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## Rules-based connectivity, maritime security and EU-Japan cooperation in the Indian Ocean

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### Theme<sup>1</sup>

This paper puts forward a number of specific proposals to further EU-Japan maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

### Summary

Taking the 2019 EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) as its point of departure, this paper puts forward a number of specific proposals to further EU-Japan maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. It begins by discussing recent developments in EU and Japanese security policy, and briefly outlines the political and geo-strategic drivers of EU-Japan security cooperation, as well as its limitations. Next, it identifies maritime security and the Indian Ocean region as two areas that have a great potential for greater EU-Japan security cooperation. It then discusses a specific proposal to further EU-Japan security cooperation: the setting up of an Indian Ocean Maritime Capacity Building Initiative.

### Analysis

#### Introduction

Why maritime security in the Indian Ocean? The maritime domain is the artery of global trade, the glue that holds together the rules-based international economic and political order. Its security is therefore of the utmost importance to Japan and the EU, whose economies are highly dependent on external trade and whose politics are deeply invested in the preservation of a rules-based international order. More specifically, the Indian Ocean region is where the EU's 'extended neighbourhood' meets Japan's concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).

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Japan has the strategic mindset of a sea power. It is fully aware that the maritime domain is critical to its security and prosperity, and it has a characteristically global perspective of international politics. Moreover, the Indian Ocean is a key highway for Japanese trade, notably with Europe, but also East Africa and the Middle East. From a broader geostrategic perspective, the Indian Ocean region matters increasingly to Japan: it is becoming a central piece in China's outreach and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and for many it has already become a sub-theatre of the broader Indo-Pacific maritime axis.<sup>2</sup> This has been endorsed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's FOIP vision, but also by the US decision to replace its Pacific Command with a new Indo-Pacific Command, and thus treat the Indo-Pacific as an integrated geostrategic space.

From a European security perspective, the maritime domain offers the best entry point to think beyond the immediate European neighbourhood (ie, North Africa and Eastern Europe). This becomes particularly relevant as we move towards a geopolitical paradigm that is increasingly defined by great power competition, whereby the centre of gravity of world politics is shifting towards the Indo-Pacific maritime axis. The result will be a shattering of a geostrategic mindset in which Europe is at the centre of world politics, and events in and around the European region very much shape what happens elsewhere. Today –and presumably even more so tomorrow– much of what happens in Europe and its neighbourhood is affected by geostrategic and geo-economic dynamics further afield, and more particularly on the Indo-Pacific maritime axis. From that viewpoint, the Indian Ocean is Europe's highway into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is something that some European countries like France and the UK seem to well understand, and that the EU is becoming aware of.

The fact that the maritime domain and the Indian Ocean region constitute the 'natural meeting place for EU-Japan cooperation' is arguably upheld by Japan's ongoing presence in Djibouti, its ongoing engagement with EUNAVFOR Atalanta and the decision to deploy a destroyer to the Arabian Sea, as also by the EU's ongoing commitment to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia.

But what are Japan and the EU's shared interests in the Indian Ocean? To the extent that it lies at the crossroads of China's BRI, Japan's FOIP, the EU's connectivity vision, America's Indo-Pacific and India's 'Look East' policy, we see a number of visions –partly competing, partly complementary– about the world order that centre on the Indo-Pacific and meet in the Indian Ocean. In many ways, this is the one region where all important world powers meet more directly, and where the battle for the soul of the international system is being fought.<sup>3</sup> From an EU and Japanese viewpoint it is therefore critical to ensure that the behaviour of Indian Ocean rimland states is bound by rules and openness, and not by spheres of influence or protectionism. And the best way to do that is to preserve a balance of power in the Indian Ocean region, to ensure that no single power is able to change the status-quo coercively and impose its views on the region – and that rimland states operate according to widely shared rules and not to the designs

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<sup>2</sup> See, eg, Kai He & Mingjiag Li (2020), 'Understanding the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China strategic competition, regional actors and beyond', *International Affairs*, nr 96, p. 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Kaplan (2010), *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, Random House, New York.

of any given individual power—. To do that, the EU and Japan ought to make sure that India Ocean rimland states are capable of standing on their own feet. That may sound like a rather tall order for the EU and Japan, given the many constraints and caveats that surround their security policies. So the question is: how can the EU and Japan help advance such geostrategic aims in a way that is politically realistic?

We argue that the EU and Japan should focus on initiatives that do not entail the direct, kinetic use of military force; that de-emphasise military-only solutions and further a more mixed 'civ-mil-pol' approach to security; that they use transnational threats (such as piracy, disaster relief, the fight against pandemics and environmental security at sea) as their entry point, as opposed to inter-state threats; and that they focus on empowering others through training, advising and capacity building. This is our framework of reference.

### The strategic importance of the maritime domain and the Indian Ocean region for European security

In recent years the EU has sought to strengthen its role as a security provider. The development of European defence was a strategic priority for the High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Vice President (HRVP) Federica Mogherini, as well as for the Juncker Commission writ large. The 2016 European Global Strategy singled out the importance of security and defence, and proclaimed that 'Europeans must be able to protect Europe, respond to external crises, and assist in developing our partners' security and defence capacities'.<sup>4</sup> Building on the ambition set out in the 2016 European Global Strategy, the EU has since launched a number of initiatives aimed at consolidating its role in security and defence.<sup>5</sup>

If anything, the new EU leadership is set to increase its efforts to consolidate the Union's role in security and defence. In his confirmation hearing, HRVP Josep Borrell alluded to the existence of an increasingly competitive world and argued that the EU should learn to 'use the language of power'.<sup>6</sup> In the same vein, the Commission's President, Ursula von der Leyen, identified the creation of a 'stronger Europe in the world' as one of its key priorities, and thus referred to the Commission as a 'geopolitical' one.<sup>7</sup>

Admittedly, when it comes to its security and defence policies, the EU identifies its immediate geographical neighbourhood as the main area of strategic priority.<sup>8</sup> However, the 2016 report on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in security and defence outlines a revised set of military tasks for which there is no geographical delimitation.

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<sup>4</sup> *EU Global Strategy*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> These include, notably, the Coordinated Annual Defence Review (CARD), which surveys existing defence capabilities and identifies opportunities for cooperation; Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which provides a framework to develop key capabilities collaboratively; and the European Defence Fund (EDF), a vehicle that aims to provide financial incentives for EU Member States for cooperative defence research as well as the joint development of European military capabilities up to the prototype phase. For a more detailed overview of these and other recent initiatives see Daniel Fiott (2018), 'EU defence capability developments', EU Institute for Security Studies, June.

<sup>6</sup> 'Green light to EU's new Foreign Policy Chief', *Forbes*, 9/X/2019.

<sup>7</sup> 'A Commission to stand up for Europe's interests', *Financial Times*, 10/IX/2019.

<sup>8</sup> *EU Global Strategy*, p. 23-25.

Notably, the report calls for the EU to be able to undertake military tasks such as close air support and maritime security (including on the high seas).<sup>9</sup>

The EU's emphasis on maritime security (including on the high seas) stems from the importance of the maritime domain to Europe's prosperity. Over 90% of the trade between Europe and East Asia is sea-borne and it is largely conducted through the Indian Ocean.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, from a European and EU perspective, the Indian Ocean constitutes the main entry point into Asia and the Pacific, which are rapidly consolidating as the world's centre of economic and geostrategic gravity.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the EU's interest in maritime security also stems from a broader recognition that global geopolitical and security dynamics (including developments in the Indo-Pacific space) impinge upon the security of Europe's immediate neighbourhood, and upon that of the European continent itself.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the EU has engaged in a number of maritime security operations beyond its immediate neighbourhood in recent years, paying particular attention to the Indian Ocean region. These include, notably, EUNAVFOR Atalanta (a naval mission aimed at fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia) and EUCAP Somalia<sup>12</sup> (a mission aimed at building the maritime capacity of Somalia). In the same vein, the EU floated in 2019 the concept of a Coordinated Maritime Presence, ie, a mechanism that would allow member states to coordinate their maritime deployments in certain key areas. To instil greater coherence to these and other initiatives, the 2018 Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan features, for the first time, a section devoted to regions and sea basins, including the Horn of Africa-Red Sea, which is a major choke point of international trade and the crossroads between the Mediterranean basin and the Wider Indian Ocean region.<sup>13</sup>

### Operational and geographical limitations

To be sure, the EU is still significantly constrained in its security and defence policies. For one thing, security and defence are intergovernmental areas, and the existence of divergent views and interests amongst the EU's key member states mean the parameters for the EU's development as a security actor are rather tight. Moreover, most EU member states are also NATO members, and recognise the latter as the main point of reference when it comes to the core areas of deterrence and defence, but also an important one in the conduct of expeditionary military operations due to its possession of an advanced military command and control infrastructure, which the EU lacks. For these and other reasons, the EU's role in security and defence has been primarily confined to 'low-end' external crisis management operations. In particular, the EU has

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<sup>9</sup> Council of the EU (2016), 'Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence', nr 14149/16, Brussels, 14/XI/2016.

<sup>10</sup> James Rogers (2009), 'From Suez to Shanghai: the European Union and Eurasian maritime security', *Occasional Paper*, nr 77, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris.

<sup>11</sup> Luis Simón (2015), 'Europe, the rise of Asia and the future of the transatlantic relationship', *International Affairs*, vol. 91, nr 5, p. 269-289.

<sup>12</sup> Formerly named EUCAP Nestor.

<sup>13</sup> European External Action Service (2018), 'Horn of Africa-Red Sea: revised EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan', Regional and Global Maritime Affairs, Brussels, 26/VI/2018.

identified the challenges that straddle the civilian and military divide as its main competitive advantage (vis-à-vis NATO as well as its member states). More recently, the backlash against out-of-area interventions has led the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy to pivot away from so-called executive missions (in which the EU plays a direct, kinetic role) and towards capacity building, training and advisory missions.

The EU's limitations in engaging in maritime security in the Indian Ocean are also of a geographical or geopolitical nature. In principle, the EU's commitment to maritime security is global in scope, and knows no boundaries. However, resource scarcity means that the EU's strategic bandwidth to engage beyond its geographical neighbourhood remains rather limited. Indeed, as already argued, discussions on EU security policy often revolve around the so-called eastern and southern neighbourhoods, which include, respectively, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and the Levant and North Africa. In this regard, the need to deal with the socio-economic effects of the COVID19 crisis may also limit the EU's foreign and security policy bandwidth overall.<sup>14</sup>

Admittedly, there has been a debate in EU circles about the need to engage in the 'extended neighbourhood' or with 'the neighbours of the neighbours', ie, in areas such as the Sahel, Gulf of Guinea, Central Asia or the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. It is perhaps in this context that we must understand the EU's security engagement in the Indian Ocean region, which is arguably not anchored in an EU strategic vision of the Indian Ocean region as a whole –let alone the broader Indo-Pacific– but is rather confined to the north-western Indian Ocean and seen through an 'extended neighbourhood' prism. This would explain why the EU's security initiatives in the Indian Ocean are primarily confined to that ocean's north-western part, namely the stretch of water running from the Red Sea and Bal el Mandeb to the Persian Gulf. In particular, Somalia has become a referent for EU security initiatives in the area, most notably through EUNAVFOR Atalanta (designed to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia) and EUCAP Somalia (a mission aimed at building the maritime capacities of that country).

Arguably, a number of issues prevent the EU from developing a more holistic and strategic approach to maritime security in the Indian Ocean. One relates to resource and attention scarcity, and the fact that the EU's resources are concentrated in its immediate vicinity, with much fewer to spare for the extended vicinity (which would include the north-western Indian Ocean), let alone beyond that. Another limitation is political, and relates to the fact that some EU member states and constituents are wary of anything that smacks of an EU security engagement further east –or even embracing the Indo-Pacific concept– for that might lead to tension with China. In other words, the north-western Indian Ocean is better from an EU viewpoint because: (a) it is part of the EU's extended neighbourhood; and (b) it emphasises the transnational dimension of security, rather than the inter-state one.

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<sup>14</sup> See, eg, Daniel Fiott (2020), 'Will European defence survive coronavirus?', *Expert Comment*, nr 11/2020, Elcano Royal Institute, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_in/zonas\\_in/commentary-fiott-will-european-defence-survive-coronavirus](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/commentary-fiott-will-european-defence-survive-coronavirus).

### Japan's initiative for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Japan has also undergone a period of change and greater outreach in terms of its security policies. In August 2016 Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Japan's vision for a 'Free and Open Pacific' (FOIP).<sup>15</sup> While FOIP comprehensively covers security, economic and diplomatic activities, maritime security is at its core. In particular, protecting and maintaining freedom of navigation and the rule of law at sea is one of the underlying priorities of FOIP. As a country surrounded by the sea, and hugely dependent on sea-borne trade, Japan realises that maintaining the rule of law at sea is indispensable for securing its interests. Due to its lack of domestic production of natural resources, Japan is particularly dependent on maritime resources and trade.

In recent years, Japan has strengthened its strategic partnerships with other like-minded maritime democracies, such as India and Australia, and has also broadened the geographical scope of the US-Japan alliance to the broader Indo-Pacific. Japan's strategic outreach to both Australia and India has now developed up to the level of what some describe as 'quasi-alliances'. Japan has also reinvigorated 'minilateral' groupings to support the rules-based order, such as the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) with these countries. Meanwhile, the Maritime, Air and Ground SDF has frequently visited South-East Asian (and Indian Ocean) countries to conduct port calls, joint military training and capacity-building assistance. The number of joint bilateral or minilateral training/exercises with navies of European countries like the UK or France has also increased over the past few years.

Japan's capacity-building assistance to Indo-Pacific countries has had a strong maritime security component. Since 2013 Japan's Ministry of Defence (MOD) has conducted a number of seminars and training for such areas as oceanography, search and rescue, vessel maintenance and underwater medicine in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar. For its part, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has provided Japanese coast-guard vessels to countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka mainly through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) scheme. Additionally, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has conducted joint training, human-resource exchanges and technical support to South-East and South Asian countries with a view to improving their maritime security capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

While these activities are important elements to realize the FOIP, they have also some limitations. Simply put, Japan needs more money and manpower to maintain an effective and sustainable maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific. Although the Japanese government has increased its defence budget for eight years running, the pace of such an increase is far slower than that of other major regional countries such as China, South Korea, India and Australia. Indeed, the greatest share of the defence budget increase has been consumed by growing labour costs, with aging and the purchase of new equipment for homeland defence, while maintenance, logistics and training costs for SDF equipment and personnel are not sufficiently funded. Japan's response to the COVID-19

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<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2019), 'Towards a free and open Indo-Pacific', January, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf> (last accessed 2/1/2020).

<sup>16</sup> Japan Coast Guard (2018), *Japan Coast Guard Annual Report 2018* (in Japanese), Nikkei Publishers, Tokyo, p. 151-154.

crisis, including its emergency financial package worth over ¥117 trillion (approximately US\$1.08 trillion), may worsen this already severe budgetary situation, although its impact remains unclear.<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, the Japanese government has recently boosted its budget for the JCG to strengthen its maritime patrolling capabilities.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the number of Chinese Coast Guard vessels has already surpassed that of the JCG, and the capability gap will continue to expand in the foreseeable future. Both the SDF and JCG have also suffered from a shortage of manpower due to Japan's ageing society, while their missions continue to increase in both the Indo-Pacific and in the areas surrounding Japan.

The SDF's overseas missions are also still heavily constrained by legal restrictions. Even after the introduction of a new security legislation issued in September 2015, the SDF cannot be directly involved in conflicts in the South China Sea or Indian Ocean unless there is a recognition of 'survival-threatening situations' that directly impinge on Japanese security. While the Japanese people have become more receptive to the SDF's overseas activities, it is not clear how they would react to its involvement in a conflict in a region far from Japanese territory. These legal and normative impediments could become an obstacle for Japan to further deepen its existing strategic partnerships with like-minded allies.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is clear that Japan's security and prosperity increasingly relies upon maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, including the Indian Ocean itself. Although Japan's primary strategic focus still rests on its homeland defence and North-East Asia, developments in the broader Indo-Pacific can indirectly or even directly affect its security and prosperity. This explains, for instance, why the Japanese government has recently decided to dispatch an MSDF ship to the Arabian Sea for information-gathering purposes. Notably, the SDF has also increased its defence engagement with some coastal countries in North-East Africa, with Kenya and Uganda standing out, and has expanded the function of its operational facility in Djibouti, which is currently used for anti-piracy missions in the sea off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. These activities suggest the existence of important synergies between Japan and the EU's missions in the Red Sea-Indian Ocean corridor, and offer significant opportunities for the SDF to cooperate with the EU and other countries in the Indian Ocean.

These activities are often recognised as measures to counter China's growing power and influence through the BRI. However, Japan's FOIP vision is broader than that. As already discussed, Japan's security and prosperity are heavily dependent on a rules-based order and free trade. Without such an order, Tokyo's regional and global influence will easily diminish as Japan has less power to change the status-quo by force than other great powers like the US and China. Japan's pursuit of a FOIP does not simply come

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<sup>17</sup> 'Japan's emergency stimulus reaches ¥117 trillion as virus crisis deepens', *The Japan Times*, 20/IV/2020, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/04/20/business/economy-business/japan-record-%C2%A5117-trillion-stimulus-coronavirus/#.Xp\\_scdP7RQI](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/04/20/business/economy-business/japan-record-%C2%A5117-trillion-stimulus-coronavirus/#.Xp_scdP7RQI) (last accessed 22/IV/2020).

<sup>18</sup> Robert D. Eldridge (2017), 'Japan's changing demographics and the impact on its military', *Education About ASIA*, vol. 22, nr 3, Winter, p. 27-30.

from its idealism, but from the necessity of maintaining a favourable international order in which the exercise of physical power is constrained or regulated through multilateral institutions, rules and norms. Cooperation with like-minded partners, such as the EU, is indispensable for Japan to realise such objectives.

### Towards greater EU-Japan cooperation in the Indian Ocean

The EU-Japan SPA comes at critical time in world politics. The seeming rise of protectionism and inward-looking tendencies across the world compel Japan and the EU to step up their global role, and strengthen their economic and strategic ties. Europeans and Japanese are interested in a rules-based international order, one that revolves around existing liberal economic and political principles. As such, they share an interest in advancing multilateralism and strengthening collective action problem-solving in the fields of trade and economics, security and the environment. In this regard, the intensifying US-Chinese rivalry has also increased the need for cooperation between Japan and the EU, whose interests rely on an inclusive rather than an exclusive order divided between two different blocs.

Both the EU and Japan have a shared interest in preserving a rules-based order in the maritime domain, ie, a medium in which no country can exclusively dominate or regulate under its jurisdiction. Ninety per cent of world trade is sea-borne and the maritime domain provides transactional access for maritime security forces to undertake humanitarian missions during various contingencies on and off foreign shores.<sup>19</sup> With an increasing global demand for food and energy, the development of maritime resources has rapidly grown. Preserving a rules-based order and freedom of navigation at sea as a 'public good' is therefore particularly important for the adequate functioning of the global security and economic system, in which both the EU and Japan have invested deeply.

The Indian Ocean connects Europe and East Asia to East Africa's mineral riches and to the Indian sub-continent, an important source of cheap labour and manufactured products. Given demographic projections, East Africa and the Indian sub-continent offer considerable potential as investment and export markets in the medium and long term for both Europe and Japan. Critically, the Indian Ocean is also the gateway to the Persian Gulf, which is the main source of oil for Europe and Japan, as well as an important source of gas. This is why Japan and the EU agreed on the partnership for sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructure development in the broader Indo-Pacific area. So far, no initiative on EU-Japanese security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific has been made. And yet the vision of fostering greater economic and social connectivity within the Indo-Pacific space will only be sustainable if security is part of the equation.

It is important to be realistic about the political and geo-strategic parameters of EU-Japanese security cooperation, both in general and in the Indo-Pacific more specifically. For one thing, dealing with their respective regional threats is going to absorb most of the strategic resources and bandwidth of the EU and Japan for the foreseeable future,

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<sup>19</sup> Gurpreet S Khurana (2016), 'Common public good at sea: evolving architecture in the Indo-Pacific region', *International Fleet Review Series*, National Maritime Foundation, January, <http://www.maritimeindia.org/View%20Profile/635875578606062366.pdf>.



thus limiting their ability to engage with each other. For another, there are also obstacles of a political and cultural nature, which have to do with the reticence of the Japanese and Europeans to use military power for other than defence. In their security policies, both the EU and Japan have eschewed high-intensity expeditionary combat operations and shown a preference for low-end peacekeeping and even non-kinetic tasks such as training, advice and capacity building; they have preferred to focus their external intervention on transnational challenges (rather than inter-state conflicts) and followed a political-civilian-military approach to dealing with security challenges.

Both the EU and Japan are focused on the security of their immediate neighbourhoods, which means that the limitations on Japan's direct contribution to European security or the EU's contribution to security in North-East Asia are very real. However, both the EU and Japan acknowledge that security in their immediate vicinities is affected by dynamics further afield, especially in geopolitically adjacent regions. And the Indian Ocean is part of the extended neighbourhoods of both the EU and Japan, therefore representing both the meeting place and the natural basis for EU-Japan security cooperation. The EU and Japan share two fundamental geostrategic objectives: the security of the Indian Ocean Sea Lanes of Communication and the existence of a balance of power on the Indian Ocean 'rimland', particularly in the Persian Gulf area. In this regard, the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Aden is an important foundation on which to further EU-Japanese cooperation in an Indian Ocean context.

After having recognised 'maritime security in the Indian Ocean' as a promising area for EU-Japan cooperation, it is important to further unravel the concept. For one thing, the Indian Ocean is a geographical concept that is far from being integrated in security terms, let alone homogeneous. It comprises numerous sub-components or sub-regions, such as the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf in the north-west, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea area further down, the Bay of Bengal in the north-east, and the Burma Sea and Malacca straight further east (bordering the South China Sea and the Pacific), the maritime approaches to Indonesia and the Australian continent in the south-east, and those to Madagascar and the southern part of East Africa in the south-east. These sub-regions are defined by different (mixes) of actors and challenges, and have little or no connection to each other.

There is no such thing as an Indian Ocean region in the sense of being a coherent strategic whole. Thus, it is important for the EU and Japan to identify the areas of the Indian Ocean in which their *joint* efforts should concentrate, at least to begin with, even as they remain committed to extending such cooperation to other areas of the Indian Ocean or the broader Indo-Pacific. In this regard, the area delimited by the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Madagascar in the south appears to be a good candidate. It is an area where the EU's security efforts in the Indian Ocean have concentrated (mainly around Somalia), has been identified as an area of interest by Japan (which is present in Djibouti and active in Kenya and Uganda) and has already seen joint EU-Japanese initiatives.

Maritime security must be delimited too. We are not talking about high-end warfare or deterrence in the context of inter-state competition, which may be significant in areas like the Persian Gulf, the Bay of Bengal or the Strait of Malacca. Such challenges constitute important barriers to entry for both the EU and Japan, given their capability and political

limitations. This is not to say they are not important, nor that the EU and Japan should ignore them. But other actors and frameworks may be more suited for dealing with such contingencies –that is not where EU-Japan cooperation can add the most value–. Rather, the EU and Japan should focus on tackling transnational security challenges at sea, such as terrorism, piracy, the trafficking of narcotics, people and illicit goods, arms proliferation, illegal fishing, the fight against pandemics, environmental concerns, and maritime accidents and disasters.

In particular, some environmental problems in the maritime domain, such as the pollution of maritime environment, the rise of seawater temperature and the depletion of marine resources have already affected some countries' security and international security in general. More particularly, the EU and Japan should focus on building up the capacities of IO states for such challenges. As advanced democracies, the EU and Japan can jointly cope with these maritime environmental issues and lead international initiatives by making the best use of their knowledge and expertise. Thus, our analysis suggests that transnational challenges and the non-kinetic realm in the Gulf of Aden area constitute the most promising areas to further EU-Japanese security cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

## Conclusions

On the basis of such considerations we can put forward a concrete proposal to advance EU-Japanese cooperation in the maritime domain.

The Indian Ocean Maritime Capacity Building Initiative (IOMCBI) should focus on the Indian Ocean –an area that is geo-strategically relevant to both the EU and Japan– and help advance the geopolitical interests of both parties (ie, by empowering the Indian Ocean's littoral states). It should also underscore their strengths (maritime frame, capacity building), whilst respecting their operational and political caveats (ie, be non-kinetic, straddling the civil-military divide). More broadly, it should help underpin the concept of rules-based connectivity.

Building on the example of EUCAP Somalia, the EU-Japanese IOMCBI would consist of:

- (1) A common fund to support the training and educational activities of navies and coast guard around the Indian Ocean rim (open to contributions from other like-minded partners, such as India, Australia, the Republic of Korea, the US, Canada, Turkey and NATO). One possibility in this regard would be to use NATO's Centre of Excellence on maritime interdiction (based in Cyprus) to train naval and coast guard officers from Indian Ocean countries and ASEAN partners. This would be in line with the recent push for greater EU-NATO and Japanese-NATO cooperation.
- (2) An Indian Ocean patrol boat programme, co-funded by the EU and Japan (and open to relevant partners), which would help provide patrol boats to coastal countries in the Indian Ocean region.

- (3) A centre of excellence on Maritime Domain Awareness focusing on the Indian Ocean based in Djibouti, led by the EU and Japan and open to relevant partners. It should focus on information sharing and the joint monitoring of choke points: Hormuz, Suez, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca, Lombok, Sunda, etc. This should link with existing initiatives, such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) and the Information Fusion Centre in Singapore, as well as the Fusion Centre in India. That way, it would build on existing initiatives and seek to connect them with a view to developing a networked architecture on maritime domain awareness aimed at supporting rules-based connectivity in the Indian Ocean.

One interesting possibility in this regard would be a joint Table Top Exercise (TTX) between defence authorities of the EU and Japan focused on the maritime domain and non-traditional security issues such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), counter-piracy, the fight against pandemics and environmental security in the maritime domain. While such an exercise could be initiated bilaterally and separately, the idea would be to progressively expand the number of participants, and thus integrate the TTX in the IOMCBI.

The IOMCB initiative would be open to all rimland states in the Indian Ocean region. However, with a view to ensuring its political and technical feasibility, the EU and Japan should first identify one or two 'pilot countries' to begin with. As already argued, given that the EU and Japan are both engaged (together and separately) in the Western Indian Ocean, that might be the best way to start, even if the ambition would be to progressively expand and move the initiative eastwards. In this regard, some possible candidate pilot countries could be Kenya and Somalia, which have been identified as priority countries by Japan and the EU respectively.