

Chapter 7

Japan

Initiatives for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

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In recent years, Japan has been strengthening whole-of-government initiatives toward maintaining and bolstering an open maritime order based on the rule of law and freedom of navigation under the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) concept. The Ministry of Defense (MOD)/the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have also been promoting various initiatives toward realizing FOIP as shown by the National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2019 and beyond (2019 NDPG). The 2019 NDPG stressed: “in line with the vision of free and open Indo-Pacific, Japan will strategically promote multifaceted and multilayered security cooperation, taking into account characteristics and situation specific to each region and country.”

If maintaining and strengthening the international order based on the principles of the rule of law and freedom of navigation are the main objectives of FOIP, then FOIP is certainly not a new concept, but rather a goal that Japan has consistently pursued since the Cold War era. At the same time, due to India’s rise and China’s strengthening its maritime advances since the latter half of the 2000s, FOIP has been characterized by unprecedented focus on maritime security and strengthening cooperation with democratic countries with ocean borders. Together with being a concept led by the United States aimed at maintaining and strengthening the existing order, FOIP has also emphasized expanding roles of non-US countries including Japan and has a potential to become a vision for a new order in an age of “multipolarization.”

From the above perspective, in recent years the MOD/SDF, centered on the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), have been expanding their presence and strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region (hereafter the Ground Self-Defense Force, the Maritime Self-Defense Force, and the Air Self-Defense Force are referred to as GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF, respectively). In addition, the MOD/SDF are strengthening initiatives to provide capacity building assistance with other countries in the region as well as multilateral security cooperation. Nevertheless, amidst the ongoing severe financial situation and personnel shortages, there are some views that further project expansion would be difficult.

As budget and personnel constraints become increasingly tight going forward, it is becoming more important to develop a whole-of-department approach as well as to strengthen cooperation with other ministries and agencies in order to promote defense exchanges and cooperation. Additionally, to review individual projects and set an order of priority for these projects, it is essential

to draft a long-term strategy for defense cooperation and exchanges in the Indo-Pacific. Considering the placement of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and China in FOIP is also an important pending issue.

1. About the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” Concept

(1) FOIP as an Order Concept

FOIP is synonymous with an objective or “vision” of Japanese diplomacy that denotes a regional order desirable to Japan.¹ The objective or vision is for Japan to make the region extending from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean free and open as “international public goods,” such as by “ensuring rules-based international order including the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful settlement of disputes, and promotion of free trade,” and thus promote the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region.²

The principles of the rule of law and freedom of navigation are essentially the “operational code” of the liberal international order aimed for by Western countries centered on the United States following World War II. If FOIP is an attempt to make these principles and this order take root in the region extending from the Pacific Ocean to Africa, it is not new for Japan to have this kind of order concept. Rather, the concept of FOIP that aims at promoting an order based on the liberal values of the rule of law and market economies should be considered the goal or “parameters” that post-war Japanese diplomacy has consistently pursued.³

Particularly following the Cold War, as Japan has striven for a new role in the international community, maintaining and strengthening the liberal order have been more explicitly raised as the goals of Japanese diplomacy and the Japan-US Alliance.⁴ Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter unveiled in 1992 lists as one of the “four principles” for implementing assistance, “Full attention should be paid to efforts for promoting democratization and introduction of a market-oriented economy, and the situation regarding the securing of basic human rights and freedoms in the recipient country.”⁵ In addition, while developed countries’ interest in Africa weakened due to the end of the Cold War, Japan first held the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993, and strengthened initiatives toward the

development and democratization of Africa.⁶ Furthermore, under the Partnership for Democratic Development (PDD) unveiled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996, Japan has been providing assistance not only to Asian countries, but also to countries in Eastern Europe and Africa, including support for elections, cooperation toward domestic efforts to establish the rule of law, strengthening of civil society, and cooperation toward expanding participation in politics by women.⁷

Cooperation with India and Australia, the frequent focus of FOIP, also did not begin recently. Especially from the beginning of the 2000s mainly against the backdrop of the rise of China, Japan has been strengthening strategic relations with Australia and India. As a result, the Joint Statement: Towards Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership was issued in December 2006 and the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was issued in March 2007, confirming further promotion of relations with both countries, including for defense and security cooperation.

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's speech titled "Confluence of Two Waters" in front of the Parliament of India in 2007 has been often cited in literature as a prototype for FOIP. Furthermore, the National Security Strategy unveiled in 2013 clearly placed maintaining and protecting the international order "based on rules and universal values, such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law" as being in Japan's national interest, and raised as a goal strengthening relations with not only the United States, but also countries that share values with Japan: the ROK, Australia, ASEAN countries, and India. In this way, protecting liberal values and cooperation with Australia and India as emphasized in FOIP did not suddenly appear with the advent of the second Abe administration, but rather had been continuously strengthened amidst Japan's increasing engagement in shaping the regional order following World War II, particularly following the Cold War.

That being said, usage of the new regional concept of "Indo-Pacific" took root from the 2010s. It is true that the term FOIP emerged reflecting the new trend of developments in the region, including the rise of India. One development in this new trend has been the rise in importance of maritime security particularly since the latter half of the 2000s.

For example, the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" concept, which was unveiled by the first Abe administration and is often pointed out to resemble

FOIP, broadened the liberal order along the outer rim of the Eurasian continent in the same way as FOIP, but emphasized engagement in the continent's regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Turkey, as well as Central and Eastern Europe, and the Baltic countries.⁸ By contrast, FOIP brings to the forefront enhancing connectivity with ocean-facing countries in Southeast and Southwest Asia to the coastal countries of East Africa, as well as infrastructure support, defense cooperation, and the like related to these countries.⁹

Needless to say, the backdrop for this included China's expansion of its maritime advances from the latter half of the 2000s. In particular, China not only rapidly expanded its military actions both qualitatively and quantitatively in maritime areas, but also sought to unilaterally change the status quo by force through increasing its government vessels and military operating around the Senkaku Islands as well as its actions to construct artificial islands in the South China Sea. China's military movements threaten freedom of navigation and the stable use of sea lanes, and have thus come to be perceived as a serious threat to Japan. In an essay published in 2012 by Prime Minister Abe, he harshly criticized China for attempting to make the South China Sea into the "Lake of Beijing," and indicated plans to maintain and strengthen the rules-based order by strengthening cooperation with the United States as well as Australia and India, which are all democratic maritime countries.¹⁰

Nevertheless, FOIP does not aim to "contain" China. On the contrary, since its establishment in December 2012, the Abe administration has consistently worked to repair relations with China that had deteriorated due to the boat collision incident near the Senkaku Islands in 2010. As a result, while recognizing that both countries have different views on what led to tensions in the East China Sea, including the Senkaku Islands, through dialogue and consultations, the "Four Points Consensus" was reached between Japan and China in November 2014 and confirmed that deterioration of the situation should be prevented. In addition, consultation resumed toward building a maritime communication mechanism between Japan and China in January 2015, and the mechanism became operational in June 2018. During Prime Minister Abe's visit to China in October 2018, it was agreed to advance cooperation between Japan and China in many fields including economic fields and maritime security. During the Japan-China Summit Meeting in June 2019, in addition to confirming that "Japan-China relations have gotten back on a normal track and that there have

been new developments in the relations,” Prime Minister Abe and President Xi shared determination to carve out a “new era of Japan-China relations.”¹¹ In August of the same year, the vice-ministerial level Japan-China Strategic Dialogue was resumed after not being held for about seven years.

In this way, Japan has been strengthening cooperation with the United States, its allies, and other countries in the region under the FOIP concept on the one hand, while leveraging such relations on the other hand to improve relations with China. If FOIP’s ultimate objectives are the various principles of the liberal order of ensuring rules-based international order including the rule of law, freedom of navigation, peaceful resolution of disputes, and promotion of free trade, then China can be positioned as one important country within FOIP as long as it respects and adheres to these principles.

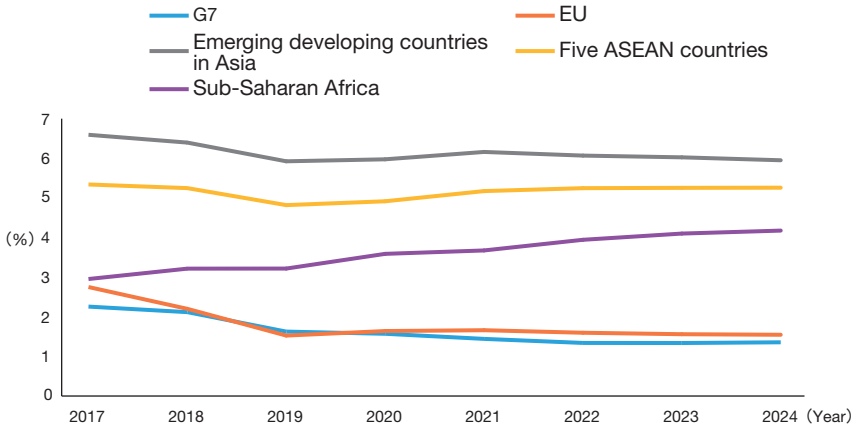
To that extent, FOIP does not have the objective of opposing any particular country. Rather, it is a concept that aims to form a rules-based, inclusive order by including all countries in the region. It should be understood that it is within the above context that the Abe administration places importance on engagement concerning China while aiming for a balance of power with China through Japan-US-Australia-India cooperation. These are not contradictory policies. Instead, they are positioned as mutually essential components for realizing an inclusive FOIP order concept.

(2) Seeking a New Order in the Age of Multipolarization

Another reason FOIP is garnering attention as an order concept is that there is unprecedented necessity for Japan to strengthen cooperation with countries besides the United States. As many Asian countries achieve rapid economic growth, not only China but also India, the ROK, and other Southeast Asian countries have a growing presence in the region, and this trend is expected to continue going forward (Figure 7.1). To incorporate the dynamism of countries with remarkable growth and to realize a FOIP, it is essential for Japan to strengthen cooperation not only with the United States but also with emerging nations expanding in the region as well as other countries inside and outside the region.

From the above perspective, Japan has been diversifying its strategic partnerships for both security and economic aspects particularly since the 2000s. For the security aspect, Japan is strengthening the rules-based Indo-Pacific order by strengthening defense exchanges with Australia, India, and the

Figure 7.1. Trends in the GDP growth rate (projected)



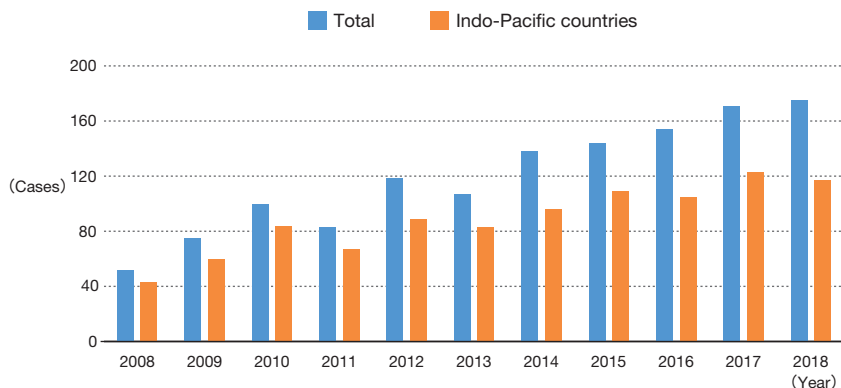
Notes: Figures are real GDP. Figures shown for after 2019 are estimates. The emerging developing countries are 30 countries including China, Southeast Asian countries, South Pacific countries, and Pacific Island countries. The five ASEAN countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2019.

Indo-Pacific countries of ASEAN, as well as promoting initiatives that actively leverage defense capabilities, such as joint training with the United Kingdom and France as well as defense equipment and technology cooperation with other countries (Figure 7.2). Japan has also been strengthening interoperability between the SDF and the militaries of other countries by concluding the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) (Table 7.1). Japan has also advanced negotiations on the Reciprocal Access Agreement (provisional name) to improve administrative, policy-related, and legal procedures for reciprocal visits by the SDF, the Australian Defence Force, and the British Armed Forces, further streamlining joint operations and exercises.

The diversification of security cooperation does not diminish the importance of the Japan-US Alliance, but rather leads to strengthening of the Alliance. Although Japan has strengthened security cooperation with several countries besides the United States, this could not become a “substitute” for the alliance with the United States under the current circumstances. On the contrary, Japan is taking on part of the United States’ role toward maintaining the regional order by

Figure 7.2. Number of cases of defense exchanges and cooperation (2008–2018)



Notes: Excludes the United States. Defense exchanges and cooperation include high-level exchanges among leaders such as summit leaders and defense ministers, regularly-held consultations among defense authority officials, exchanges between military units, and trilateral trainings (such as Japan-US-Australia or Japan-US-ROK trainings).

Source: Compiled by the author based on each year's edition of the *Defense of Japan* by the Ministry of Defense.

strengthening cooperation with US allies and partner countries. This lightens the burden on the United States, and as a result provides bottom-up reinforcement of the United States' alliance system in the region, including the Japan-US Alliance. In other words, as the United States' clearly unipolar system in the "Asia-Pacific" wavers, Japan is complementing the United States' role through cooperation with diverse actors in a wider region, thus maintaining or strengthening the order mainly led by the United States.

Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to think that the United States' leadership will continue forever. If the United States' relative power continues to shrink, it will become necessary for Japan, together with other democratic countries, to substitute for part of the role taken by the United States thus far. As a result, it cannot be denied that a more multipolar order could develop in the future, different from the bipolar structure between the United States and the Soviet Union (or the United States and China) during the Cold War and from the unipolar structure with the United States following the Cold War. This has active significance as the concept of a new order replacing the "New Cold War"

Table 7.1. Security agreements concluded with countries in the region

	Joint security declarations/statements	Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meetings (2+2)	Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements (ACSA)	General Security of Military Information Agreements (GSOMIA) / Information Security Agreements (ISA)	Bilateral joint training	Agreements concerning Transfers of Defense Equipment and Technology
Australia	○ (2007)	○ (2007-)	○ (2010)	○ (2012)	○ (Ground, maritime, and air forces)	○ (2014)
United Kingdom	○ (2017)	○ (2015-)	○ (2017)	○ (2013)	○ (Ground, maritime, and air forces)	○ (2013)
India	○ (2008)	○ (2019)	△	○ (2015)	○ (Ground, maritime, and air forces)	○ (2015)
France	×	○ (2014-)	○ (2018)	○ (2011)	○ (Maritime forces)	○ (2015)
Canada	○ (2010)	×	○ (2018)	×	○ (Maritime forces)	×
ROK	×	×	△	○ (2016)	○ (Maritime forces)	×
Indonesia	×	○ (2015-)	×	×	○ (Maritime forces)	△
Philippines	×	×	×	×	○ (Maritime forces)	○ (2016)

Notes: Years in parentheses are the years of announcement, commencement, or conclusion. The △ symbol indicates ongoing negotiations.

Source: Compiled by the author based on each year's edition of the *Defense of Japan* by the Ministry of Defense.

between the United States and China. Thus, together with being a means to maintain the existing order, FOIP also potentially has significance as a new order concept toward an era of multipolarization.

2. Initiatives by the MOD/SDF

(1) Strengthening Japan's Maritime Presence and Partnerships

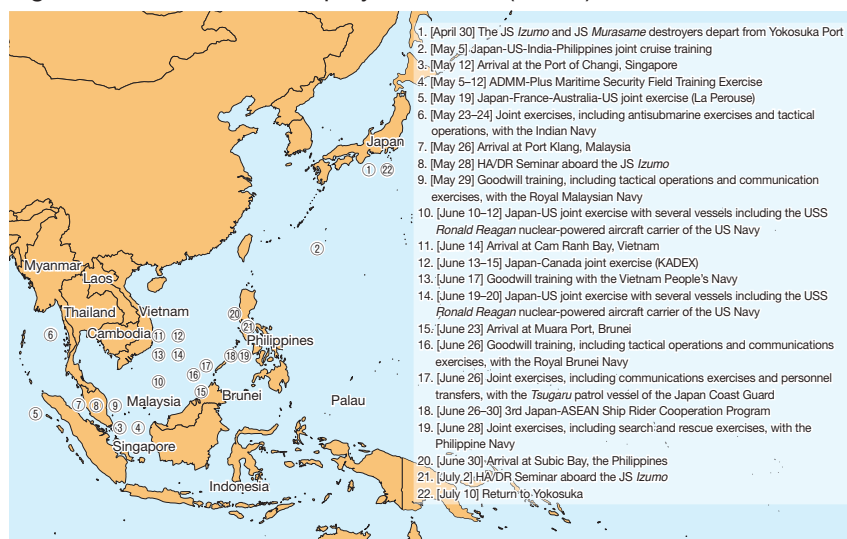
As discussed in the previous section, ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation is a central component of FOIP. This is why the MSDF has been

expanding its presence and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years. Since the 2000s, the MSDF has perceived its maritime operations areas as extending to the Middle East and Africa due to the rise of non-traditional threats such as terrorism and piracy as well as changes in the regional power balance. From this viewpoint, the MSDF has strengthened its efforts to ensure the security of sea lanes over 1,000 nautical miles (1,852 km) (which Japan had raised as the extent of its sea lane defense in the 1980s).¹²

It is necessary to understand the regional characteristics and environment in order to ensure stable maritime transportation routes. Additionally, because it is impossible to defend sea lanes in the vast maritime areas alone, it is necessary to strengthen interoperability regularly with the United States, other friendly nations, and coastal countries through enhanced cooperation. To demonstrate Japan's determination to engage in the region, moreover, it is essentially important to maintain the regular presence of SDF vessels in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

From the above perspective, since 2017 the MSDF has been carrying out the long-term deployment of vessels, including the JS *Izumo* and JS *Kaga* large

Figure 7.3. Indo-Pacific Deployment 2019 (IPD19) activities



Note: The numbers in the map indicate the approximate locations where activities took place.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the Ministry of Defense website.

destroyers, each year in the Indo-Pacific region. In April 2019, the JS *Izumo* and JS *Murasame* destroyers departed from Yokosuka under the Indo-Pacific Deployment 2019 (IPD19). The vessels visited and made port calls at various locations in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean over about three months. In addition to conducting goodwill events with countries in the region, these ships conducted joint training in various locations with friendly nations including the above countries as well as the United States and Australia (Figure 7.3).

Besides these operations, there were frequent port calls at countries in the region, joint trainings, and other such exercises conducted by destroyers dispatched for anti-piracy operations, the MSDF Training Squadron, and others. From September 2019, the MSDF Mine Division first began long-term cruise trainings from the Asia-Pacific to the Indian Ocean over about three months (International Maritime Exercise at Indian Ocean). The unit, composed of the JS *Bungo* minesweeper tender, the JS *Takashima* minesweeper, and about 180 crew members, made port calls in Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and India during its voyage, and conducted training, including for minesweeping and diving, with the navies of various countries in several locations.¹³

With the increased operations of the MSDF in the Indo-Pacific region, there have been an increasing number of opportunities for joint trainings including with the militaries of other countries in the region, the United States, and friendly nations. The JS *Izumo* and JS *Murasame*, which were dispatched under the IPD19 from western Kyushu to the South China Sea in May 2019, implemented joint cruise training for the first time with navy vessels from the United States, India, and the Philippines. In the same month, the JS *Izumo* and JS *Murasame* conducted joint training for the first time with the French Navy's *Charles de Gaulle* nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean near western Sumatra, Indonesia, and, by adding vessels from the Australian and US navies, joint training for the first time between Japan, France, Australia, and the United States. Furthermore, in the same month, the JS *Ariake* and JS *Asahi* destroyers participated in the Pacific Vanguard joint training held by Japan, the United States, Australia, and the ROK in maritime and aerial areas from southern Honshu to the island of Guam. The MSDF also participated for the first time in the Talisman Sabre 2019, practical training held by the United States and Australia in locations such as Shoalwater Bay in Queensland, Australia in June.

Additionally, in recent years not only the MSDF, but also the GSDF, the ASDF, and the Japan Coast Guard are actively participating in exercise activities in the Indo-Pacific. For example, the GSDF's Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, which was newly formed in March 2018, participated in the IPD19 for the first time, and participated in goodwill events and other activities with countries in the region. The ASDF has also been contributing to strengthening the SDF's presence in the region through participation in bilateral and multilateral joint trainings, overseas transport operation trainings, and more. Furthermore, the joint training between the MSDF and the Japan Coast Guard was also held for the first time in June 2019 in the South China Sea.

In addition to the above, Japan has strengthened its engagement with Pacific Island countries as part of the new trend in recent years. Compared to Southeast Asian and South Asian countries, engagement by the MOD/SDF in South Pacific countries was extremely limited, with the exception of some capacity building assistance projects. This is partly because only three countries—Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Tonga—have militaries in the region. However, in recent years as China has been strengthening its economic, political, and military clout in the region, strengthening engagement in the region is being raised as an important issue.

In August 2019 on the journey back to Japan after the Talisman Sabre 2019 ended, the MSDF's JS *Ise* helicopter destroyer and the JS *Kunisaki* transport vessel stopped at Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, deepening goodwill with its defence force. In the same month, the MSDF's Training Squadron made port calls in French Polynesia and Fiji. Furthermore, in September, three personnel were dispatched from the Joint Staff Office and the Joint Staff College to Equateur 2019, a multilateral joint exercise concerning humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) hosted by the French armed forces in New Caledonia. In October, GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF personnel, who were participating in U-4 multi-purpose support aircraft overseas utilization training by the MSDF's Training Squadron and the ASDF, joined together to visit Palau and participated in a ceremony to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Palau. In addition, the ASDF participated in Christmas Drop, an HA/DR joint training implemented annually by the air forces of the United States, Australia, and New Zealand in the Federated States of Micronesia.

In addition to these activities, based on the Government Initiatives to Ensure the Security of Ships Related to Japan in the Middle East approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on December 27, 2019, the anti-piracy forces' P-3C fixed-wing patrol aircraft were utilized and the JS *Takanami* destroyer was dispatched for information-gathering activities by the SDF in the Middle East. The geographic scope of the information-gathering activities by the SDF was the Gulf of Oman, the northern Arabian Sea, and international waters in three maritime areas of the Gulf of Aden on the side of the Bab-el-Mandeb strait (including the exclusive economic zones of coastal countries). The period for activities is planned until December 26, 2020.¹⁴

In this way, as the SDF's activities have rapidly expanded in the Indo-Pacific, there are concerns inside the MSDF about a shortage of personnel, including the number of vessels, crew, and logistics personnel.¹⁵ Also, if the security environment surrounding Japan becomes more tense in the near future, reducing the operations in the Indo-Pacific can be considered because it would be necessary to deploy many vessels and patrol planes to conduct surveillance and missile defense in the areas surrounding Japan. The MSDF reduced the number of destroyers deployed for anti-piracy operations from two to one, and also reported in 2019 that it was considering withdrawing from Antarctic exploration activities that had been continued since 1965 due to the personnel shortage.¹⁶

Based on this situation, the MOD has begun working to more efficiently execute duties by allocating funds for equipment aspects of building new smaller, more multifunctional destroyers compared to the conventional destroyers as well as introducing patrol vessels, and introducing “manpower saving” and “multi-crew shiftwork” (a system of operating vessels by having crews alternate between several vessels, rather than having a crew only for one certain vessel).¹⁷ In addition, from the perspective of further strengthening the human resources base supporting the SDF's activities, the MOD raised the fixed retirement age for SDF personnel in the Early Retirement System and has promoted further activities by female SDF personnel.¹⁸

Amidst concerns about further worsening of the personnel shortage due to the declining birth rate going forward, securing adequate personnel and maintaining their skills are urgent issues. In addition, to establish a system for support such as supplies and maintenance for MSDF vessels docked in foreign countries, it is necessary to advance cooperation among the entire government, not just

the MOD, as well as public-private cooperation including with private airline companies. In addition to these points, it is required to expand a more efficient and effective presence and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific by strengthening cooperation with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other countries that have overseas bases and facilities.

(2) Capacity Building Assistance

In 2011, the Capacity Building Assistance Office was established within the International Policy Division of the Bureau of Defense Policy of the MOD in 2011. Since then, the MOD/SDF have strengthened capacity building assistance activities for Southeast Asia. In recent years, there has been a trend of expanding assistance with target countries and fields. As of July 2019, assistance is being provided in extensive fields to 15 countries and one organization (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2. Capacity building assistance implemented by the MOD/SDF (number by country and project)

Country / project	Oceanography	International aviation law	Defense medicine	Civil engineering	Unexploded ordnance disposal	Search and rescue	PKO	Aviation safety	Military band training	HA/DR	Vehicle maintenance	Vessel maintenance	Underwater medicine	Aerial rescues	Cyber	Aviation meteorology	Japanese language education	Total
Brunei										1								1
Cambodia				8	1													9
Indonesia	7	1																8
Kazakhstan			2															2
Laos					1					5								6
Malaysia		1								3								4
Mongolia			5	9														14
Myanmar		1								5			5			8	2	21
Papua New Guinea									12	1								13
Philippines		1	2	1						2		2						8
Sri Lanka			1			2												3
Thailand		1					2	2										5
Timor-Leste				1							11							12
Uzbekistan			2															2
Vietnam		1			1		4	4		1			8	3	2			24
ASEAN										3								3
Total	7	6	12	19	3	2	6	6	12	21	11	2	13	3	2	8	2	135

Note: As of July 2019.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the Ministry of Defense website.

As stated above, engagement with Pacific Island countries is one major theme of capacity building assistance. The MOD/SDF have provided HA/DR and assistance for the military music unit of Papua New Guinea since 2014. Musical techniques instruction was provided to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force Band, which participated in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, a military music festival held by the United Kingdom in Australia in October 2019.

The MOD/SDF have held many seminars aimed at capacity building. In March 2019, an underwater medicine seminar was held aimed at the Vietnam People's Navy. Medical officers from the National Defense Medical College, the JMSDF Underwater Medical Center, and the Japan Self Defense Forces Hospital Yokosuka worked on capacity building together with medical officers from the US Navy in the underwater medicine field of the Vietnam People's Navy. In the same month, 15 cybersecurity personnel from the Vietnam People's Armed Forces were invited to attend the Cyber Security Seminar, which was held for the second time after first being held in 2017. During the seminar, instructors from the GSDF Signal School taught about passwords, authentication, firewalls, and intrusion detection systems, and private lecturers also provided instruction concerning incident responses. In May, an HA/DR seminar was held for 45 people related to the Malaysian Armed Forces aboard the MSDF's JS *Izumo* destroyer, which was visiting Malaysia (Port Klang).

In addition, as emphasized in the “Vientiane Vision” unveiled by the MOD in November 2016, one trend in recent years has been not only assistance to individual countries, but also strengthening assistance for ASEAN as a whole. For example, during the 2nd Japan-ASEAN Invitation Program on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief held in Tokyo from January–February 2019, a tabletop exercise (TTX) concerning HA/DR was held at the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) as part of the Program, and there were active discussions among the participants from ASEAN and the GSDF. In July, the First Professional Airmanship Program was held inviting participants (lieutenant colonels and majors) from all ASEAN member states and the ASEAN Secretariat, which promoted confidence-building and shared understanding concerning international law among the air forces of Japan and ASEAN. In addition to strengthening Japan-ASEAN cooperation and ensuring ASEAN's unity, holding such seminars and TTX holds important significance for spreading the basic principles and standards of freedom of navigation and the rule of law that Japan

places importance on.

On the other hand, only holding a one-off seminar or TTX does not necessarily lead to continuous capacity improvement of the recipient country. Ideally, it is essential to have initiatives for concentrated capacity improvement for target countries in specific fields by drafting long-term plans including seminars and TTX. A good precedent is the training for the Papua New Guinea Defence Force Military Band held 12 times over four years from 2015. Even though this was a small program, it was the first example of direct engagement by the MOD/SDF in forming and strengthening an organization of a foreign country's military. In addition, when conducting proper follow-up on the effects of capacity building assistance, studying local coverage and reactions about the project based on assistance from external organizations can be considered.

In the longer-term, it is required to draft long-term plans in order to determine the priority levels of countries receiving assistance and projects. As stated above, although there is a rising trend of expanding capacity building assistance projects with target regions and fields, there has also been a trend in which Japan frequently has vague plans and objectives in terms of assistance targets and priority levels. This is because projects have basically been conducted based on the ad hoc needs of target countries. While the first stage of expanding projects and target countries has been completed, some argue that the MOD needs to formulate long-term plans focusing on the next three to four years. For this, based on the rapidly-changing security environment surrounding Japan, the Japanese government should clarify projects truly necessary for Japan and decide their priority level by reexamining the significance of capacity building assistance, reviewing past projects, and other efforts. This suggests that capacity building assistance projects by the MOD/SDF have reached a new stage following their "dawn" in 2011.

(3) Multilateral Security Cooperation

Since the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 following the Cold War, there has been a growing tendency for strengthening multilateral security frameworks focusing on confidence-building and preventive diplomacy among countries in the Asia-Pacific (Indo-Pacific) region. The East Asia Summit (EAS) was established in 2005 through increasing discussions toward the East Asian Community from the beginning of the 2000s. In addition to

Northeast Asian countries and ASEAN member states, India, Australia, and New Zealand were added (as well as the United States and Russia later on), which created a discussion framework at the summit level on initiatives for shared regional issues, including security issues faced by countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Nevertheless, these initiatives were created with countries' diplomacy departments as the main players. It was thus required to have frameworks centered on defense departments for more practical cooperation toward dealing with regional security issues. Amidst this, bearing in mind the establishment of the ASEAN Community in the future, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) was established in 2006, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) was established in 2010 with the addition of non-ASEAN countries (Japan, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, the ROK, and Russia). This created the first multilateral security framework centered on defense departments in the Indo-Pacific region. Six Experts' Working Groups (EWGs) (later expanded to seven) were established under the minister-level meetings and the high-level consultation meetings of the ADMM-Plus, and discussions, exercises, and other activities are implemented by the participating countries primarily concerning non-traditional security issues.

Because the ADMM-Plus is also the only official defense ministers' meeting that includes non-ASEAN countries in the Indo-Pacific region, the MOD/SDF have constantly placed importance on it. Although the Defense Ministers' Meeting was planned to be held once every three years in principle at the start, it was held once every two years from 2013, and since 2017 has been held annually. The 5th ADMM-Plus was held in Thailand in November 2019. Defense Minister Kono, who attended the meeting, announced the "Vientiane Vision 2.0," the updated version of the Vientiane Vision guidelines for Japan-ASEAN defense cooperation unveiled in 2016, as the start of initiatives to further accelerate momentum for Japan-ASEAN defense cooperation. The updated Vision inherits the direction of cooperation that stresses three key areas of realizing the "rule of law," strengthening maritime security, and dealing with non-traditional threats such as natural disasters. In addition, under the "Three Principles for Japan's Defense Cooperation with ASEAN" of "Heart-to-heart Cooperation," "Tailored and Lasting Cooperation," and "Equal and Open Cooperation," it aims to strengthen ASEAN's resilience through more practical defense cooperation and

thus contribute to ASEAN centrality and unity. The Vision also stressed that the principles of openness, transparency, and inclusivity outlined in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific “share the same bases” with those of Japan’s vision for FOIP.¹⁹

Rather than being a new initiative, strengthening the centrality, unity, and resilience of ASEAN as outlined in the Vision has been something Japan has consistently pursued since becoming an ASEAN Dialogue Partner in the 1970s. During the Cold War period, such efforts were mainly conducted through diplomatic and economic means. Following the end of the Cold War, defense-related contact between Japan and ASEAN began to gradually expand due to the rise of non-traditional security issues. The Vientiane Vision of 2016 and the Vientiane Vision 2.0 of 2019 can be assessed as clear means for Japan’s cooperation with ASEAN as defense exchanges and cooperation with ASEAN have been expanding.

The MOD/SDF are also actively participating in other multilateral frameworks besides the ADMM-Plus. In January 2019, the Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff participated for the first time in the Raisina Dialogue in India, which was being held for the third time. He discussed maritime security in the Indo-Pacific with then US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Harry Harris, Chief of Navy Timothy Barrett of Australia, and Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy Sunil Lanba. In June, then Defense Minister Iwaya attended the annually-held Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue), and called for the participating countries’ endorsement of the FOIP vision. Furthermore, the Japan-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Forum was held in October. The Forum has been held 11 times as of this year. At the Forum, there was an exchange of views among the participants regarding three themes: “the Regional Security Situation,” “Visions for the Indo-Pacific: Towards the Free and Open Regional Order,” and “ASEAN’s Initiatives for Regional Defense Cooperation.”

In this way, as multilateral frameworks concerning security issues become increasingly active, the issue of how Japan should approach such cooperation frameworks is coming into question. For example, among the seven EWGs of the ADMM-Plus, which field should Japan work on as a priority item in addition to the EWG on PKO for which Japan serves as co-chair country along with Vietnam since 2020? Also, as the importance of the “new domains” of cyber and space further rises for security, how should that reality be reflected in multilateral

security cooperation? Additionally, how should the MOD/SDF be involved with multilateral frameworks led by China, which China has been exerting efforts for in recent years as seen with the Xiangshan Forum? As it has become more difficult to continue to expand projects in the manner thus far due to budget and personnel constraints, now is the time for the MOD/SDF to reexamine their long-term strategies in the same way as capacity building assistance based on multilateral security cooperation, international circumstances, and changes in Japan.

3. Challenges for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific

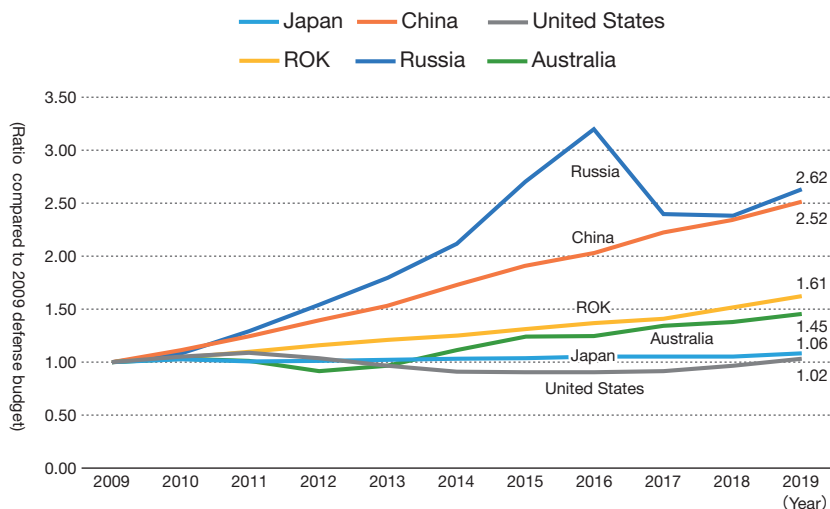
(1) Toward More Efficient and Effective Defense Exchanges and Cooperation

As already shown, although the MOD/SDF are rapidly expanding activities in the Indo-Pacific region to realize FOIP as an order concept, there are many budget and personnel shortage constraints. The Japanese government has consistently increased the defense budget since the beginning of the second Abe Cabinet, but the growth rate remains at a low level compared to other major countries. In addition, although utilization of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the militaries of other countries that was first approved through the Development Cooperation Charter in 2015 can be considered for providing larger-scale capacity building assistance in the Indo-Pacific region, the objective of the ODA is limited to non-military uses such as disaster relief. There is still reluctance toward providing ODA to militaries.

Amidst this, it was reported that the Japanese government began coordination to provide life-saving systems used by the SDF to the Philippine Army utilizing ODA in September 2019.²⁰ If this project is realized, it would be the first example of provision of equipment used by the SDF to the military of a foreign country through ODA. It is required to closely cooperate with other ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, as well as the National Security Secretariat in order to carry out more strategic defense cooperation such as for equipment provision, including with the utilization of ODA.

In addition, as examined in the previous section, it is necessary to constantly

Figure 7.4. Changes in defense budgets in major countries (2009–2019)



Note: The ratios (rounded to two decimal places) of respective countries' officially publicized defense budgets for FY2010 onward when considering their defense budgets for FY2009 as 1.

Source: Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan*, 2019, p. 244.

review the policies and strategies of defense exchanges and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in order to make projects of capacity building assistance and multilateral security frameworks more efficient. Based on this recognition, the Japan-ASEAN Defense Cooperation Committee was once held at the MOD with the State Minister of Defense sitting as the chair to discuss consideration concerning Japan-ASEAN defense cooperation as well as the future approach.²¹ Within the MOD, it was exceptional that a cross-organizational committee was established regarding defense cooperation with certain countries and regions. Going forward, establishing the same kind of committee or some sort of review system targeting various Indo-Pacific countries can be considered as a direction.

(2) Toward Strengthening Further Cooperation with Indo-Pacific Countries

To deepen cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries going forward, it is necessary to further strengthen interoperability between the SDF and the militaries of partner countries through joint trainings, concluding agreements, and other

efforts. A particularly urgent issue is strengthening cooperation with countries in important locations within the Indo-Pacific region: Australia, India, and Indonesia.

In September 2019, six Australian FA18 fighter aircraft visited Japan, and the joint training known as “Bushido Guardian” was held with the ASDF for the first time. With India, in addition to annually-held joint trainings such as Malabar, bilateral cooperation between the MSDF and the Indian Navy is being advanced in the field of maritime situational awareness, including by starting utilization of information-exchanges such as information on vessels, under the “Implementing Arrangement for Deeper Cooperation between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Indian Navy” concluded in October 2018. In November 2019, the first Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting (2+2 Ministerial Meeting) was held. Both countries’ ministers welcomed tremendous progress in negotiations toward concluding the ACSA between Japan and India, and expressed their wish to finish negotiations soon. With Indonesia, strengthening relations is being promoted such as through implementation of joint trainings between the MSDF, which visited Indonesia in May, and the Indonesia Navy.

The Legislation for Peace and Security, which was approved by Cabinet decision in September 2015 and entered into force in March 2016, also contributes to strengthening relations between Japan and other countries in the region. In particular, permission for the partial use of the right of collective self-defense in a “survival-threatening situation” enabled Japan to exercise the right to self-defense under certain conditions in the event of an armed attack against not only the United States, but also third-party countries with close relations with Japan. On the other hand, because exercising the right to self-defense is limited to a situation that “threatens Japan’s survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness,” there is a view that the possibility of recognizing an attack on a country besides the United States that is an ally of Japan as a “survival-threatening situation” would actually be considerably limited.²² This will probably become one obstacle to Japan promoting security cooperation at a deeper level with countries in the region in the future.

In addition, the issue of how to position the ROK and China in the FOIP vision has not seen progress in discussions despite its importance. In regard to the ROK, issues with negative effects on Japan-ROK defense exchanges and

cooperation have occurred, including the ROK's negative response concerning the SDF vessel flag for the international naval review conducted by the ROK in October 2018, and the incident involving fire-control radar lock-on to an MSDF patrol plane by a ROK Navy destroyer that occurred in December of the same year. On the other hand, due to the ally relationship with the United States and the geopolitical importance of the Korean Peninsula to Japan, there is no change to the fact that cooperation with the ROK is extremely important strategically for Japan. Moreover, the ROK has been strengthening engagement in Southeast Asia and India through its "New Southern Policy." Actively utilizing such opportunities and promoting defense cooperation in broad fields with the ROK through multilateral cooperation frameworks and other means will probably become an important component for realizing a FOIP.

By contrast, defense exchanges with China have increased since 2012 due to improvement in Japan-China relations in recent years. In April 2019, the MSDF's JS *Suzutsuki* destroyer visited China, which was the first visit by an MSDF vessel in about seven years, and participated in the International Fleet Review held by China to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy. In addition, the MSDF Chief of Staff, who visited China for the first time in about five and a half years, attended a high-level symposium held on the sidelines of the Fleet Review, and held exchanges of views with participating navy officials including from the Chinese navy. Furthermore, in October, the Chinese navy's missile destroyer *Taiyuan* made the first visit by a Chinese navy vessel to Japan in 10 years. Joint training was held with the MSDF's JS *Samidare* destroyer in an area south of Tokyo Bay, including forming column and line formations and signal correspondence.

As reviewed in the first section, FOIP is not a concept that excludes China. On the contrary, it ultimately intends to welcome China as an important component country. As this is the case, advancing such defense exchanges with China also represents an important initiative to realize FOIP as an order concept. On the other hand, China is further increasing, rather than diminishing, the operations by its government vessels in the waters around Japan including the Senkaku Islands. Entering 2019, official Chinese vessels have been approaching the waters near the Senkaku Islands on a nearly daily basis, and frequently entering Japan's territorial waters. In addition, as it centralizes its power, the Xi Jinping administration has strengthened actions counter to the principles of FOIP,

including suppressing freedom of speech, religion, and learning as well as minorities, strengthening social monitoring systems, and other actions.

Based on the above situation, it is necessary to share the FOIP principles and vision with other countries in the region to further advance bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation and exchanges going forward. In addition to “hard” cooperation in the form of joint trainings and equipment cooperation, “soft” exchanges in the form of accepting and dispatching international exchange students are an important component for this. For example, Australia, which is strengthening its engagement in the Indo-Pacific like Japan, has been accepting over 700 military-related people as exchange students annually from various countries, mainly from Southeast Asian and Pacific Island countries, under its Defence Cooperation Program.²³ Because many of these exchange students occupy important positions in the militaries of their countries once they return, acceptance of exchange students is an invaluable method for Australia’s defence-related engagement with other countries.

Japan is also generally accepting over 100 people from the militaries of various countries annually as exchange students to the National Defense Academy, the JMSDF Command and Staff College, the NIDS, and its other educational institutions. Although there are issues such as language problems, it is necessary to strengthen and expand such cooperation going forward. Additionally, rather than just welcoming students, there should also be consideration of actively dispatching MOD human resources to educational institutions, including military universities and commanding officer courses of Indo-Pacific countries. Such human resources exchanges and education can be implemented at relatively low costs compared to cooperation utilizing material resources such as joint trainings and defense equipment provision. It also appears that this will be increasingly important going forward for expanding the ideas and principles of FOIP in the region.

NOTES

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