

Chapter 2

Japan's Foreign Policy by Region

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Section

1

Promotion of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” Based on the Rule of Law

1 Overview

The Indo-Pacific region, which stretches from the Asia Pacific across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa, is the core of the world's vitality and supports more than half of the world's population.

At the same time, the region is home to several countries with strong military capabilities, and there have been some ongoing and strengthening acts that shake the very foundations of the international order based on the rule of law. The region also faces a variety of threats, such as piracy, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and illegal fishing. It is essential to ensure peace and prosperity in the entire region and beyond, through establishing a free and open order based on the rule of law.

Japan has long emphasized the importance of taking a holistic view of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as seen in the “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech regarding the Indian and Pacific Oceans delivered by Prime Minister Abe to the Indian Parliament in 2007. In August 2016, this concept was brought to fruition as the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” vision, which Prime Minister Abe announced to the world in his keynote speech at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Kenya. In his speech, Prime Minister Abe stated that the key to stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by combining “Two Continents” — rapidly-growing Asia and potential-filled Africa — and “Two Oceans” — free and open Pacific and Indian Oceans — and that Japan would work to realize prosperity in Asia and Africa.

Japan has widely promoted efforts to realize FOIP

based on the rule of law in cooperation with like-minded countries from 2016 to the present. As a result, the vision of FOIP first proposed by Japan has now gained broad support in the international community, including the United States (U.S.), Australia, India, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Republic of Korea (ROK), the European Union (EU), and other European countries. Various consultations and cooperation are also underway. Numerous policy documents on the Indo-Pacific have been released, such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) adopted at the ASEAN Summit in June 2019, the Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific presented by the EU in September 2021, the Indo-Pacific Strategy presented by the U.S. in February 2022, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region presented by the ROK in November 2022.

In March 2023 in India, Prime Minister Kishida announced the New Plan⁽¹⁾ for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” He explained in detail the approach and efforts for FOIP at a historic turning point to achieve the goal of leading the international community toward cooperation rather than division and confrontation.

The new plan clearly emphasizes the importance of “rulemaking through dialogue,” “equal partnership among nations,” and an approach focusing on “human” as the approaches to be taken going forward, while maintaining the core principles of defending “freedom” and “the rule of law,” and respecting “diversity,”

(1) For more information on the New Plan for FOIP, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page3e_001336.html



“inclusiveness,” and “openness.” The new plan also clarifies that Japan will strengthen coordination with various countries, expand the networks among countries that share the FOIP vision, and direct efforts in the spirit of co-creation. Furthermore, it sets forth

“four pillars” of cooperation for FOIP (Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity, Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way, Multi-layered Connectivity, and Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the “Sea” to the “Air”).

2 Examples of Specific Initiatives Under the New Plan

The “four pillars” of the new plan are organized as “pillars of cooperation for FOIP” suited for a historic turning point in order to realize a world that FOIP aims for.

(1) Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity

The first pillar, “Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity,” is the backbone of FOIP. In the international community, it is important to defend “peace” and create an international environment where “freedom,” “transparency,” and “the rule of law” are upheld and the weak are not beaten by force. Japan will promote the sharing of fundamental principles that the international community should uphold for peace; peacebuilding; pursuit of a free, fair, and just economic order in a manner that adapts to changing times; and rulemaking to prevent opaque and unfair practices.

(2) Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way

The second pillar, “Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way,” is the new focus of cooperation for FOIP. Japan will expand cooperation for FOIP through the dramatic increase in the importance of “global commons,” such as climate and the environment, global health, and cyberspace, thereby enhancing the resilience and sustainability of societies. For example, in terms of climate, environment, and energy security, Japan will promote the “Asia Zero Emission

Community (AZEC)” concept, which aims to achieve both decarbonization and economic growth, “assistance for loss and damage” to countries vulnerable to natural disasters, and the “Blue Ocean Vision” to protect the abundant oceans.

(3) Multi-layered Connectivity

The third pillar, “Multilayered Connectivity,” is the core element of cooperation for FOIP. In order to achieve vigorous growth for the entire region, countries need to stay connected in various aspects. Japan will increase each country’s options and help them overcome their vulnerabilities through initiatives to further enhance connectivity. For example, Japan will work to enhance “knowledge” connectivity by further developing “human” connectivity and promote digital connectivity.

(4) Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the “Sea” to the “Air”

The fourth pillar, “Extending Efforts for Security and Safe Use from the ‘Sea’ to the ‘Air,’” places “marine routes” at the center as the “focus of FOIP” and ensures the security and safety of the entire “public domain,” incorporating secured use of air domain in a safe and stable manner. Japan will work to ensure the “three principles of the rule of law at sea,” strengthen maritime law enforcement capabilities, enhance maritime security, and promote safe and stable use of airspace.

3 Collaboration and Cooperation with Other Countries

In 2024, Japan remained actively engaged in diplomatic activities for the realization of FOIP.

(1) United States (U.S.)

In April, Prime Minister Kishida made an official visit to the U.S. and held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Joseph Biden in Washington, D.C.

In the United States-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement released as an outcome of the meeting, the leaders confirmed that both Japan and the U.S. pledge that both countries will continue their tireless work, together and with other partners, to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific and world." In addition, in his address at a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress, Prime Minister Kishida also stated that Japan aims to realize FOIP together with like-minded countries.

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in Delaware, U.S. in September, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that Japan and the U.S. further promote FOIP through their partnerships with like-minded countries, including the G7, Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines. Prime Minister Kishida also stressed the need to advance such cooperation with the Global South.

In addition, following their telephone call in October, Prime Minister Ishiba held an in-person meeting with President Biden in Lima, Peru in November, where the leaders confirmed that Japan and the U.S. will continue to closely cooperate. Furthermore, in February, Prime Minister Ishiba held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Donald J. Trump in Washington, D.C., where both leaders concurred on closely cooperating toward the realization of FOIP.

Beyond the Japan-U.S. summit meetings, both countries have confirmed their intention to continue close cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region through various opportunities, including successive Japan-U.S. foreign ministers' meetings and the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (Japan-U.S. "2+2") held in July.

(2) Australia and New Zealand

With regard to Australia, at the Eleventh Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations ("2+2") held in September, both sides engaged in a candid exchange of views on the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region and concurred on deepening their shared strategic recognition. They also concurred on playing a leading role in realizing FOIP. In addition, during the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and confirmed that under the "Special Strategic Partnership"

between Japan and Australia, both countries would work together toward the realization of FOIP.

With regard to New Zealand, during the visit to Japan by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in June, a summit meeting was held in which both leaders concurred on further strengthening their cooperation toward the realization of FOIP amid the increasingly challenging strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

(3) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Japan and ASEAN released the Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in 2020, confirming that the AOIP and FOIP share fundamental principles. In addition, at the time of the announcement of the new plan for FOIP in 2023, Prime Minister Kishida emphasized that the AOIP and FOIP are visions that resonate with each other and announced a new contribution of 100 million U.S. dollars to the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund. Furthermore, at the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in September of the same year, the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative was announced to further strengthen connectivity in both tangible and intangible ways. At the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation in December of the same year, the leaders adopted the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, outlining a new vision for cooperation and its Implementation Plan indicating extensive and specific cooperation. At the ASEAN-Japan Summit in October, the leaders affirmed that cooperation is steadily progressing in line with the Joint Vision Statement. The ASEAN member states welcomed the steady progress and expressed appreciation for the complementary nature of FOIP and the AOIP as well as expectations for further cooperation. Moreover, at the East Asia Summit (EAS) held in the same month, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan consistently advocates the AOIP and will actively support its promotion and mainstreaming. He also expressed Japan's determination to enhance cooperation through ASEAN-led frameworks to maintain and strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

(4) Canada

Japan and Canada confirmed that they would continue to cooperate toward the realization of FOIP through the steady implementation of the Japan-Canada Action Plan for Contributing to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, which was announced by both countries in 2022, at the Japan-Canada Summit Meetings held in June, September, and November; the visit to Montreal by Foreign Minister Kamikawa in January; the visit to Japan by Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly in July; and the Japan-Canada Foreign Ministers' Meeting held during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

Cooperation under the Action Plan steadily progressed in areas such as security and the rule of law, including the Japan-Canada bilateral exercise (KADEX24) and cooperation in monitoring illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

(5) India

At the Third Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting held in New Delhi in August, Japan and India emphasized their shared strategic goals for achieving FOIP. In addition, at the 17th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue held in the same month, Foreign Minister Kamikawa stated that Japan and India have a great responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, and Japan would like to deepen bilateral cooperation to fulfill this responsibility in cooperation with India. Furthermore, the two countries confirmed their cooperation during the Japan-India Summit Meeting in October and the Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November.

(6) Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad)

The four countries of Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S. share recognition of the importance of promoting practical cooperation in various fields, including critical and emerging technologies, quality infrastructure, and maritime security, and expanding cooperation to more countries in order to realize FOIP, with the goal of strengthening a rules-based free and open international order. The Quad also fully supports the AOIP and welcomes the proactive efforts by European and other countries toward FOIP. At the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Japan in July,

the foreign ministers of the four countries reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to the realization of FOIP. Furthermore, at the Quad Leaders' Meeting held in the U.S. in September, the leaders reaffirmed the increasing importance of continuing to demonstrate their strong commitment toward the common vision of FOIP to the international community, and issued the Wilmington Declaration. In January 2025, a Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held the day after the inauguration of the new U.S. administration, and a joint statement was released reaffirming the shared commitment to strengthening FOIP.

(7) Republic of Korea

At the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in May and the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Japan and the ROK confirmed the importance of maintaining and strengthening FOIP, and that Japan-ROK cooperation is increasingly important in effectively addressing global challenges.

(8) Japan-U.S.-ROK

Recognizing that the collaboration among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK is essential for regional peace and stability beyond issues related to North Korea, the three countries have been enhancing collaboration at multiple levels, through holding summit meetings, foreign ministers' meetings, vice-ministerial meetings, and other such meetings. Amidst this, trilateral cooperation has also been advancing toward the realization of FOIP. In addition, in the year following the Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit held at Camp David in the U.S. in August 2023, the three countries have confirmed on successive occasions that their trilateral cooperation has progressed globally across a wide range of fields. At the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in September, the three countries concurred on cooperating even more closely amid increasing challenges to the free and open international order based on the rule of law. In addition, in June and November, the Japan-U.S.-ROK joint exercise Freedom Edge was conducted across multiple domains. Japan, the U.S., and the ROK continued to demonstrate their defense posture and strong will to protect freedom by enhancing their trilateral interoperability across multiple domains for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific, including the Korean Peninsula.

Furthermore, in November, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting was held in Lima, Peru, where the leaders confirmed that strategic collaboration among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK has become more important than ever and that trilateral cooperation has been expanding globally across a wide range of fields. On this basis, the three leaders concurred on establishing the Trilateral Coordinating Secretariat and continuing to work closely together, including through this Secretariat, in various fields such as responses to North Korea.

(9) Europe

A The EU

In February, State Minister for Foreign Affairs TSUGE Yoshifumi attended the 3rd EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum held in Belgium. At the meeting, he shared with participating countries the necessity for European and Indo-Pacific nations to work together on various fields and issues where ties are deepening between Europe and the Indo-Pacific, including addressing the increasingly inseparable security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.

In November, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the 1st Japan-EU Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell Fontelles. Both sides reaffirmed that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions is inseparable and confirmed that Japan and the EU will closely coordinate with each other in maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order.

B The United Kingdom (UK)

In August, the UK announced that the Protocol for its accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) would enter into force by December 15. At the Japan-UK Summit Meeting held in November, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Keir Starmer shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable. The leaders also welcomed the great progress in meaningful and concrete cooperation between the two countries toward realizing FOIP, including the Global Combat

Air Programme (GCAP), the deployment of the UK's Carrier Strike Group to the Indo-Pacific planned for 2025, and the application of Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) asset protection measures to the UK. The two leaders concurred to strongly promote such cooperation. At the same meeting, the leaders announced the launch of the Japan-UK Economic 2+2 Ministers' Meeting ("Economic 2+2"). Furthermore, at the Japan-Italy-UK Leaders' Meeting on GCAP held in the same month, the three leaders concurred on continuing close trilateral cooperation toward completing the GCAP's development.

C France

In May, Prime Minister Kishida held a summit working lunch with President Emmanuel Macron. The leaders shared the view to begin negotiations on the Japan-France Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), a framework to enhance interoperability between Japan's SDF and the French Armed Forces and to further advance bilateral security and defense cooperation. The leaders also welcomed the signing of the "Japan-France Declaration on Cooperation in The Field of Critical Minerals" and concurred on strengthening cooperation in the field of economic security. Foreign Minister Iwaya held a telephone call with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot in October, as well as an in-person foreign ministers' meeting in Italy in November. At these meetings, the two foreign ministers concurred on advancing cooperation in the fields of security and economy and science and technology under the Roadmap on Japan-France Cooperation. The foreign ministers also welcomed the establishment of the Japan-France Counter-Terrorism Consultations to promote cooperation in the counter-terrorism field. The ministers also shared the recognition that the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is inseparable and confirmed that Japan and France will closely cooperate on security conditions in the Indo-Pacific as well as on the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East.

D Germany

Based on Germany's Indo-Pacific guidelines approved by the Cabinet in September 2020, the Government of Germany has been working to strengthen its engagement with the region, and security cooperation

between Japan and Germany has further deepened. In January, the two countries signed the Japan-Germany Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which establishes the settlement procedures for the reciprocal provision of supplies such as fuel and services during joint activities between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ACSA entered into force in July. In the same month, Prime Minister Kishida visited Germany and held a Japan-Germany Summit Meeting. The two leaders welcomed the recent progress in security and defense cooperation between the two countries as Germany has been strengthening its involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. Subsequently, under the framework of the Government of Germany's “Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024,” the German Air Force, including Eurofighter combat aircraft, visited Japan in July. In addition, in August, the frigate *Baden-Württemberg* and the supply ship *Frankfurt am Main* made port calls in Japan. On both occasions, joint training exercises were conducted with the SDF.

E Italy

In February, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Italy Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. The two leaders confirmed cooperation in the field of defense and security, including the GCAP, and concurred on continuing to work closely together for the smooth progress of the joint development of the next-generation fighter aircraft by Japan, the UK, and Italy under the GCAP. At the G7 Apulia Summit in June, Prime Minister Kishida also held informal talks with Prime Minister Meloni, and the two leaders announced the commencement of negotiations on the Japan-Italy Acquisition and Cross-Servicing

Agreement (Japan-Italy ACSA). In August, a carrier strike group composed of the aircraft carrier *Cavour*, the frigate *Alpino*, and the patrol ship *Raimondo Montecuccoli*, as well as air force aircraft, visited Japan and conducted joint training exercises with the SDF. In addition, from late August to early September, the *Raimondo Montecuccoli* conducted its first-ever monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers⁽²⁾ by North Korean-flagged vessels. In November, the Japan-Italy ACSA was signed. Furthermore, at the Japan-Italy-UK Leaders' Meeting on GCAP held in the same month, the leaders of the three countries concurred on continuing to work closely together to complete the GCAP's development.

F The Netherlands

In January, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, through a Japan-Netherlands Foreign Ministers' Meeting in a working lunch format with Minister of Foreign Affairs Hanke Bruins Slot and a courtesy call on Prime Minister Mark Rutte, shared the recognition that the security of Europe and Indo-Pacific are inseparable, and concurred on strengthening bilateral relations, including in the fields of security and defense. From late May to early June, the frigate *HNLMS Tromp* conducted its first-ever monitoring and surveillance activities against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers with North Korean-flagged vessels. In June, the *HNLMS Tromp* made a port call in Nagasaki. In July, Prime Minister Kishida held a Japan-Netherlands Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Dick Schoof and welcomed the Netherlands' concrete engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, including the dispatch of the *HNLMS Tromp* to Japan in June.

(2) In this context, “ship-to-ship transfers” refers to the transfers to or from North Korea-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits the UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.