

# **Strategies for the Indo-Pacific: Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific 3.0 and New Southbound Policy**

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## **Introduction**

Articulating Indo-Pacific frameworks from the regional security perspective is one of the most prominent trends in contemporary international relations. Rory Medcalf has described the Indo-Pacific region as the world's focal region for economic and security dynamics. He has compared it to the North Atlantic region, which dominated global economic and strategic affairs for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup> The Indo-Pacific's security frameworks rest on the region's significance. This region is characterised by its vast maritime expanses and critical sea lanes. The Indo-Pacific contests make cooperative governance and security architecture essential to regional stability. Prominent naval historian and emeritus professor of maritime studies, Geoffrey Till, in his book *Sea Power: A Guide for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, emphasises that maritime security is contingent on cooperative, rule-based institutions, precisely because the oceans, as global commons, are porous.<sup>2</sup> Hence, maritime zones cannot be controlled unilaterally.

The Indo-Pacific is the home to 65 per cent of the world's population.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the region is home to some of the world's largest economies, including China, India, and Japan, as well as several of the world's most powerful military forces.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Indo-Pacific region attracts cooperating and competing security and strategic interests. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy and Indo-Pacific Vision, as well as Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP), present exemplary models of regional security and strategic policy. The significance of the Indo-Pacific is such that it is being posited as a counter to the China-centric view of regional order under the Belt and Road Initiative. The security and economic significance of the Indo-Pacific has attracted major powers seeking to establish themselves as stakeholders in the region's evolving strategic landscape. This explains the strategic and policy focus Taiwan and Japan place on the Indo-Pacific's security architecture, thus anchoring their rhetoric in the region's pivotal role in global economic and strategic dynamics.

## **Indo-Pacific- A perspective from Japan and Taiwan**

Japan's prime foreign policy document describes the Indo-Pacific region as the core of contemporary geopolitical strategy, referring to it as 'The world's growth centre' and 'The core of global stability and prosperity' through its FOIP framework.<sup>5</sup> Japan has continually updated its FOIP framework to reflect the region's evolving dynamics, and FOIP 3.0 makes a similar case. Similarly, Taiwan's NSP also recognises the Indo-Pacific as a region that is 'Free, open, and rules-based'.<sup>6</sup> These strategies, as highlighted in their narratives, underscore Japan-Taiwan's role and relationship as a model democratic partnership in the Indo-Pacific, anchored by shared concerns and national strategic interests, respectively.

## **Japan**

Japan has repeatedly framed the Indo-Pacific as central to its national interest and global order. Fumio Kishida, in his 2022 policy speech delivered at New Delhi entitled 'The Future of the Indo-Pacific—Japan's New Plan for a FOIP—'Together with India, as an Indispensable Partner'', asserted that a FOIP is coterminous with peace, stability, and prosperity for the region and the world.<sup>7</sup> He also committed to allocating USD 75 bn to the Indo-Pacific region by 2030 for infrastructure and cooperation with other countries.<sup>8</sup> Kishida's speech signals Japan's ambition to build partnerships grounded in shared principles in the Indo-Pacific. It highlights a strategic balancing act between regional leadership and great-power competition. Kishida also emphasised the four pillars of FOIP cooperation. These pillars include rules for peace and prosperity, addressing challenges in an Indo-Pacific way, multi-layered connectivity, and efforts to ensure security and the safe use of the sea-to-air.<sup>9</sup>

### **FOIP 3.0**

Japan's FOIP 3.0 framework exemplifies multilateral cooperation, reaffirming its commitment to a FOIP that is inclusive, sustainable, and grounded in universal values. Japan, with its commitment to FOIP 3.0, pledges to mobilise USD 75 bn in public and private financing by 2030, for equal partnership and rulemaking through dialogue.<sup>10</sup> However, FOIP 3.0 exhibits essential contradictions between Japan's aspirational commitments and operational practices. These contradictions systematically marginalise key regional actors, particularly Taiwan. This strengthens Kei Koga's analysis of 'Strategic ambiguity in Japan's Indo-Pacific conceptualisation'.<sup>11</sup> Koga's article, 'Japan's Indo-Pacific question: Countering China or shaping a new regional order?', describes FOIP as a vehicle for shaping the regional order in the Indo-Pacific and ensuring Japan's security. Koga's analysis highlights that Japan's core interest, the defence of Japan, is more imperative than building a regional order in the Indo-Pacific region.

## **Taiwan**

Taiwan has given the Indo-Pacific significant primacy in its foreign policy. President Tsai Ing-wen, in her address at the 2023 Yushan Forum, explained the Indo-Pacific strategy at the core of NSP. She positioned Taiwan as a secure and reliable partner in mounting threats of authoritarianism. President Tsai emphasised that Taiwan is part of the solution to the challenges in the Indo-Pacific. Her key highlight was to deepen ties with NSP partners to ensure prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>12</sup> Taiwan's NSP identifies the Indo-Pacific as a maritime domain of significance.

### **New Southbound Policy**

The NSP builds on the 'Go South' policies of previous administrations and continues Taiwan's efforts to resolve the perennial challenge of balancing its economic dependence on China with its security interests, which are often at odds with Beijing. One notable difference is that the NSP takes a 'People-centric' approach that, in

addition to economic collaboration, focuses on developing a shared identity between Taiwan and primarily its Southeast and South Asian neighbours. Taiwan's NSP was announced in 2016 and is characterised as strategic overreach masquerading as diplomatic innovation.

President Tsai Ing-wen's assertion that diversifying Taiwan's economic partners is essential to safeguarding its sovereignty and future prosperity has been consistent throughout her presidency. The NSP is a coterminous strategy for the same. However, its ambitious scope and implementation suffer from fundamental structural limitations and conceptual contradictions that compromise its objectives and may even exacerbate Taiwan's strategic vulnerabilities rather than mitigate them.

Though both Japan and Taiwan prioritise the Indo-Pacific region as pivotal to their foreign policy orientation, geo-economic interests and strategic priorities, they differ constructively in approaches. Also, there is significant divergence in how Japan and Taiwan position each other in their Indo-Pacific policies, despite common themes such as democracy, development, and norm architecture. The following table provides comparative and analytical nuances of Japan's FOIP and Taiwan's NSP. The table also highlights the convergences and divergences between FOIP and NSP architectures, with implications for the Indo-Pacific region.

**Table 1: Comprehensive Comparative matrix of FOIP 3.0 and NSP**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>FOIP 3.0 (Japan)</b>	<b>NSP (Taiwan)</b>	<b>Indo-Pacific Context &amp; Implications</b>
<b>Strategic Scope</b>	Broad Indo-Pacific security and economic order	Focused on 18 countries: Southeast/South Asia, Australia, New Zealand	These policies view Indo-Pacific as pivotal; Japan's scope enables greater institutional influence
<b>Financial Commitments</b>	USD 75 bn public/private financing by 2030	No comparable large-scale funding; emphasis on trade facilitation, Budget from Presidential Office allocation	Massive resource asymmetry: Japan shapes infrastructure, Taiwan focuses on trade

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>FOIP 3.0 (Japan)</b>	<b>NSP (Taiwan)</b>	<b>Indo-Pacific Context &amp; Implications</b>
<b>Institutional Access</b>	Strong Quad, ASEAN ties; selective inclusivity excluding Taiwan	Excluded from CPTPP, RCEP, and ADMM-Plus; relies on bilateral networks	Japan operates within formal frameworks; Taiwan is constrained to informal mechanisms
<b>Security Cooperation</b>	Maritime governance, values-based alignment, cooperation, QUAD cooperation	Limited formal security ties; focus on economic/social connectivity	Japan integrates security and economic considerations, whereas Taiwan is largely confined to functional cooperation.
<b>Values Framework</b>	Democracy, rule of law, quality infrastructure, sustainable development	Similar democratic rhetoric; emphasis on 'free and open' principles	Shared normative language masks operational power asymmetries
<b>Leadership Implementation</b>	Kishida's USD 75 bn commitment is partially realised through JICA projects	Tsai's diversification goals are complicated by persistent China dependency	Leadership rhetoric exceeds institutional capacity for delivery
<b>Operational Challenges</b>	Selective engagement favouring Japanese interests; Taiwan's exclusion undermines universalist claims	Capacity constraints, limited public awareness, and structural dependency on China	Both face rhetoric-reality gaps, but Taiwan's constraints are more severe.
<b>Regional Integration</b>	Shapes multilateral frameworks while excluding a key democratic partner (Taiwan)	Participates in Japanese-led initiatives without formal voice or voting rights	Creates hierarchical rather than inclusive regional architecture

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>FOIP 3.0 (Japan)</b>	<b>NSP (Taiwan)</b>	<b>Indo-Pacific Context &amp; Implications</b>
<b>Economic Interdependence</b>	Emphasises resilient supply chains supporting Japanese strategic interests.	Trade growth masks continued indirect exposure to China through transshipment.	Economic ties generate asymmetric dependencies rather than mutual autonomy.
<b>Climate and Environmental Initiatives</b>	Comprehensive environmental agenda including 'Asia Zero Emission Community', blue economy initiatives, sustainable aviation fuel, and green transformation with dedicated funding streams.	Limited environmental focus; primarily addresses climate issues through economic partnerships and trade facilitation rather than dedicated environmental programs.	Environmental cooperation exposes resource asymmetries: Japan leads regional climate initiatives, while Taiwan's participation remains largely reactive and economically motivated.
<b>Technology and Innovation Cooperation</b>	Emphasises digital connectivity, cybersecurity, AI governance, and technology transfer, e.g., 'Enhancement in digital connectivity' and 'Data Free Flow with Trust'.	Focuses on bilateral technology partnerships, particularly in semiconductors and information and communications technology; relies heavily on Taiwan's tech sector strengths but is limited by institutional constraints.	Technology cooperation reveals both complementarity and dependency: Japan seeks Taiwan's semiconductor expertise, while Taiwan needs Japan's market access and regulatory frameworks.

*Source:* Data compiled from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, *Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) 3.0* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023); and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), *New Southbound Policy (NSP) Achievements Report* (Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

Japan's FOIP 3.0 and Taiwan's NSP demonstrate significant convergence around shared democratic values for the Indo-Pacific centrality and connectivity priorities. Both the Indo-Pacific strategies emphasise a rules-based regional order and economic diversification as key to the Indo-Pacific order. However, Japan and

Taiwan's complementary strategies for Indo-Pacific are dotted with fundamental asymmetries that undermine sustainable partnership in the agreed goal of 'Free and open Indo-Pacific'. Japan's USD 75 bn commitment and formal institutional access sharply contrast with Taiwan's resource constraints and its exclusion from multilateral institutions. The foremost challenge lies in bridging the gap between aspirational alignment and operational reality, wherein Japan's selective inclusivity paradoxically marginalises Taiwan despite their shared values and strategic interests. At the same time, Taiwan's structural dependencies limit genuine diversification. These contradictions reveal that policy-documented similarities mask deeper institutional and strategic disparities that complicate practical Indo-Pacific cooperation.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Rory Medcalf, *Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won't Map the Future* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Schmitt, Henrik Glöckner, Till Potente, Thomas Jasinski, and Bartholomäus Wolff, "Identification and Assessment of Need for Change Within Production Systems", *International Journal of Business and Management Studies* 5, no. 2 (2013): 241–51.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2022), accessed 01 Jun 2026, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/assets/pdfs/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique-en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> European Parliamentary Research Service, *The Indo-Pacific: A Region of Primary Importance for the EU* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) 3.0* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Taiwan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Southbound Policy (NSP) Achievements Report* (Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

<sup>7</sup> Fumio Kishida, "The Future of the Indo-Pacific—Japan's New Plan for a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'—'Together with India, as an Indispensable Partner'", policy speech delivered at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, March 20, 2023, Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed 02 Jun 2026, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page1e\\_000586.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page1e_000586.html)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *New Plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)"* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023), accessed June 18, 2026, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page3e\\_001336.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page3e_001336.html)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Koga, Kei. "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Concept: Strategic Ambiguity and Multilateral Cooperation." *The Pacific Review* 33, no. 3-4 (2020): 213–242.

<sup>12</sup> Tsai, Ing-wen. "President Tsai addresses opening of 2023 Yushan Forum", Speech delivered at the 2023 Yushan Forum, Taipei, 11 Oct, 2023. Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan),

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accessed 03 Jun 2026, <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6619>

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