



East Asian Maritime Security
Monthly Column

**FOIP 3.0 and the Operationalization of
Japan's Maritime Statecraft**

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1. Indo-Pacific through the Japanese normative framework and multi-domain deterrence

In May 2026, marking a decade since Japan officially codified its regional foreign policy vision, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi articulated the updated iteration of Japanese Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy during her foreign policy address at Vietnam National University in Hanoi. This was the second upgrade of FOIP since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 2016 address at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Nairobi.¹ This first upgrade had been announced by the former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in March 2023 at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in New Delhi.² While Kishida's FOIP 2.0 centralized India in the Japanese grand strategy, emphasizing inclusive dialogue, multi-layered connectivity, and co-creation with the Global South, escalating gray-zone coercion and shifting power balances necessitated a further evolution, Takaichi's FOIP 3.0 can be understood as both, a strategic shift to elevate FOIP from a normative vision into an operational security framework for multi-domain deterrence, as well as a vision aimed at promoting continuity of Abe's vision for guarding the rule-based international order. The FOIP upgrades, hence, reflect Japanese policy response to the constantly evolving frictions in the Indo-Pacific, wherein an analysis of maritime security challenges unveils the multi-layered dimensions of threats perceived by Japan as quintessential and existential to its own security and its self-perception as a regional security co-provider with like-minded partners.

The contemporary Indo-Pacific maritime security environment presents a set of challenges that traditional diplomatic declarations and non-military economic aid can no longer address effectively. Concerns over East Asian maritime security have continued to propel Japanese FOIP towards greater security cooperation with like-minded partners while simultaneously re-capacitating Japan to safeguard its own maritime neighborhood. For instance, PM Abe had noted two survival-threatening scenarios for Japan, namely, crises in the Strait of Hormuz

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2016). *Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI)*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html

² Prime Minister's Office of Japan. (2023). *Policy Speech by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)* [Provisional translation]. Cabinet Public Affairs Office, Cabinet Secretariat.

https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202303/_00013.html

crisis and the Korean Peninsula, followed by PM Kishida equating Ukraine's security situation with a future East Asian crisis. A decade after Abe and only a year after Kishida stepped down, PM Takaichi evoked potential crisis on Taiwan Strait as a trigger for Japan, stating "If battleships are used and a naval blockade involves the use of force, I believe that would, by any measure, constitute a situation that could be deemed a threat to Japan's survival."³

Japan and its regional partners face a changing security matrix characterized by gray-zone coercion, maritime incursions, vulnerability of critical undersea infrastructure, disruptions in sea lanes of communication, fragile supply chains and shifting regional dynamics centralized by the US relations with China, Russia, and India. In this context, Takaichi's FOIP 3.0 represents a structural transition in Japanese statecraft as it transcends beyond a normative framing mechanism for Japanese maritime security vision, into an active security strategy that uses defense hardware transfers via Official Security Assistance (OSA), technological co-development, and seabed-to-space connectivity to build regional deterrence and foster partner state strategic autonomy. This shift is important since rather than viewing maritime security solely through the lens of civilian coast guard enforcement or development assistance (ODA) as was prioritized over the past decade, Japan's FOIP 3.0 aims to directly equip partner military forces with physical surveillance and defense hardware. This shift integrates economic security, digital network resilience, and hard defense transfers into a coherent strategy designed to resist coercion.

2. Evolution of FOIP amid maritime security concerns: From Abe to Takaichi

The conceptual origin of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision lies in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's address to the Indian Parliament in August 2007, titled "Confluence of the Two Seas." Abe posited that the Indian and Pacific Oceans were undergoing a dynamic coupling, forming a broader geographic space governed by freedom, open sea lanes, and mutual economic dynamism. While this represented the early conceptualization of what would become the FOIP, it required clear geopolitical framing, normative foundation to appeal to multiple partners and a roadmap for diplomatic coalition-building for specific objectives. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific only got its form in August 2016 when PM Abe

³ The Japan Times. (2025). *Takaichi's Taiwan tumult: A closer look at the Japanese leader's contentious remarks.*

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/12/03/japan/explainer/explainer-japan-existential-crisis/>

pitched FOIP as a conceptual connector for rapidly growing Asian continent with potential-filled Africa across the Pacific and Indian Oceans, with emphasis on freedom of navigation, peaceful dispute resolution, and institutionalization framework for Japan-U.S.-Australia-India Quad dialogue to serve as a diplomatic anchor in the region.⁴ As regional polarization deepened following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the intensification of the US-China systemic competition, PM Kishida's FOIP 2.0 expanded FOIP by linking the Indo-Pacific with the Euro-Atlantic strategic spheres, as PM Kishida hinted at "Ukraine today is East Asia tomorrow".⁵ FOIP 2.0 continued to emphasize inclusivity through dialogue and equal partnership but aimed at Japanese Global South engagement across Southeast Asia, South Asia (the Bay of Bengal Industrial Value Chain), Pacific Island states, and Africa. Tokyo had by then already created a space for itself as an alternative infrastructure provider to the Global South, including joint projects with New Delhi across small states in the Indian Ocean region, by pledging over USD 75 billion in public and private investment across the Indo-Pacific by 2030 to finance quality infrastructure, clean energy, and regional connectivity.

With the adoption of Japan's National Security Strategy (NSS) and the establishment of Official Security Assistance (OSA), PM Takaichi's FOIP 3.0 maintained Kishida's focus on economic connectivity but further incorporated hard defense transfers and cross-domain deterrence to directly reinforce regional maritime capabilities. Under FOIP 3.0 MOFA's FY2026 initial budget increased the OSA funding from JPY8.1 billion in FY2025 to JPY18.1 billion. It marked the transition from Japanese ODA's non-lethal civilian Coast Guard capacity-building to directly equipping partner militaries (for example naval forces in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Cambodia) with patrol craft, surveillance radars, and boathouse facilities. By extending security operations beyond surface maritime routes to cover subsea communication cables, satellite-based earth observation (greater than 100 km orbit), and cyber-resilient maritime domain awareness networks, FOIP 3.0 promoted operational deterrence, hard capability building, and sovereign defense empowerment in maritime domain.

⁴ Chadha, A. (2020). *India's Foreign Policy towards Japan: Special Partnership Amid Regional Transformation*. *Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 38(1), 19–37. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34409/rjaps.38.1_19

⁵ Prime Minister's Office of Japan. (2024). *Speech by Prime Minister Kishida at the Opening Plenary Session of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine* [Provisional translation]. Cabinet Public Affairs Office, Cabinet Secretariat. https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202406/15speech.html

3. Japan's Core Maritime Security Imperatives & Threat Perception

As an island nation lacking significant domestic energy resources and agricultural self-sufficiency, Japan's national survival is intrinsically tied to the security of sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Over 99% of Japan's trade by volume relies on maritime transit, with crucial energy supplies, specifically crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) originating from the Middle East, transiting through vulnerable maritime chokepoints including the Strait of Hormuz, the Malacca Strait, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait. Japanese NSS emphasizes that any disruption to these maritime routes directly threatens economic viability, industrial capacity, and supply chain continuity. Takaichi's articulation of a crisis in Taiwan Strait creating security concern for Japanese territorial sovereignty find space in her FOIP 3.0, wherein securing open SLOCs is no longer a commercial interest, but a foundational pillar of national defense. Consequently, maintaining a rules-based, free, and open maritime order serves as a prerequisite for preserving Japanese sovereignty. The primary operational challenge facing Japanese maritime law enforcement and defense forces is the proliferation of the gray-zone coercive actions that fall below the threshold of open military conflict to incrementally alter the status quo. These include, according to the official MOFA records, constant and systematic intrusions by armed China Coast Guard (CCG) vessels into Japanese territorial waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands⁶. These intrusions are executed to establish a persistent physical presence and challenge Japan's administrative jurisdiction. For the Takaichi administration, a cross-strait conflict or blockade along the Taiwan Strait directly compromises Japan's southwestern maritime baseline, thus centralizing peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as explicitly Japanese concerns and tied to the security of Japan's Southwestern region.

Thus, to counter gray-zone coercion, FOIP 3.0 integrates continuous Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and rapid-response capabilities, ensuring a seamless operational bridge between civilian law enforcement (Japan Coast Guard) and military deterrence (Maritime Self-Defense Force). North Korea's expanding ballistic missile capabilities and clandestine maritime activities present a direct physical threat to maritime navigation, international law, and regional stability. Repeated launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and short-range ballistic missiles which frequently land inside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ),

⁶ Sato, Y. & Chadha, A. (2022). *Understanding the Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands Dispute: Diplomatic, Legal, and Strategic Contexts*. In M. de Souza, Karalekas, D., Coutaz, G. (Eds.), *Asian Territorial and Maritime Disputes: A Critical Introduction* (pp. 48–64). E-International Relations. <https://www.e-ir.info/publication/asian-territorial-and-maritime-disputes-a-critical-introduction/>

particularly off the coast of the Sea of Japan, pose grave hazards to commercial maritime shipping and civil aviation. Moreover, to bypass strict United Nations Security Council Resolutions, North Korean maritime networks engage in illicit ship-to-ship transfers at sea to procure refined petroleum products and export commodities. Under FOIP 3.0, Japan aims to continue to actively coordinate multinational maritime surveillance operations (involving aircraft and warships from Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the UK, and the US) based at JMSDF bases to monitor, detect, and deter North Korea's illegal maritime networks.

A cornerstone of FOIP 3.0 is the operational coupling between internal military restructuring and external security capacity-building. Under the National Defense Strategy, Japan had sought to actively reinforce its Southwestern region. This includes deploying surface-to-ship guided missiles (Type 12 SSM upgrades), establishing anti-aircraft units, and integrating counterstrike capabilities to deny enemy forces anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) advantages along Japan's strategic maritime territory.⁷ Tokyo's internal fortification is complemented externally by exporting coastal surveillance hardware, military patrol craft, and radar systems to Southeast Asian nations bordering the South China Sea. By equipping frontline ASEAN partners with the physical assets needed to monitor and enforce their own maritime jurisdiction, Japan aims to build a continuous surveillance and defense corridor across the Western Pacific and South China Sea, deterring unilateral coercion across the entire regional maritime theater.

4. Security assistance and cooperation: Reemphasizing ASEAN centrality

A central pillar of FOIP 3.0 is respecting ASEAN Centrality and aligning Japanese foreign policy with the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). PM Takaichi's decision to deliver her FOIP 3.0 in Hanoi underscores Tokyo's commitment to recenter Southeast Asia as the geographical and strategic core of the Indo-Pacific as conflicts and unrest continue to brew across the Middle-East, Eastern Europe and in South Asia. By offering direct defense hardware, surveillance systems, and capacity-building assistance without ideological conditions, Tokyo provides Southeast Asian nations with the physical means to enforce their own maritime jurisdiction under UNCLOS, resist external coercion, and preserve regional equilibrium.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2022). *Adoption of the new "National Security Strategy (NSS)"* (Statement by Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_003192.html

On July 19, 2026, in Phnom Penh, Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia Ueno Atsushi and Cambodian Deputy PM and Minister of National Defense General TEA Seiha formally signed and exchanged notes for a JPY500 million (c. USD 3 million) grant under Japan's OSA FY2026 program.⁸ This agreement marked the first time Cambodia received defense hardware under Tokyo's dedicated OSA security framework in an assistance package including the following:

- provision of newly constructed rigid-hulled patrol vessels designed to enhance coastal surveillance, search-and-rescue (SAR) operations, and maritime law enforcement along its 443 km coastline in the Gulf of Thailand;
- tactical military communications equipment engineered to establish secure command-and-control networks; and
- linking the hardware transfer directly with the Japanese Ground SDF communication practitioners exchange program, that supports establishing the Royal Cambodian Army's first Communications School.

This FY2026 OSA agreement is particularly central to understanding how FOIP 3.0 aims to operate in countries through maritime security partnerships, like Cambodia that have historically maintained close diplomatic and economic ties with Beijing, highlighted by Chinese infrastructure support at Ream Naval Base along the Gulf of Thailand. Providing Japanese defense hardware directly to the Cambodian Navy offers Phnom Penh a viable alternative for defense capacity-building, helping prevent strategic over-reliance on a single power. Demonstrating that Japan's security assistance is not restricted to the traditional treaty ally, FOIP 3.0 extends security capabilities across all ASEAN member states to maintain a balanced, stable regional maritime order. The Cambodia agreement is part of a broader Japanese initiative to establish an integrated MDA framework across Southeast Asia's vital sea lanes. Previously under the OSA during FOIP 2.0, Japan had provided coastal radar systems to the Philippine Navy to monitor the West Philippine Sea and Luzon Strait, coastal radar systems to Djibouti, patrol boats to Bangladesh, Fiji, and Indonesia; as well as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Tonga. By expanding on these operations and linking these national defense systems into a collective network, FOIP 3.0

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2026). *Signing and Exchange of Notes for Official Security Assistance (OSA) FY 2026 project to the Kingdom of Cambodia*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_02528.html

enhances regional visibility, protects maritime trade routes, and supports collective regional stability, marking a continuity from Kishida's FOIP 2.0.

Additionally, FOIP 3.0 explicitly aims to extend reliable maritime surveillance systems operated by the JCG to address maritime security challenges for Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia etc., such as MDA issues, illegal fishing, and capacity deficits in port security by leveraging Japan's satellite data and information analysis. Economic resilience being a key pillar of the FOIP 3.0 necessitates infrastructure development infused with advanced technology for economic and strategic resilience across ASEAN. FOIP Digital Corridor Concept provides security for financial and digital backbone assets, especially the undersea fiber-optic cables and satellite communication networks. ASEAN also remains key to Japan's Partnership On Wide Energy and Resources Resilience (POWER Asia) initiative for stabilizing the Indo-Pacific against Middle Eastern geopolitical volatility and energy trade volatility in the Strait of Hormuz. Through a USD 10 billion financial commitment, POWER Asia aims to shield ASEAN states from unreliable fuel procurement by expanding strategic energy stockpiles. The FOIP 3.0 by December 2026, also aims to commissioning "Patrol Vessel for International Cooperation and Training" within the JCG to build a Coast Guard Capacity-Building Support Unit for the Promotion of FOIP, collaborate with foreign coast guard agencies and promote capacity-building support to Indo-Pacific nations through joint exercises.

5. Japan-India alignment and cooperation under FOIP 3.0

In the Abe-led FOIP, the maritime security architecture of the Indo-Pacific relied heavily on the strategic alignment between Tokyo and New Delhi and maintained the momentum under Kishida's FOIP even as India and Japan differed drastically over New Delhi's Russia engagement. That vision has continued and deepened under FOIP 3.0 and presented at the 16th Japan-India Annual Summit in June 2026 in New Delhi, coinciding with the deliberate joint naval exercises between JMSDF and Indian Navy.⁹ PM Takaichi and PM Modi reaffirmed that Japan and India serve as indispensable anchors for regional stability, freedom of navigation, and economic security, emphasizing the convergence between Japan's FOIP 3.0 and India's MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth across Regions) initiative, which is an upgrade from its own SAGAR doctrine for Indo-

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2026). *Japan-India Leaders' Meeting and Luncheon*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/in/pageite_000001_01706.html

Pacific security.¹⁰ By aligning these operational concepts, Tokyo and New Delhi expanded their Special Strategic and Global Partnership from joint exercises and Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services (ACSA) toward co-development of defense technologies and joint supply chain resilience. PM Takaichi's address noted that India's MAHASAGAR "views the oceans as a shared space supporting regional stability and growth and seeks to help countries in the Indian Ocean region safeguard their sovereignty and maritime interests through their own efforts. This initiative is fully aligned with the principles of the updated FOIP."¹¹ While India-Japan relations have flourished under previous Abe and Kishida administrations, FOIP 3.0's alignment with India on "safeguarding nations' own sovereignty" through strategic autonomy is the key to ensuring a stable and continued India-Japan anchoring in the region.¹²

A major milestone in the bilateral defense industrial integration under FOIP 3.0 and MAHASAGAR confluence is the formal agreement on the transfer and co-development of the Unified Complex Radio Antenna (UNICORN / NORA-50) system.¹³ Building on the Memorandum of Implementation (MoI) signed for UNICORN fitment on Indian Navy warships, this initiative marks Japan's first major defense technology transfer and co-development project with India. Traditional warship superstructures featured multiple exposed antennas that emit distinct electromagnetic signatures and reflect radar waves, but the UNICORN system encloses TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation) and multi-frequency communications antennas inside a single composite mast made of Fibre Reinforced Plastic (FRP). This design significantly lowers the ship's radar cross-section, enhancing warship

¹⁰ Chadha, A. (2025). *MAHASAGAR's reach: India's New Maritime Doctrine and South China Sea Security*. YL Blog #117. Pacific Forum. <https://pacforum.org/publications/yl-blog-117-mahasagars-reach-indias-new-maritime-doctrine-and-south-china-sea-security/>

¹¹ Prime Minister's Office of Japan. (2026). *Visit to India (2)* [Provisional translation]. Cabinet Public Affairs Office, Cabinet Secretariat. <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/105/actions/202607/02india2.html>

¹² Chadha (2025). *India in Japan's Indo-Pacific vision: Synergies, Divergences, and the Future of the India-Japan Partnership*, India's World. <https://indiasworld.in/india-in-japans-indo-pacific-vision-synergies-divergences-and-the-future-of-the-india-japan-partnership/>

¹³ Japan Ministry of Defense. (2026). *Japan-India Defense Political Dialogue* [Provisional translation]. Japan Ministry of Defense. <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/article/2026/07/5906945ee3255d112ee1d21d253ef85e3ba70f23.html>

stealth and operational survivability in contested environments. The composite mast also eliminates mutual electromagnetic interference between closely packed sensors, providing clear MDA and signal clarity during high-intensity electronic warfare operations.

Designed and field-tested on Japan MSDF Mogami-class stealth frigates, exporting and co-producing this system with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in India also integrates Japanese technology with India's domestic defense production capacity. While the diplomatic and political groundwork for UNICORN took place under Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during the September 2022 India–Japan 2+2 Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo, followed by November 2024 signing of India- Japan MoI to adapt UNICORN for future Indian Navy warships.¹⁴ However, the formal defense-industrial agreement transitioning UNICORN from a technical memorandum into an active joint-manufacturing program between BEL and Japanese industrial partners was officially signed and announced on July 2, 2026, during PM Takaichi's official state visit to New Delhi accompanied by several Japanese industrial business leaders. Thus, UNICORN serves as a clear bridge showing strategic continuity and operational escalation across Japanese administrations with Kishida's FOIP 2.0 establishing the regulatory and diplomatic opening via the November 2024 MoI, and Takaichi's FOIP 3.0 operationalizing the project during the July 2026 Summit, executing Japan's first-ever military hardware co-development contract and embedding defense-industrial ties directly into its FOIP framework.

Furthermore, recognizing the interlinkages between maritime operational capacity and economic resilience amid the ongoing Iran conflict and blockading of the Strait of Hormuz, PM Takaichi and PM Modi adopted the Japan-India Joint Declaration on Economic Security Cooperation. Under Japan's POWERR Asia framework and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's (METI) agreement with India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, established joint initiatives for strategic oil stockpiling, crude reserve coordination, and securing maritime energy transport routes from the Indian Ocean to East Asia. The declaration also committed to expanding Japanese corporate participation in the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, facilitating joint R&D, design, and manufacturing to counter non-market trade practices and arbitrary export restrictions. It also established cooperative mechanisms to secure critical mineral processing, joint subsea fiber-optic cable deployment, 5G Open RAN architectures, and clean hydrogen/ammonia production facilities in India's Odisha. This cooperation on economic security architecture ensures that SLOCs through the

¹⁴ Japan Ministry of Defense. (2024). *Joint Statement Third Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting* [Provisional translation]. Japan Ministry of Defense. <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/images/e1307911ccc68914be9c56b13f5f71d1ac65ce94.pdf>

Indian Ocean and the South China Sea remain resilient against supply chain disruptions, arbitrary blockades, and non-kinetic pressure.

6. The US-Japan alliance and the changing dynamics of Indo-Pacific: a critical view

The U.S.-Japan security alliance remains the cornerstone of Tokyo's strategic posture, yet Japanese FOIP has been upgraded to operate under the assumption that US attention, fiscal resources, and military deployments are subject to shifting domestic political priorities and competing global crises. The contemporary dynamic between the US and its Indo-Pacific partners, including ASEAN, India, Australia, Taiwan, and Japan is defined by a mutual desire for deterrence alongside growing structural anxieties over long-term American commitment. Washington's grand strategy faces severe overextension as it simultaneously navigates acute security crises in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Consequently, Indo-Pacific partners are increasingly wary of a strategic bandwidth deficit where the US may lack the fiscal capacity or political will to manage multiple high-intensity flashpoints simultaneously, especially under the current administration's transactional approach towards its partners and rivals alike. Furthermore, structural shifts within the US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific highlighted by the symbolic reversion of USINDOPACOM back to USPACOM underscore an American preference for burden-sharing, while signaling the distance between India and US over security issues of critical concern in New Delhi's strategic neighborhood, as well as differences India's own vision for regional energy and economic security. Hence, rather than acting as a unilateral security guarantor, Washington is actively pushing regional allies to anchor their own immediate neighborhoods. This evolution has raised doubts over the feasibility and capacity to deliver of the traditional hub-and-spoke alliance model, wherein now Indo-Pacific partners are actively seeking robust, indigenous capabilities to counter gray-zone coercion and regional revisionism. Japan's primary strategic anxiety centers on the threat of abandonment or operational paralysis, specifically, the fear that US forces might face domestic political constraints or become heavily entangled in a parallel global crisis during a cross-strait conflict or a Taiwan Strait naval blockade.

FOIP 3.0 directly resolves these anxieties by transforming Japan from a junior partner into a proactive security coordinator with like-minded partners like Australia, India and ASEAN. It systematically addresses Washington's resource constraints and Japan's fear of abandonment through two distinct mechanisms. One, autonomous defense upgrades wherein by revising its National Security Strategy (NSS) to deploy Type 12 surface-to-ship guided missiles and establish counterstrike capabilities in its Southwestern region, Japan reduces its immediate operational dependence on the US military during the opening phases of a maritime crisis. Second, FOIP 3.0 continues to build a creates a multi-layered security

architecture founded on strategic autonomy across Indo-Pacific by equipping frontline ASEAN militaries with maritime hardware through OSA, securing the largest post-war defense export contract for supplying eleven upgraded Mogami-class frigates to the Australian Navy, and integrating high-end defense manufacturing with India (such as the UNICORN mast program). FOIP 3.0 ambitiously aims at a resilient web of regional partnerships is already in place to maintain cross-domain deterrence and uphold the rules-based order, but does not explicitly elucidate to what extent it can deliver in the region in the event of a constrained or restricted American presence.

Hence, while the transition to FOIP 3.0 under Takaichi administration demonstrates a significant pragmatic evolution in Japanese statecraft, its operational success in mitigating Indo-Pacific maritime security threats remains constrained by critical structural and diplomatic hurdles, inherited from previous iterations of FOIP. On one hand, the shift from purely normative diplomatic declarations to hard-edged security instruments, such as expanding OSA budgets for ASEAN militaries and launching the UNICORN defense co-development program with India, marks an aspirational and proactive attempt to build regional deterrence. However, this strategy faces distinct limitations too. Tokyo's reliance on modest grant packages, like the JPY 500 million agreement with Cambodia, may offer a diplomatic alternative but lacks the financial scale to meaningfully decouple regional partners from deeply entrenched Chinese economic and infrastructure dependencies. Furthermore, by actively arming partner militaries and explicitly framing East Asian security issues as a survival-threatening scenario, FOIP 3.0 hints at Japan's continued recognition of and response to the China challenge, evokes negative diplomatic response from Beijing amid rising instances of grey-zone tactics. These risk accelerating regional polarization and triggering security dilemmas that could inadvertently destabilize the very SLOCs FOIP 3.0 seeks to protect.

Consequently, while FOIP 3.0 successfully assumes greater localized burden-sharing by Tokyo for regional security, its ultimate efficacy will depend on whether Japan can balance its ambitious hard-security mandates with the delicate, diplomatic realities of its Global South partners that increasingly seek to walk the fine line amid US-China rivalry, take autonomous foreign policy decisions regarding ongoing conflicts, centralize their own security reckoning, seek domestic capacity-building, emphasize strategic autonomy, deride foreign non-interference and voice sovereignty concerns.