

A Report from the Conference "The EU and Japan: State, Obstacles and Prospects of Political and Economic / Trade Relations"

This year's European Japan Advanced Research Network (EJARN) conference marked something new again. After five years with conferences in Stockholm, Brussels, Berlin, Tokyo, in Paris and one in Trondheim, Norway, the location was in 2015 moved to Pavia in Italy. Our local host on this occasion, 4-5 June 2015, was Pavia University. The main responsibility for the organization and execution of the conference was held by Professor Axel Berkofsky, with the assistance of some of his students. The conference organizer, in close coordination and consultation with EJARN's chairperson Professor Marie Söderberg, was able to gather a group of leading Japan/EU-Japan scholars from Europe and Japan and furthermore invited European and Japanese officials directly involved in negotiating the envisioned EU-Japan agreements covering trade, political and security relations. Through the participation of scholars and policymakers the conference was able to present a wide range of views and analysis regarding the future of EU-Japan relations and European-Japanese cooperation in trade, economics, politics and security. The EU and Japan have yet to sign and adopt the envisioned Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and it remains yet to be seen whether they will be able and willing to sign both agreements by the end of this year (as it was announced both in Brussels and Tokyo). The EU-Japan conference in Pavia sought on the first day of the 2-day conference to present and analyze the existing problems and obstacles yet standing in the way of adopting the above-mentioned two bilateral agreements in the course of the year 2015. The current obstacles notwithstanding, there was a near-consensus among scholars and policymakers that while there will in the months ahead continue to remain uncertainty as regards the timing of the actual adoption of the above-mentioned EU-Japan agreements, Brussels and Tokyo have over the last two years made significant progress towards the adoption of those agreements. It was furthermore agreed that concrete EU-Japan cooperation in international politics and security has been intensified over recent years even without a further and new institutional basis. In other words, EU-Japan non-military ad hoc security cooperation in Central Asia, Africa and Southeast Asia (among others) has been intensified even with the above-mentioned SPA still in the process of negotiation. Indeed, the track record of EU-Japan non-military security cooperation is not at all unimpressive and officials from both Japan and the EU explained and

presented where and how that is the case. Finally, there was a consensus that further institutionalization of EU-Japan cooperation in politics and security is bound to increase the above-mentioned non-military security cooperation. While it has yet to be formally and officially announced whether the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) will be adopted later this year, officials from both Japan and the EU confirmed that significant progress has been made. That said, however, EU officials directly involved in bilateral trade negotiations caution that – due to existing problems and obstacles regarding standards, market obstacles, non-tariff barriers to trade and investment – the adoption of the envisioned EPA could require additional time and the agreement’s adoption for 2015 cannot yet be guaranteed. The second day of the conference dealt with and covered various issues on Japan’s foreign and security policy agenda, with leading Japanese and European scholars and officials presenting their views and analysis of Japanese foreign and security policies. Apart from (for further details please see the conference agenda sent to you earlier) Pavia University, Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO) contributed generously to the financing of this conference and we want to extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to TIFO for its support..



Pavia University is one of Italy’s oldest universities established in 1361. The conference was held in the Aula Scarpa of Pavia University (see picture above) and welcome remarks were given by Professor Pierluigi Valsecchi, Director for Centre of Extra European (Asian and African Studies). We started the conference by focusing on EU-Japan relations in trade and economics and had two very qualified speakers in this field, namely Jun Arima, Director of the JETRO office in London and Antonio Parenti from EU Commission/DG Trade. Parenti has been working EU-Japan trade negotiations for six years now was just back from Tokyo where another round of bilateral negotiations had been held the week before. Jun Arima also had all the latest updates from the negotiations. They were both very positive as regards the ongoing negotiations and both confirmed that the shared EU-Japan objective is to conclude the Economic Partnership/Free Trade Agreement before the end of this year.



Pictured above Professor Berkofsky and Professor Valsecchi



Pictured above (L-R) Mr. Arima, Professor Söderberg and Mr. Parenti

The adoption of the EPA is envisioned to take place simultaneously with the adoption of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the EU and Japan. This agreement was the topic of another session during the day with Ambassador Jiro Okuyama, Deputy Director of the Japanese Delegation to the EU, Ambassador Michael Reiterer, European External Action Service and Professor Michito Tsuruoka from the National Defense Institute discussed EU-Japan political and security relations. As mentioned above, both speakers and discussants of that session pointed out that actual cooperation in international politics and security is already very intense even if EU-Japan non-military security cooperation does not always hit the headlines of the international press. It might be ‘unspectacular’ but it is nonetheless substantive doing justice to the both Japan and the EU’s status as ‘soft powers.’



Pictured above (L-R) HEM Okuyama, Dr. Swenson-Wright and HEM Reiterer

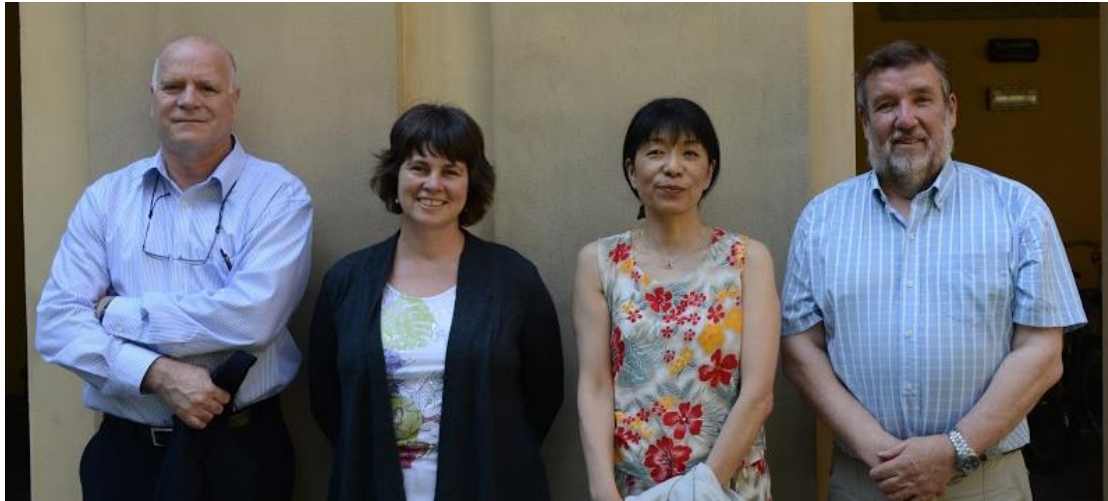
Matteo Dian from the University of Bologna gave a presentation on the prospects and problems of Japan joining and the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) and Marie Söderberg from the European institute of Japanese Studies at the Stockholm School of Economics spoke about Japan's new development cooperation policy.

On the second day of the conference Guibourg Delamotte, Centre Asie in Paris spoke about Japanese defense policy under Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Annette Skovsted Hansen from University of Aarhus in Denmark presented on Africa/Asia/Japan regional Partnership.



Pictured above Dr. Skovsted Hansen and Dr. Delamotte

Finally the conference was rounded off with a panel of Canadian researchers from the Japan Future Initiative (JFI), the Canadian equivalent of EJARN. Kimie Hara, Carin Holroyd, Keith Hipel and James Tiessen presented a number of Japan-related papers and proposed, together with Professor Ken Coates via Skype, to host a joint EJARN-JFI conference in Tokyo in 2016.



Pictured above (L-R) Dr. Tiessen, Dr. Holroyd, Professor Hara and Professor Hipel



Some of the conference participants in the library of Pavia University.

This year's conference was rounded up by the announcement that next year's meeting will be arranged by Professor Chris Hughes and will be held at Warwick University in the UK in June 2016. We will get back to you with exact dates before the end of the year.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Marie Söderberg".

Marie Söderberg
On behalf of the EJARN Executive Committee