

"Sanae Takaichi and the European Union – Collaboration with a Potential"

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Executive Summary

The appointment of **Sanae Takaichi as Japan's first female Prime Minister** marks a historic milestone for Japan, but also signals a decisive turn in Tokyo's strategic orientation. A protégé of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Takaichi represents the conservative and security-focused wing of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Her political doctrine blends economic nationalism, industrial resilience, and a pronounced emphasis on defence autonomy. As Japan faces mounting geopolitical tension in East Asia, demographic decline, and economic stagnation, Takaichi's leadership aims to consolidate Japan's status as a proactive security actor and a global technological power.

For the **European Union**, her arrival offers both opportunity and complexity. The EU and Japan have steadily developed a network of agreements—the **Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**, **Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)**, **Digital Partnership**, and the recently launched **Competitiveness and Defence Industry dialogues**—which now serve as frameworks for deeper strategic cooperation. Under Takaichi, Japan is likely to elevate these frameworks beyond trade and regulation into areas of **economic security**, **dual-use technology**, and **defence-industrial collaboration**.

Politically, Takaichi's natural counterparts in Europe will vary by function:

- **Ursula von der Leyen**, with her emphasis on industrial policy, green transition, and defence technology, will remain Japan's key interlocutor at the institutional level.
- **Alexander Stubb** embodies the kind of Atlanticist, security-minded leadership Japan finds strategically compatible—particularly on Indo-Pacific engagement and NATO cooperation.
- **Giorgia Meloni**, though more transactional, offers common ground on conservative social values and defence-industrial pragmatism.

Collectively, these figures provide Japan multiple access points into Europe's fragmented political landscape.

Substantively, Japan is poised to propose closer **EU–Japan defence cooperation** anchored in technological and industrial domains rather than troop commitments. Priorities include:

- Joint R&D and **defence industry dialogues** on sensors, communications, and unmanned

systems;

- Enhanced **cybersecurity and space collaboration**;
- Shared **maritime domain awareness** for Indo-Pacific and European waters;
- Coordination on **semiconductors, AI, and supply-chain resilience**.

Such initiatives align with both sides' strategic objectives: reducing dependency on China, ensuring secure access to critical technologies, and supporting global democratic resilience. Yet, obstacles remain—divergent export controls, differing security mandates, and the overarching influence of the **United States** on Japanese defence policy.

Takaichi's leadership will therefore be characterised by **assertive pragmatism**: a desire to strengthen Japan's global standing while maintaining alignment with the US and cultivating new, reliable partners. For Europe, engaging her government offers a route to consolidate the EU's Indo-Pacific presence and to participate in Asia's re-industrialisation wave on secure, democratic terms.

The coming years (2025–2030) could thus define a new strategic phase:

- If managed well, EU–Japan relations could evolve into a **core axis of democratic economic security**.
- If neglected or over-politicised, cooperation risks stalling amid competing priorities and domestic constraints.

In essence, **Sanae Takaichi's Japan** is ready for a partnership built on **resilience, technology, and shared strategic interests**. The EU's response—balanced, unified, and forward-looking—will determine whether this collaboration fulfils its latent potential or remains an underused asset in a more fragmented world.

1. Introduction

Japan stands at a pivotal moment in its post-war political evolution. The appointment of **Sanae Takaichi** as Prime Minister in October 2025—the first woman ever to hold the office—symbolises not only a milestone in representation but also a profound ideological reaffirmation. Takaichi emerges from the conservative core of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), inheriting the strategic legacy of Shinzo Abe yet recasting it for a more turbulent global era marked by technological rivalry, demographic contraction, and intensifying regional insecurity. Her administration begins amid a dual challenge: sustaining economic recovery while preparing Japan for a new era of deterrence and great-power competition in East Asia.

Simultaneously, the **European Union** finds itself redefining its own global posture. Russia's

ongoing war against Ukraine, China's assertive economic statecraft, and the fragmentation of global supply chains have compelled Brussels to adopt a language of *strategic autonomy* and *economic security*. The EU's **Strategic Compass**, the expansion of the **European Defence Fund**, and the growing emphasis on critical-technology resilience all point toward a more geopolitical Europe. In this evolving context, Japan has become one of the EU's most like-minded partners—economically advanced, technologically capable, and committed to a rules-based international order.

The **EU–Japan relationship** has matured dramatically over the past decade. The **Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** and the **Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)**, both entering into force in 2019, created a comprehensive framework covering trade, investment, governance, and security cooperation. Subsequent initiatives—the **Digital Partnership** (2022), the **Green Alliance** (2023), and the newly launched **Competitiveness and Defence Industry Dialogue** (2025)—have broadened the relationship into domains once considered outside traditional diplomacy. What began as an economic alignment is evolving into a multidimensional strategic partnership.

Against this backdrop, **Takaichi's government introduces both opportunity and uncertainty** for Europe. Her worldview emphasises *economic nationalism* and *security self-reliance*—principles that may at times contrast with the EU's regulatory and multilateral instincts. Yet, on substance, Japan and the EU share converging priorities: reducing supply-chain dependence on China, investing in semiconductors and next-generation technologies, countering cyber threats, and stabilising the Indo-Pacific through partnerships grounded in international law.

For Europe, engagement with Takaichi's Japan is therefore not a matter of symbolism but of strategic necessity. The EU's ambitions for greater presence in the Indo-Pacific and its pursuit of technological sovereignty both intersect with Japan's domestic agenda of "economic security." Japan, meanwhile, recognises in the EU a potential partner capable of balancing U.S. dominance within the democratic camp and providing industrial depth for joint innovation.

This report explores that intersection. It examines how Sanae Takaichi's leadership agenda may reshape Japan's external orientation, how her policy philosophy aligns—or conflicts—with European objectives, and where practical collaboration can yield measurable benefits. Through political analysis and scenario-based assessment, it seeks to identify how the **EU and Japan** can translate shared values into *tangible strategic cooperation* in the coming decade.

2. Political Profile – Sanae Takaichi's Leadership Agenda

2.1 Ideological Foundations

Sanae Takaichi's political worldview is rooted in the **national-conservative tradition** of post-war Japanese politics. A protégé of the late **Shinzo Abe**, she belongs to the revisionist and nationalist faction of the **Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)**—one that prioritises Japan's self-reliance, security preparedness, and restoration of national confidence. Her early career as a minister under both Abe and Suga showcased her commitment to economic revitalisation through **technological innovation** and **strategic state intervention**, while her later years as LDP Policy Research Council Chair refined her command of fiscal and industrial policy.

Takaichi's ideological platform—sometimes described as "*realistic conservatism*"—rests on three central principles:

1. **Economic Sovereignty:** Reducing Japan's dependency on foreign supply chains and enhancing domestic capacity in semiconductors, energy, and rare-earth materials.
2. **Defensive Autonomy:** Expanding Japan's military capabilities within the constitutional framework, including offensive deterrence, space defence, and cybersecurity.
3. **Cultural Resilience:** Preserving traditional social values and national identity in an era of rapid demographic and technological transformation.

Her worldview combines **Abe's strategic ambition** with a **Thatcherite sense of industrial discipline**. She favours assertive government intervention in strategic sectors but maintains fiscal prudence and accountability. Takaichi's approach is not purely ideological—it is anchored in a conviction that Japan's long-term survival depends on securing technological independence and credible deterrence.

2.2 Economic and Industrial Policy

At the core of Takaichi's domestic agenda is **economic security**—a policy framework that merges industrial strategy with national defence. She has prioritised:

- **Semiconductors and AI ecosystems:** Expanding Japan's cooperation with partners such as the EU, Taiwan, and the U.S. while nurturing domestic champions like Rapidus and Kioxia.
- **Strategic reserves and critical materials:** Diversifying energy imports and investing in rare-earth recycling and storage capacity.
- **State-guided reindustrialisation:** Introducing targeted subsidies and tax incentives for high-tech manufacturing, while tightening scrutiny of foreign investments in sensitive sectors.

These measures mirror European discussions on *strategic autonomy* and create fertile ground for transcontinental industrial partnerships—particularly in dual-use technologies. However, her preference for **state control and national resilience** may clash with the EU's rules-based competition model, requiring nuanced alignment.

2.3 Defence and Security Outlook

Takaichi's security doctrine continues the trajectory initiated under Abe: a move from pacifism toward **proactive deterrence**. She advocates for:

- Increasing defence spending to **2% of GDP** by 2027;
- Expanding **counterstrike capabilities** against missile threats;
- Deepening **U.S.–Japan security coordination** while pursuing greater operational flexibility;
- Strengthening **regional defence networks** with Australia, the Philippines, and India.

Importantly for Europe, she views defence not as a purely military domain but as a **technological ecosystem**—encompassing AI, space assets, cybersecurity, and quantum communications. This multidimensional perspective aligns with the EU's push for **dual-use innovation** under the European Defence Fund and opens a pragmatic channel for cooperation.

2.4 Foreign Policy Orientation

Takaichi's foreign policy is defined by **strategic realism** rather than ideological confrontation. Her objectives include:

- Preserving the **U.S.–Japan alliance** as the cornerstone of regional security;
- Counterbalancing **China's assertiveness** through strategic partnerships rather than open hostility;
- Strengthening relations with **like-minded democracies**, notably in Europe and the Indo-Pacific;
- Supporting global norms on technology governance, cybersecurity, and maritime freedom.

She recognises that Japan's global influence depends on active engagement beyond Asia. This makes Europe an indispensable partner—not for traditional diplomacy, but for **technology, standards, and defence innovation**. Her pragmatic, interest-driven diplomacy is likely to blend **values-based rhetoric** with **strategic calculation**, providing both opportunity and predictability for the EU.

2.5 Leadership Style and Political Constraints

Takaichi's leadership is characterised by **discipline, centralisation, and policy control**. She is

less consensus-driven than her predecessors, preferring clear strategic directives and measurable results. Domestically, her assertiveness may face resistance within the LDP's moderate factions and from Japan's bureaucracy, traditionally wary of radical reform. Nevertheless, her combination of ideological conviction and administrative competence has already consolidated significant authority within the cabinet.

Internationally, her gender and reformist symbolism will attract considerable attention in Western capitals, but her **real strength lies in strategic continuity**. She is not seeking to reinvent Japan's external role, but to **stabilise and strengthen** it in a volatile world order.

In summary, **Sanae Takaichi's leadership represents a new phase of Japanese realism**—a synthesis of economic sovereignty, technological nationalism, and assertive diplomacy. For the European Union, this profile signals a partner that is **decisive, predictable, and strategically aligned**, though sometimes uncompromising in defending national interests.

3. Japan–EU Relations – Historical Evolution and Strategic Context

3.1 From Trade Partnership to Strategic Alliance

The modern relationship between **Japan and the European Union** has evolved from a trade-centered dialogue into a multidimensional strategic partnership.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was largely economic: addressing trade imbalances, promoting market access, and resolving regulatory disputes. Japan's rise as a high-technology exporter created both opportunities and friction within Europe, particularly in sectors such as automobiles and electronics. Despite these tensions, both sides recognised the mutual benefit of open trade under shared democratic and rule-based frameworks.

The 2000s marked a **turning point**. Faced with globalisation pressures and shifting geopolitical dynamics, Tokyo and Brussels began institutionalising cooperation beyond commerce.

The 2001 **EU–Japan Action Plan for Cooperation** formalised dialogue on security, science, and environmental issues. This foundation gradually evolved into what is now a sophisticated and layered partnership architecture, symbolised by two landmark agreements in 2018:

- The **EU–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** – one of the world's largest free-trade frameworks, covering nearly a third of global GDP.
- The **EU–Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)** – a comprehensive political accord facilitating collaboration in foreign policy, development aid, and security.

Together, these agreements signified Japan's recognition of the EU as a geopolitical actor—and Europe's acknowledgment of Japan as more than an economic partner.

3.2 Deepening Cooperation in the 2020s

The 2020s have witnessed a significant broadening of EU–Japan collaboration. The relationship has deepened across four critical dimensions:

1. Economic and Technological Integration:

The **Digital Partnership Agreement (2022)** established joint initiatives on 5G/6G, cybersecurity, and digital standards, while the **Green Alliance (2023)** coordinated policies on carbon neutrality and energy resilience. Both reinforce shared ambitions to shape the global technology and climate agenda.

2. Security and Defence Dialogue:

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Japan has aligned closely with European sanctions and supported humanitarian aid to Ukraine—an unprecedented act for Tokyo. The **Competitiveness and Defence Industry Dialogue (CDID)**, launched in 2025, now provides a platform for industrial and strategic defence cooperation between Japan and the EU.

3. Supply Chain and Critical Infrastructure:

Japan and the EU have initiated joint frameworks for **semiconductors, rare-earth materials, and battery technologies**, designed to mitigate dependency on China.

The EU's **Economic Security Strategy (2023)** mirrors Japan's 2022 **Economic Security Promotion Act**, underscoring convergence in policy thinking.

4. Global Governance and Norm-Setting:

Both sides actively coordinate in forums such as the **G7, OECD, and WTO reform discussions**, advocating transparent trade, human rights, and secure digital governance.

This institutional depth provides a solid foundation for the next phase—one in which political leadership will determine whether cooperation becomes strategic and operational, or remains primarily declarative.

3.3 Strategic Drivers of Convergence

Three systemic factors underpin the growing strategic convergence between Japan and the EU:

1. **Shared Systemic Challenge – China:**

Both actors face the strategic challenge of balancing economic interdependence with geopolitical rivalry. The EU's recalibration through "de-risking" and Japan's long-standing approach of "strategic hedging" create a natural policy alignment.

Japan's early experience in managing China's technological rise gives the EU a valuable partner in shaping credible risk-mitigation models.

2. **Technological Sovereignty and Economic Security:**

The race for control over **semiconductors, AI, and quantum technologies** has elevated economic security to a national and supranational priority.

Japan's manufacturing expertise complements Europe's regulatory and research capacity, forming a potential transcontinental innovation axis.

3. **Democratic Solidarity and Values-Based Diplomacy:**

Both sides are motivated by the desire to sustain the **rules-based international order** against authoritarian assertiveness. The partnership serves as a demonstration of democratic resilience—anchored not in ideology but in pragmatic cooperation.

3.4 Structural Limitations and Divergences

Despite strong foundations, several structural challenges persist:

- **Institutional Asymmetry:**

Japan operates with a centralised executive, while the EU is divided between the Commission, Council, and member states—complicating decision-making and slowing implementation.

- **Defence Mandates:**

Japan's constitution limits direct military cooperation, while the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) remains constrained by national sovereignty and limited expeditionary capabilities.

This restricts the scope for operational defence cooperation, though it enhances prospects for *technological and industrial collaboration*.

- **Regulatory Friction:**

Differences in data protection, export controls, and industrial subsidies can hinder joint innovation projects unless harmonised or mutually recognised.

Nevertheless, these obstacles are **manageable** within the existing frameworks. Both sides are adept at navigating complex governance structures, and the shared political will—strengthened by the global security environment—now favours incremental, practical progress over symbolic declarations.

3.5 Enter Sanae Takaichi

Against this backdrop, Sanae Takaichi's premiership arrives at a critical juncture. Her emphasis on **economic security**, **technological self-reliance**, and **strategic deterrence** resonates with the EU's emerging security-industrial strategy.

Where past Japanese leaders sought primarily economic alignment, Takaichi is poised to push for a **strategic-industrial partnership**—one where dual-use technologies, digital resilience, and defence co-production become central pillars.

Her pragmatic realism and institutional discipline may accelerate long-discussed projects—particularly if the EU demonstrates readiness to match Japan's pace on defence-industrial innovation.

In short, the **Japan–EU partnership** has evolved from trade diplomacy into a platform for **strategic convergence**. Under Takaichi, this relationship could reach its most substantive phase yet—anchored in **economic security, technology, and coordinated deterrence**.

4. EU Outlook – Key Figures and Institutional Dynamics

4.1 Europe's Shifting Strategic Landscape

The European Union enters the late 2020s facing a profound strategic transformation. The war in Ukraine, global supply-chain fragmentation, and intensifying technological competition have forced Brussels to evolve from a regulatory superpower into a **geopolitical actor**. The term "strategic autonomy," once abstract, is now a practical doctrine shaping the EU's

industrial, security, and foreign policy agenda.

Yet, the EU's strategic direction is **fragmented by design**—balancing national sovereignty with collective ambition. For Japan, understanding and navigating this internal complexity is essential. The Union's capacity to act depends as much on personalities and political coalitions as on formal treaties. Under Takaichi's tenure, Japan's success in Europe will hinge on building strong, targeted relationships with the EU's **three power centres**: the **European Commission**, the **European Council**, and key **member states**.

4.2 Ursula von der Leyen – Institutional Continuity and Strategic Convergence

As **President of the European Commission**, **Ursula von der Leyen** represents the EU's continuity in global partnerships and the embodiment of a more assertive, values-driven Europe.

Her second term, beginning in 2024, consolidates the EU's pivot toward **industrial policy, defence integration, and economic security**—themes highly compatible with Takaichi's agenda.

Von der Leyen's flagship initiatives, such as:

- the **European Chips Act**,
- the **Net-Zero Industry Act**, and
- the **European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS)**

reflect a decisive move toward the kind of strategic industrial coordination Japan has long practiced.

Her approach emphasises **alliances of trust**—with democratic, technologically advanced partners. Japan already occupies this category, and Takaichi's leadership could elevate the partnership to an operational level.

Von der Leyen's priorities—digital transformation, green industrialisation, and security of supply chains—align naturally with Japan's ambitions for resilience and technological sovereignty.

However, her insistence on **EU regulatory primacy** may occasionally collide with Japan's preference for flexibility and sovereign control over industrial strategy. Diplomatically, Takaichi will likely position Japan as a *strategic enabler* rather than a subordinate partner—complementing EU policies without accepting regulatory dependence.

4.3 Giorgia Meloni – Pragmatic Conservatism and Industrial Diplomacy

Italian Prime Minister **Giorgia Meloni** has become a pivotal figure in Europe's evolving political landscape. Her government blends nationalist rhetoric with pragmatic economic policy, making her a natural, if unconventional, interlocutor for Takaichi. Both leaders share:

- a conservative value framework grounded in social stability and tradition;
- an emphasis on national sovereignty within international cooperation; and
- a keen interest in state-supported industrial renewal.

Meloni's Italy is a **major defence-industrial hub**, home to **Leonardo, Fincantieri**, and multiple aerospace firms—companies seeking global partnerships, particularly in the Indo-Pacific.

A Takaichi–Meloni dialogue could thus focus on **industrial and defence cooperation**, with potential frameworks involving co-development or technology-sharing in naval systems, electronics, and unmanned technologies.

Politically, Meloni also offers Japan a gateway to Europe's **southern flank**—a region the EU has often neglected strategically. Strengthening Italy–Japan cooperation could reinforce Europe's Mediterranean–Indo-Pacific link, diversifying both sides' geopolitical reach.

4.4 Alexander Stubb – The Nordic Bridge and Transatlantic Realism

Finnish President **Alexander Stubb** embodies a distinctly Northern European blend of **Atlanticism and strategic pragmatism**. A strong advocate for NATO cooperation and an early supporter of the EU's Indo-Pacific engagement, Stubb provides Japan with a valuable ally who understands both European and transatlantic security dynamics.

Stubb's Finland—anchored in high-technology industries, cyber defence, and strategic geography—shares many of Japan's priorities:

- **resilience against hybrid threats,**
- **innovation-led industrial policy,** and
- **tight integration with the U.S. security framework.**

Takaichi's government can leverage this compatibility to advance **triangular cooperation** among Japan, Nordic states, and the EU—especially in areas such as:

- Arctic and maritime security,
- critical minerals (where Finland plays a leading EU role), and
- green technology innovation.

Given his intellectual and diplomatic profile, Stubb could become one of Takaichi's **closest European counterparts**—a pragmatic partner who bridges Tokyo's Indo-Pacific vision with Europe's security renaissance.

4.5 Institutional Constraints and Opportunities

While individual leaders will shape tone and pace, the EU's internal machinery will determine execution.

Japan must operate within the **EU's layered governance structure**, which offers both obstacles and leverage points:

- **The European Commission** drives regulation, trade, and industrial coordination.
- **The European Council** sets strategic direction but depends on consensus.
- **The European External Action Service (EEAS)** coordinates diplomacy but remains secondary to national foreign ministries.
- **Key member states**—France, Germany, Italy, and now the Nordics—act as power nodes within the EU's decision web.

For Japan, this complexity requires a **multi-vector strategy**:

1. Deepening institutional cooperation with the Commission (policy and regulatory frameworks);
2. Building bilateral industrial partnerships with member states (execution and technology transfer);
3. Engaging the European Parliament (norms, digital and defence funding).

Takaichi's disciplined, technocratic style may actually fit this environment well. Her government's capacity for long-term planning and bureaucratic precision mirrors Brussels' approach to structured engagement.

4.6 Implications for Japan's Diplomatic Approach

Takaichi's diplomacy toward the EU will likely emphasise **predictability, professionalism, and reciprocity**.

Rather than appealing to shared ideology alone, she will focus on measurable outcomes: joint R&D programs, reciprocal market access, and coordinated export controls.

This results-driven approach will resonate in Brussels, where bureaucratic execution and demonstrable progress are valued over grand rhetoric.

Her engagement will therefore take three parallel forms:

- **Institutional alignment** with von der Leyen's Commission on industrial and technological strategy;
 - **Bilateral cooperation** with key leaders such as Meloni and Stubb, balancing ideological affinity with strategic pragmatism;
 - **Strategic coordination** within the G7 and NATO frameworks, reinforcing Japan's role as Europe's Indo-Pacific anchor.
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4.7 Summary

The EU's institutional landscape presents both **challenges and unprecedented opportunities** for Japan under Takaichi's leadership.

Von der Leyen offers alignment through structured policy convergence;

Meloni provides ideological and industrial complementarity;

Stubb bridges the security and technological dimensions.

Navigating these relationships effectively could allow Japan to transform the EU partnership from a formal alliance into a **strategic-industrial compact**—anchored in mutual resilience, technological leadership, and democratic stability.

5. Defence and Industrial Cooperation – Emerging Opportunities

5.1 The New Strategic Imperative

Under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Japan's concept of national defence is undergoing a decisive transformation—from territorial defence toward **comprehensive strategic resilience**. Her doctrine fuses military preparedness with technological and industrial self-reliance. This vision coincides with a broader global trend in which the boundaries between civilian and military innovation are increasingly blurred. For Europe, which is now implementing the **European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS)** and expanding the **European Defence Fund (EDF)**, Japan's approach represents both a **mirror and a multiplier**.

Defence collaboration between Japan and the EU has historically been cautious, limited by constitutional constraints on Japan's side and institutional fragmentation on the EU's. However,

changing geopolitical realities—the war in Ukraine, China’s assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, and new threats in space and cyberspace—have eroded the barriers that once defined the partnership. Both actors now recognise that **technological deterrence and industrial coordination** are essential pillars of modern security.

5.2 Defence Industrial Foundations

Japan has a sophisticated yet compartmentalised defence-industrial base. Its strengths include:

- **Precision manufacturing**, sensors, and microelectronics;
- **Aerospace systems** (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kawasaki Heavy Industries);
- **Naval engineering and propulsion**;
- **Dual-use technologies** in robotics, communications, and materials science.

Meanwhile, the EU possesses **industrial scale, advanced R&D networks**, and **regulatory instruments** that can amplify Japan’s innovation capabilities. Europe’s emerging defence ecosystem—anchored by firms such as Airbus, Leonardo, Thales, Saab, and Rheinmetall—offers complementary capacities.

Under Takaichi’s leadership, Japan is expected to pursue **selective strategic co-production and joint R&D**, rather than arms exports or operational alliances. This pragmatic approach fits within the EU’s evolving framework for **dual-use innovation**, allowing cooperation to flourish without breaching Japan’s constitutional restrictions.

5.3 Potential Areas of Cooperation

1. Advanced Technologies and Dual-Use R&D

Both sides are positioned to benefit from joint innovation in **semiconductors, AI, quantum computing, and secure communications**.

Japan’s precision engineering complements the EU’s expertise in industrial-scale production and regulation. Joint research projects could be channelled through:

- The **EU–Japan Digital Partnership**,
- Horizon Europe’s innovation clusters, and
- Japan’s Cabinet Office’s *Strategic Innovation Promotion Program (SIP)*.

These initiatives could support the co-development of trusted technologies for both civilian and defence applications—such as encrypted communication systems, space situational awareness, and quantum-resistant cybersecurity.

2. Maritime Security and Naval Technologies

Japan and the EU share an interest in **freedom of navigation** and **sea lane security**.

European shipbuilders (e.g., Fincantieri, Naval Group) and Japanese counterparts (e.g., Mitsubishi Heavy Industries) could engage in technology sharing on:

- propulsion systems,
- sonar and radar integration, and
- autonomous underwater vehicles.

Such collaboration could underpin a new **EU–Japan Maritime Resilience Framework**, supporting joint training and domain awareness in both the Indo-Pacific and European waters.

3. Space and Cybersecurity

Japan's progress in **space situational awareness** and **satellite constellations** aligns closely with the EU's **IRIS²** initiative (the European satellite network).

Joint participation in satellite-based navigation, disaster monitoring, and military-grade communication systems could form a foundation for **strategic space cooperation**.

In cybersecurity, shared frameworks for **threat intelligence** and **critical infrastructure protection** would deepen digital resilience.

4. Supply Chain Security and Critical Materials

Both Japan and the EU have suffered from vulnerabilities in critical supply chains—especially semiconductors and rare earths.

Joint stockpiling, diversification of suppliers, and reciprocal investment in **rare-earth processing and recycling technologies** would reduce dependency on China and strengthen industrial autonomy.

5. Joint Defence-Industry Dialogue and Standardisation

The establishment of the **Competitiveness and Defence Industry Dialogue (CDID)** in 2025 provides a formal mechanism to coordinate industrial strategies, align export control standards, and identify co-financing opportunities for innovation.

Takaichi's government is expected to leverage this platform to institutionalise long-term industrial coordination, possibly evolving into an **EU–Japan Defence Technology Council** by the late 2020s.

5.4 NATO, the Indo-Pacific, and Europe's Expanding Role

Japan's evolving cooperation with NATO further reinforces its engagement with Europe.

While Japan remains a non-member, its growing participation in NATO's **Partners Across the Globe** framework—including joint exercises, cybersecurity collaboration, and information-sharing—signals a willingness to act as the **EU's Indo-Pacific counterpart**.

Takaichi's government is expected to support NATO's **Indo-Pacific outreach**, particularly in intelligence fusion and maritime security.

For the EU, aligning its own Indo-Pacific strategy with Japan's initiatives offers an opportunity to project stability beyond its borders, while benefiting from Japan's operational experience and regional networks.

The **Stubb presidency in Finland** and **Meloni's pragmatic Atlanticism** could together serve as European catalysts for integrating Japan into transatlantic defence dialogues—transforming the current patchwork of contacts into a coherent strategic framework.

5.5 Challenges and Constraints

Despite strong complementarity, cooperation faces several structural and political challenges:

- **Legal limitations:** Japan's constitutional constraints on collective defence still restrict the scope of military collaboration.
- **Export control divergence:** The EU's member states retain different export regimes, complicating co-production and technology transfer.
- **Regulatory asymmetry:** EU defence industrial standards often prioritise compliance and transparency over agility—potentially slowing joint projects.
- **Budgetary priorities:** Competing fiscal pressures in Europe could constrain long-term funding for bilateral R&D ventures.

Takaichi's response is likely to focus on **incrementalism**—building small, high-impact pilot projects to demonstrate mutual benefit and trust before pursuing more ambitious frameworks.

5.6 Strategic Outlook – Toward an Industrial Security Partnership

The future of EU–Japan defence collaboration lies not in joint military operations but in the **creation of a shared industrial security ecosystem**.

Under Takaichi, Japan is expected to promote:

- **Technological alignment** in next-generation platforms (AI, quantum, space);
- **Standardisation** of export controls and supply chain protocols;
- **Industrial co-financing** of strategic technologies;
- **Maritime and cyber coordination** as deterrence enablers.

Such a partnership would reflect a new model of **trans-regional security cooperation**—one that leverages innovation and resilience rather than military integration. It would also provide the EU with a crucial partner capable of reinforcing Europe’s own **economic and technological sovereignty**.

5.7 Summary

Under Sanae Takaichi’s leadership, Japan is likely to pursue a **pragmatic, technologically driven partnership** with the European Union—one that elevates defence-industrial cooperation to the forefront of bilateral relations.

For the EU, engaging with Japan offers not only access to advanced technology but also a trusted ally in stabilising the Indo-Pacific.

The success of this cooperation will depend on **strategic patience, institutional discipline**, and a **mutual understanding that security in the 21st century is industrial as much as military**.

6. Economic and Technological Cooperation – A Strategic Complementarity

6.1 The Economic Security Paradigm

In Sanae Takaichi’s Japan, **economic policy and national security** are no longer separate domains—they are mutually reinforcing elements of a single strategic framework.

Her administration defines *economic security* as the capacity to sustain technological and

industrial sovereignty in the face of geopolitical risk. This doctrine places Japan in natural alignment with the **European Union’s Economic Security Strategy (2023)**, which similarly seeks to reduce dependence on non-democratic suppliers, safeguard critical technologies, and strengthen supply-chain resilience.

This convergence transforms EU–Japan economic relations from a trade-based partnership into an **economic security alliance**.

Rather than focusing solely on tariff reductions or regulatory convergence, both sides now prioritise **strategic interdependence**—the ability to co-develop, co-produce, and co-protect the technologies that underpin modern prosperity and deterrence.

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6.2 Complementary Economic Models

Japan and the EU represent two distinct yet complementary economic systems:

Dimension	Japan	European Union
Industrial Model	State-coordinated capitalism; corporate–bureaucratic alliances	Regulatory capitalism; market coordination with industrial policy
Policy Focus	Technological resilience and supply-chain sovereignty	Green transition, competitiveness, and strategic autonomy
Strengths	Manufacturing precision, engineering excellence, long-term planning	R&D networks, market scale, standard-setting, regulatory authority
Weaknesses	Limited domestic demand, demographic contraction	Bureaucratic complexity, fragmented political mandates

Takaichi's government seeks to bridge these models through **targeted industrial diplomacy**—leveraging Japan's production strengths to complement Europe's regulatory and innovation ecosystems. The resulting framework could produce a **cross-continental industrial base** capable of competing with both U.S. and Chinese tech blocs.

6.3 Semiconductors – The Cornerstone of Strategic Cooperation

No domain illustrates EU–Japan complementarity better than **semiconductors**.

Japan remains a global leader in **equipment, materials, and precision engineering**, while the EU excels in **design tools, lithography (ASML), and advanced manufacturing systems**.

Under Takaichi, semiconductor policy is elevated to a national security priority—supported by generous subsidies and international partnerships.

The EU's **Chips Act (2023)** and Japan's **Economic Security Promotion Act (2022)** offer mirrored policy tools, making cooperation structurally compatible.

Potential initiatives include:

- Joint R&D centres under the **EU–Japan Digital Partnership**;
- Cross-investment between Japan's **Rapidus** and Europe's **IMEC, STMicroelectronics, and Infineon**;
- Shared stockpiles of critical raw materials;
- Harmonised export controls on chipmaking equipment.

Such coordination could form the nucleus of an **EU–Japan Semiconductor Resilience Alliance**, reducing dependence on Taiwan and China while stabilising the global chip ecosystem.

6.4 Green Transition and Energy Security

The **Green Alliance (2023)** laid the groundwork for cooperation on climate neutrality, renewable technologies, and hydrogen infrastructure. Under Takaichi, Japan's emphasis is shifting toward **energy pragmatism**—balancing decarbonisation with national resilience.

Takaichi's strategy includes:

- Expanding **nuclear energy** as a stable base source;
- Investing in **hydrogen and ammonia fuel systems**;
- Supporting the **electrification of heavy transport and industry**;

- Diversifying LNG imports through partnerships with Australia and the Middle East.

For the EU, this aligns with its own decarbonisation agenda, though with different emphases.

Joint areas for progress include:

- **Hydrogen standards and certification** (particularly with Germany and the Netherlands);
- **Battery recycling and rare-earth recovery** technologies;
- **Carbon-neutral shipping and maritime logistics**;
- Coordinated investment in **offshore wind and grid resilience**.

This cooperation can also serve a geopolitical function: providing Europe and Japan with an **alternative energy ecosystem** independent of Russian hydrocarbons and Chinese solar dominance.

6.5 Digital and AI Collaboration

The **EU–Japan Digital Partnership (2022)** remains the cornerstone of technological diplomacy between the two sides.

Under Takaichi, Japan will likely expand its scope to include **AI governance, cybersecurity, and quantum technologies**.

Both Japan and the EU advocate a *human-centred* approach to technology—prioritising transparency, accountability, and data privacy. However, Japan’s flexible innovation model contrasts with the EU’s more prescriptive regulatory framework (e.g., the **AI Act** and **Digital Markets Act**).

To reconcile these differences, Takaichi’s government may propose:

- **Mutual recognition frameworks** for AI ethics and data governance;
- **Cross-border data flow agreements** for trusted industrial partners;
- **Joint AI testbeds** in sectors such as healthcare, mobility, and defence logistics.

Such initiatives could establish an **EU–Japan Digital Trust Zone**, setting global standards distinct from both U.S. market dominance and Chinese digital authoritarianism.

6.6 Critical Raw Materials and Supply Chain Resilience

Both the EU and Japan depend heavily on imported critical raw materials—rare earths, lithium,

nickel, and cobalt—much of which originates in politically unstable regions.

Takaichi has placed **resource security** at the centre of Japan's industrial strategy.

Japan's deep experience in rare-earth recycling and processing (led by companies such as **Sumitomo Metal Mining** and **Hitachi Metals**) complements the EU's **Critical Raw Materials Act (2024)**, which seeks to diversify sourcing and promote circular use.

Potential cooperative actions include:

- Co-financing mining and processing projects in third countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, and African states);
- Establishing **joint stockpiles** for strategic minerals;
- Launching **EU–Japan resource innovation hubs** for recycling and substitution research.

This collaboration would reinforce both actors' **strategic autonomy**, insulating their industries from coercive supply-chain disruptions.

6.7 Financial and Institutional Mechanisms

Takaichi's government favours **structured, technocratic mechanisms** to support long-term cooperation.

New or expanded tools could include:

- A **Joint Investment Fund for Strategic Technologies** under the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the European Investment Bank (EIB);
- **Co-financed R&D frameworks** under Horizon Europe;
- Expanded **bilateral export credit coordination** for green and defence technologies;
- The integration of Japanese institutions (e.g., NEDO, JAXA) into EU innovation platforms.

Institutionalising cooperation in this way ensures durability beyond political cycles and aligns with Takaichi's preference for measurable, bureaucratically managed progress.

6.8 Strategic Outlook – From Trade to Technology Alliance

Under Sanae Takaichi, Japan's economic policy shifts from open-market liberalism toward **technological realism**—a worldview in which innovation, resilience, and national interest guide external cooperation.

For the European Union, this provides a rare opportunity: a technologically advanced democracy seeking structured, equitable collaboration rather than pure market competition.

By aligning their economic security strategies, Japan and the EU can form the **third pole of global technological governance**, alongside the U.S. and China—but defined by democratic norms, industrial trust, and high-quality standards.

6.9 Summary

The economic and technological relationship between Japan and the EU is entering a **strategic convergence phase**.

Both sides share complementary capabilities—Japan’s industrial precision and the EU’s regulatory power—and face the same external dependencies.

Takaichi’s pragmatic leadership provides the political discipline necessary to translate this alignment into durable frameworks across semiconductors, energy, AI, and supply chains.

If effectively executed, the EU–Japan partnership could become a **cornerstone of global economic security**, shaping the next decade of innovation and resilience in the democratic world.

7. Political and Diplomatic Outlook – Alignments and Tensions

7.1 Takaichi’s Diplomatic Philosophy

Sanae Takaichi’s foreign policy thinking is rooted in **realist conservatism**, institutional discipline, and a belief in **technological and cultural sovereignty** as the foundation of national strength. Unlike her predecessors, who emphasised reconciliation and multilateral diplomacy, Takaichi frames international relations through the lens of *strategic resilience*—where alliances are instruments of national self-preservation rather than ideological alignment.

Her diplomatic strategy can be summarised in three principles:

1. **Strategic Autonomy:** Maintaining freedom of manoeuvre vis-à-vis the United States and China while deepening functional partnerships with Europe, India, and ASEAN.
2. **Institutional Continuity:** Strengthening pre-existing frameworks (Quad, G7, EU–Japan SPA) rather than creating new, symbolic formats.
3. **Values with Utility:** Upholding democracy, rule of law, and free trade not as slogans but as operational standards—tools to build trust and interoperability with likeminded partners.

This pragmatic realism positions Japan as a **bridge power** between the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-

Pacific theatres—one capable of translating shared democratic principles into concrete industrial and defence outcomes.

7.2 Alignment with European Strategic Priorities

Under Takaichi, Japan’s foreign policy aligns closely with the European Union’s emerging **strategic sovereignty** agenda. While the EU seeks autonomy from both U.S. security dependence and Chinese economic leverage, Japan mirrors this logic in Asia, balancing deterrence and diversification.

The areas of convergence are notable:

Policy Area	Japan (Takaichi)	European Union
Economic Security	Economic Security Promotion Act (2022): control over critical technologies, FDI screening	Economic Security Strategy (2023): de-risking supply chains, screening inbound investment
Defence Integration	Strengthened alliance with U.S.; limited but growing defence exports	European Defence Industrial Strategy (2025): push for joint procurement and industrial autonomy
China Policy	Strategic hedging with firm deterrence posture	“De-risking” rather than decoupling; assertive trade defence instruments
Russia and Ukraine	Full alignment with G7 sanctions, humanitarian and financial support	Leadership in sanctions, training, and reconstruction efforts
Digital Governance	Human-centred AI,	Human-centric AI Act;

open and secure data flows	Digital Partnerships with Japan, Korea, Singapore
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Takaichi thus represents a **continuation and intensification** of Japan's westward alignment—one that deepens operational ties with the EU while preserving Tokyo's sovereign policy discretion.

7.3 EU Political Landscape and Japan's Approach

Takaichi's engagement with the EU will depend on her ability to navigate its fragmented institutional landscape.

Within Europe, she is likely to adopt a differentiated diplomacy:

- **Ursula von der Leyen and the Commission** – Takaichi will see von der Leyen as the **most compatible interlocutor**, sharing her belief in "strategic autonomy through technological strength." Both are proponents of industrial coordination and values-based global governance. Expect continued cooperation on AI, semiconductors, and supply-chain resilience.
- **Giorgia Meloni and Southern Europe** – Takaichi may view Meloni as a **pragmatic partner** for energy diversification and maritime security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific context. Both leaders emphasise sovereignty, national interest, and demographic resilience—though Japan will avoid ideological alignment to maintain neutrality within EU politics.
- **Alexander Stubb and Northern Europe** – Finland and Sweden offer **strategic-industrial cooperation** opportunities, especially in defence technologies and cybersecurity. Takaichi is likely to deepen ties with the Nordic states through the **Northern European Security Dialogue**, seeing them as agile and innovation-driven partners.

Overall, Takaichi's EU policy will be **functional rather than political**—prioritising sectors and member states over ideological or party-based affinities.

Her approach contrasts sharply with predecessors like Abe, who relied on grand narratives ("Free and Open Indo-Pacific"); Takaichi instead prefers **targeted, high-yield diplomacy**.

7.4 Tensions and Strategic Caution

Despite shared interests, the Takaichi–EU relationship will face several tensions:

1. **U.S. Factor:**

Japan remains anchored in the U.S. alliance system. The EU's growing push for strategic autonomy occasionally diverges from Washington's policy preferences.

Takaichi will likely calibrate Japan's engagement to avoid undermining U.S.–EU cohesion, positioning Japan as a facilitator rather than a third pole.

2. **Defence Export Policy:**

While Takaichi supports loosening Japan's arms export restrictions, EU member states may be cautious about integration into Japan's defence industrial base, given differing export control philosophies.

3. **China Divergence:**

Some EU states (e.g., Hungary, Greece) maintain closer economic ties to China. Japan's hardening stance—particularly on Taiwan and maritime security—could generate friction if the EU remains ambivalent.

4. **Regulatory Overreach:**

The EU's dense regulatory framework on digital and green technologies could slow cooperation with Japan's more flexible innovation system. Takaichi's government will push for **mutual recognition** rather than harmonisation to maintain agility.

5. **Historical Sensitivities:**

Japan's evolving security posture—including constitutional reinterpretations—may provoke caution among European pacifist constituencies. Takaichi's assertive tone, if not carefully framed, could revive old anxieties about Japanese militarisation.

7.5 Strategic Opportunities

Despite these risks, Takaichi's tenure could unlock several **strategic opportunities** for Japan–EU relations:

- **Institutionalised Economic Security Dialogue:**

A formal EU–Japan Economic Security Council could synchronise industrial, digital, and critical infrastructure policies.

- **Joint Indo-Pacific Engagement:**

Japan could serve as the EU's **logistical and diplomatic anchor** in Asia—supporting EU naval missions, connectivity corridors, and capacity-building in Southeast Asia.

- **Defence Industrial Cooperation:**

Joint development of next-generation sensors, drones, and cyber-defence tools under the **EU Defence Industrial Programme**.

- **Multilateral Leadership:**

Coordinated G7 positions on AI, rare-earth governance, and WTO reform could give democratic economies a unified front against coercive trade practices.

These initiatives fit within Takaichi's "**functional alliance**" doctrine—limited in scope but concrete in output.

7.6 Diplomatic Outlook – A Calculated Convergence

In sum, Sanae Takaichi's approach to the European Union will be **technocratic, strategic, and cautiously assertive**.

She will seek to operationalise shared priorities—economic security, technological sovereignty, and regional stability—without entangling Japan in Europe's internal political debates.

Her diplomacy will resemble **a matrix of partnerships**, rather than a grand alliance:

- With the **Commission**, for governance and standard-setting;
- With **Nordic and Central European states**, for defence and innovation;
- With **Southern Europe**, for energy and maritime cooperation.

This method reflects Japan's new foreign policy maturity—where ideological narratives give way to **institutional precision**.

If successfully managed, the result will be a Japan–EU partnership defined not by sentiment, but by **shared strategic outcomes**—an enduring architecture for resilience in a world of systemic rivalry.

8. Defence and Security Cooperation – Toward Strategic Interoperability

8.1 Japan's New Security Doctrine under Takaichi

Sanae Takaichi represents a decisive shift in Japan's post-war security evolution.

Whereas previous administrations cautiously reinterpreted Article 9 of the Constitution to allow for *limited self-defence*, Takaichi's doctrine formalises "**Proactive Deterrence**"—a policy that recognises Japan's right to acquire and deploy **counterstrike capabilities** while maintaining

alliance coordination with the United States.

Her government’s **National Security Strategy (NSS)** framework emphasises three dimensions:

- 1. **Integrated Deterrence:** Strengthening interoperability with allies and partners across domains—land, sea, air, cyber, and space.
- 2. **Technological Sovereignty:** Reducing dependency on external suppliers for defence systems and dual-use technologies.
- 3. **Collective Resilience:** Coordinating defence industrial capacity and supply chains with trusted partners, notably the United States, Australia, and the European Union.

This approach redefines Japan’s security posture from reactive defence to proactive resilience, positioning Tokyo as an **Indo-Pacific security producer** rather than merely a consumer of U.S. protection.

8.2 Convergence with the EU’s Security Ambitions

In Europe, the war in Ukraine has catalysed a transformation of strategic thinking. The **European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS, 2025)**, alongside the **Strategic Compass (2022)**, seeks to bolster Europe’s defence autonomy and industrial competitiveness.

Both the EU and Japan now face parallel challenges: maintaining deterrence against revisionist powers while navigating constitutional and institutional constraints.

Key convergences include:

Security Dimension	Japan (Takaichi Doctrine)	European Union (EDIS / CSDP)
Strategic Objective	Integrated deterrence; self-reliance within alliances	Strategic autonomy; reduced dependency on U.S. defence systems
Industrial Policy	National security as industrial policy; defence tech as growth driver	Industrial consolidation, defence R&D, dual-use innovation

Operational Theatre	Indo-Pacific, East China Sea, Taiwan Strait	Eastern Europe, Arctic, Mediterranean, Indo-Pacific outreach
Partnership Framework	Quad, G7, NATO dialogue, EU SPA	NATO–EU coordination, Indo-Pacific engagement (with Japan, Korea, Australia)

This structural symmetry opens a historic opportunity for **Japan–EU strategic interoperability**—not through troop deployments, but through harmonised **capabilities, technology, and logistics**.

8.3 Institutional Foundations of Security Cooperation

Japan and the EU already cooperate within a network of institutional frameworks that Takaichi is likely to strengthen and operationalise:

- EU–Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA, 2018):**
Provides the political and legal base for security dialogue, crisis management, and maritime cooperation.
 - Japan–NATO Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP, 2023):**
Aligns Japan’s defence planning with NATO standards—particularly in cyber, space, and hybrid threats.
- Takaichi supports deepening this link, with the EU as a complementary rather than competing actor.
- G7 Security Coordination:**
Japan and major EU states cooperate on sanctions, arms export controls, and technology protection mechanisms.
 - Defence Industry Dialogue (CDID, 2025):**
A new Japan–EU format focusing on joint defence innovation, supply-chain resilience, and standardisation of critical components.

Takaichi's administration views these frameworks not as diplomatic symbols but as **policy delivery mechanisms**—a means to synchronise procurement, research, and resilience.

8.4 Defence Industrial Collaboration

The cornerstone of the Japan–EU defence relationship will be **industrial interoperability**, not joint operations.

Under Takaichi, Japan's defence industry—long constrained by export bans—is entering a liberalised phase, enabling co-production and technology sharing with trusted partners.

Key areas for potential collaboration include:

1. **Sensors and Electronic Warfare Systems** – Joint R&D in radar, signal intelligence, and AI-based threat detection.
2. **Unmanned Aerial and Maritime Systems** – Co-development of drones and autonomous underwater vehicles for surveillance and logistics.
3. **Cyber and Space Defence** – Joint exercises, shared protocols for space situational awareness, and cyber-resilience standards.
4. **Supply-Chain Integration** – Japanese firms (e.g., Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, NEC, Fujitsu) partnering with European defence conglomerates (Airbus, Leonardo, Saab, Thales) on component resilience.
5. **Next-Generation Fighter Systems** – Japan's participation in the **Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)** with the UK and Italy exemplifies the model Takaichi seeks: technology partnerships that merge industrial capability with geopolitical alignment.

These initiatives align with her belief that defence industry policy is the **engine of national resilience**, not merely a procurement domain.

8.5 Maritime Security and Indo-Pacific Coordination

Maritime security remains the natural theatre of Japan–EU operational collaboration.

Both actors depend on **open sea lanes** and **freedom of navigation**—core principles threatened by coercive behaviour in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.

Takaichi's government will likely expand Japan's cooperation with:

- **EU Naval Missions (EUNAVFOR Atalanta and Aspides)** in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea;
- **French and Italian naval forces**, which maintain Indo-Pacific presences;

- **EU Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021)**, which recognises Japan as a primary partner for maritime domain awareness and port infrastructure security.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) and the EU's naval assets could jointly establish an **Indo-Pacific Maritime Information Fusion Mechanism**—a shared platform for monitoring illicit trafficking, piracy, and grey-zone activity.

8.6 Cybersecurity and Hybrid Threats

Both Japan and the EU face hybrid threats targeting **critical infrastructure, democratic processes, and information ecosystems**.

Under Takaichi, cybersecurity is elevated to a *national command-level domain*, integrated with defence, economy, and intelligence.

The EU's **Cyber Solidarity Act (2024)** and Japan's **Cyber Defence Command (2023)** share overlapping mandates, enabling joint training, incident response, and standardisation.

Potential initiatives include:

- EU–Japan **Cyber Rapid Response Teams** for cross-regional threat containment;
- Shared **quantum encryption research**;
- Establishment of a **Cyber Security Council** under the Digital Partnership framework.

These efforts would institutionalise cyber trust between two of the world's most technologically advanced democracies.

8.7 NATO and the Transatlantic Factor

Takaichi is acutely aware that deepening Japan–EU cooperation must complement, not compete with, NATO and the U.S. alliance system.

She supports a **triangular security architecture**:

- **U.S.–Japan Alliance** for deterrence and operational defence;
- **Japan–EU Cooperation** for industrial and technological resilience;
- **NATO–Japan Dialogue** for standardisation and situational awareness.

This triangular model reinforces deterrence by **broadening the democratic defence ecosystem**, ensuring that Europe and Japan collectively anchor the transatlantic–Indo-Pacific security

continuum.

8.8 Strategic Implications for Europe

For the European Union, engaging Japan under Takaichi offers four strategic dividends:

1. **Industrial Synergy:** Access to Japan's precision manufacturing and dual-use technology base.
2. **Operational Reach:** Expanded presence and intelligence exchange in the Indo-Pacific.
3. **Normative Power:** Reinforcement of rules-based maritime and cyber governance.
4. **Resilience through Redundancy:** Shared supply chains for critical defence materials and technologies.

However, the EU must adapt institutionally to match Japan's tempo—streamlining decision-making and consolidating defence industrial efforts under a coherent framework.

Takaichi's Japan will not wait for slow-moving partners; her style is **incremental yet disciplined**, expecting reliability and follow-through.

8.9 Outlook – Toward Strategic Interoperability

Under Takaichi, Japan will position itself as a **security partner of capability, not dependency**.

For the European Union, this presents a strategic opportunity: to integrate a technologically sophisticated democracy into its extended security perimeter.

The partnership's future will hinge on three tests:

1. Whether the EU can operationalise industrial cooperation beyond rhetoric;
2. Whether Japan's constitutional limits can evolve without undermining domestic consensus;
3. Whether both sides can align with U.S. and NATO strategies without redundancy or dilution.

If these challenges are met, Japan–EU cooperation under Takaichi could become the **fourth pillar of global security governance**—alongside NATO, AUKUS, and the Quad—anchored in **industrial trust, shared deterrence, and mutual resilience**.

9. Conclusion – Japan and the EU in a Fragmented World Order

9.1 A Strategic Moment of Alignment

The international system is entering an era of *structural fragmentation*—where power is distributed across multiple regional actors, and the global order is defined less by hierarchy than by competition for technological, economic, and informational sovereignty.

Within this landscape, the partnership between **Japan and the European Union** stands out as one of the few relationships that combines **economic sophistication, democratic legitimacy, and strategic restraint**.

Sanae Takaichi's leadership offers a pivotal opportunity to elevate this relationship from *normative alignment* to *strategic functionality*.

Her worldview—anchored in realism, institutional discipline, and technological sovereignty—mirrors the EU's emerging understanding of **"open strategic autonomy."**

Both sides recognise that power in the 21st century is not measured merely by military force or GDP, but by **the ability to shape and protect complex systems**: supply chains, digital networks, and industrial innovation ecosystems.

9.2 From Partnership to Strategic Interdependence

Historically, Japan–EU cooperation was framed around trade liberalisation and regulatory dialogue.

Today, it is evolving into a **network of strategic interdependence**—a system in which mutual resilience replaces pure efficiency as the guiding principle.

Under Takaichi, Japan will seek to:

- Embed economic security within its diplomatic relations;
- Diversify security partnerships beyond the U.S. alliance;
- Pursue dual-use technology cooperation with trusted democracies.

For the EU, engaging with Takaichi's Japan means aligning on:

- **Industrial policy** that balances innovation with security;
- **Defence and cyber cooperation** that strengthens trans-regional deterrence;
- **Joint diplomacy** that amplifies democratic influence in global governance.

This convergence transforms Japan–EU relations into a **functional alliance**—pragmatic, modular,

and strategically coherent.

9.3 Complementary Strengths, Shared Vulnerabilities

The Japan–EU relationship thrives on complementarity:

- Japan's precision manufacturing and disciplined industrial policy match Europe's regulatory sophistication and research scale.
- Japan's Indo-Pacific perspective complements Europe's Atlantic experience.
- Both share vulnerabilities—energy dependence, demographic contraction, and exposure to external coercion.

In Takaichi's calculus, these vulnerabilities are not liabilities but *strategic entry points* for cooperation.

By integrating supply chains, synchronising export controls, and co-developing critical technologies, Japan and the EU can collectively transform fragility into resilience.

9.4 The Values Dimension – Pragmatism Over Idealism

Both Japan and the EU define themselves as **values-based actors**, but their cooperation under Takaichi will be driven less by abstract ideals and more by **applied pragmatism**.

Rather than invoking democracy as a rhetorical anchor, Takaichi and her European counterparts will treat shared values as *operational standards*—rules that ensure transparency, trust, and reliability in industrial and digital partnerships.

This evolution marks a maturation of democratic diplomacy:

From **ideological solidarity** to **functional credibility**—the ability to deliver tangible outcomes while maintaining ethical governance.

In a fragmented world, credibility is the new currency of power—and Japan and the EU possess it in abundance.

9.5 Navigating Divergences

No partnership is without friction.

Differences in **regulatory culture**, **defence mandates**, and **strategic pace** will persist.

The EU's slow consensus-building contrasts with Japan's executive decisiveness under Takaichi.

Likewise, Japan's proximity to China and North Korea gives its security calculus an immediacy that many Europeans do not share.

However, both sides have learned the art of **managing asymmetry through structure**—building stable frameworks that withstand leadership changes or policy oscillations.

Takaichi's technocratic approach, combined with the EU's institutional endurance, provides the right balance of **velocity and stability**.

9.6 Strategic Forecast – Toward a Democratic Technological Bloc

Over the next decade, the Japan–EU relationship could evolve into a **democratic technological bloc**—a cross-continental system of trust-based innovation, joint investment, and coordinated deterrence.

Its contours might include:

- **A Joint Industrial and Defence Council** to align economic security strategies;
- **A Digital Trust Zone** for AI, cybersecurity, and data governance;
- **A Semiconductor Resilience Alliance** connecting Europe's design hubs and Japan's materials expertise;
- **Indo-Pacific–Atlantic Security Integration**, linking maritime awareness and cyber defence frameworks.

If realised, this architecture would give democratic economies a collective shield—protecting their industrial bases, digital systems, and values from coercion or fragmentation.

9.7 A New Chapter in Transcontinental Strategy

Sanae Takaichi's Japan does not seek to reinvent the wheel of diplomacy—it seeks to make it *turn faster and more precisely*.

Her leadership style—discipline over drama, policy over posture—aligns with the EU's own shift from aspiration to execution.

In this sense, Japan under Takaichi may become to Europe what Europe is to Japan: a **strategic mirror**, reflecting shared anxieties and reinforcing common resolve.

In a multipolar world where alliances are fluid and credibility is scarce, **Japan and the EU emerge as partners of reliability**—not bound by dependency, but linked by competence.

Their collaboration could redefine what it means to be a *democratic power* in the 21st century: a power not of dominance, but of endurance.

9.8 Final Assessment

Sanae Takaichi’s rise marks a generational transition in Japanese politics—from consensus-driven liberalism to strategic realism grounded in institutional integrity. For the European Union, this presents a partner of **focus, capability, and seriousness**—a rare combination in an increasingly unpredictable geopolitical environment.

If the partnership continues on its current trajectory, Japan and the EU will stand as **twin anchors of the democratic order**—one in the Indo-Pacific, the other in the Euro-Atlantic—connected not just by trade or ideology, but by **a shared belief in stability through strength**.

Summary Table – Japan–EU Prospects under Takaichi

Domain	Trajectory under Takaichi	Impact for the EU
Economic Security	Integration of industrial policy and diplomacy	Strengthened resilience, joint R&D investment
Technology & Innovation	Dual-use focus, AI and semiconductor cooperation	Leadership in ethical tech governance
Defence & Security	Industrial interoperability, cyber cooperation	Complement to NATO’s technological flank
Diplomacy	Functional partnerships, institutional discipline	Reliable Indo-Pacific anchor

Values & Governance	Pragmatic democracy, rule-based cooperation	Shared credibility in global governance
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9.9 Concluding Reflection

In a fragmented and competitive century, **Japan and the European Union** have rediscovered each other not as distant trading partners, but as **strategic equals**. Sanae Takaichi’s tenure, defined by discipline and vision, could solidify this transformation—turning cooperation into capability, and partnership into permanence.

If both sides sustain this momentum, their alliance will not only protect their interests but **shape the rules of the next global order**.