

FROM THE OCEANS

Intelligence Analysis (Special Edition)

July 30, 2018



**The Philosophy and Practice of the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP) ”
decoded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website**

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Preface

Since the autumn of 2017, the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP)” has been attracting broad attention in Japan and around the world. To quote the comparatively compact and easy-to-understand editorial from *The Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, “Prime Minister Shinzo Abe launched his foreign diplomatic strategy at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Kenya in August 2016. It aims for economic growth throughout the region connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, identifying growing Asia and the latent potential of Africa as key regions. The strategy promotes free trade and infrastructure investment to expand trading zone. Cooperation on security is another goal. It appeals to the freedom of the ocean based on the rule of law by constraining China’s building of a military base in the South China Sea.”¹ There is a feeling that it is somewhat difficult to understand, such as the interpretation about this part of the “constraining China.” While the major media outlets in Japan emphasized its character as a strategy to counter China’s “Belt and Road Initiative,” it is conspicuous that the Japanese government, in contrast, appeared to try and downplay any notion of constraining China when Prime Minister Abe made the remarks “Based on this overall direction, We will also work with China,” at a policy speech in January earlier this year (2018). This point is similar to the tone of discussion abroad, where there is a significant split in opinions. For example, Indian Gurpreet S. Khurana, one of the proponents of the “Indo-Pacific” regional concept, wrote in *The Washington Post* about a common prosperity in the future that embraces China, while at a briefing of the Institute of South Asian Studies in Singapore, Indian C. Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor of ISAS, pointed out that “the talks between Japan, the United States, Australia, and India,” which I will describe later in this article, are to get China to abandon its aggressive strategy (For reference, see [Khurana’s article](#)² and [Mohan’s ISAS brief](#)³).

¹ *The Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, October 26, 2017 (in Japanese).

² Gurpreet S. Khurana, “Trump’s new Cold War alliance in Asia is dangerous,” *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2017.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2017/11/14/trump-asia-trip/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f7d8d8d0b3fa Accessed January 20, 2018.

³ C Raja Mohan, “India and the Resurrection of the Quad,” ISAS Brief, November 17, 2017.
https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/media/isas_papers/ISAS%20Briefs%20No.%20525-%20India%20and%20the%20Resurrection%20of%20the%20Quad.pdf Accessed January 20, 2018.

“Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept has also been a hot topic at academic conferences over the past few years, and while prior research with various approaches has been done, the relationship with China is but one focus of those academic discussions. FOIP originally has been a feeling that is no practice in philosophical precedence, and it is not clear as to what the Japanese government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), who are spearheading it, actually intend to do in practice, and this is what can be said to be spurring on any difficulties in understanding.

However, this issue has developed following the announcement at TICAD, and by carefully following the related articles on the MOFA website, there is considerably concrete information that can be read. Therefore, in this article, I would like to offer hints on how to understand the philosophy and practice of FOIP based on the articles from the MOFA website as subject materials.

I would like to add that I have worked as a specialist (part-time) at the Regional Policy Division of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at MOFA until March of this year. While I had a strong interest in FOIP in carrying out general duties at MOFA, as well as through my work as a researcher specializing in national security policy study, I would like to make clear that I have no direct involvement in this issue and am not in a position to know any relevant special information. Therefore, all matters discussed in this article are my own opinions based on public information, except for already published materials, do not imply any official policies and views of the Government of Japan or MOFA.

1. Formulation Process of “Indo-Pacific” as a Regional Concept and History to the Development of FOIP

Before discussing about the main subject, I would like to first confirm the process of how “Indo-Pacific” was formed as a regional concept as well as the process of formulating FOIP. While there is a sense that these topics have been fully discussed during last year’s “boom” around FOIP, there are media commentaries and other articles that do not make their sources clear, so I would like to make an effort to introduce the sources as much as possible.

(1) Trends surrounding FOIP after October 2017

While the timeline is backwards, it is more appropriate to look at the series of events since last autumn to understand the recent rapid progress of FOIP. This is also because many items deemed to be particularly important points for understanding FOIP-related articles on the MOFA website, which are discussed in the next chapter, are included in this series of events.

The starting point was the speech by Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State of the United States, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on October 18, 2017, in which he repeatedly used the phrase “free and open Indo-Pacific” while discussing the U.S.-India relationship with China in mind. Following this speech, we can see a series of notable events about FOIP during U.S. President

Donald Trump’s tour of Asia in November 2017. At the Japan-U.S. summit meeting held in Tokyo on November 6, the two leaders reaffirmed that they would promote the “three pillars” of FOIP, which I will discuss later in this article. Then, on November 8, the joint press release following the U.S.-South Korea summit included the expression “the United States-Republic of Korea Alliance...remains a linchpin for security, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific,” but a senior official in the Office of the President of South Korea expressed a negative view the next day. This is generally accepted as indicative of the turmoil in the decision-making process within the South Korean government, but I think that it can be said to be a typical example of a reaction arising from aspects of the FOIP strategy against China made in the introductory remarks, given the subtleties of the relationship between China and South Korea with the THAAD issue in the background. Furthermore, President Trump’s speech at the APEC CEO Summit in Da Nang, Viet Nam on November 10 made a clear commitment to the region based on FOIP. At the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Manila in the Philippines held after the APEC Summit, although not prominent, there were efforts to revive “the four-country USA-Japan-Australia-India talks” which will be addressed later in this article.

Following that, the publication of the United States’ “National Security Strategy” on December 18 explicitly replaced the conventionally used expression “Asia-Pacific” with “a free and open Indo-Pacific.” Meanwhile, in Japan, FOIP has become a top priority area of Japan’s diplomacy, as made evident by a strong endorsement of FOIP in Prime Minister Abe’s policy speech delivered on January 22, 2018, as well as through the Japanese government’s engagement in various efforts with foreign countries, such as cooperating with the United States. From the reporting and related website articles on these events mentioned above, we can read very specific information on the philosophy and practices of FOIP, which I would like to explore in detail below.

(2) The formation process of “Indo-Pacific” as regional concept as seen in prior research

There is nothing wrong with the explanation that FOIP is a diplomatic strategy launched by Prime Minister Abe as mentioned in the article of *The Nihon Keizai Shimbun* quoted at the preface of this article. However, strictly speaking, it is necessary to understand the distinction between FOIP and the formation process of the regional concept of “Indo-Pacific.” In particular, I would like to first confirm the outline regarding the latter, as there are many reviews and research being conducted with various approaches both in and outside Japan. However, since constraints of sentence volume make it difficult to give an overall explanation, I would like to attempt a brief introduction focusing on two points: the history behind the formation of the concept of “Indo-Pacific” and the direct trigger for its development.

As an example of comprehensive domestic research in Japan on this issue, the Japan Institute of International Affairs has been developing a series of research projects at the request of the MOFA since FY2012. Its origin is in the prologue of a 2012 research report presented by Yoshinobu Yamamoto titled “*Josyou. Indo Taiheiyou Gainen wo Megutte* [Introduction to On the Indo-Pacific Concept] (in

Japanese),”⁴ in which he offers five points on the history behind the start of “Indo-Pacific,” as a regional concept as:

- 1) The increased possibility that conflicts among countries in recent years will extend to the Indian Ocean,
- 2) The U.S. return to Asia-Pacific will include the Indian Ocean,
- 3) The rise of emerging countries such as China and India
- 4) The concern that the stability of the oceans, which have been indispensable for economic activity since ancient times, may collapse due to the rise of China, and
- 5) The increased common awareness that stability of the oceans (freedom of navigation) is one of the global commons and that establishing the rule of law is necessary.

These can be said to be highly indicative as the basic understanding directly linking the philosophy and practice of FOIP, which is the subject of this article.

As for the direct trigger to develop the concept of “Indo-Pacific,” Kazutoshi Tamari’s “*Indo Taiheiyou Gainen no Fukyuu Katei* [The Diffusion of the Concept “Indo-Pacific”] (in Japanese),”⁵ is revealing. Tamari offers a detailed analysis on the formation process of the concept while broadly analyzing the arguments of foreign researchers such as Australian Rory Medcalf to be mentioned later.

According to Tamari, the use of the term “Indo-Pacific” itself began in the late 2000s, and he points out that it began to have a direct influence as a political theory after 2010, as a turning point with the

⁴ Yoshinobu Yamamoto, “*Joshou. Indo-Taiheiyou Gainen wo megutte* [Introduction to On the Indo Pacific Concept].” *Asia (Tokuni Minami Shina kai Indo-you) ni okeru Anzen Hoshou Chitsujo* [Research Report on Security Order in Asia (especially in South China Sea and Indian Ocean)] (in Japanese:), Japan Institute of International Affairs (March 2013) p. 6.

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/resarch/H24_Asia_Security/introduction.pdf Accessed January 20, 2018.

This report is included among a series of research reports by the Japan Institute of International Affairs as follows (all in Japanese).

FY2012 [MOFA International Studies Research and Recommendations Project Research Report on the Security Order in Asia (especially the South China Sea and Indian Ocean),]

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/resarch/H24_Asia_Security/H24_Asia_Security.php

FY2013[MOFA Diplomacy and Security Studies Research Project (Comprehensive Project) “Japanese Diplomacy in the “Indo-Pacific” Era -Secondary Powers/Response to Swing States” Research Report,]

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/resarch/H25_Indo-Pacific/H25_Japanese_Diplomacy_in_the_Indo-Pacific_Age.php

FY2014[MOFA Diplomacy and Security Studies Research Project (Comprehensive Project) “Japanese Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific Era - Response to Swing States” Research Report,]

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/resarch/H26_Indo-Pacific/H26_Japanese_Diplomacy_in_the_Indo-Pacific_Age.php

FY2016[MOFA Diplomacy and Security Studies Research “Problems of the Rule of law in the Indo-Pacific and Maritime Security,” Country Profile Research Report (International Law Research Group),]

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/research/H28_International_Law/

FY2016[MOFA Diplomacy and Security Studies Research, “Problems of the Rule of Law in the Indo-Pacific and Maritime Security,” Country Profile Research Report (Region Study Group),]

http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/research/H28_Indo-Pacific_country_profile/

⁵ Kazutoshi Tamari, “*Indo Taiheiyou Gainen no Fukyuu Katei* [The Diffusion of the Concept “Indo-Pacific”] (in Japanese),” *Kokusai Anzen Hoshou* [Journal of International Security], Vol 43, Issue 1, June 2015, p. 68-86.

following two reports: the publication of Medcalf’s report⁶ by the Lowy Institute in Australia and policy suggestions by American Michael Auslin.⁷ On this point, Yamamoto also notes that “Indo-Pacific” began to be seriously discussed after 2010, citing David Scot’s research.⁸ In October of the same year in Honolulu, Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States gave an address which was generally regarded as an opportunity to disseminate the “Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept. However, Tamari, despite acknowledging the historical significance of this address, points out that Clinton was not necessarily conscious of the “Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept here, instead noting that she had a substantial impact on its spread in her November 2011 *Foreign Policy* article titled “America’s Pacific Century.”⁹ Tamari summarizes that Clinton’s concept symbolized in the expression “connectivity between the Indian and Pacific oceans” (I will discuss the meaning of this “connectivity” later) was an opportunity to establish it as a political concept incorporating the conventional discourse, including the ideas of Medcalf and Auslin, etc.

Therefore, with much discourse including that of Khurana, one of the proponents of this concept, that sees 2010 as a defining point in the formation process of “Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept. So, there is the sense that it has somewhat become difficult to see where the origin is, I think that Tamari’s viewpoint is a clear and understandable way of thinking. However, the above viewpoint alone causes problems in considering the relationship with FOIP, which is the theme of this article. For example, it presents the problem of how we should consider Prime Minister Abe’s “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech in his address to the Indian Parliament in August 2007 (Regarding this point, Tamari does not neglect the significance of “Indo-Pacific” as a political concept in discourse before 2010, but only focuses on its formation process as a regional concept. Tamari explicitly explains the significance of Abe’s speech in his article.). I think that this is the reason why FOIP and “Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept need to be distinguished from each other as I mentioned at the beginning of this section. Therefore, I would like to confirm the history behind formulating FOIP led by the Abe administration while keeping this point in mind.

(3) The history of the formulation of FOIP led by the Abe administration

FOIP has only recently become a familiar word with the public, and is currently more of a journalistic

⁶ Rory Medcalf and Raoul Heinrichs, with Justin Jones, “Crisis and Confidence: Major Powers and Maritime Security in Indo-Pacific Asia,” Lowy Institute for International Policy, June 2011.
<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/crisis-and-confidence-major-powers-and-maritime-security-indo-pacific-asia>. Accessed January 20, 2018.

⁷ Michael Auslin, *Security in the Indo-Pacific Commons: Toward a Regional Strategy*, American Enterprise Institute, 2010, pp.1-29
<http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/AuslinReportWedDec152010.pdf>. Accessed January 20, 2018.

⁸ David Scott, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’-New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence,” *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol.19, No.2.2012, pp.85-109.
<https://dscottcom.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/indo-pacific.pdf>. Accessed January 20, 2018.

⁹ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, pp.56-63.

concern rather than an academic research subject. Under these circumstances, the mass media have often explained the origin of FOIP as being before TICAD in the first Abe administration's "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" concept and in the "Confluence of the Two Seas" speech mentioned above. However, the book *Nihon no senryaku gaikou* [Japan's Strategic Diplomacy] (in Japanese),¹⁰ by Yoshikatsu Suzuki, the former editor of the magazine *Gaikou* [The Diplomacy] issued by MOFA, is one piece of useful literature that offers a systematic explanation of these viewpoints. This book is based on "tracing inside information (author's comment)" of the path of Japan's strategic diplomacy, and explains the details concerning the history of formulating FOIP along with personal information of officials in the Prime Minister's Office who had led this effort, including some very interesting contents. While Suzuki, in this book, positions the origin of FOIP in the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" and as a part of the Abe administration's "value-oriented diplomacy" or "diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map," and explains it with the strategy against China in mind, I would like to outline the formulation history of FOIP while drawing on articles from the MOFA website that touch on these points.

"Value-oriented diplomacy"¹¹ according to the MOFA website, is "diplomacy based on universal values (liberalism, democracy, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy)" and the "arc of freedom and prosperity" from which it stems, is explained as "expanding the ring of freedom along the Eurasian continent to form a rich and stable region based on universal values." These were the ideas advocated as the new foreign policy of the first Abe administration. The term of "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity," was first mentioned in the speech by Foreign Minister Taro Aso¹² at the Japan Institute of International Affairs in November 2006. This term reflects the understanding that the United States saw this region as an "arc of instability" given the international situation in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks.

The above page also references close cooperation with the United States and Australia in the East, India in the center, and the EU and NATO in the west, as well as consideration of each country's culture, history, and level of development, without forcing values upon them or changing systems. Taking these notions together with the idea of commitment to the "arc of instability" through cooperative development as mentioned in Aso's remarks, in other words, it is thought to be "a diplomatic strategy

¹⁰ Suzuki Yoshikatsu, *Nihon no Senryaku Gaikou*[Japan's Strategic Diplomacy] (in Japanese) , Chikuma Shinsho, 2017. See Chapters 2 to 4 pertaining to a series of diplomatic strategies leading to the formulation of FOIP.

¹¹ MOFA website, "Japan's Expanding diplomatic horizon-New Pillar for Japan's Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic Bluebook 2007:Summary*, July 2007.
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/pillar/horizons.pdf> Accessed February 23, 2018. (Below, the date of access to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website is the same.)

¹² MOFA website, "Speech by Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Japan Institute of International Affairs Seminar "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons," November 30, 2006.
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html>

linking cooperative development and cooperative multilateral security (This term is based on the author’s viewpoint. Although it is not a strictly defined term in the first place, it is conveniently used to present a straightforward image of a series of diplomatic strategies of the Abe administration that includes “value-oriented diplomacy,)” and at this stage, the basic thinking of FOIP can already be seen. Also according to Suzuki, from the development behind the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity,” Prime Minister Abe recognized it as Aso’s idea, and therefore, while the basic thinking has been passed on, the term has progressively become disused.

Prime Minister Abe’s “Confluence of the Two Seas”¹³ speech at the Indian Parliament in August 2007 is also couched in this context, and Suzuki points out three ideas indicated below that are clear signs of FOIP thinking:

- 1) The Japan-India “strategic global partnership” being the core of “value-oriented diplomacy,”
- 2) Japan and India being maritime countries and that cooperation in maritime security is necessary for matters such as securing the safety of sea lanes, and
- 3) The possibility of a “broader Asia” formed by collaboration between Japan and India, that encompasses the United States and Europe, extends to the Pacific Ocean and forms a broad network.

On the occasion of this speech, with Prime Minister Abe’s strong intention, it floated the idea of “four-country talks with Japan, the United States, Australia, and India.” However, this attempt triggered the wariness of China and ended as a setback taking into consideration the domestic circumstances of each country (For details on this, see Raja Mohan’s article¹⁴ mentioned before). Therefore, this history is the reason why foreign diplomatic officials operated with efforts to revive the “four-country talks”¹⁵ in a way not to be so conspicuous after the fall of 2017.

Also, in order to discuss FOIP, it is necessary to check Prime Minister Abe’s “Security Diamond concept.” It is based on the ideas presented in an essay titled, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,”¹⁶ in Shinzo Abe’s name posted on the international NPO Project Syndicate website the day after the launch of the second Abe administration on December 27, 2012, and explicitly describes a strategic stance against China as “a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific.” However, according to Suzuki, the Japanese government took a position not to deal with this

¹³ MOFA website, “Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, at the Parliament of the Republic of India “Confluence of the Two Seas,” August 22, 2007.
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.htm>

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, C Raja Mohan

¹⁵ MOFA website, “Australia-India-Japan-U.S. Consultations on the Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017.
https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001789.html

¹⁶ Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” Project Syndicate, The World’s Opinion Page, Dec 27, 2012.
<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe?barrier=accessreg>. Accessed February 1, 2018.

idea as prominently. While the essay was prepared for publishing before the launch of the second Abe administration, it was actually released after the launch of that administration, due to the intentions of Project Syndicate, and therefore, the government of Japan had no choice but to take the relationship with China into consideration.

In addition, Suzuki makes another interesting point in relation to this context, which is the existence of a speech manuscript entitled, “The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy.”¹⁷ Originally scheduled to be delivered in Jakarta on January 18, 2013, the speech was cancelled due to Prime Minister Abe’s abrupt return to Japan to handle the Algerian hostage crisis, but the manuscript was posted on the MOFA website. Making the speech manuscript public without it actually being delivered sends a strong message, however Suzuki notes that it replaces the “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech and softens the sharp message on China contained in the “Diamond Security Concept” in addition to laying out Japan’s five new principles of its maritime strategy.

2. The Philosophy and Practice of FOIP decoded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website

In the previous section, I reviewed the formation process of “Indo-Pacific” as a regional concept and the formulation of FOIP led by the Abe administration. Although the introductory part may have been longer than expected, I would now like to attempt a concrete examination of the philosophy and practice of FOIP as taken from the MOFA website while confirming the above contents.

(1) Current status of FOIP related articles on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website

As noted in the preface, one of the features of FOIP is that there is no practice in philosophical precedence, and it not clear as to what the Japanese government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who are spearheading it, intend to do in practice. The reason for this is that, FOIP-related articles on the MOFA website are somewhat difficult to understand and have an “unfriendly” composition, and is also the reason for why *The Nihon Keizai Shimbun* article was quoted for the explanation of FOIP at the beginning of this article. In contrast, as mentioned earlier, even though detailed information on the practice of FOIP has already been publicized in various forms on the MOFA website, it seems to be difficult to understand and “unfriendly” for the following reasons.

First, to understand the nature of FOIP, it is essential to recognize its history as mentioned in the previous section. For example, the principle explanation relating to FOIP on the MOFA website is the special feature “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”¹⁸ in the *Diplomatic Bluebook 2017* which

¹⁷ MOFA website, “The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy,” January 18, 2013. https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/abe_0118e.html

¹⁸ MOFA website, “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” *Diplomatic Bluebook 2017*, June 2017. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2017/html/chapter1/c0102.html#sf03>

consists of “Prime Minister Abe’s keynote speech at TICAD”¹⁹ in August 2016. However, if this is viewed as a series of diplomatic strategies of the Abe administration, it is possible to gain a clearer image of the basic philosophy that expanded diplomatic concepts such as “diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map,” and “proactive contribution to peace,” from the conceptual diagram in these articles.

Second, there is the problem of the timing of the release of information, and since the *Diplomatic Bluebook* is published in the early summer every year, it does not contain any events that were previously described since the previous autumn. Of course, while information is published separately with regards to relevant individual events, in any case, it is thought that a more detailed explanation incorporating this information will be provided later (in fact, the “2017 Nen ban Kaihatsu Kyouryoku Hakusyo [White Paper on Development Cooperation 2017] (“ODA White Paper”) (in Japanese),”²⁰ published in February this year (2018), contains new items related to FOIP, which will be described later on). This article is intended with helping to collect and summarize related information until that time.

Third, the MOFA website has a structural problem related to the above. This website publishes various diplomatic related information in a timely manner and can be said to be a very conscientious medium in that sense, in contrast, it is difficult to trace the information on a hierarchal level because there is so much of it. However, this website does have a search function to address this problem, which is very useful, and all the related information introduced in this article was obtained by using this function. Below, while referencing that information, I would like to give a concrete explanation of the philosophy and practice of FOIP.

(2) FOIP as a cooperative development strategy and its philosophy seen in budget request materials

As mentioned above, the main commentary about FOIP on the MOFA website is the special feature in the *Diplomatic Bluebook 2017*, however if one currently searches for “Indo-Pacific strategy” on any typical search engine, the first hit takes you to the International Cooperation Bureau’s “FY2017 Priority Policy for Development Cooperation.”²¹ Here, the regional development cooperation programs are mapped out (where there are, in fact, many regions under Chinese influence) in the diagram under “Regional Key Issues.” In addition, it has been structured to be able to clearly understand the nature of FOIP as the “diplomatic strategy linking development cooperation and multilateral security

¹⁹ MOFA website, “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of TICAD VI,” August 27, 2016 https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html

²⁰ MOFA website, “2017Nen ban Kaihatsu Kyouryoku Hakusyu[White Paper on Development Cooperation 2017](“ODA White Paper”) (in Japanese), ” ²⁰ March 26, 2018. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/press/shiryo/page22_000825.html

²¹ MOFA website, “FY2017 Priority Policy for Development Cooperation.” April 2017. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000259285.pdf>

cooperation,” with key phrases such “upholding the rule of law,” “securing maritime safety,” and “regional stability,” scattered throughout. As I mentioned above, the ODA White Paper published in February this year also contains detailed explanations, with the beginning containing the new entry of “International cooperation for the peace, stability and prosperity of the international community.” The outline of the FOIP philosophy that includes the measures of the “three pillars” that I will mention later is included in Chapter 1, under the “dynamism that is created by combining two oceans and two continents,” and concrete measures specifically focusing on “capacity building of support for maritime law enforcement,” which is one of the “three pillars,” are described in Chapter 2, “Maintaining international order that is free and open based on the rule of law.”

Moreover, the feature of FOIP is also able to prove from a completely different point of view in the *“Heisei 30 nendo Yosan Gaisan Youkyuu [FY2018 Budget Request]”* (in Japanese).²² While this material was released in August 2017, from the items described here, one can read the practical aspects of FOIP, namely, the budgets for projects in FY2018, of which two related descriptions can be found.

First, the “Development of a strategic diplomacy,” which is one of the pillars for the FY2018 Budget Requirement, states the formation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” which contains the two points of “strengthening of the rule of law,” and “strengthening connectivity.”

The former lists four items:

- 1) Formation of international rules,
- 2) Strengthening the maritime security capacities of each country,
- 3) Counter-piracy measures in Asia and Africa, and
- 4) Preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and missiles,

While the latter lists “strengthening the connectivity of goods and people in the Indo-Pacific region,” which describes building infrastructure, providing equipment, dispatching experts, developing human resources, trade investment, and support for environmental development. All of this can be said to be embodying the keywords of the development cooperation diagram described above.

In addition, it also includes the “expansion of ODA” as a “pillar” of the budget request, and while it repeats the same formation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” content here, this is thought to imply that FOIP-related projects are mainly carried out under the framework of ODA.

As discussed above, the nature of FOIP as a “diplomatic strategy linking development cooperation and multilateral security cooperation,” can also be found in concrete forms in the “Priority Policy for Development Cooperation,” and budget request materials on the MOFA website. In addition, if one follows the timeline, after the announcement at TICAD in August 2016, through the Priority Policy for Development Cooperation in April the following year, the budget request in August, the series of events from last autumn, and the ODA White Paper of February, it is possible to see the progress take shape

²² MOFA website, “*Heisei 30 nendo Yosan Gaisan Youkyuu [FY2018 Budget Request]* (in Japanese),” July 2018. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000285157.pdf>

from a basic philosophy to concrete measures. The culmination of all of this was revealed at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting in November 2017, which revealed the aforementioned “three pillars” to the world as a result, which I would like to explain in the next section.

(3) Practice of the “three pillars” of FOIP and its implications

The “three pillars” were said to have been discussed at “the working lunch and Japan-U.S. summit meeting on November 6, 2017,”²³ as cited below.

In addition, both leaders affirmed that Japan and the United States will work together to promote peace and prosperity in the region by developing the Indo-Pacific as free and open and directed relevant ministers and institutions to flesh out detailed cooperation, in particular, in the following areas:

- 1) Promotion and establishment of fundamental values (rule of law, freedom of navigation, etc.)
- 2) Pursuit of economic prosperity (improvement of connectivity, etc.)
- 3) Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, etc.)

Both leaders reiterated that they will cooperate with any country that shares this vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Although this article makes no more specific reference to the “three pillars,” the thinking has been communicated in a number of ways. For example, “the speech given by Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono at Columbia University,”²⁴ in September 2017 preceding the Japan-U.S. summit meeting mentioned above is very suggestive, along with any other speeches by the foreign minister and media reporting when traveling abroad, and during deliberations at the Diet. The provisions that hint at concrete content of the “three pillars” from the articles on the MOFA website, press reports, and related articles are summarized as follows.

- 1) Promotion and establishment of fundamental values (rule of law, freedom of navigation, etc.)
- During his keynote speech at TICAD, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated that Japan has the responsibility to respect the freedom, the rule of law, and market economies, of the confluence of the Indian and Pacific oceans and Asia and Africa, without force or coercion, and to foster them and make them prosperous. With respect to the rule of law, at the “speech delivered by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Nobuo Kishi,”²⁵ at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016 on September 2, 2016, immediately after

²³ MOFA website, “the working lunch and Japan-U.S. summit meeting on November 6, 2017,” November 6, 2017. https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_000699.html

²⁴ MOFA website, “the speech given by Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono at Columbia University,” September 21, 2017. https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page3e_000749.html

²⁵ MOFA website, “Remarks by Mr. Nobuo Kishi. State Minister for Foreign affairs at the Indian Ocean Conference 2016,” September 21, 2017. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000185853.pdf>

TICAD, Kishi explained the principles of securing the rule of law at sea as:

- 1) States should make and clarify their claims based on international law,
- 2) States should not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims, and
- 3) States should seek to settle disputes by peaceful means,

while quoting “Prime Minister Abe’s keynote address at the Shangri-la Dialogue,”²⁶ on May 30, 2014.

In his speech at Columbia University mentioned above, Foreign Minister Kono maintained that it is indispensable to develop a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, giving concrete examples, such as strong support for the “Freedom of Navigation Operations” by the U.S. navy, the importance of strategic port visits, and continuation of conducting joint maritime exercises in the Indo-Pacific.

- 2) Pursuit of economic prosperity (improvement of connectivity, etc.)

On this point, the explanation of the “connectivity” between Asia, the Middle East, and Africa in the TICAD keynote speech mentioned that Japan would start in East Asia, and then extend to South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, through infrastructure development, trade and investment, improvements to business environments, development, human resource development, and also support nation building in Africa in terms of politics and governance in addition to development, in a way that respects ownership without coercion or intervention. In his Columbia University speech, Foreign Minister Kono stated that Japan would “pursue economic prosperity through the reinforcement of connectivity by improving infrastructures, such as sea ports and railways and roads,” and stressed the importance of “quality infrastructure,” giving examples of improving the “East-West Economic Corridor” connecting Indochina and Myanmar. As I mentioned above, the FOIP-related items in the new ODA White Paper explicitly explain its philosophy and practice, including the relationship between the first point above and the third point below.

- 3) Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, etc.)

As I mentioned above, the Priority Policy for Development Cooperation and budget request materials give “strengthening the rule of law” and “strengthening connectivity” as two specific FOIP measures, and capacity building on maritime law enforcement is not seen as an independent item. In the first place, there is the simple question as to whether “capacity building on maritime law enforcement” is a part of “strengthening the rule of law,” but even in the speech by Foreign Minister Kono at Columbia University where he talks about support for “better capacity building on maritime law enforcement through the granting of patrol vessels and providing technical cooperation,” it is made within the context of “strengthening the rule of law.”

I recognize that this issue includes arguments related to the overall theme of this article in connection

²⁶ MOFA website, “The 13th IISS Asian Security Summit – The Shangri-La Dialogue-Keynote address by Shinzo ABE Prime Minister, Japan,” May 30, 2014. https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page4e_000086.html

with the content of the first and second points above, so I would like to discuss it in a bit more detail here.

The reason why “capacity building on maritime law enforcement” stands out in the “three pillars” at this stage is not certain, but it is not an idea that appeared suddenly. There is “the speech by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishi”²⁷ on March 7, 2017 at the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) summit meeting, in which he explained the three measures of FOIP, which are:

- 1) Take every opportunity to promote and consolidate basic values such as the rule of law, democracy and freedom of navigation,
- 2) Advance economic prosperity by strengthening regional connectivity...by building ports and railways and other infrastructures, and
- 3) Advance cooperation in maritime security...strengthen our efforts in maritime law-enforcement capabilities, combating piracy, counter terrorism and disaster risk reduction.

Although this is the author’s personal viewpoint, I think that the difference between 1) and 3) can be explained as the difference in degree of Japan’s own involvement in the practice of FOIP. For example, the “freedom of navigation” presented as a specific example of “strengthening the rule of law” in the speech by Foreign Minister Kono at Columbia University is difficult to carry out as a real problem, no matter what support it may have. On the other hand, “capacity building on maritime law enforcement” has been promoted as part of development cooperation, such as “through the granting of patrol vessels and providing technical cooperation” noted in Kono’s speech, and is a measure that Japan can practice on its own initiative. In addition, as I confirmed in section 2, “capacity building on maritime law enforcement” is positioned as part of development cooperation even on the budget side, and in that sense, it also means that it is a measure that straddles between “strengthening the rule of law” and “strengthening connectivity.”

Incidentally, while the MOFA, Japan Coast Guard, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and others have published information on the “provision of patrol vessels” proposed as a concrete measure of “capacity building on maritime law enforcement,” the government as a whole has not given a comprehensive explanation anywhere, which has made it quite difficult to grasp the big picture. However, this is the first time that the passage “capacity building on maritime law enforcement,” appears in the above-mentioned “ODA White Paper” and the basic thinking and its achievements (including a description of cooperation for Southeast Asian countries, Sri Lanka and Djibouti etc) were presented for the first time in a systematic manner. This thing can be said to be a significant example that “capacity building of maritime law enforcement” is a very important content of FOIP.

In light of the above points, the philosophy and practice of FOIP can be explained as the following summary of this article. The philosophy of FOIP is basically composed of “strengthening the rule of

²⁷ MOFA website, “State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishi’s Speech on March 7, 2017 at the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) summit,” March 7, 2017. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000234813.pdf>

law,” and “strengthening connectivity.” In contrast, in terms of its practice, it is necessary to implement “capacity building on maritime law enforcement,” which is a field that Japan can practically implement in relatively easy terms within the measures under “strengthening the rule of law,” and is also a part of the development cooperation of “strengthening connectivity.” That is the reason why the government distinguishes between the above 1) and 3) among the three pillars of FOIP. In other words, it is the result of considering the domestic political situation of Japan and its influence on international relations.

Conclusion

As I mentioned above, while referring to the descriptions on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and elsewhere, I have discussed a conceivable FOIP philosophy and practice, especially the outline of the measures explained as its “three pillars.” It’s simple summary is as described at the end of the previous section, but with regards to the inferred future prospects of FOIP, especially the response of countries concerned (the United States, India, Australia, China, ASEAN countries, other countries targeted for development cooperation, and other major countries not in this region, such as the UK and France), I would like to continue research and analysis, and discuss this issue again based on such analysis. However, as a supplementary discussion, I would like to briefly describe in particular the relationship with China, which was mentioned as being symbolic of FOIP’s “Difficulty in understanding” at the preface of this article. Since this article is “Decoded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website,” as mentioned in the title, it may seem that the conclusion is basically following the government’s position, but I would like to venture to offer my personal opinion about this issue as follows. In other words, in looking at the issues described in detail so far from the deductive perspective of the history of formulating FOIP by the Abe administration, which became the background to this paper, or from the inductive reasoning perspective of concrete examples of the practice of FOIP (development cooperation programs such as “providing patrol vessels” in “capacity building on maritime law enforcement” is actually being implemented in areas under Chinese influence other than Southeast Asian countries), even if these are not directly “countering” China, it is easy to infer that they were constructed with a strong awareness of this. In this regard, I would like to concisely review the relevant policies and speeches by Prime Minister Abe and related news reports related to this issue. Again, I would like to quote the key sentence in “Prime Minister Abe’s policy speech,”²⁸ on January 22, 2018, that I mentioned before, including the preceding and following parts:

A vast expanse of sea stretches from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. Since ancient times the people of this region have enjoyed affluence and prosperity from this large and free body of

²⁸ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet website, “Policy speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 196th Session of the Diet,” January 22, 2018.
http://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201801/00002.html

water. Freedom of navigation and the rule of law form their bedrock. We must ensure that these waters are a public good that brings peace and prosperity to all people without discrimination into the future. To this end we will promote the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Based on this overall direction, we will also work with China (underlining by the author) to meet the growing infrastructure demand in Asia. Japan and China share significant responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the region, and maintain an inseparable relationship. We will fulfill the expectations of the international community by deepening our friendly relationship in a stable manner from a broad perspective.

This remark was subsequently used in various situations such as in Diet deliberations and in the diplomatic field, and since the information has repeatedly been communicated, there is a general consensus that it is virtually the “government opinion.” Of course, I think that we should also basically accept this perspective at face value, but it is also natural that we must pay attention to the context of keywords. Here, “based on this overall direction,” is used as a lead-in phrase, while the previous paragraph is interspersed with keywords such as “freedom of navigation and the rule of law,” and “a public good that brings peace and prosperity to all people without discrimination.” Therefore, it is clear that cooperation with China is never unconditional, and that obeying the rules of international society is a major premise.

With regards this issue, for example, the MOFA website describes the “Japan-China summit meeting held during the G20 summit”²⁹ that took place in Hamburg, Germany in July 2017 as follows. The two leaders of Japan and China discussed how to contribute to the stability and prosperity of the region and the world, including the “Belt and Road Initiative,” but media reports stated that although it is with prerequisite, Japan will cooperate on the “Belt and Road Initiative,”³⁰ these prerequisites are as follows. Prior to the G20 summit in Hamburg, on June 5, it was reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe mentioned the “Belt and Road Initiative,” in a speech in Tokyo, saying that, “Japan would like to cooperate with China, after recognizing that it is indispensable for transparent and fair procurement, and the soundness of finances to be preserved.”³¹ Therefore, I believe that Prime Minister Abe’s remark on the relationship between FOIP and China in the policy speech I mentioned before, should be basically understood in the same context as the above remark.

*This article was originally written in Japanese and posted as “*Kaiyou Anzen Hosyō Jūhō Tokuhō* [Maritime Security Special Intelligence Report]” on Ocean Policy Research Institute, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation website, April 24, 2018. Some descriptions have been updated.

²⁹ MOFA website, “Japan-China Summit Meeting,” July 8, 2017.
https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page4e_000636.html

³⁰ *Asahi Shimbun*, July 8, 2017 (in Japanese).

³¹ *Asahi Shimbun*, June 6, 2017 (in Japanese).



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