Central European Journal of International and Security Studies
Vol. 16, No. 3, 2022, pp. 6-33

DOI: 10.51870/VEQO1925
Research article

Japan-France Relationship under Abe: An Analysis of Security Trends for the Indo-Pacific Region

Mattia Dello Spedale Venti
University of Naples L'Orientale, ORCiD: 0000-0002-7445-1133, corresponding address: mdsventi@unior.it

Abstract
Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan and France have experienced a special relationship led by strong cultural and economic ties. The present paper analyses their relationship during the second administration of the former prime minister of Japan, Abe Shinzō. The paper focuses on their respective security trends. Security is studied as a(n inter-)subjective and dynamic process. For this reason, the Copenhagen School's 'securitisation' will serve as a theoretical framework to investigate discursive and material practices of both nations. The article has two complementary goals. First, it studies whether and to what extent securitised issues and securitising moves of Japan and France converge to their approach to the Indo-Pacific region. To this end, the article extensively examines official documents and speeches of the two governments, including Japan's annual 'White Paper' and 'Diplomatic Bluebook', and France's strategic documents. Second, by examining transformations of their mutual relations, the paper investigates whether Japan and France have improved their synergy, especially in the defense domain, during Abe's second administration. The paper concludes that Japan and France have a similar view on the security environment of the Indo-Pacific and, for this reason, they share similar concerns and interests. The result was an improvement of their relations which became increasingly more symbiotic towards the region.

Keywords: *securitization, Indo-Pacific, maritime security, Japan-France relations, liberal values*

First published online on 27 July 2022, issue published on 30 September 2022

Introduction

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and France occurred in 1958, a few years after the arrival of Commodore Perry in Edo (now Tokyo) Bay. In order to remove the clauses of the 'unequal treaties', Japan's policy-makers saw the modernisation of the country as the only solution to achieving this goal. It is during the Meiji Restoration (1868) that Japan and France started to intensify their relations: Japan decided to adopt the French model for its military modernisation (Holcombe 2017), while France was astonished by Japan's arts to the extent that Japanese artistic influence resulted in the so-called *japonisme*, and later on in the *néo-japonisme* (Fregonese & Sakai 2021). The consolidation of a military regime in Japan and its withdrawal from the League of Nations constituted critical factors for the setback of the relations between the two countries. Even after the end of the Second World War, the tension between Japan and the European nations continued. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru flew to Europe in 1954 with the intention of reconstituting a dialogue with the European allies of the U.S., but with few results. European countries, among others France, showed their reluctance to accept Japan into the GATT in 1955. Japan was seen as a 'peril' for the economies of those countries, especially for their textile sector (Frattolillo 2019). The end of the Cold War changed the nature of the relations. Thaw between the two counterparts occurred, as it was testified by the signing of the 'Japan-EC Joint Declaration of 1991' and, on a bilateral level, the 'Japan-France 20 Actions for the Year 2000' which promoted cultural, economic and technological exchanges. Once again, the reciprocal cultural attraction between Japan and France facilitated new and synergic relations.

At the same time, the end of the Cold War signified the emergence of a new international scenario, which modified the former power balance. It is the case of Northeast Asia. In recent years, the security environment of the region has gone through a series of dramatic changes, causing a growing number of confrontations in the region. Some authors highlighted the triggers of such instability that can be summarised briefly as follows: China's rise as global superpower and the so-called 'power shift' from West to East undermining the order created by the U.S. (Layne 2012; Abbasi, Qambar & Minhas 2017); North Korea's brinkmanship strategy (Ha & Chaesung 2010); the 'history problem' related to Japan's imperialism and its Second World War crimes (Cumings 2007; Wang 2009); and the territorial disputes (Sidorov 2014; Choi 2005; Wei 2014). These factors altered

deeply the perception of the environment in the region of both France and Japan which adjusted their foreign policy to it.

As the Cold War ended, the main interest of France was to preserve its partnership in Asia, and to profit, as other European countries, from the economic growth experienced by the countries of the region. The institution of ASEM (Asia-Europe Meetings) in 1996 was an attempt to deepen the relations between Europe and Asia and it became the last formal rawlplug in the triangular relations among Europe, East Asia and North America (Dent 1997). However, the posture of France changed as the tension in the region increased. In the White Paper of 2008, Asia is described as:

> L'Asie est aussi, en effet, l'une des zones principales où pourraient s'exprimer des rivalités ou des conflits susceptibles de déstabiliser le système de sécurité international. [Asia is, indeed, one of the main areas where rivalries or conflicts, that can destabilize the system of the international security, could take place] (Livre Blanc 2008: 32).

Over the past fifteen years, France has shown its growing regional defense commitment, creating new partnership and strengthening the old ones. The French Army was actively involved in military exercises and programmes with its partners in the Pacific and Indian Oceans (Regaud 2016). These relations continue to develop for the mutual benefit of France and its partners.

The end of the Cold War had a severe impact on Japan's foreign policy as well. The result was the crisis of its leading doctrine during those years: the Yoshida Doctrine. The pursuit of pacifism and economic prosperity, the delegation of the security of the archipelago to the U.S. combined with a low-profile posture in the foreign arena were principles that could only be applied in the bipolar context (Mazzei & Volpe 2014: 92-93). The redefinition of Japan's strategy has been particularly evident under Abe Shinzō, Japan's former prime minister, who served both from 2006 to 2007 and from 2012 to 2020. The creation of the National Security Council in 2013, the revision of the 'Three Principles of Arms Exports' in 2014 and the enactment of the 'Legislation for Peace and Security' in 2015 together with other transformations of the Japanese security apparatus are a few examples of the reforms implemented by Abe in his second administration. These have drawn the attention of different scholars like Christopher Hughes (2015) and Akimoto Daisuke (2018) who envisaged a shift towards an 'Abe Doctrine' in Japan's foreign policy.

Undoubtedly, the (re-)rise of China as both a global and regional superpower, and the threat posed by North-Korea have made Japan and France question their

role and priorities in the region. Differently from other European countries, France presents a territorial extension in both the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. Territories in this part of the globe make France a dependent actor from regional dynamics and, at the same time, geographically close to Japan. Moreover, as democratic countries and U.S. allies, Japan and France possibly share interests and a similar vision of the region. For this reason, the paper investigates security trends of Japan and France during the second administration of Abe (December 2012-September 2020). In this paper, the notion of security is presented as a process that is continuously defined by actors, thus it is neither objective nor static. Security is studied according to the 'securitization theory' formulated by the Copenhagen School which constitutes the analytic framework of the article.

The article has two complementary goals. These are to investigate, first, whether and in which ways securitised issues of Japan and France converge to their approach to the Indo-Pacific and, second, how the cooperation between the two countries evolved throughout the years and whether Japan and France have improved their synergy during Abe's second administration, especially on the defense domain and the Indo-Pacific. The paper enriches the existing literature on Japan and France relations, giving a particular focus on their views of the Indo-Pacific region. The analysis illustrates how France has become an echo chamber reproducing and amplifying Japan's securitisation moves and vice versa. Correspondingly, the paper concludes that security symbiosis of the two concerned countries in the Indo-Pacific increased during the examined period.

The paper has the following structure. The first section will analyse official documents and speeches produced by the Japanese government during Abe's administration to understand what security issues were prioritised. At the same time, the section will clarify the geostrategic nature of the Indo-Pacific region as conceived by Japan. The second section will contain an analysis of France's official documents produced by the government, in order to compare the contents to ones of the first section. This first part will focus on discursive practices. The second part, which constitutes the third section of the paper, will focus on material practices by looking at the historical transformations of the relations between Japan and France. By making this step, I intend to show how discursive practices and material practices correspond with each other.

Analytic framework

As mentioned above, in order to examine the security practices of Japan and France during Abe's second administration, the analysis will move from the 'securitisation theory' of the Copenhagen School to set the analytic framework of the paper.

With the end of the Cold War, the realist notion of security as an objective was questioned by new theoretical patterns and theories. One of the most innovative approaches to security studies was the framework created by the Copenhagen School. The new approach proposes analysing the articulation of security practices starting with their discursive presentations (speech acts) in order to understand the action implemented by a certain actor. In the words of Wæver, one of the main theorists of securitisation, 'by uttering "security" a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it' (Wæver 1995: 55). In accordance with this view, securitisation was defined as: 'an intersubjective process in which an issue is presented as an existential threat that requires emergency measures to be undertaken' (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998: 25). It can be described as an intensification of politicisation, but it differs from the latter since the securitised issue is presented as objective and not just a mere political choice. An actor, who presents something as an existential threat, makes a securitising move, but only if and when their audience accepts it as such, will securitisation happen (*ivi*: 21-31). Securitisation theory is a fundamental part of the Regional Security Complex (RSC) theory of the Copenhagen School which theorise security as a hybrid. It shares the materialist ideas of bounded territoriality and distribution of power with neorealism, but, as constructivism, it conceives the nature of security and patterns of amity/enmity among states in terms of social structures (Buzan & Waever 2003). Still, since its formulation, the concept of securitisation was transformed and applied to different fields of social sciences, which only served to enrich its theoretical structure.

The notion of securitisation was widened as:

> an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artifacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be immediately undertaken to block it (Balzacq 2011: 3).

In other words, securitisation theorists believe that security issues are socially constructed in terms of relations between a securitising actor who, by means of discursive and material practices, legitimates their actions and an au-

dience to support them. It can be said that securitisation is composed of four key elements: audience, context, power relations, and instruments and practices (Balzacq 2016). The present case study identifies the securitising agents and these elements as follows:

1. Context: as already mentioned in the Introduction, increasing tensions among states are stressing out the Northeast Asia context in the post-Cold War era. The paper clears up the context from a Japanese and French point of view. In the Introduction of the paper I individuate four main reasons of regional instability. Putting aside the 'historical problem' which exclusively concerns Japan and its neighbours, the three main factors are: first, China's rise as global and regional power, second, and linked with the latter, territorial disputes, and finally North Korea's brinkmanship.

   China's rise has been interpreted by scholars in two different ways. According to pessimists, or 'Dragon slayers', like John Mearsheimer, China, as a revisionist state, cannot rise peacefully. For this reason, war with the U.S. is inevitable (Mearsheimer 2014). According to optimists, or 'Panda Huggers', like Ikenberry, China has no interest in overthrowing the liberal order as it is profiting from it (Ikenberry 2008). At the same time, Ikenberry recognises the existence of a 'dual hierarchy' in Asia (the military one is led by the U.S., whereas the economic one is led by China) (Ikenberry 2016). Chinese leaders claim that China rise will be peaceful. At the same time, since the end of Cold War, China has implemented an assertive diplomacy. Chinese budgets for military expenditure is expanding every year (according to the data of the World Bank, China is the second state for military expenditure since 2008). Moreover, starting from the third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), the maritime posture of China has become increasingly aggressive. Since 2013, the Chinese government is constructing artificial islands in the South Chinese Sea and its vessels have penetrated the contiguous zone and the territorial seas of other countries, claiming its sovereignty on Spartly, Parecels and Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. This controversy is strictly related to the second factor of regional instability – territorial disputes. China's actions have to be analysed in light of the economic and geostrategic importance that these islands have, in particular in the international trade (Tønnesson 2002; Fravel 2011; Yiallourides 2017). Moreover, China has exerted its power through its economic power. Xi Jinping launched the 'Belt and Road Initiative' in 2013, an infrastructural plan originally created to connect Asia, Africa and Europe. It represents China's efforts to improve its economic and security interests, and its power projection to influence the decision-making process of the countries that it encompasses (Mobley 2019).

North Korea's nuclear and missile diplomacy is another important factor of regional instability. Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea has developed mass-destruction weapons. In 1998, the government launched a Taepodong-1 rocket over Japan, while in 2003 it announced the withdrawal of the country from the NTP. In order to handle the situation, the Six-Party Talks (North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and U.S.) was created. However, the forum did not bring any effective results. In 2006, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. Since then North Korea has periodically destabilised the regional environment by conducting nuclear and ballistic tests. Pyongyang priority remains to preserve its regime. For this reason, its opening to the region is pretty limited and restricted (Kim 2012).

2. Power relations and audience: both Japan and France are middle range power and there is not any formal or informal submission of one state to the other. Thus, it can be assumed that power relations are equal.
3. Discursive instruments and practices: the study will focus on the analysis of official speeches and documents, political tools and historical relations among the two states.

Security trends during Abe's administrations: The securitisation of maritime routes and the Indo-Pacific

The present paragraph focuses on Japan's political orientation towards security during the second Abe administration. I will examine and interpret official documents produced in the period between 2013 and 2020 as discursive practices implemented by Japan. Before presenting the analysis, it is important to note three important elements. First, since the government of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982-1987), Japan has been through a series of changes of its internal apparatus which have brought the Prime Minister's office (*Kantei*) to the centre of the organisation of the foreign policy of the country. Second, the government centralisation under Abe generated a general trend in Japanese official documents consisting of the increment of the threat assessment related to Japan's neighbours, particularly China and North Korea (Oren & Brummer 2020). Third, Abe served as prime minister of Japan for one year, from September 2006 to September 2007. Although his first administration was short, Abe paved the way for his political vision that he followed in his second administration. The transformation of the Defense Agency, created in 1954, into the Ministry of Defense in 2007 showed Abe's willingness to convert Japan into a 'normal country' (*Futsū no Kuni*) or, in other words, a country with a regular military power. Besides this reform, in 2007 Abe launched his geopolitical vision of the region which took a much more coherent shape during his second administra-

tion. Abe's 'Confluence of the Two Seas' (*Futatsu no Umi no Majiwari*) discourse, translated as *Confluence of the Two Seas* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007), together with the creation of the Quadrilater Security Dialogue (or QUAD I), marked a significant shift in Japan's approach to the regional environment. Describing the relations between Japan and India in front of the members of the Indian Parliament, Abe covers different subjects. On a national level, he affirmed the importance that the sea plays for Japan, as well as for India, described as '*kaiyō kokka*', two maritime states. Through this linkage with the sea, Abe highlights how Japan and India's vital interests depend on the *security of the sea lanes*. On a regional level, it can be said that Abe's discourse is the first discursive attempt to merge the security interdependence between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. The concept of 'Broader Asia' (*Kakudai Ajia*) introduced in the discourse can be considered as the precursor and the seed of the Indo-Pacific geopolitical construction (Heidukand & Wacker 2020). Maritime security, bound with liberal values such as freedom of navigation, the rule of law, democracy and peace have remained the most securitised subjects under Abe.

The 'Confluence of the Two Seas' discourse has served as base to Abe's formulation of the '*Anzen Hoshō Daiyamondo*', translated as the 'Asian Democratic Security Diamond'. As suggested by the name itself, the discourse focuses on two main elements: security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region and its actors. It presents China's aggressive posture in the South China Sea as the main threat to regional maritime security. To avoid the creation of a 'Lake Beijing', to preserve the freedom of navigation and respect of the international law, Abe proposes a greater involvement of Japan. Assuming the role of *guardian* of liberal values both in the Indian and Pacific Oceans together with the U.S., India and Australia, the nations would create a free and democratic space, shaping a diamond. While the cooperation with these states is fundamental, Abe's auspice was to improve cooperation with Great Britain and France as well (Abe 2012).

In 2014, at the 13th IISS Asian Security Summit The Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Abe gave a speech called *'Peace and prosperity in Asia, forevermore. Japan for the rule of law. Asia for the rule of law and the rule of law for all of us'*. The speech refers to the ongoing situation in the South China Sea which is undermined by the assertive policy of China. In order to maintain a stable maritime environment, he advocates for the 'Three Principles on the Rule of Law at Sea' which are described as follows:

> The first principle is that states shall make and clarify their claims based on international law. The second is that states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims. The third principle is that states shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

In 2016 during the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI), Abe gave a more incisive form to this strategic vision which culminated in the presentation of the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) strategy. During this discourse Abe highlighted the strong bonds existing between the Asian and the African continents. However, as he explains, these relations rely on the sea lanes that connect the continents physically. For this reason, stability and prosperity can only be pursued through the union of two free and open oceans (the Pacific and the Indian) and two continents (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). Despite the generic discourse, the aim of Abe was to expand Japan's strategic horizon beyond Northeast and Southeast Asia. In other terms, the FOIP can be described as Japan's search for allies in order to stabilise the environment of the Indo-Pacific. Through the instrumentation of a discourse that opposes the coercive and expansionist actions in the sea to liberal values, Japan's goal with its allies is to make the region free and open like an international public good. Japanese discourse about the FOIP has not remained stationary.

A strategy defined as 'tactical hedging', in the sense of an ambiguous, temporal declaratory policy doctrine used to bide time in order to follow the opponent's steps, Japanese FOIP has changed from its first formulation, Koga (2019) individuates three phases. The first one (from mid-2016 to mid-2017) focused on the geographical domains comprising the Indian and the Pacific Oceans and the promotion of two key issues: connectivity and maritime security. The speech of State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishi Nobuo at the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Summit in 2017 is consistent with this framework in which words such as 'freedom of navigation', 'maritime security' and 'maritime law-enforcement' can be found ('The World and Japan' Database 2017). The application and protection of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known as the Montego Bay Convention or UNCLOS, and its principles assumed a straategic importance in the Japanese narrative. The second phase, from mid-2017 to 2018, was characterised by the adoption and promotion of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific by other actors, such as the United States, and the resurgence of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue in 2017 (QUAD II) (Smith 2020). The third phase is marked by the announcement on the 'White Paper on Development Cooperation 2017' issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018 of the three pillars on which FOIP rests:

1. the promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation and free trade,
2. the pursuit of economic prosperity through enhancing connectivity, including through 'quality infrastructure' development in accordance with international standards,

3. initiatives for ensuring peace and stability that include assistance for capacity building on maritime law enforcement, anti-piracy and disaster risk reduction (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018: 2).

Together with these three guiding principles, the FOIP was enlarged from a geostrategic point of view. Remarking the ASEAN centrality in Japan's perspective, this new phase saw the possibility of including new actors who showed their interest to cooperate with Japan in the Indo-Pacific region like the U.K. and France. The result of the geographic dilatation of the original concept created the possibility for the inclusion of new nations also in the institutional framework of the QUAD, reorganised in a QUAD Plus.

As already shown, the discursive practices of securitisation of maritime security and freedom, together with liberal values in the Indo-Pacific, can be detected not just in Abe's and Japan's officials' speeches between 2012 and 2020. These trends can also be found in official documents. *Bōei Hakusho* (Defense of Japan) issued by the Ministry of Defense *and Gaikō Seisho* (Diplomatic Bluebook) issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide strong evidence. The following elements have been drawn by analysing the transformation of Defense of Japan in its contents and design through the years. From 2013 to 2020 the design of the document changed, putting major security issues in evidence. In particular, three major changes can be found. Two of these changes are related to Part I, while the third is related to Part III.

First, Part I, called *Waga Kuni wo Torimaku Anzen Hoshō* (Security Environment Surrounding Japan) in the part called *Gaikan* (Overview), has been chronologically modified as follows. In 2013 it contains a paragraph called *Waga Kuni Shūhen Anzen Hoshō Kankyō* (Security Environment in the Vicinity of Japan). The title does not contain the word Asia-Pacific, the content of the paragraph does. From 2014 to 2018 the paragraph title is substituted with *Ajia Taiheiyō Chiiki no Anzen Hoshō Kankyō* (Asia Pacific Security Environment) clearly referring to the Asia-Pacific region. In 2019 the title of the paragraph is replaced with *Waga Kuni Shūhen nado no Gunji Dōkō* (Military Trends in the Neighboring Countries of Japan), while in 2020 it is changed to *Waga Kuni Shūhen Anzen Hoshō Kankyō* like in 2012. In both documents, the term Indo-Pacific is introduced to replace the term Asia-Pacific. Second, Part I underwent other changes through the years. From 2013 to 2018 it contains a chapter called *Kokusai Shakai no Kadai* (Issues in the International Community) whose name has been changed to *Uchū, Saibā, Denjiha to itta Aratana Ryōiki wo meguru Dōkō*, *Kokusai Shakai no Kadai* (Trends Concerning New Domains including Outer Space, Cyberspace, and Electromagnetic Spectrum, and Relevant Challenges Facing the International Community). This chapter has changed both the title and the sections. In the document of

2013, section titles are: Cyberspace, Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, International Terrorism and Complex and Diverse Regional Conflicts and Approaches of the International Community. In the latter one of 2014, section titles Outer Space, and Military Science and Technology were added to the document. From 2015 to 2018 the following six section titles and their order were preserved: *Kokusai Terorizumu, Chiikifunsō nado no Dōkō* (Trends in International Terrorism and Regional Conflicts)*; Tairyō Hakai Heiki no Iten, Kakusan* (Transfer and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction)*; Kaiyō wo meguru Dōkō* (Maritime Trends)*; Uchū Kūkan to Anzen Hoshō* (Outer Space and Security)*; Saibā Kūkan wo meguru Dōkō, Gunji Kagaku Gijutsu to Bōei Seisan* (Trends in Cyberspace)*, Gijutsu Kiban wo meguru Dōkō* (Trends Concerning Military Science and Technology as well as Defense Production and Technological Bases)*.* Compared to the sections contained in 2014, in the period 2015-2018 'Maritime Trends' acquired an important relevance creating a section itself. In 2019 and 2020 the sections remain the same with the addition of a section called *Denjiha Ryōiki wo meguru Dōkō* (Electromagnetic Domain Trends) in both of them, and *Shingata Korona Uirusu Kansenshō wo meguru Dōkō* (Developments regarding the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)). The order of presentation of the topics changed: terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have been moved to the end of the chapter and replaced by the sections regarding military science and technology, space, cyberspace and electromagnetic domains. Finally, Part III is the most varied, both in terms of sections and titles. The title of the part changes in 2013 and 2014. From 2015 to 2018, the title becomes *Kokumin no Seimei, Zaisan to Ryōdo, Ryōkai, Ryōkū wo Mamorinuku tame no Torikumi* (Initiatives to Protect the Lives and Property of the People and Secure the Territorial Land, Water and Airspace). The name is substituted once again in 2019 and 2020 with *Waga Kuni Bōhei no Mittsu no Hashira (Bōei no Mokuhyō wo Tassuru tame no Shudan)* (Three Pillars of Japan's Defense (Instruments to Achieve the Objectives of Defense)). Structure coherence in terms of chapters and sections in the document is achieved from 2016 to 2018 and from 2019 to 2020. In the last two documents the Three Pillars mentioned in the titles correspond to the titles of the three chapters (Japan's own defensive architecture, Japan-U.S. Alliance and Security Cooperation). Moreover, from 2016 the sections called *Kaiyō Anzen Hoshō no Kakuho* (Ensuring Maritime Security) and *Gunji Kanri, Gunshuku oyobi Fukakusan he no Torikumi* (Initiatives for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation) can be found in all the documents of the following years. The same can be said about the sections called *Uchū Ryōiki oyobi Saibā Ryōiki no Riyō ni kakeru Kyōryoku* (Cooperation in Use of Space and Cyber Domains) and *Takakuteki, Tasōtekina Anzen Hosho Kyōryoku no Senryakutekina Suishin ni mukete* (Strategic Promotion of Multi-Faceted and Multi-Layered Defense Cooperation)

from 2019. In this Part, multilateralism, maritime, space and cyberspace security are the leading topics of the sections.

With regard to the contents of the document, security trends in terms of actors remain the same throughout the years, identifying Russia, China and North Korea as major challengers. From 2014, the term *gurei zō*n *no jitai* (gray-zone situation, defined as those situations in which disputes and conflicts occur not from a strict warfare point of view) has been used with more frequency. The term appears in the Overview, which presents the description of Japan's surrounding environment in the Asia and Indo-Pacific region and the main three challengers.

Securitised issues are the same as those presented in the official speeches made by Abe and government officials: non-proliferation of mass-destruction weapons (like bacteriological and nuclear weapons), maritime security related to the freedom of navigation, sea lanes of communication and the respect of UNCLOS in relation to the situation in the South and East China Sea. The substitution of counter-piracy sections with a broader section, called 'Ensuring Maritime Security', shows the importance given to maritime security in reference to the Chinese threat. It integrates the actions of Japan in the Pacific and Indian Oceans as shown in the description of the *Malabar Exercise*. In 2019 and in 2020, the promotion of the military science and technology section and electromagnetic, space and cyberspace domains sections to major security issues can be associated with the threat posed by China's modernisation in technology and development of Artificial Intelligence.

Analysing the Diplomatic Bluebook, a similar chronological transformation can be traced from 2013 to 2020. While the general structure of the document has remained more or less coherent during the years, a few design changes have been made. First, Chapter III, titled *Bunyabetsu ni Mita Gaikō* (Japan's Foreign Policy in Major Diplomatic Fields) in 2013, changed in *Kokueki to Sekai Zentai no Rieki wo Zōshin Suru Gaikō* (Japan's Foreign Policy to Promote National and Global Interests) from 2014 to 2020, is divided into four sections. The first section titled from 2013 to 2020 *Nihon to Kokusai Shakai no Heiwa to Antei ni muketa Torikumi* (Efforts for Peace and Stability of Japan and the International Community) has changed its internal structure according to major issues reaching a formal coherence from 2016. In 2013, the paragraphs were: *Nichibei Anzen Hoshō* (*Anpo) Taisei* (The Japan–U.S. Security Arrangements)*; Kokusaishakai no Heiwa no tame no Torikumi* (Efforts for Peace in the International Community)*; Gunshuku, Fukakusan, Genshiryoku no Heiwateki Riyō* (Disarmament, Non-proliferation, and the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy)*; Kokusai Shakai no Antei ni muteka Torukumi* (Efforts towards Stability in the International Community). In the following years the number of paragraphs has been expanded and from 2016 they became eight and they are: *Anzen Hoshō ni kan suru Torikumi* (National

Security Initiatives); *Nichibei Anzen Hoshō (Anpo) Taisei* (Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements); *Gurōbaru na Anzen Hoshō* (Global Security); *Gunji, Fukakusan, Genshiryoku no Heiwateki Riyō; Kokusairengō (Kokuren) ni okeru Torikumi* (Disarmament and Non-proliferation and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy); *Kokusai Shakai ni okeru Hō no Shihai* (The Rule of Law in the International Community); *Jinken* (Human Rights); *Jyosei* (Women). Second, in the same section, inside the paragraph called Efforts for Peace in the International Community in 2013 the following subparagraphs are found: *Chiiki Anzen Hoshō* (Regional Security); *Heiwa Iji, Heiwa Kōzō* (Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding); *Kaiyō Anzen Hoshō* (Maritime Security); *Chianjyō no Kyōi ni tai suru Torikumi* (Initiatives to Combat Security Threats; *Saibā* (Cyber), *Uchū* (Outside Space). In 2014 and in 2015, the subparagraphs which refer to maritime, cyber and space security are contained in a specific paragraph by the title of *Kokusai Kōkyōzai (Gurōbaru Komonsu)* (Global Commons). From 2016 to 2020, these three subparagraphs are moved into the main paragraph titled Global Security, together with the subparagraphs present in the previous years. In 2020 *Aratana Anzen Hoshō Kadai* (Emerging Security Challenges) is inserted as a new paragraph. Third, from 2017 to 2019, the document contains a specific section as *Tokushū* or Special Feature dedicated to the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy' inside Chapter I. In 2020 this part is moved to *Kantō Tokushū* or Opening Special Features.

With regard to the contents of Diplomatic Bluebooks, we find the same type of discursive practices as in the Defense of Japan and Abe's and other government officials' speeches. Japan's security linkage with the sea and the oceans is justified by defining the country as a maritime state. Freedom of navigation, maritime security and stability combined with Japan's promotion of UNCLOS principles remain central in the documents and in the cooperation with the U.S. but also with ASEAN and European States. From 2016 specific subparagraphs explain the situation in the South and East China Sea, presenting China actions as a threat for liberal values. The FOIP is presented as a strategy to maintain the Indo-Pacific region as a *Kokusai Kōkyōzai* (international public goods). In 2020, the FOIP is presented as an inclusive and open concept apt to the promotion of an international law-based order, a free and fair economy, connectivity, maritime security and safety with many countries besides the U.S., India and Australia. Moreover, from 2017 in Chapter III, in the section related to Japan's international cooperation and development, and economic diplomacy (section II and III), the Indo-Pacific strategy is presented as a political reality to achieve through economic means.

Eventually, from the analysis of the documents, it is possible to have a close reading about the securitising moves, which are mainly focused on topics that are linked to Japan's greatest challengers: China and North Korea. Over the

years, the government has put significant stress on some specific security issues. In particular, the maritime security dimension has implied an important and systematic securitisation process throughout the years. This is mainly related to the South and East China Sea and the freedom of navigation. Moreover, the government has inserted liberal values such as international law, rule of law and democracy as important principles to protect, in line with the so-called 'value-oriented diplomacy' launched by Abe in 2007.[1]

Securitisation practices in France from 2013 to 2020: The importance of the Indo-Pacific

This paragraph analyses the official documents published by the French governments and speeches given by its officials. It is important to specify that French official documents, like the White Paper (*Livre Blanc*), are not issued every year, but they are published as the national strategy is revised. It is just as important to clarify its historical position in Asia and in the Pacific in order to understand France's national interests in the region.

Addressed as a European country, France's role in the region is usually underestimated despite its long-lasting historical bond with the area and the fact that the EEZs of the overseas territories located in the Indian and in the Pacific Ocean correspond to 93% of its entire EEZ. France's presence in the Indo-Pacific is rooted in the controversial heritage of its colonial past in the world. It dates back to the seventeenth century with the first colonial wave and it enlarges with the second wave in the nineteenth century. France's presence in Asia (French Indochina) starts to decrease considerably with the revolutionary movements born in the aftermath of the Second World War in order to obtain independence. The Geneva Conference in 1954 marked the formal end of its colonial experience in the continent. Thereafter, the French presence in the Indo-Pacific region has been relegated to the territories in the Pacific and in the Indian Ocean and its interests limited to the security environment of these territories. France's engagement in the region continued through the stipulation of different partnership agreements with neighbouring countries in the development of their military capabilities and through the participation in regional fora and organisations. This trend is particularly visible from the nineties during which

1 The annual version of the Defense of Japan from 2015 to 2020 in its original language are accessible at the following website: Ministry of Defense, Bōhei Hakusho: https://www.mod.go.jp/j/publication/wp/index.html. The version of 2013 is accessible at the following website: http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2013/w2013_00.html. The version of 2014 is accessible at the following link: http://www.clearing.mod.go.jp/hakusho_data/2014/w2014_00.html.
The annual version of the Diplomatic Bluebook of Japan is accessible at the following website in the original language: https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/index.html

France undertook strategic dialogues, military and technological cooperation initiatives with countries like South Korea (1992), Vietnam (1997) and Singapore (1998), and cooperation initiatives to ensure the security in the Pacific with the United States, Australia and New Zealand which materialised in the QUAD in 1998 (Regaud 2017).

The beginning of the millennium marked an evident shift in the interests shown towards the Asian continent not only by France but also by the European Union and its Member States. Two main factors explain the uptick in the region, which correspond to the description contained in the 'Guidelines on the EU'S Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia of 2007' (Council of the European Union 2007) published by the EU and in the 'Défense et Sécurité nationale: le Livre blanc' of 2008 published by the French government (Ministère des Armées 2008). From a geo-economic point of view, Asia is defined as home to different fast-growing economies, with a particular regard to India and China, from which European states' economies depend. From a military point of view, the continent is described as precarious and a potential future site of clashes: terrorism, proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (e.g. North Korea), fast-modernising countries and increase in their military expenditures (in particular, China). In both these documents there is not a specific and strong securitisation of maritime issues linked with Asia. However, in the French document, the prevention of potential military conflicts in the area is considered a general priority to pursue in order to avoid an impact on maritime routes.

The linkage between this topic and Asia starts to appear in the documents published from 2012. The European Guidelines of 2012, which reviewed those of 2007, present North Korea as a key issue along with two others which involve China directly. The first one is the relations with Taiwan; the second one is related to the unstable situation in the South China Sea and the necessity to maintain the freedom of navigation with a clear reference to UNCLOS. It presents China's economic and military growth as an important source of instability for the security environment of the region (Council of the European Union 2012). Similarly, the *Livre Blanc* of 2013 presents the freedom of navigation, the territorial dispute in South China Sea and the security of the sea lanes of communications as elements of concern for the French government. Moreover, the book introduces the military modernisation of China together with its capacity to operate a cyberattack, as one of the main security issues (Ministère des Armées 2013). The importance played by the Asia-Pacific region has been emphasised by the number of publications and statements that the government of France has made since 2014. The presentation of the French security strategy in Asia-Pacific by the General Director of Strategic Affairs of the Ministry of Defense Philippe

Errera in 2014 (Ministère de la Défense 2014), followed by the publication of the '*Stratégie nationale de sûreté des espaces maritimes*' (National strategy for the security of maritime areas) in 2015 are clear evidence of France's willingness to be recognised as a maritime power and an important actor to shape regional dynamics (Premier Ministre 2015). From 2016, also as a consequence of China's refusal to respect the arbitration award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, discursive practices used by the French government about China and its stand become stricter. The speech given by the Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2016 shows the posture that France will assume in the following years:

> If the law of the sea is not respected today in the China seas, it will be Threatened tomorrow in the Arctic, the Mediterranean or elsewhere. In order to continue to contain the risks of conflict, we must defend law and defend ourselves by means of law. This is a message that France will continue to repeat in international institutions. It is a message that France will continue to put into practice, by sailing her ships and flying her aircraft wherever international law allows and operational needs require. Several times a year, French Navy vessels sail the waters of this region, and this will continue. Since the beginning of this year, the French navy has already deployed three times through the South China Sea. We do this to defend our national interests and our security, to implement our defence partnerships and to contribute to regional and international peace and security (Ministère de la Défense 2016).

France's concern about China is evident in the revision of the national security strategy of 2013, published in 2017. By the analyses of this document, two main elements can be pointed out: first, it introduces the term Indo-Pacific in the French rhetoric specifying France's commitment to reinforce maritime security in the region; second, it describes China's policy in the South China Sea as 'assertive'. The new version of the strategy inserts China together with Russia, in a specific paragraph of Part B which is titled '*Durcissement et diffusion des menaces*' (translated as: Harder, more disseminated threats) (Ministère des Armées 2017).

Since 2018, President Emmanuel Macron and his *entourage* have actively promoted France's involvement in the Indo-Pacific security as strictly tied to its own security. The government have published three main documents since 2018 that explain the French strategy and interests are: '*Stratégie française en Asie-Océanie à l'horizon 2030. Vers un espace asiatique indopacifique inclusif*' (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangère 2018), '*La Stratégie de Défense Française en*

Indopacifique' (Ministère des Armées 2019) and '*Partenariats de la France dans l'Indopacifique*' (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangère 2021). The first two documents describe securitised issues, which are: maritime and air security, the safeguard of multipolarity against unipolarity, non-proliferation, climate and environmental security, respect of the rule of law and the safeguard of international law. The third document designates France's partners to achieve and promote the interests listed before. While France-China relations were raised to the level of 'global strategic partnership' in 2004, the document mentions just Australia, ASEAN, Japan and India.

Securitised issues in France's discursive practices are similar to Japan's: the protection of liberal value, the strategic importance of sea lanes of communications in the South China Sea, safeguard of maritime and air security in the Indo-Pacific, non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons and of nuclear weaponry. Security trends tend to converge also on a chronological point of view. Moreover, Japan is described as an important partner in achieving France's goals in the region. However, the analysis of discursive practices cannot be considered enough in order to understand how Abe's securitising moves have been influential. The next paragraph investigates the transformation of Japan-France relations under Abe's administration as a form of material practice which had the capacity to juxtapose the security of East Asia with the one of France, as a state of the Pacific and of the Indian Ocean, in the broader framework of the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan-France synergy under Abe: An alliance for the Indo-Pacific

The official establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and France dates back to 1858 when the Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed by the two countries in Edo (Tokyo). The establishment of the relations between Japan and the Western countries was the product of the American gunboat diplomacy which forced Japan to open up after more than two hundred years of its policy of isolation called *sakoku* (literally, closed country). The result was the imposition of the 'unequal treaties' to Japan which found itself in a position of subordination to these countries. To cancel the effect of the treaties, Japan responded to Western colonialism with the modernisation of the country giving birth to the Meiji Restoration. It is in this context that Japan and France started to communicate and exchange their knowledge.

Since its beginning to nowadays, the relations between the two countries have changed greatly. If at the end of the nineteenth century Japan left Asia 'to enter Europe', from the 1930s the controversies related to the 'Manchurian Incident' and the refusal of the proposal of racial equality provoked Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations (Burkam 2008). With the exception of Germany

and Italy, and their alliance during the Second World War, Japan's distance with European countries, including France, remained strong for two reasons also in the post-war years. First, the memories of the actions of the war committed by the Japanese Army were still vivid; second, Japan's economic growth guided by a 'developmental state' (Johnson 1999), and the invasion of Japanese products in the European market thanks to a favourable exchange rate created the so called *bōeki masatsu* (commercial frictions) and an anti-Japanese sentiment (Nye 1992).

Cooperation started to increase in a wide range of areas between Japan, the European Community and its Member States only at the beginning of the 1990s with the end of the era of trade conflicts. The reconciliation was facilitated by the excuses of the Japanese government for its actions during the Second World War expressed by the Murayama Statement in 1995. In 1991, the Japan-EC Joint Declaration was signed in order to improve economic and political cooperation as liberal and democratic actors (European External Action Service 1991). On a bilateral level, France and Japan started to collaborate on different domains. To penetrate the Japanese market and help its companies with information and financial assistance, France launched a special programme called '*Le Japon c'est possible*' for the period of 1992-1997, while in November 1996 Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Chirac signed the 'Japan-France 20 Actions for the Year 2000' to deepen economic and political cooperation by regularising consultations between the two governments (Republique Française 1996). In 1997, the *Maison de la culture du Japon* was opened in Paris and the cultural event called 'Japan Year' took place. The 'France Year' took place in 1998 in Japan.

Japan's interest for the European region deepened with the start of the new millennium, as a consequence of the acceleration of the process of regional integration which gave birth to the European Union (Tōgō 2010). In 2000, Foreign Affairs Minister Kono delivered in Paris his speech called '*Seeking a Millennium Partnership: New Dimensions in Japan-Europe Cooperation*' proposing 'the decade of Japan-Europe cooperation' based on three pillars: realising shared values while respecting diversity, strengthening of Japan-Europe political cooperation to prevent future conflicts and to promote the disarmament and non-proliferation, and sharing the benefits of globalisation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000). This discourse was followed by the Action Plan for EU-Japan Cooperation agreed in 2001 in which four major areas of cooperation were individuated: promoting peace and security, strengthening the economic and trade partnership, coping with global and societal challenges, and bringing together people and culture. (European Parliament 2001). Japan's commitment to strengthen its partnership with the European Union was achieved by the promotion of bilateral relations with the Member States. In 2005, after the Japan-France Summit held in March, the '*Declaration for a new Japan-France partnership For Peace, Stability and Pros-*

perity in the International Community' was launched to improve the cooperation between the two countries. The cooperation would intensify the high-level strategic dialogue in order to handle international security issues, like international terrorism, non-proliferation, North Korea and Africa, and international development to reduce poverty (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005).

In the first ten years of the 2000s the relation between France and Japan improved mainly towards cultural, technological and economic cooperation, while from the 2010s the strategic dialogue and the partnership between the two countries upgraded to a new level. The French White Paper of 2008 signaled the new concern of France for Asia, as new tension could destabilise the region. For this reason, military and political cooperation begun to assume a major relevance in Japan-France relationship. The '*Declaration for a Japan-France partnership for Nuclear Energy and Energy Policy*' in 2011 and the establishment of the first Japan-France Foreign Ministers' Dialogue in 2012 are clear witnesses of this change.

The relations went even further under Prime Minister Abe, reaching a high peak in cooperation, especially in the regional context. It is during these years that in each country documents and discursive practices become similar. The point of view on the importance of the Asia-Pacific region and the concern for the Chinese growth start to converge. Unsurprisingly, in May 2013, during the summit between the foreign ministers of the two countries, Kishida outlined the common interests in the stability of the Asia-Pacific region referring to France's territories in the Pacific Ocean (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). In July of the same year, on the occasion of the visit of President Hollande to Japan, the relationship between the two countries was elevated to an 'exceptional' partnership with the reaffirmation of cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. The Japan-France Foreign and Defense Ministers' Dialogue was launched and it was held for the first time in 2014. Abe's revision of the security apparatus of Japan and its defense posture in order to fulfill a 'proactive contribution to peace' made it possible to boost the synergy between the two countries. Moreover, as France's posture about Asia-Pacific and the security of SLOCs became closer to the Japanese view, the government of Japan probably considered improving its cooperation with the partner in military exercises and the defense production. In 2014, Japan took part in the French-led military exercise called '*Croix du Sud*' held in New Caledonia every two years. In the same year, bilateral consultations on cybersecurity-related issues started. Interoperability and coordination between Japan's Self Defense Forces and France's army were subsequently strengthened by the participation in multilateral exercises like *'Jeanne D'Arc' Mission* and '*La Perouse*'. The stipulation of the transfer of defense equipment and technology agreement in 2016 and the conclusion of the acquisition

and cross servicing agreement in 2018 established a new legal framework that confirmed Japan's and France's willingness to build up a concrete cooperation in the field of security.

Finally, from 2016 maritime security, in particular related to the Chinese Seas, and its safeguard from Beijing's predatory behave match in both discursive practices, thereby Abe's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' initiative in 2016 was favourably welcomed by France, which was one of the first countries among European Union Member States to adopt a strategy and to declare its commitment in the region. Furthermore, the renovation of the new partnership in 2019 placed a significant emphasis on the securitisation of this strategic space, the enhancement of liberal values and maritime security resulting in the establishment of a Japan-France Comprehensive Maritime Dialogue. The partnership set three main pillars of cooperation: maritime security, climate change and the environment and biodiversity, and quality infrastructure (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019). The dossier prepared on the occasion of *'Jeanne D'Arc' Mission* in 2020 by the French government made clear the strategic importance of the exercise to affirm its presence in the Indo-Pacific (Ministère des Armées 2020). Similarly, the transit of the French Navy in the South China Sea in 2021 was in line with the speech given the same year by the Ministry of Armies, Florence Parly. She expressed her fear of China's aggressivity and disrespect of international law (République Française 2021). In addition, France has been an active promoter of the European Union's involvement in the Indo-Pacific. After the invitation and the explanation of the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' given by the Foreign Affairs' Minister Motegi in a videoconference at the EU Foreign Affairs Council in January 2021, France, supported by the Netherlands and Germany, pushed the European Union to adopt a strategy for the cooperation in the region, which resulted in the 'EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' approved by the European Council in April 2021 (Council of the European Union 2021). This document, together with the Strategic Partnership Agreement and the Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force on 1 February 2019, and constitutes the base for the common action between Japan and the European Union. The Union cited the document approved by the Council to reaffirm its commitment in the Indo-Pacific for a free and open sea during the trilateral exercise held in May 2021 among the European Naval Force, the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force and the Djibouti Force under ATALANTA (EU Naval Force 2021).

Conclusion

Looking at the elements and the analysis conducted above, some considerations can be drawn. From 2013, securitisation trends in Japanese and French documents start to be more similar than in previous years. The two major actors tar-

geted as security issues in Northeast Asia are North Korea and China. While the tensions related to North Korea's ballistic missiles and nuclear crisis, together with proliferation of mass-destruction weapons, were already mentioned as security threats in the White Paper of 2008, France's posture on maritime security and China's assertive policy became more rigid from 2013. Maritime security, and protection of the values and principles enunciated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are two important issues that the two countries targeted in relation to the Chinese Seas and the Chinese posture in it. As other countries, since Abe launched the FOIP in 2016, France has designed its own strategy to engage in the region. It has a high degree of similarity with the Japanese one and, unusually, the French government published for the first time a booklet on the same topic in the Japanese language (Ministère des Armées 2018). Moreover, France's participation into the QUAD, the platform created by Abe to promote security dialogue among India, Australia, the U.S and Japan to contain China, can be seen as further evidence of the effective impact that Japan's foreign policy under Abe had on security dynamics in North East Asia (Observer Research Foundation 2021).

As mentioned, securitisation of certain topics relies on a specific context which makes it more effective. On the one hand, China's foreign policy led by Xi Jinping has become more assertive in the region, making clear its vital interests (Zhang 2015). On the other hand, both Japan and France had several reasons to deepen their relations for the cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Both countries have strategical geo-position in the Indian and the Pacific Ocean, and they are important partners of the U.S. Japan's interest in France has been motivated by the necessity to search a new privileged partner in the European Union that could share its security interests after 'Brexit' (Tsuruoka 2018). On the other hand, France's return to *gaullo-mitterandisme* (de Gliniasty 2017), as the style guiding Macron's foreign policy has prioritised the imperative research and pursue of multilateralism against the hegemonic claims of a unipolar system shown by China. Finally, the revision of its defensive posture and the inclusion of liberal values in Japan's foreign policy have made the country a more attractive partner for France than it was before (Pajon 2018).

In conclusion, the analysis of Japan's foreign policy from 2012 to 2020 has shown how securitising moves implemented by the Japanese government, in particular under Abe's administration has had an important influence on France and to a lesser extent on the European Union. Especially the FOIP strategy, announced in 2016, and its contents spread and sprouted widely. Different actors, *inter alia* France, have decided to support the vision and the securitised issues, starting to play an active role in Northeast Asia. In the past few years, Japan and France have aligned their process of securitisation with each other. Whether the

North Korean threat was already a critical security issue, China's rise as both economic and military power and its disrespect of the UNCLOS in the Chinese Seas have been targeted as major security objectives to tackle. Japan's influence did not limit itself to France. France's position as both an Indo-Pacific nation and a member state of the European Union has produced a spill-over effect on the Union itself, which adopted its own strategy towards the region. However, as claimed by RSC theory, it can be assumed that the territorial proximity of France and Japan to the Indo-Pacific region has amplified the convergence in interests. The result is the improvement of the cooperation between the two countries especially in regard to maritime security and the promotion of liberal values.

Mattia Dello Spedale Venti is enrolled as a Ph.D. Student at Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale (Departement of Asian, African, Mediterrenean Studies). He was granted a scholarship to participate in the Double Degree Program between Kōbe University and "L'Orientale" University of Naples in 2018-2019. He graduated in "International Relations of Asia and Africa" (Napoli) and "Intercultural Studies" (Kōbe). He is affiliated to the Department of Excellence "Center for East Asian Studies".

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