

# ***The European Union and Japan in a Fluid Global Liberal Order: Establishing an Inter-Regional Studies Centre***

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## **A newly launched joint research project**

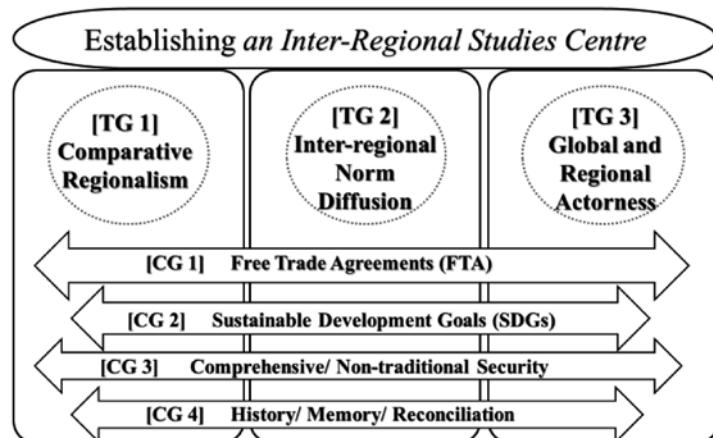
The Global Liberal Order has been constructed and contested since the end of the Second World War. This order has become more fluid than ever with the rise of Russia and China, but more seriously as a result of the Brexit referendum and the Trump victory in 2016. At the same time, however, the European Union (EU) and Japan have long shared liberal values – both economic and political. These two actors concluded their official negotiations over two significant agreements: an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). Both agreements were signed at the EU-Japan Summit on 17 July 2018.

Against this backdrop, we are successfully carrying out a joint research project, generously funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) from April 2018 to March 2023: Core-to-Core Programme A. Advanced Research Networks (see [http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-c2c/adopted\\_a.html](http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-c2c/adopted_a.html); <https://www.waseda.jp/inst/oris/en/project/>).

The main objectives of this research project are, primarily, to carry out theoretical and empirical studies of EU-Japan relations, identifying three theoretical pillars and several case-study (thematic) strands, and subsequently, to establish a world-wide centre of ‘Inter-Regional Studies (IRS)’ in the academic field of Politics and International Relations. In order to establish an IRS centre, it is imperative for us to expand our research networks involving the researchers of Asian/ Asia-Pacific Studies, while strengthening our existing networks of European Studies around the world. With regard to studies of the EU and European integration, Waseda University has already carried out substantial research collaboration and exchange with (1) Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in Belgium, (2) Freie Universität Berlin (FUB) in Germany, (3) the University of Warwick (UW) in the UK, and (4) the University of Canterbury (UC) in New Zealand. This research project will strengthen these existing networks, by including other research institutes in each country and in both regions: Europe and Asia.

We have embarked on this project by organising several research groups with three theoretical pillars and four case-study strands, as shown in **Figure 1**. Three theoretical research groups focus on: (1) comparative studies of

**Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram of the Project**



European integration and Asian regionalism (TG1: comparative regionalism); (2) studies on diffusion mechanisms of liberal norms between the two regions (TG2: inter-regional norm diffusion); and (3) studies of global and regional actorness, mainly comparing the EU with Japan (TG3: global and regional actorness). At this stage, we have four case-study research groups (CGs) focussing on: (1) free trade agreements (FTA); (2) sustainable development goals (SDGs); (3) comprehensive/ non-traditional security; and (4) history/ memory/ reconciliation.

### **Three major activities of this research project**

#### **1. Joint research**

The above-mentioned research groups are jointly operated by Waseda University and four core institutes in partner countries. Coordinators from the four universities are: Anne Weyembergh (ULB), Tanja A. Börzel (FUB), Christopher W. Hughes (UW), and Martin Holland (UC). We aim to expand and consolidate our research networks by inviting leading researchers not only from their own institutes, but also from other institutes in their own and neighbouring countries. Each research group intends to publish an edited book or a special issue of an academic journal.

#### **2. Seminars and workshops**

Waseda and the four core institutes in partner countries organize international seminars. This gives presentation opportunities to both senior and young researchers in our project. We regularly organize workshops of a relatively small size, as we have also done at the Organization for Regional and Inter-regional Studies (ORIS), frequently in partnership with the Top Global University (TGU) Global Asia Studies project based in Waseda University.

#### **3. Research exchanges**

The four core institutes in partner countries host short-term visits for seminars and workshops by our Japan-based researchers, and Waseda makes reciprocal efforts. Significantly for this research exchange project, we encourage young (early stage) researchers, post-doctoral and doctoral students, to pay medium- or long-term visits in order to conduct substantial research in partner countries. Particularly with the ULB and FUB, we have already made several substantial research exchanges. ULB and Waseda are currently implementing a 'cotutelle' system, by jointly supervising one PhD student under the auspices of the Gemstones project.

### **The role of this journal and the future of this research project**

We have now invited nine members of our overseas core institutes to the international board of editors for this *Journal of Inter-Regional Studies: Regional and Global Perspectives*, which was launched last year by ORIS at Waseda University. Together with the joint research project, forming this new international board of editors will be a substantial step towards an academic journal with a more international reputation.

In this volume, we have two invited articles. One article explains the significance of the EU-Japan EPA, which came into force on 1 February 2019. It is not necessarily the product of the above-mentioned joint research, but Mr Pedro Silva Pereira, a Rapporteur of the European Parliament for the EU-Japan EPA, evaluates this agreement 'in the context of a new global trade order'. In another invited article, Professor Enrique Peruzzotti 'traces the genealogy of a model of democracy that arose in Latin America in the mid-1940s and that has attained significant momentum in today's politics'. This article suggests that we should not only study Europe and Asia, but also other regions like Latin America and Africa, if we really aim for a genuinely pluralistic and inclusive Inter-Regional Studies Centre.