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# **THE RISING IMPORTANCE OF SHARED POLITICAL VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN - EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS**

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**Abstract:** While observing the rising of the Pacific as the new geo-strategic epicenter of international politics, the concept of 'Soft Power' gained more attention from Japanese, Chinese, and Korean foreign policy experts and decision makers. When considering the Japanese case study, its domestic, foreign, defense and security policies may all encompass a soft power dimension given Japan's unique political values, foreign policy legitimacy and culture. Similarly, the European Union is often pointed as a civilian power with valuable soft power assets, a global actor which uses its prestige and reputation in the international community as a fundamental foreign policy tool. Simultaneously, both the EU and Japan are facing considerable political, economic and security challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which require increased cooperation through traditional and innovative diplomatic tools. Soft power resources can be shared and used in a cooperative fashion by both political actors. The EU, with its successful history of integration from the Treaties of Rome to the Treaty of Lisbon - an event that gave rise to the 'post-modern World' - is facing its biggest challenges so far, e.g. with the euro crisis. Similarly, Japan's position in the world today is the result of challenging external and domestic conditions: an aging population, a debt-to-GDP ratio over 200% and the rise of China. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to assess and analyze how important are shared political values for both Japan and the European Union's foreign policy strategies and bilateral relations, taking into account the ongoing changing distribution of power not only in East Asia but also at a global level. The focus of this paper will underline the similarity between EU's and Japan's political values, and how their combined soft power resources may contribute to a more peaceful and democratic global order and counter-balance recent authoritarian trends.

**Key-words:** Authoritarian; China; Democracy; East Asia; European Union; Japan; Political Values; Soft Power.

**Resumo:** Ao observar a emergência do Pacífico como o novo epicentro geoestratégico da política internacional, o conceito de "soft power" tornou-se alvo da atenção dos decisores políticos e peritos da política externa japonesa, chinesa e sul-coreana. Ao considerar o caso de estudo do Japão, a sua política interna, externa e de segurança e defesa parecem englobar diferentes dimensões do conceito de soft power, seja através dos valores políticos do Japão, da legitimidade da sua política externa ou da sua cultura singular. Simultaneamente, a União Europeia tem sido aclamada como uma potência civil, com valiosos recursos

de soft power, e como um ator global que utiliza o seu prestígio e reputação como valiosos instrumentos da sua política externa perante a comunidade internacional. A UE e o Japão enfrentam no século XXI, consideráveis desafios políticos, económicos e de segurança, que exigem um aumento do nível de cooperação, através de instrumentos diplomáticos tradicionais e inovadores, e.g. através da partilha e utilização de recursos de soft power entre os dois atores. A UE, com um passado de sucesso de integração europeia desde os Tratados de Roma até ao Tratado de Lisboa, um evento que deu lugar ao mundo pós-moderno, enfrenta hoje, um dos seus maiores desafios com a crise do euro e as suas consequências políticas. Similarmente, o posicionamento atual do Japão no mundo é o resultado de circunstâncias peculiares a nível interno e externo, i.e. o envelhecimento da sua população, um rácio da dívida/PIB que atinge os 200% e a emergência da China. Neste contexto e sublinhando a mudança que decorre ao nível da distribuição de poder, não só na Ásia Oriental, mas também a nível global, o objectivo deste artigo científico centra-se na análise da importância de valores políticos partilhados no desenvolvimento das relações bilaterais e das respectivas estratégias de política externa do Japão e da UE. O ponto central deste artigo sublinha ainda a similaridade entre os valores políticos da UE e do Japão, e como os seus recursos de soft power poderão, em conjunto, contribuir para uma ordem internacional mais pacífica e democrática, contrariando assim as mais recentes tendências autoritárias.

**Palavras-chave:** Ásia Oriental; Autoritarismo; China; Democracia; Japão; Soft Power; União Europeia; Valores Políticos.

### **The current geopolitical dynamics and its implications in the perception-building about EU and Japan's contemporary role in international politics**

Contemporary global politics are observing a period of power shifts with power transitions and the emerging of new nation-state powers, together with the new phenomenon of power diffusion in today's global information age, in which non-state actors have much more power than in any other time in history. In the context of power transition, the 21st century is witnessing the reformulation of states' foreign policy agendas, underlining the centrality of Asia as the new geostrategic epicenter of international politics. The recent focus on the 'Asia pivot' shows that most states believe that the center of gravity for foreign policy, national security, and economic interests is shifting towards Asia, and therefore states' strategies and priorities need to be adjusted accordingly. Today's world showcases Asia as the most populous region and the fastest growing economic area, and it is even expected to become more vital for the world economy in the future. Greater trade flows through the Asia-Pacific have also reinforced greater security interests in the region, as have the major expansions of other local nations' military forces, the most evident case being China (Manyin, 2011). In fact, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) anticipated the news that China will soon have the world's largest economy surpassing even the US (Bush III, 2011). History showed that the rise of a new power could destabilize the international system and even lead to conflict. The rising of China and the other BRICS is, therefore, one of the most relevant events in early 21<sup>st</sup> century international politics.

As political attention moves from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Europe is moving from the center of geopolitics into periphery. Since World War II, the United States and Europe have been the two major centers of global governance. Observing the current geopolitical dynamics, this paradigm seems to be gradually shifting, and its democratic model is now threatened, while the rest of the world may look somewhere else for global leadership. The crisis of the Western democratic model also caused by the inability of the United States and Europe to deal with their respective fiscal and financial issues may bring serious consequences for the importance of the so called democratic world, its power, its influence and its example (Mathews, 2012).

In the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics it is also possible to observe a rising dichotomy between 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism,' particularly as development models. East Asia, as a region, seems to be a fundamental case-

study in this context, due to the cases of Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese democracies, coexisting with Chinese and North Korean authoritarian regimes. The Japanese democracy, for example, may look or feel different from democracy in Europe or the United States. However, it may constitute an important example of how liberal democracies work within different cultural settings. Several countries in East Asia may be heir to a Chinese-style centralized state, which lies at the core of their economic success. Nevertheless, as Fukuyama (2012) underlines:

*“The rule of law and democratic accountability are important to high-quality state performance. If governments are not rule-bound and predictable, if they do not protect property rights, then they will constitute obstacles to economic performance. And if they are not democratically accountable, there will be no way of removing bad leaders or giving them feedback on their performance.”*

The rising of new powers in international politics may not imply the absolute decline of the hegemonic power. In fact, it is still possible to identify the United States’ hegemonic preponderance. Today, its military power is still incomparable, spending over four times as much on defense as China, the world’s second-biggest military spender (IISS, 2013). The US and its allies, e.g. Japan and most of EU member-states, also derive competitive advantages from its preponderant position – profiting with globalization, English as the *lingua franca*, the excellence of its academic institutions, among other factors (Beckley, p. 42). Today’s rise of China and the other BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are not necessarily accompanied by the absolute decline of the US and its allies. The contemporary configuration of international politics observes the ‘rise of the rest’ but not necessarily the decline of the status quo powers (Nye, 2011, p. 155).

Power resources do not always translate into power outcomes. However, they may constitute an important indicator to make a general assessment of today’s world order and its power distribution. The media, scholars or policymakers may focus their attention on the emergence of new powers, but the US, Japan and the EU, still remain well ahead in terms of traditional power resources in contemporary international politics. The US, most of the European Union member-states and Japan together, are still the biggest military powers and allies, and they account for the majority of the wealth produced in 2013, while they are also the most attractive countries for foreign students, having the best universities in the world and the biggest number of foreign students (IIE, 2013) (UNESCO, 2013) (CIA, 2013). In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, both hard and soft power resources are still dwelling within these major political actors. Simultaneously, the BRICS are consolidating its importance in international politics through economic power, as they held more than 40% of global foreign reserves, and in 2010, they have accounted for 30% of global economic growth (Sule, 2011).

In today's world the 'rising rest' is aiming at diminishing the gap of power with the US, Japan or the EU. Nevertheless, economic growth is not expected to spill-over into exaggerated military growth, which could instead produce a countervailing coalition. It is possible to say that we are not living in a unipolar international system, but in an asymmetric multipolar world, with a hegemonic power that can't take decisions alone. It may be an open question if there is or not an absolute power transition between nation-states, however, it seems evident that we are in the presence of a relative power transition with the rise of China, India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa and the relative decline of the US, Japan and the EU.

Japan's position in the world today is also the result of some domestic conditions: a demographic challenge with its aging population and declining birth rate, a debt-to-GDP ratio over 200 percent, together with the "*sakoku syndrome*", a growing inward mindset among many young Japanese. Alternatively, there are also many underappreciated dimensions of Japan's national power and influence. Japan is one of the four largest economies in the world, with a consumer sector that doubles the size of China's. Japan's potential could be further unleashed if accompanied by reform and competition. More openness to free trade and immigration, more gender equity and more globalized academic institutions would add significantly to Tokyo's gross domestic product (GDP) growth (Armitage & Nye, 2012, p. 1). At the same time Japan still holds considerable soft power resources, the country is rated among the top three countries in international respect and first in the world in terms of 'national brand'. Many other countries, particularly the US, rely on Japan as a fundamental partner for a strategic equilibrium in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan is also one of largest contributors to international institutions, like the United Nations (UN) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Armitage & Nye, 2012, p. 1). In a time when scholars and policymakers have the tendency to undervalue Japan's role within the international society in favor of other Asian actors it seems fundamental to make a real and balanced assessment about the country's role and influence in today's world.

As political attention moves from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Europe is also moving from the center of geopolitics into the periphery. While observing the current geopolitical dynamics and the rise of China, there seems to be an emerging crisis of the Western democratic model. This is also caused by the inability of the "West" to deal with its respective fiscal and financial issues, something that may bring serious consequences for the importance of the EU, its power and influence. Many of today's European problems are economic, but with large political implications. "The consequences of continued failure to act will be a weakening of the West throughout the rest of the world in every dimension of national strength: its ability to prosper, to lead, to summon and guide international action, and to protect and advance core national interests (Mathews, 2012)."

The EU, with its successful history of integration from the Treaties of Rome to the Treaty of Lisbon, an innovative process in history, which Robert Cooper called the 'post-modern World' (Cooper, 2003), is now facing its biggest challenges since its creation. "Many of the EU's apparent triumphs are now coming back to haunt it: Russian resents its supposed 'humiliation'; the euro is in crisis; and the rising economic powers that have benefited from globalization are not supporting Europe's global multilateral agenda. The financial crisis has revealed the structural contradictions at the heart of EU's unfinished project: member states' economies need more immigrants than their populations seem ready to tolerate and monetary union needs more political integration than their elites are able to deliver (Krastev & Leonard, 2010, p. 23)." One of the possible solutions for the current European problems resides in further political integration or the federalization of Europe. Given the recent events related to the economic crisis in Europe, Niall Ferguson (2010), historian at Harvard University states: "The difference is, of course, that the United States has a federal system, while the euro zone does not. (...) What the Greek crisis has belatedly revealed is that such fiscal centralization is the necessary corollary of a monetary union. Europe now faces a much bigger decision than whether to bail out Greece. The real choice is between becoming a fully-fledged United States of Europe, or remaining little more than a modern-day Holy Roman Empire, a gimcrack hodgepodge of 'variable geometry' that will sooner or later fall apart". The federalization of Europe seems to be an urgent need or perhaps even a matter of survival of the European project.

On the other hand, Europe needs to strengthen new global partners and allies while addressing the emergence of Asia in its policies. Europe's new Asia policy will have to be more than just trade, if it is to succeed. In fact Europe's soft power can be a source of encouragement towards cooperation with the Asian countries. The EU's force of attraction or soft power lies in the positive synergies generated from the implementation of a common project never attempted in history, a source of peace in a war-torn region. Not so long ago, Europe was present in large parts of Asia, but at the same time has been absent from many of the most important events in this region for decades. If Asia is indeed the future dynamo of global growth, the European Union will have to discover a solid strategy in the region, find its common interests and shared values.

As Nye (2005, p. 77) underlined, the closest competitor to the United States in soft power is Europe. At the cultural level, European art, music, fashion and food have global projection, while half of the ten most widely spoken languages in the world are European. Besides the level of attractiveness of its culture, the EU has been championing, domestically and internationally, political values related with peace, democracy, human rights and good governance. The distinction of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 rewards the EU's contribution for over six decades to the advancement of those same values: peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights.



Considering the current geopolitical dynamics and changing distribution of power, it seems fundamental for the European Union and Japan to forge a new and more assertive foreign policy strategy in which soft power resources, particularly on its political values dimension, may become a bridge to strengthen levels of cooperation with political actors that share the same values and common interests.

### **How important are the EU and Japan's soft power resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

Although the 21st century is witnessing the emergence and rising influence of non-democratic powers like China or Russia, we still live in a fundamental age for the advancement of democracy. Since its birth in Ancient Greece more than 2500 years ago, a democratic set of political ideals was developed into contemporary political practices that are focused on a human-centered paradigm, which in many ways serves as a guideline in the development of domestic or foreign policies. After the 1990's democratic heyday, today there seems to be a loss of the democratic *momentum*, particularly due to the growing appeal in some parts of the world of China's development model based on non-democratic rules. Indeed, China and Russia, along with other authoritarian powers, are asserting a growing international political influence in a way that works against the spread of democracy (Carothers, 2012). These developments only reinforce the need for democratic countries to promote or reinforce their values across the globe, not through coercion but through attraction. Therefore, a soft power strategy is of fundamental importance to the success in dealing with these new challenges and dynamics. The soft power of a political unit rests on three types of resources: its culture, its foreign policy legitimacy, and its political values. In fact, when a government champions its values in domestic or foreign behavior, this strongly affects the preferences of others (Nye, 2005, pp. 11-13). The countries that are most attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues, and whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms, e.g. liberalism, pluralism, human rights and human security. These countries will benefit from the trends of the new global information age, enhancing their level of attractiveness, and ultimately maximize their power (Nye, 2005, pp. 31-32). In a growing multipolar world and considering the emergence of a new and alternative "authoritarian" political model, the EU and Japan are set to be fundamental actors to ensure or at least promote human dignity and peace.

Despite this urgency, if we give a closer look on how the Japanese government views its own soft power resources and how implements it through public diplomacy, there is an overestimation of the cultural dimension to the detriment of promoting its political values and foreign policy legitimacy. As McGray underlined, "Japan's global cultural influence has only grown (...) from pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and food to art, Japan has far greater cultural influence now than it did in the 1980's when it was an economic

superpower (McGray, 2002, p. 47).” In tune with this approach to soft power, the Japanese government has been paying particular attention to the global promotion of its cultural resources. The former Japanese Foreign Minister (currently Deputy Prime-Minister and Finance Minister), Taro Aso said, “We can safely say that any kind of cultural diplomacy that fails to take advantage of pop culture is not really worthy of being called ‘cultural diplomacy.’ The reason for this is that the world has become increasingly democratized. That is, public opinion now enjoys much greater influence on diplomacy than before. (...) that is exactly why we want pop culture, which is so effective in penetrating throughout the general public, to be our ally in diplomacy (Aso, 2006).”

The current geopolitical trends and challenges determine how Japan should also give more attention to the promotion of its own political values and foreign policy legitimacy *vis-à-vis* its cultural diplomacy strategy. The recently elected Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, mentioned that it “will boldly develop (a) strategic diplomacy rooted in the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights, and the rule of law (Abe, 2013).” Particularly important in this context is the engagement with other established or rising democratic powers, e.g. the EU. The similarity and shared political values between the European Union and Japan can function as a window of opportunity to increase cooperation between Brussels and Tokyo. In fact, Europe has been along with the US and Japan, one of the most influential soft power superpowers.

A general overview of Europe’s soft power resources may similarly overemphasize its cultural dimension. “Many European states have a strong cultural attractiveness: half of the ten most widely spoken languages in the world are European. Spanish and Portuguese link Iberia to Latin America (...) and there are nearly 50 Francophone countries (Nye, 2005, p. 76).” European art, literature, music, design, fashion, cinema and cuisine also have served as powerful cultural diplomacy tools to attract foreign publics. However, it was through the EU’s political model and political values that European soft power gained stronger depth and visibility. The attribution of the Nobel peace prize in 2012 to the EU confirms its contribution for over six decades to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights. Durão Barroso, the former EU Commission President said in this regard: “the EU is a big peace project, (...) it is a project of democracy and freedom that inspires people worldwide, people that have to face extreme nationalist regimes or the lack of liberty. (...) The world needs a stronger EU (Barroso, 2012).” Since the post-Cold War period, the goal of joining the European Union became a magnet to the entire region and enlargement has been one of the main instruments of EU’s soft power over the years. The former Enlargement Commissioner, Oli Rehn, stated, “I am convinced that enlargement is at the core of the EU’s soft power – its power to transform its nearest neighbors into functioning democracies, market economies, and true partners in meeting common challenges. (...) It reflects the essence of the EU as a civilian power, extending the area of peace and prosperity, liberty and democracy (Rehn, 2007).”

Another example of the European Union's soft power in action is the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Within the ENP the EU offers its neighbors a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values. The ENP offers political association and deeper economic integration, increased mobility and more people-to-people contacts. The status and future of the relationship depends on how far these values are shared (European Commission, 2012). The ENP was originally a policy initiative aimed at Eastern European countries and those who would join the EU in 2004 and 2007. With the Barcelona Process in 1995, the ENP covered the Maghreb countries, establishing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The ENP countries are encouraged to follow the EU laws and standards as set out in the *acquis communautaire*, promoting institutional and values convergence towards EU norms on its neighbors (Pearce, 2007). The success of the ENP and the enlargement process, or the attractiveness of the European membership, confirms that the European Union has been able to project its soft power assets at a regional level.

The rising importance of Asia will oblige the EU to pivot its policies towards a region where Japan seems to be one of the countries with closer values to Brussels. In the last Japan-EU summit, this was underlined by the Japanese government as follows: "Prime Minister Noda congratulated the European Union (EU) on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and stated its intention to continue cooperation in various fields with the EU as global partners sharing fundamental values (Government of Japan, 2012)." In response, Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council said that the recent visits to Japan by several European Commissioners demonstrate increasingly close bilateral ties and the European Commission President Barroso stressed the development of the bilateral relations as strategic partners (Government of Japan, 2012). In the current context of 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics, the potential cooperation between democratic actors may contribute to a more peaceful and democratic global order. Here lies a window of opportunity for further cooperation between the EU and Japan, in which shared soft power resources can be an important policy tool.

### **Underlining shared political values between the EU and Japan in future bridges of cooperation**

The EU and Japan's fundamental political values are enshrined in their constitutional settings or founding treaties and are supposed to be a fundamental guideline to the formulation of domestic and foreign policies. Japan's key political values are originally expressed in its present constitution:

*"We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of*

*the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want (Japan, 1947)."*

The preamble of the Japanese constitution clearly states the importance of Human Rights and Human Security, while the article 9 underlines the Japanese post World War II commitment with pacifism:

*"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized (Japan, 1947)."*

It is thus possible to say that the Japanese constitution is the basis for Tokyo's commitment to a human-centered paradigm. Today, there is a wide debate within the Japanese society for the revision of the current constitution, but in essence, its commitment to democracy and peace is guaranteed (Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, 2012). In fact, the limitations imposed by the constitution on Japan's hard power resources triggered the formulation of a strong and proactive ODA policy and increasing international peace cooperation activities since 1992, ultimately reinforcing its soft power strategy.

Japan's commitment with human-centered principles was also expressed through its foreign policy bid on human security. After the publication of the 1994 UNDP Report, Japan was one of the countries that supported the new conceptual framework around the concept of human security. The key figure within the Japanese government for the pursuit of human security was Obuchi Keizo, appointed Prime Minister in 1998. The first expression of adopting human security as a key concept took place after the effects of the 1997 Asian economic crisis. Obuchi's initial efforts related to human security were expressed in his decision to join the international campaign against landmines, and turning this event into the starting point for Japan's endeavor to promote human security (Edström, 2011, pp. 9-10). Later in 1998, at the "Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia's Tomorrow", Obuchi used a new term in Japanese, "*ningen anzenhoshō*", which literally means human security (Obuchi, 1998). In his speech, "Toward the Creation of a Bright Future for Asia" given on the occasion of the Summit Meeting of ASEAN Plus Three, Obuchi stated his vision for Asia in the 21st century: "a century of peace and prosperity built on human dignity" and also proposed the creation of a Human Security Fund at the United Nations (Obuchi, 1998). From this moment on, Human Security was incorporated in Japan's Foreign Policy

agenda and the Japanese government implemented numerous initiatives related with this concept.

As a result of new regional and global challenges and the need for Japan to underline its political values, Tokyo has been reinforcing its commitment with democratic and human-centered principles. The academic community and policymakers are reengaging with the concept of Human Security and are promoting it globally. The 2011 Diplomatic Bluebook clearly states this commitment:

*“Fully guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are universal values, contributes to the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous society in each country, and therefore to the peace and stability of the international community. (...) Japan will strengthen its foreign policy in order to promote human rights in a comprehensive manner (...) Japan stresses the concept of human security (...) to resolve such issues (Government of Japan, 2011, p. 20).”*

The promotion and implementation of the Human Security concept in the Japanese foreign policy agenda is the result of Japan's demand for a guiding concept that represents universal principles. A second reason is also to support the implementation of Japanese ODA, as Human Security may also, in this domain, be a guiding concept. In summary, Human Security is part of Japan's soft power strategy, clarifying Japanese political values within the international society and contributing to enhance the country's sympathetic support and reputation (Anon., 2012).

In the same way, Japan's engagement with Human Rights has been part of the country's strategy to improve its image and its level of attractiveness within the international society. Japan ratified all the main conventions that regulate the protection of international human rights. Namely, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In addition to the individual rights protected by the Japanese Constitution, the international human rights if directly applicable, can be invoked before the courts in Japan (Hayashi, 2010, pp. 258-259).

Japan's annual contribution to the UN Funds on human rights is about US\$ 1 million. This shows Japan's strong commitment with Human Rights, which is also expressed through its ODA charter: “Guided by the belief that human rights are universal, Japan has expressed its concern for human rights violations, calling on countries of concern to improve their human rights situations. Japan pays full attention to the human rights situations and efforts for promoting democratization as proclaimed in the ODA Charter (Government of Japan, 2012).”

Japanese foreign policy agenda doesn't seem to subscribe to a conventionalist approach on human rights, and clearly underlines its universality: "Japan has strongly supported UN activities in the human rights field, believing that all human rights are universal (Government of Japan, 2012)." This belief was reinforced with Japan's candidature for the UN Human Rights Council: "The Human Rights Council is expected to play an important international role in the area of human rights. During its tenure as a Council member, Japan continued to attach importance in the conduct of diplomacy to universal values such as human rights and democracy (Yamane, 2012)."

Japan was also elected in order to serve again on the Council from 2013, with the aim of contributing further to improving human rights situations around the world. These same commitments have been mentioned in numerous ways, e.g. in joint statements with the US, Japan's key ally: "Japan and the United States share a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, open societies, human rights, human security, and free and open markets, these values guide us in our joint efforts to address the challenges of our time (Government of Japan; US Government, 2012)."

In summary, Japan's political values are clearly aligned with the liberal democracies, despite its own socio-cultural background. The triangulation between human rights, human security and pacifism, gives Japanese foreign policy a unique character and an hybrid structure, mixing realist elements connected with the country's national interest, and idealist elements related with human-centered principles. This benefits Japan's reputation, image and level of attractiveness in the world and may constitute a valuable soft power resource in the current global context.

The similarities and political proximity between Japan and the European Union seems to be evident in this context. In order to understand the EU's political values and their origin, it is important to give a closer look to a group of prominent figures related with the beginning of a new era in European politics, the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet (1888-1979), Robert Schuman (1886-1963), Alcide De Gasperi (1881-1954), Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), Paul-Henri Spaak (1899-1972), Winston Churchill (1874-1965) and Walter Hallstein (1901-1982). On May 9, 1950, Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister between 1948 and 1952, authored the founding document of the European unification process, marking the first step in the actual construction of a United Europe:

*"World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it. The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations. (...) Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity (Schuman, 1950)."*



The famous Schuman Declaration, driven also by the ideas and contribution of Jean Monnet, represents the first concrete step towards the creation of an European federation, promoting therefore a key contribution to create regional and world peace (Pistone, 2010, p. 20). The ideas and thinking of the other founding fathers converge with the ones professed by Monnet and Schuman. If we take Churchill's speech in Zurich (1946) into account, it is possible to find the fundamental values that are still embedded in today's European integration process:

*"To re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living (Churchill, 1946)."*

The successors and heirs of the founding fathers of Europe were guided by these values. Alberto Spinelli promoted the European cause in academia. Valérie Giscard D'Estaing, Helmut Schmidt, François Mitterrand, Jacques Delors and finally Helmut Kohl, who promoted fiercely the Euro currency and the Maastricht Treaty, are some of the policymakers that contributed in a fundamental way to the construction of a unique peace project based on democratic values in a region previously affected by recurrent war and conflict.

In December 2007, the EU member-states' leaders met in Lisbon for the signing of a new treaty that aimed to strengthen the Union's capacity to act, by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of its institutions and mechanisms, particularly in light of new global challenges. The fundamental values of the European Union are also clearly expressed in the Lisbon Treaty and the Treaty of the European Union

*"Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law (...) confirming their attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law (...), Desiring to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions, Desiring to enhance further the democratic and efficient functioning of the institutions so as to enable them better to carry out, within a single institutional framework, the tasks entrusted to them (European Union, 2008)."*

In addition, the article 2 and 3, states as follows:

*"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to*

*the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. (...) The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. (...) In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter (European Union, 2008)."*

By observing the fundamental texts of the European Union law, it is possible to clearly identify the peace-related and human-centered political values that are translated in powerful soft power resources held by the EU and its member-states. With the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union now has full legal effect, offering protection for all EU citizens and residents, all in a single text for the first time in the European Union's history. This is an additional tool for protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms already recognized by the European Convention on Human Rights, the constitutional traditions of the EU Member States, the Council of Europe's Social Charter, the Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of Workers and other international conventions to which the European Union or its Member States are parties.

The European Union's political values are also clearly stated in the Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the European Union. To join the EU, the candidate country must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; and the acceptance of the *acquis communautaire*, or the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union (Tatham, 2009, p. 207).

The EU political values are also incorporated in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) through declarations on the human rights situation in third countries, diplomatic sanctions and arms embargoes. These value-based considerations are also raised in political dialogue meetings, e.g. the human rights dialogue with China, or in regional cooperation initiatives and dialogues, e.g. the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue (Smith, 2004, pp. 191-193). Additionally as a global actor, the EU has been promoting integration as a tool to support peace and prosperity and to overcome conflicts around the world. To this end, peace building and conflict prevention, the use of preventive diplomacy through mediation and dialogue are also fundamental tools of the European External Action Service.

The European development aid strategy is another EU foreign policy tool where its values are firmly expressed. The European Union and its Member States



provided more than half of official aid worldwide at €53.8 billion in 2010, while the eradication of poverty is also enshrined in the EU treaties as the common goal of development policy. In this regard Martin Schulz, the European Parliament president states, "the EU has a big role to play in promoting peace, democracy, stability and poverty reduction. The EU does not grant aid without any conditions, like for example China. We take into account respect for human rights and the Parliament will make full use of its oversight granted to it by the treaties. (...) The EU should only grant partner countries the advanced status (...) if they meet human rights and democracy requirements (European Commission, 2011)." The European Union clearly supports the view that democracy and human rights are universal values that should be promoted around the world. They are integral to effective work on development aid, conflict prevention and resolution. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) serves also a concrete expression of the EU's intention to integrate worldwide the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law (European Union, 2012).

Similarly to Japan, the aforementioned facts provide evidence of how incorporating peace, human rights and democratic values into European Union's relations with the world seems to benefit EU's reputation, image, level of attractiveness among the democratic world, 118 nation-states in 2013, and among the aspiring movements for democracy in the non-democratic world. In fact, the promotion of EU's political values constitutes one of its main soft power resources, the heart of its soft power strategy and foreign policy identity.

The shared values between Japan and the European Union have the potential to become the main pillar for an enhanced cooperation between the two parties, a bridge to bring Japan closer to Europe and Europe closer to Asia. When the European Union was awarded with the Nobel peace prize in 2012, one of the first messages of congratulations came from the Prime Minister of Japan, Yoshihiko Noda. In response to this message, Herman Van Rompuy, former President of the European Council said, "over the last 60 years, the European Union has become an anchor of stability in Europe, promoting peace, reconciliation, democracy and Human Rights in our own continent and beyond. Through our cooperation, we can foster the same ideas, and indeed, Europe and Japan by working together, as we are increasingly doing, can be a force for peace and stability in the world (Rompuy, 2012)."

## Conclusion

Today's global order is evolving into an "asymmetric multipolar" world. The United States' hegemonic power still prevails, while other rising powers increasingly assume a fundamental role within the international system, therefore, participating in the definition of norms and rules that may guide the relation between states in international politics. Among these emerging powers, non-democratic countries,

such as China or Russia, relegate the international protection of human rights and democratic freedoms to a place of lesser relevance. It is therefore important to underline the role of the main democratic powers in the Eurasian continent, i.e. Japan and the EU, in the global promotion of democracy, peace, universal and human-centered political values.

Shared political values, expressed in Japan's unique post World War II constitution or in the European treaties, are clearly aligned with the international protection of human rights and the promotion of peace and security in the world. Japan has also been a crucial actor on the development of the intellectual concept and the implementation of human security through its financial support to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the establishment of the Commission on Human Security, and revision of its ODA charter to meet human security guidelines. At the same time, the EU has been implementing and promoting a unique political model that downgrades nationalism in favor of solidarity, cooperation and voluntary sovereignty transfer to a supranational institution, a model that enshrined peace, freedom and human rights in a once war-torn continent. The EU's political values are also clearly expressed in its engagement with the rest of the world, whether through its foreign and security policy, its trade agreements and development aid, or the neighborhood policy and enlargement process.

The promotion of peace, democracy and human rights, not only benefits Japan's and EU's reputation, image and level of attractiveness, but also, eventually, the international protection of human rights and the promotion of liberal democratic values within the international society. It is therefore important that new bridges of cooperation are created between Tokyo and Brussels, as they share the same values and commitments and may engage in promoting them within the international society while enhancing bilateral cooperation. Despite of the persistent anarchic character of today's global order, law still means order, and a good order is the result of good laws. In a time of change and new challenges, the international legal and customary framework needs to address and prioritize the respect for human dignity. In this context, the EU and Japan are positioned to play a fundamental role on the preservation of fundamental human values in the 21<sup>st</sup> century emerging new global order.

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