the development of the Japan-NATO relationship. Beyond this, however, NATO should capitalize on the assessments being conducted as part of its future planning process, along with the increasing awareness among Allies and partners of the challenges posed by China, to think more critically about Japan and the other Asia-Pacific Global Partners, as well as the relevance of their broader region for NATO in the years to come.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, "National Security Strategy," Kantei, December 17, 2013, pp. 26, 27, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/documents/2013/icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/icsFiles/afiedfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf); Michito Tsuruoka, "Mutual Support and Common Interests in Asia and European Neighborhoods," German Marshall Fund, April 2015, pp. 1,2, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/mutual-support-and-common-interests-asia-and-european-neighborhoods>; Christopher Hughes, "Japan's response to China's rise: regional engagement, global containment, dangers of collision," *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 2009, p. 850; and Paul Bacon and Joe Burton, "NATO-Japan Relations: Projecting Strategic Narratives of 'Natural Partnership' and Cooperative Security," *Asian Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2018), pp. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom is the only country other than the United States to hold joint military exercises in Japan. The 2017 Japan-United Kingdom Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation calls the two "... the closest security partners respectively in Asia and Europe." See Government of the United Kingdom, "PM press conference with PM Abe of Japan: 31 August 2017," August 21, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-press-statement-in-tokyo>; and Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Defense of Japan 2017," pp. 374-376, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/2017.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2017.html), accessed September 4, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, the EU relies on NATO force generation and resources for major operations like its mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. See, for example, Kristi Raik and Pauli Jarvenpaa, "A New Era of EU-NATO Cooperation: How to Make the Best of a Marriage of Necessity," *International Centre for Defence and Security*, May 2017, pp. 6,17, [https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/ICDS\\_Report\\_A\\_New\\_Era\\_of\\_EU-NATO.pdf](https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/ICDS_Report_A_New_Era_of_EU-NATO.pdf); Michito Tsuruoka, "Japan-Europe Security Cooperation: How to 'Use' NATO and the EU," *National Institute for Defense Studies*, March 2011, pp. 35, 36, [http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/kiyo/pdf/2011/bulletin\\_e2011\\_3.pdf](http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/kiyo/pdf/2011/bulletin_e2011_3.pdf); Stephanie C. Hoffmann, "Overlapping Institutions in the Realm of International Security: The Case of NATO and ESDP," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 46; and Nicholas Williams, "NATO-EU Cooperation: Don't Forget Berlin Plus!," *European Leadership Network*, March 26, 2018, p. 2, <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/nato-eu-cooperation-dont-forget-berlin-plus/>.

<sup>4</sup> See Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Brief Two: Assessing the Impact of Abe Era Security Reforms on Japan-NATO Relations," *Japan Institute of International Affairs*, June 2019, [http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/article\\_page.php?id=21](http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/article_page.php?id=21).

<sup>5</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "Japan-Europe Security Cooperation: How to 'Use' NATO and the EU," pp. 35, 36. See also Michael Paul, "NATO Goes East," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, October 2013, p. 4, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2013C33\\_pau.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2013C33_pau.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> NATO's Global Partners are Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization web page on "Relations with partners across the globe," [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49188.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm), accessed February 13, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Joe Burton, "NATO's 'Global Partners' in Asia: Shifting Strategic Narratives," *Asian Security*, Vol. 14, No.1 (2018), pp. 12, 13, 19; and Philip Shetler-Jones, "What should NATO do about Asia?," in *NATO and Asia Pacific*, Alexander Moens and Brooke A. Smith-Windsor, Editors, NATO Defense College, NDC Forum Papers Series, Forum Paper 25, 2016, p. 69,

[https://www.academia.edu/23910354/What\\_should\\_NATO\\_do\\_about\\_Asia\\_Chapter\\_in\\_NATO\\_and\\_the\\_Asia-Pacific](https://www.academia.edu/23910354/What_should_NATO_do_about_Asia_Chapter_in_NATO_and_the_Asia-Pacific).

<sup>8</sup> Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Policy Brief One: Learning from the History of Japan-NATO Relations," *Japan Institute of International Affairs*, June 2019, pp. 7, 9, 10, [http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/article\\_page.php?id=20](http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/article_page.php?id=20).

<sup>9</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on trust fund projects, <https://www.nspa.nato.int/about/support-to-operations/trust-fund-projects>, accessed June 4, 2019.

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<sup>10</sup> Natalia Chaban et al., “Communicating NATO in the Asia-Pacific Press: Comparative Analysis of Patterns of NATO’s Visibility, Capability, Evaluation, and Local Resonance,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2018), pp. 75, 76, 78. Among partner elites, those in Japan and Australia also appear to have had more broadly positive perceptions of NATO and regional partnerships with NATO than those in New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. See Paul Bacon and Joe Burton, “NATO-Japan Relations: Projecting Strategic Narratives of ‘Natural Partnership’ and Cooperative Security,” pp. 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10; Ben Wellings, Serena Kelly, Bruce Wilson, Joe Burton and Martin Holland, “Narrative Alignment and Misalignment: NATO as a Global Actor as Seen from Australia and New Zealand,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2018), pp. 33, 34; and Sung-Won Yoon, Adiyasuren Jamiyandagva, Vlad Vernygora, Joe Burton, Byambakhand Luguusharav, and Munkhtur Dorjraa, “Views on NATO from Mongolia and the Republic of Korea: Hedging Strategy, and ‘Perfunctory Partnership?’,” *Asian Security*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2018), pp. 61, 62, 63.

<sup>11</sup> See Mirna Galic, “Navigating by Sun and Compass, Brief Two: Assessing the Impact of Abe Era Security Reforms on Japan-NATO Relations,” pp. 2-6.

<sup>12</sup> Global Firepower (GFP) ranked Japan’s military the fifth most powerful in the world for 2020, up from sixth in 2019. See GFP website, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp#additionalNotes>, accessed March 10, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Author interview with NATO official, May 17, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> See GFP website; Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Defense of Japan 2019,” p. 420, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2019/DOJ2019\\_Full.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2019/DOJ2019_Full.pdf), accessed January 20, 2020; and Franz-Stefan Gady, “Japan Launches New Warship,” *The Diplomat*, October 31, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/japan-launches-new-warship/>.

<sup>15</sup> Randall Schriver and Tiffany Ma, “The Next Steps in Japan-NATO Cooperation,” Project 2049 Institute, 2010, p. 16, [https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/next\\_steps\\_in\\_japan\\_nato\\_cooperation\\_schriver\\_ma.pdf](https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/next_steps_in_japan_nato_cooperation_schriver_ma.pdf), accessed September 21, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Tsuneo Watanabe, “A NATO-Asia Partnership Would Ease Japan’s Regional Security Cooperation Dilemma,” January 28, 2015, p. 4, <https://www.tkfd.or.jp/en/research/detail.php?id=585>.

<sup>17</sup> And, increasingly, the broader Indo-Pacific. See “Japan’s Defense Capacity Building Assistance,” pp. 2-6, 8-11, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000146830.pdf>, accessed September 8, 2019; and “Japan Expands Self-Defense Forces Assistance to Include South Asia,” *Japan Forward*, April 3, 2018, <https://japan-forward.com/japan-expands-self-defense-forces-assistance-to-include-south-asia/>.

<sup>18</sup> For a full list of IPCP priority areas, see North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme between Japan and NATO,” May 31, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2018\\_05\\_pdf/20180719\\_180531-ipcp-japan.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2018_05_pdf/20180719_180531-ipcp-japan.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, “NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence grows to 25 members,” <https://ccdcoe.org/news/2019/nato-cooperative-cyber-defence-centre-of-excellence-grows-to-25-members/>, accessed July 15, 2020; and Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Press Conference by Defense Minister Iwaya,” March 8, 2019, <https://www.mod.go.jp/e/press/2019/03/08a.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Defense of Japan 2016,” pp. 299, 300, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016\\_3-1-2\\_web.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_3-1-2_web.pdf), accessed August 7, 2019; Ministry of Defense of Japan, “Defense of Japan 2019,” p. 392; and Rieko Miki, “Japan joins NATO cybersecurity drills to counter Chinese hackers,” *Nikkei*, December 3, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-joins-NATO-cybersecurity-drills-to-counter-Chinese-hackers>.

<sup>21</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO and Japan intensify dialogue on cyber defence,” October 9, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_169493.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_169493.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>22</sup> Robert Ayson, “Asian Roles for NATO: Ideas of Force or the Force of Ideas?,” in *NATO and Asia Pacific*, Alexander Moens and Brooke A. Smith-Windsor, Editors, NATO Defense College, NDC Forum Papers Series, Forum Paper 25, 2016, p. 111; and Emily Tamkin, “10 Years After the Landmark Attack on Estonia, Is the World Better Prepared for Cyber Threats?,” *Foreign Policy*, April 27, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/27/10-years-after-the-landmark-attack-on-estonia-is-the-world-better-prepared-for-cyber-threats/>.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond,” December 18, 2018, p. 4, [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218\\_e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2019/pdf/20181218_e.pdf); and National Center of Incident Readiness and Strategy for Cybersecurity of Japan, “Cybersecurity Strategy,” July 27, 2018, pp. 35, 36, 40, 41, <https://www.nisc.go.jp/eng/pdf/cs-senryaku2018-en.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on cyber defence, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_78170.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm#), accessed August 9, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> See NATO Industry Cyber Partnership webpage, <https://www.ncia.nato.int/business/partnerships/nato-industry-cyber-partnership.html>, accessed August 13, 2019; and Bruno L  t   and Daiga Dege, “NATO Cybersecurity: A Roadmap to Resilience,” *German Marshall Fund*, July 3, 2017, p. 4, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/nato-cybersecurity-roadmap-resilience>.

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Michito Tsuruoka, “NATO’s Challenges as Seen from Asia: Is the European Security Landscape Becoming Like Asia?,” *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, 2016, No. 1, pp. 124-133; and interview with Luis Simón in Octavian Manea, “The A2/AD Predicament: Challenges NATO’s Paradigm of ‘Reassurance through Readiness,’” *Small Wars Journal*, 2016, p. 3, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/index.php/jml/art/the-a2ad-predicament-challenges-nato%E2%80%99s-paradigm-of-%E2%80%9Ccreassurance-through-readiness%E2%80%9D>, accessed June 18, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Mirna Galic, “Navigating by Sun and Compass, Policy Brief One: Learning from the History of Japan-NATO Relations,” p. 2. See also Takashi Oka, “Japan takes firm stand with West on defense issues at summit,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 1983, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1983/0601/060153.html>.

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<sup>31</sup> Japan Times, “Japan seeks multilateralization of INF treaty, Kono says, after U.S. decides to withdraw from pact,” February 5, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/02/05/national/following-u-s-decision-withdraw-inf-japan-says-broader-arms-treaty-needed/>; and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Speech by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg at the High-level NATO Conference on Arms Control and Disarmament,” October 23, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_169930.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169930.htm?selectedLocale=en).

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<sup>34</sup> The Brookings Institution, “The U.S. –Japan Alliance and the Problem of Deterrence,” February 22, 2018, pp. 18, 19, 21; and Dr. Karl-Heinz Kamp and Major General Robertus C.N. Remkes (USAF, RET), “Options for NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements,” in *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe a Framework for Action*, Steve Andreasen and Isabelle Williams, Editors, Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2011, p. 94, [https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NTI\\_Framework\\_Chpt4.pdf](https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NTI_Framework_Chpt4.pdf).

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<sup>82</sup> Joe Burton, “NATO’s ‘Global Partners’ in Asia: Shifting Strategic Narratives,” p. 9.

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<sup>94</sup> See, for example, North Atlantic Treaty Organization fact sheet on “Key NATO and Allied exercises in 2019,” February 2019, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_02/1902-factsheet\\_exercises\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_02/1902-factsheet_exercises_en.pdf), accessed June 12, 2020. Partner participation in exercises must also be endorsed by the Military Committee and Approved by the North

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Atlantic Council. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on exercises, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/49285.htm>, accessed June 12, 2020.

<sup>95</sup> See North Atlantic Treaty Organization Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe webpage on exercises and training, <https://shape.nato.int/exercises>, accessed on June 12, 2020; and North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on exercises, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/49285.htm>.

<sup>96</sup> There is a distinction between NATO exercises, which are determined according to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's annual guidance for the NATO Military Training and Exercise Program, and Allied-led exercises, which are initiated by national authorities and may be held under a NATO flag given approval. In some cases, exercises might even be hosted by partner nations; NATO's webpage on exercises notes, "Exercises are as open as possible to all formal partners, either as observers or as participants, *and in some cases even as hosts of an exercise* (emphasis added)." See North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on exercises, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/49285.htm>.

<sup>97</sup> Author interview with NATO official, May 17, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Brief Two: Assessing the Impact of Abe Era Security Reforms on Japan-NATO Relations," p. 10.

<sup>99</sup> Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Brief Two: Assessing the Impact of Abe Era Security Reforms on Japan-NATO Relations," p. 11; See also Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Defense of Japan 2020," pp. 360-365, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/wp2020/pdf/index.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/wp2020/pdf/index.html), accessed October 6, 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Michito Tsuruoka, "Competing Visions of Japan's International Engagement: Japan First vs Global Japan," *International Spectator*, Vol. 55, No. 1, March 2020.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Defense of Japan 2019," pp. 503-505, 532-534.

<sup>103</sup> Author interview with former Ministry of Defense of Japan official, February 6, 2019.

<sup>104</sup> Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Policy Brief One: Learning from the History of Japan-NATO Relations," p. 8.

<sup>105</sup> Author interview with Japanese government official, April 6, 2019. See also organizational information from the Ministry of Defense of Japan, [http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/gaiyou/jimu/jinjikyoku/files/14\\_mod.pdf](http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/gaiyou/jimu/jinjikyoku/files/14_mod.pdf), accessed February 12, 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Author interview with Japanese government official, April 6, 2019; and author interview with Japan Self-Defense Forces official March 2, 2020.

<sup>107</sup> "Japan Defense Ministry to create post for ASEAN affairs," *Japan Times*, June 28, 2020,

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/28/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-defense-ministry-asean-post/#>.

<sup>108</sup> Author exchange with Japan Self-Defense Forces official, October 31, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Author interview with Japan-NATO expert Michito Tsuruoka, November 18, 2018 and March 29, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> Based on Author interviews and research.

<sup>111</sup> Based on Author research and Author interview at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 6, 2019; Author interview with Japanese government official, April 6, 2019; Author interview with Japanese government official, June 17, 2019; and Author interview with Japan Self-Defense Forces official, March 2, 2020.

<sup>112</sup> Mirna Galic, "Navigating by Sun and Compass, Policy Brief One: Learning from the History of Japan-NATO Relations," p. 8; Ministry of Defense of Japan, "Defense of Japan 2020," p. 363.

<sup>113</sup> Author interview with former official at the United States Mission to NATO, October 16, 2018; author interview at Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 6, 2019; and author interview with Japan Self-Defense Forces official March 2, 2020.

<sup>114</sup> On differing perceptions regarding NATO among partners in the region, see: Benjamin Schreer, "Beyond Afghanistan: NATO's Global Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific," NATO Defense College, Rome, Research Paper No. 75, April 2012, pp. 3-7; Ben Wellings et al., "Narrative Alignment and Misalignment: NATO as a Global Actor as Seen from Australia and New Zealand," pp. 33, 34; and Sung-Won Yoon et al., "Views on NATO from Mongolia and the Republic of Korea: Hedging Strategy, and 'Perfunctory Partnership'?", pp. 61, 62, 63.

<sup>115</sup> See North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on Operation Sea Guardian, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_136233.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136233.htm), accessed May 27, 2020.

<sup>116</sup> Idea attributed to former United States Mission to NATO official Jason R. Hutchison, Author interview, September 27, 2018. See also North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO recognises Ukraine as Enhanced Opportunities Partner," June 12, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_176327.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176327.htm); and North Atlantic Treaty Organization webpage on the Partnership Interoperability Initiative, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132726.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm), accessed May 27, 2020.

<sup>117</sup> The idea of a NATO Asia liaison office located in Japan is raised by Philip Shetler-Jones. See Philip Shetler-Jones, "What should NATO do about Asia?," p. 80.