

The EU-Japan EPA/SPA and the 'Abe Doctrine': Reinforcing Norms Globally, Changing them Domestically

July 2018

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On 17 July 2018, leaders from the EU and Japan met in Tokyo to sign the dual Economic Partnership Agreement and Strategic Partnership Agreements (EPA and SPA). These agreements, for which negotiations started in 2013, represent a significant change in the relationship between these two great civilian powers, ushering in a new era of increased cooperation. The response to these agreements from around the world has been largely positive, with these agreements frequently understood to be lending significant support to the increasingly fragile liberal international order. Whilst this may be the case, these agreements are certain to also impact upon the domestic economic and political landscapes of either signatory, with Japan likely to be significantly affected. It is this subject that is addressed within this paper. Throughout his tumultuous premiership, Shinzo Abe's strategic ambitions for Japan have become increasingly clear. While Abe's leadership is often associated with his efforts to revive the Japanese economy through policies dubbed 'Abenomics', his ambitions to alter Japan's foreign and security policy are also illustrative of his time in power. Throughout this paper, I will assess how the recently signed EPA and SPA may act to further Abe's strategic agenda, often dubbed the 'Abe Doctrine'. I will conclude that whilst these agreements certainly act to reinforce the global norms underlying the liberal international order, they also function as a means through which domestic Japanese norms can be altered in line with the 'Abe Doctrine'.

EU-Asia at a Glance is a publication series about the current state of affairs in Asia and EU-Asia relations

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Introduction

Despite at first glance appearing to be natural allies, the relationship between the European Union (EU) and Japan has historically left much to be desired. Whilst throughout the twentieth century these great, civilian powers both emerged as core members and ardent advocates of the post-war global liberal order, the development of strong bilateral relations has long been elusive. In 2013, however, the EU and Japan began the process of establishing an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and an accompanying Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). Just last week, on 17 July, leaders of the EU and Japan met to sign off on these agreements, ushering in a new age for relations between these two global powers.

Initially, this paper will analyse how the EPA and SPA are popularly understood from the perspectives of the agreements' stakeholders and amongst the dominant literature discussing this topic. Having outlined these dominant interpretations however, my focus will turn to address how these agreements can be understood within the context of Japan's domestic ambitions and strategic goals. Shinzo Abe has for some time been assumed to be developing a new doctrinal approach to Japan's international affairs, with this grand strategy earning the appellation 'The Abe Doctrine'. Throughout this paper, I hope to offer an alternative perspective on the burgeoning relationship between Japan and the EU, and question to what extent the agreements function to further Abe's grand strategy.

The EPA and SPA: Prevailing Interpretations

Despite remaining mutually important trading partners, for both the EU and Japan, "the relative importance of their bilateral trade has been declining for years"². In addition to this, whilst the EU has recently described Japan as its 'natural ally', near consensus exists amongst analysts that EU-Japan security cooperation is yet to reach its full potential³. Within this context, the recently signed EPA and SPA are poised to facilitate a sea-change in relations between these two great powers.

The significance of these agreements to either party cannot be understated, with the EPA being described in a European Commission press release of July 2017 as; "the most important bilateral trade agreement ever concluded by the European Union"⁴. They are viewed with no less approbation in Japan, with a 2016 document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) highlighting how the SPA will "[P]rovide legal basis for the Japan-EU strategic partnership for the coming decades"⁵. It is evident from these statements that both the EPA and SPA are held in great regard by both partner countries.

Whilst agreement exists between Japan and the EU concerning the significance of these tandem agreements, it is important to analyse what their implications are popularly understood to be. In their analysis of this increased EU-Japanese cooperation, Mario

² Hilpert, HG. (2017). *The Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement: Economic Potentials and Policy Perspectives*. SWP

³ Berkofsky, A. (2017). *The EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) - Responding to the Crisis of the Liberal World Order*. Bertelsmann Stiftung

⁴ European Commission Press Release. 6 July 2017. Retrieved from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1902_en.htm

⁵ MOFA. (2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000033265.pdf>

Esteban and Luis Simon of the Real Instituto Elcano suggest that both Brussels and Tokyo view the EPA and SPA as signs “of their commitment to upholding and reinforcing the normative foundations of the liberal order”⁶. This theme is prevalent throughout a large amount of the literature on the subject, with influential stakeholders from either side echoing this line of argument - framing the increased economic and strategic cooperation between the EU and Japan within the context of a liberal world order in crisis⁷. For either of these agreement’s signatories, reinforcing the global political-economic environment that has underpinned their affluence and influence throughout the past 70 years is clearly in their vested interests, however the implications of these agreements extend beyond the international, ideational sphere.

One major domestic implication of these agreements is the potential impact of the EPA upon either partner’s economy. With the European and Japanese economies cumulatively accounting for around a third of global GDP, the opportunities that stem from both reduced tariff and non-tariff barriers, and mutually improved market access, are significant. It is suggested that within a 10-year time frame, the EPA is projected to boost annual European exports to Japan from around EUR 80 bn to over EUR 180 bn, with Japanese exports to the EU rising from EUR 55 bn to over EUR 140 bn over the same period⁸. Literature touting the economic significance of these agreements for either partner’s economy is also widely available⁹, dominating analysis into the domestic implications of the EPA and SPA.

At the recent signing ceremony in Tokyo, the comments of both Jean-Claude Juncker and Cecilia Malmstrom aligned clearly with the claims made throughout the dominant literature discussing the EPA/SPA. As such, both focussed exclusively on what impact these agreements are expected to have upon the international political environment, and upon either partner’s economy¹⁰. Whilst arguments of this ilk are well substantiated, the knock-on effects of these tandem agreements are sure to permeate beyond these two spheres. One area which is noticeably under-represented in the literature concerns the domestic politics of the agreement’s signatories. Whilst the impact of these agreements on the internal politics of various EU member states is likely to be minimal, the same can not be said for Japan.

Since his re-election in 2017, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been decidedly candid in his ambition to change the political paradigms that, throughout the past 70 years, have shaped modern Japan. With the EPA and SPA set to have a significant impact upon Japan’s economy and strategic global role, the archipelago’s somewhat stagnant political landscape may be on the verge of momentous change.

⁶ Esteban M & Simon L. (2018). *Europe Japan Cooperation for a rules based international liberal order*. Real Instituto Elcano

⁷ Hilpert. 2017; Berkofsky, 2017; Okano-Heijmans. 2017. *Europe and Japan should look to each other amid Uncertainty about Trump and Xi*, Clingendael; Angelescu. 2018, *Japan-EU Partnership Agreements herald new era of closer cooperation*, ECFR

⁸ The EU-Japan Forum, Retrieved from: <https://www.eujapanforum.com/>

⁹ E.g. Lee-Makiyama H. (2018). *At the Nexus of Trade and Investment: The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement*. LSE Consulting; Panda A. (2018). *Largest Bilateral Free Trade Agreement: Japan, EU Conclude Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement*, The Diplomat; Pesek W. (2018). *Japan-EU Trade Deal not Gold Standard, but Still Worth Billions*, Asia Times

¹⁰ European Commission Press Release. 17 July 2018. Retrieved from: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4526_en.htm

Considering Abe's desire to redefine the norms that have long dominated Japanese politics, it is of clear value to analyse these agreements within the context of Shinzo Abe's 'Grand Strategy'.

Understanding Abe's Grand Strategy: The Emergence of the Abe Doctrine

Before the EPA and SPA can be analysed against Abe's strategic ambitions, it is first necessary to provide some background information on Shinzo Abe's premiership, and explain how his 'Grand Strategy' is popularly understood. Since a litany of economic, social, and political shocks hit Japan in and around 1989, Japan has seen 17 Prime Ministers come and go in 29 years. Having experienced such a high turnover of leaders, the resilience and longevity demonstrated by Shinzo Abe since his return to power in 2012¹¹ marks a change in recent trends. With a distinguishing feature of Abe's premiership being not just its longevity, but also his increasingly candid ambition to change Japan's place in the world, the notion of Abe's 'grand strategy' has entered the academic discourse on Japan.

With numerous commentators seeking to define Abe's 'grand strategy', it is necessary to briefly analyse several of these so as to develop a working definition to use throughout this paper. Christopher Hughes¹², Hugo Dobson¹³, John Nilsson-Wright & Kiiichi Fujiwara¹⁴, and Daisuke Akimoto¹⁵ have all made significant contributions to the study of Abe's grand strategy, and I will be using their analysis to form the platform from which to continue this study. Throughout all four of these studies, the 'grand strategy' being pursued within Japan is referred to as the 'Abe Doctrine'. This term, originally popularised by Chris Hughes in 2015, frames Abe's strategic ambitions within the context of the Yoshida Doctrine, the doctrinal approach orchestrated by post-war Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida. With an emphasis on low profile foreign policy, constrained defence posture, reliance on the US security umbrella, and the rebuilding of economic and diplomatic ties with East Asian neighbours¹⁶, the Yoshida Doctrine came to define Japan's post-WWII political stance. As the notion of an Abe Doctrine gains traction amongst Japanese and non-Japanese commentators alike¹⁷, its phrasing clearly implies that Abe's grand strategy is likely to involve a doctrinal shift away from past political norms.

Whilst the literature chosen for this study represents both critical and more neutral interpretations of the Abe Doctrine, consensus exists that Japan's new grand strategy reflects a distinct shift in political priorities. The extent and nature of this shift however, is widely contested. Within the aforementioned literature, Chris Hughes and

¹¹ After his initial 2006/2007 premiership was brought to an end due to ill health

¹² Hughes, C. (2015). *An 'Abe Doctrine' as Japan's Grand Strategy: New Dynamism or Dead End?* Japan Focus, Volume 13 (4)

¹³ Dobson, H. (2017). *Is Japan Really Back?: The "Abe Doctrine" and Global Governance*, Journal of Contemporary Asia. Volume 47(2). pp199-224

¹⁴ Nilsson-Wright J & Fujiwara K. (2015). *Japan's Abe Administration: Steering a Course Between Pragmatism and Extremism*, Chatham House

¹⁵ Akimoto, D. (2018). *The Abe Doctrine: Japan's Proactive Pacifism and Security Strategy*. Palgrave Macmillan

¹⁶ Hughes, *An 'Abe Doctrine' as Japan's Grand Strategy*, p.1

¹⁷ Dobson, *Is Japan Really Back?*, p.203

Hugo Dobson provide a more critical analysis of the Abe Doctrine, linking Abe's strategic approach to historical revisionism and military normalisation. This understanding argues that the Abe Doctrine's roots are established within the kind of traditional conservatism outlined in Abe's 2006 book *Utsukushiii Kuni e* (Towards a Beautiful Country). Throughout this publication, Abe outlines his grand vision for Japan - one in which Japan is a "truly sovereign nation in line with its great power status"¹⁸. In achieving this, Dobson suggests that Abe's eponymous and evolving doctrine can be summarised in four tenets: A desire to halt Japan's 'decline'; restored status resulting from addressing 'shackles of the past'; overturning post-war obstacles constraining foreign policy; and the achievement of this through an economically strong Japan¹⁹. Similar arguments are reflected in Hughes' work, where it is argued that Abe hopes to "shift Japan towards a more radical external agenda - characterized by a defence posture less fettered by past anti-militaristic constraints"²⁰

Given Abe's ties to conservative nationalism, the critical interpretation of the Abe Doctrine espoused by Hughes and Dobson has garnered a strong following. Despite this however, many commentators are more neutral in their analysis. In their discussion of the Abe Doctrine, John Nilsson-Wright and Kiichi Fujiwara suggest that at the core of the doctrine lies not Abe's revisionist ideology, but a set of values laid out in a 2013 text prepared for an ASEAN meeting in Jakarta. Within this text, Japan is presented "as a land of democracy and the rule of law"²¹, with a focus on Japan's normative influence as a member of the liberal community. Echoing this line of argument, Daisuke Akimoto's 2018 book also focusses on the Jakarta document when seeking to define the Abe Doctrine. Akimoto also considers Japan's "proactive contribution to peace" as core to the Abe Doctrine.

Although the four pieces of literature I have analysed provide a variety of perspectives on the Abe Doctrine, certain commonalities run through them. Whereas commentators disagree as to the drivers behind Abe's grand strategy - varying from radical conservative idealism to pragmatic hedging against regional threats - consensus exists that the Abe Doctrine will likely replace the long-standing normative framework established under the Yoshida Doctrine. As mentioned, the Yoshida Doctrine has a focus on low-profile foreign policy and constrained defence posture, and it is these two things that Abe seems determined to overturn. Abe's foreign policy is increasingly proactive, and his ambitions for the defence sector far from constrained. Akimoto suggests Abe desires "complete normalisation or possible maximisation of Japan's defence capability"²², a task that will require constitutional change - another ambition of Abe's agreed upon throughout the literature. Discussion surrounding the changing of Japan's constitution is predominantly focussed around Article Nine, the constitution's 'peace clause', which famously denies Japan the right to belligerency and a standing army.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Hughes, *An 'Abe Doctrine' as Japan's Grand Strategy*, p.1

²¹ Nilsson-Wright J & Fujiwara K, *Japan's Abe Administration: Steering a Course Between Pragmatism and Extremism*, p.8

²² Akimoto, *The Abe Doctrine: Japan's Proactive Pacifism and Security Strategy*, p.199

There is clear agreement throughout the literature that Abe hopes to change Japan's constitution, re-orient its foreign policy, and normalise its military; however, Akimoto and Dobson also highlight the importance of economics to the Abe Doctrine. Dobson concisely outlines the importance of economics to Abe's grand strategy, writing how; "the objectives of securing Japan's great power status and promoting a more proactive and robust Japanese security role... can only be achieved through an economically strong Japan"²³. Dobson also highlights Japan's interest in maintaining the rules based economic world order in the face of numerous threats. Akimoto also raised the subject of economics, arguing how the dual strategic and economic implications of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) - especially before the USA exited the deal - were highly important to the Abe Doctrine²⁴. Whilst this issue isn't explicitly mentioned within the other literature I have analysed, Dobson suggests that the importance of economics is implied throughout Hughes' book. This being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that Abe's grand strategy for Japan depends to a large extent upon the strength and stability of the nation's economy.

Assessing the EPA/SPA within the context of the Abe Doctrine

Throughout the course of this paper, I have laid out both how the EU-Japan EPA/SPA are commonly interpreted and provided a working definition of the 'Abe Doctrine' from dominant literature on the subject. Having done this, in this final section I will bring these two subjects together, in doing so, demonstrating the potential impact that the upcoming EU-Japan agreements may have upon Shinzo Abe's grand strategy. Whilst it is widely agreed upon that the EPA and SPA should be understood "as two wheels on a vehicle"²⁵, I will now analyse each agreement independently against Abe's strategic objectives, before bringing my findings together.

Economic issues have long held primacy within the Japanese political discourse. With Japan's now dwindling great power status built upon economic strength and elections fought and won over economic policies, the relationship between Japan's domestic politics and its economy cannot be decoupled. As such, it should come as no surprise that Shinzo Abe's strategic ambitions for Japan are embroiled with economic strength, with his economic strategy known as 'Abenomics', being central to his 2012 election campaign²⁶. However, despite commentators clearly considering economics as central to Abe's grand strategy, the role that economics will play is discussed in rather vague terms. From the literature I have analysed, Abe's strategic economic goals rather unclearly involve 'economic strength' and 'economic recovery'. Within the context of these somewhat ambiguous ambitions, I hope to assess how the EPA is likely to help advance Abe's strategic interests.

When assessing the EPA's headline grabbing statistics, it appears obvious that Japan's economy is likely to benefit from this wide-reaching agreement. With this agreement gradually eliminating 98 per cent of tariffs between two regions that

²³ Dobson, *Is Japan Really Back?*, p.205

²⁴ Akimoto, *The Abe Doctrine: Japan's Proactive Pacifism and Security Strategy*, p.186

²⁵ Taken from a speech made in 2014 by then Japan Ambassador to the EU, H E Kojiro Shiojiri, Retrieved from: http://www.eu.embjapan.go.jp/pdfs%20and%20docs/Ambassador%20Shiojiri%20speech%20on%20SPA_WEBSITE.pdf

²⁶ Pekkanen R, Reed R & Sceiner E. (2013). *Japan Decides 2012: the Japanese General Election*, Palgrave Macmillan, p.195

cumulatively encompass 30 per cent of the world's GDP, it is clear that when the EPA gets enacted, much is to be gained economically. In a recent publication by the European Commission, it is argued that this agreement between the EU and Japan "would enhance the competitiveness of their economies, make their markets more efficient and vibrant and ensure predictable commercial environment for further expansion of trade and investment between them"²⁷. These changes are in line with the illusive 'third arrow' of Abenomics, which encourages structural reforms to compliment the other two 'arrows' of fiscal stimulus and monetary easing. As such, if the proposed outcomes of this wide-reaching agreement are realised, Abe's ambitions to further strengthen the Japanese economy are likely to be significantly aided.

Whilst it is highly likely that the EU-Japan EPA will act to bolster Japan's long-struggling economy, it is arguable that this economic agreement serves strategic aims beyond increased financial returns. Developed in 2013, Japan's National Security Strategy (NSS) has discussed the role played by multilateral frameworks and agreements in furthering Japan's broader strategic interests. The NSS has asserted that the "expansion of the open and rule-based international economic system... is essential for the world economy and Japan's economic prosperity"²⁸, adding that participation in and development of agreements such as the EPA and TPP is important to this process. In discussion of the TPP (now CPTPP following President Trump's withdrawal), Akimoto made evident that multilateral agreements can help Japan and its traditional partners counterbalance the increasing economic and normative influence of China²⁹. As such, despite the overwhelming economic focus of the EU-Japan EPA, it has the potential to serve alternate strategic ends. With the potential to boost Japan's economic output, reinforce the rules-based economic order, and help counterbalance against Japan's historical, regional adversary, the EPA clearly functions to advance numerous aspects of Shinzo Abe's grand strategy.

The above-mentioned aspects of the Abe Doctrine that are set to be facilitated by the EPA are readily acknowledged within the literature discussing the likely outcomes of the EU-Japan agreements. Whereas the facilitation of economic growth and the defence of the liberal international order are aspects of the Abe Doctrine that Japan's European partners support and encourage, other strategic ambitions are perhaps overlooked by Japan's allies. The Abe Administration's desire to overhaul the norms laid out within the Yoshida Doctrine and break from the 'shackles of the past' is all but invisible throughout literature discussing the EPA and SPA. Especially in commentary originating in Europe, this subject goes largely ignored. These ambitions however, are at the very core of the Abe Doctrine, and whilst these particular strategic aims aren't directly advanced by the signing of the EPA, the same cannot be said for the SPA.

Compared to the EPA, the stated purposes of the SPA align more clearly with Shinzo Abe's domestic ambitions. Whilst its outcomes are less quantifiable, the SPA certainly leaves scope for Japan to exercise a more proactive foreign policy and less constrained security policy. Within the recently signed document outlining the SPA, it is stated that "the Parties shall strengthen their partnership through dialogue and

²⁷ European Commission. (2018), *Proposal for a Council Decision, on behalf of the European Union, of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Japan*, Retrieved from: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/december/tradoc_156423.pdf

²⁸ Japanese National Security Strategy. (2013). p.33

²⁹ Akimoto, *The Abe Doctrine: Japan's Proactive Pacifism and Security Strategy*, p.187

cooperation on matters of mutual interest in the area of political issues, foreign and security policies and other sectoral cooperation"³⁰. Whilst numerous articles within this agreement fall under the category of 'other sectoral cooperation'³¹, there is a distinct focus on foreign and security policy throughout the document. In the SPA's opening article, the agreement's "purpose" is outlined. Within this short section, the terms 'international', 'regional', and 'global' are mentioned a total six times³². In addition to this, many of the SPA's initial articles cover issues with a distinct connection to foreign and security policy³³. Whilst specific examples of future cooperation are not alluded to, it is supposed that the consolidation of the SPA will lead to greater military/security cooperation. Examples of this are likely to include anti-piracy operations (e.g. Operation Atalanta), and greater Japanese involvement in peace-keeping and other military operations worldwide. Despite the SPA's ambiguity as to what this strategic partnership is likely to involve, it is clear that the areas of Japanese domestic policy that the SPA is most likely to be impact upon are both foreign and security policy; the Abe Doctrine's two main focuses.

As mentioned previously, the domestic, policy related outcomes of the EPA and SPA are largely ignored within the dominant literature on the subject. Despite this however, it appears likely that the SPA in particular will impact upon Japanese domestic policy, especially where it concerns foreign relations and security. This strategic agreement has the potential to open up policy space within Japan that historical norms have long constrained, with Japan now poised to play a more pro-active role in international security. The recently signed SPA aims to push the EU and Japan's security relationship beyond the usual rhetoric concerning peace promotion and nuclear non-proliferation, encouraging instead an increase in strategic dialogue and security cooperation³⁴. Within the context of the Abe Doctrine, a shift towards more comprehensive and tangible security collaboration with the EU will directly aid in overturning the constrained foreign and security policies that have held primacy in Japan for decades.

As the Abe Administration increasingly looks to distance itself from the norms that have long dictated its foreign and security policy, there is a real chance that the enactment of the EPA and SPA could act as a catalyst for this normative shift. In 2014, the then Japanese Ambassador to the EU, H. E. Ambassador Kojiro Shiojiri, highlighted how it is hoped that these agreements will aid Japan in "setting a new paradigm"³⁵. When outlining this new paradigm, Ambassador Shiojiri's primary focuses were on Japan's economic recovery, achieved through Abenomics, and Japan's changed role in global

³⁰ Strategic Partnership Between the European Union and its Member States, of the One Part, and Japan, on the Other Part, Signed 17 July 2018

³¹ This includes such things as industrial cooperation, tourism, agriculture, environment, etc.

³² Ibid

³³ Including the promotion of peace and security, crisis management, arms, and terrorism.

³⁴ De Prado C. (2014). *Prospects for the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership: A Global Multi-Level and Swot Analysis*, European University Institute. p.27

³⁵ Speech by H E Ambassador Shiojiri, 2014, Accessed from: Taken from a speech made in 2014 by then Japan Ambassador to the EU, H E Kojiro Shiojiri, Retrieved from: http://www.eu.embjapan.go.jp/pdfs%20and%20docs/Ambassador%20Shiojiri%20speech%20on%20SPA_WEBSITE.pdf

security, manifested in Japan's "proactive contribution to peace"³⁶. Clearly, these two aspects of Shiojiri's 'paradigm' are inseparable from the ambitions of the Abe Doctrine. Whilst this certainly isn't to say that strategic ambitions have acted as the primary driver behind Japan's commitment to these agreements, it is evident that as far back as 2014, the Abe Administration has understood its changing relationship with the EU within the context of domestic policy goals.

Throughout much of the primary and secondary literature on the EPA and SPA, an emphasis is placed on how they will act to reinforce the norms that underly the liberal international order. However, it appears as though the Abe Administration plans to simultaneously use these agreements to change norms domestically. Somewhat alarmingly, this utilisation of these agreements to advance Shinzo Abe's grand strategy has been all but ignored within the relevant literature, and by Japan's European partners. Whilst Japan's pursuit of a proactive foreign and security policy does not nullify its commitment to the global liberal order, Abe's hard-line (and arguably nationalistic) agenda should not continue to go overlooked.

Conclusion

With Shinzo Abe and Jean-Claude Juncker recently signing the EPA and SPA at a summit in Tokyo, 2018 is shaping up to be an important year within Europe and Japan's historical relationship. As regularly noted in the dominant literature on the subject, in this time of great political uncertainty, these agreements function to lend significant support to the increasingly fragile-looking liberal international order. Both signatories have much invested in this global order and reinforcing the norms at its foundation is clearly in either parties interest. With so much focus on the international implications of these agreements however, their impact upon the domestic policies of either partner has been largely overlooked.

Throughout his time in office, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has become increasingly candid in his strategic vision for Japan. In an attempt to break from the normative framework of the Yoshida Doctrine, Abe and other traditional conservatives within the LDP have been working to implement a new Japanese grand strategy. It was this grand strategy, given the appellation the 'Abe Doctrine', that this paper's second section sought to define. From my research, I concluded that Abe's strategic ambitions for Japan centre around a normalised military, more proactive foreign and security policy, and constitutional revision - all built upon the foundation of a strong economy. With all of these at the very core of Abe's domestic agenda, this paper set about analysing the EU-Japan agreements against these domestic policy aspirations.

Upon closer inspection, it soon became clear that significant aspects of the Abe Doctrine are likely to be served by the outcomes of the EPA and SPA. The EPA is widely expected to boost Japan's long struggling economy, and whilst the SPA is more of an unknown entity, it clearly leaves scope for Japan's security and foreign policy to become increasingly assertive. It is commonly understood that these partnership agreements should serve to further the regional policies and strengthen the common global interests of either party, however it appears as though they are also being utilised to further Shinzo Abe's domestic political agenda. Whilst this should not be cause for alarm within the EU, as Japan's emerging grand strategy is not at necessarily odds with the European world view, Brussels should pay more consideration to this point. Abe's association with

the Japanese far-right and the rising potential for regional spats (despite recent warming of relations with China) resulting from a more assertive and militarily liberalised Japan have the potential to undermine regional stability in East Asia. In a time when the EU and the liberal world order is in desperate need of support, decision makers in Brussels must remain cautious and vigilant, even when dealing with allies.

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