



## Pioneering a New Era of Japan-US Relations— Japan's Course and the New US Administration

Nakasone Peace Institute Proposals  
March 27, 2025

The US may undergo a significant shift in its strategic role, which has traditionally been to support the international order through deterrence, trade liberalization, and the promotion of liberal values. To ensure its peace and prosperity, Japan must promote and protect a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. To this end, Japan must first fundamentally strengthen its own defense capabilities, deepen the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and expand security cooperation with like-minded countries in order to ensure deterrence necessary for maintaining peace and stability in Japan and the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, while working closely with other market-oriented economy democracies, Japan should promote a free and fair international economic order and develop resilient supply chains to mitigate the risks posed by economic coercion, regional conflicts, and natural disasters. Furthermore, by promoting social interaction with countries that respect values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, Japan should expand opportunities for individuals to maximize their opportunities for self-realization. With regard to relations with various emerging and developing countries (the so-called Global South countries), keeping in mind the struggle over the international order that has arisen between Japan, the US, and like-minded countries on the one hand and countries such as China and Russia on the other, Japan and the US should express their understanding through the Japan-U.S. Strategic Diplomacy and Development Dialogue, etc. and confirm each other's specific goals and roles. Japan and the US should also take advantage of their respective advantages to create a better environment for the maintenance of the existing order.

### I. Proposals regarding the basic policy of Japan's diplomacy

1. **Basic stance on relations with the US.** Japan's peace and prosperity cannot be guaranteed without a stable and firm relationship based on trust with the US. If Japan-US relations were to deteriorate, deterrence would be undermined. Even if unilateralist or nationalist tendencies were to become more pronounced in the US, Japan should not adopt a stance of openly expressing distrust of the US and loudly advocating for "strategic autonomy." This kind of a response would be perceived by China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Russia as a weakening in the Japan-U.S. Alliance leading to a deterioration of deterrence and therefore should be avoided. While strengthening its own defense capabilities, Japan should promote diplomacy and cooperation with the US as discussed below, and, at the same time strive to expand security cooperation with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region and Europe

2. **Defense.** Japan should, as a top priority, fundamentally strengthen its defense capabilities to deter the use of force against Japan by China, the DPRK, or Russia and continue to confirm that the US strengthens its defense commitment to Japan. In light of the current security environment, the target level of Japan's defense budget should be set at over 2% of gross domestic production (GDP) beyond FY2027, assuming that the necessary increases in staffing and organizational improvements are made in government ministries and agencies. Postponing a decision on defense funding will be seen as an indication of weakness in Japan's will to defend itself. Therefore, the Japanese government should determine stable funding sources as soon as possible. In addition, with regard to defense cooperation between Japan and the United States, the initiatives confirmed at the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2+2) should be steadily implemented. Since there is no time to waste in strengthening deterrence, Japan should not allow a situation to arise that would delay Japan-US cooperation for this purpose. Furthermore, Japan should convene new five-party talks (tentatively called the Pacific 5) with the US treaty allies – the Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, the Philippines, and New Zealand – to discuss effective security cooperation with the United States and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, to effectively strengthen deterrence, the Japan-U.S.-Australia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations (2+2+2) should be held to strengthen cooperation and coordination on development of defense capabilities, force posture, exercises and training, intelligence sharing, joint research and development, and other issues.
3. **Promotion of free and fair trade.** Japan should continue to promote high-standard, rules-based trade liberalization through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). On the other hand, Japan should be cautious toward trade and investment policies that deepen relations in economic and technological fields with countries that use advanced technology transferred from Japan for military purposes in ways that undermine Japan's national security.
4. **Defense and promotion of values.** Japan, along with other nations that respect democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, should counter those countries that unjustly interfere in domestic politics through information warfare, including the dissemination of disinformation that threatens these values. Japan should accelerate cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries in policy, technology, and intelligence measures to defend elections and public opinion, and take legal action, including sanctions, against governments that engage in unjust political interference and those that support or condone harmful activities by non-state actors. At the same time, by expanding systems that promote social interaction with liberal democracies, Japan should create an environment that promotes people-to-people exchanges in various fields in a space where individual freedom and basic rights are guaranteed, and in turn create a modern society that attracts talented people from around the world.
5. **International cooperation for building resilience cooperation.** International economic relations are frequently disrupted by large-scale natural disasters, regional conflicts, financial and economic crises, and economic coercion. Japan should take the lead in expanding international cooperation with its partners in the Global South, as well as with the G7 countries and liberal democracies, in various fields such as

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energy, climate change, infrastructure development, and advanced technology, with the aim of achieving economic development in Japan and enhancing the resilience of the international community. Japan should strengthen deterrence through its partnerships to counter forces aiming to change the status quo while also working to unite forces that would maintain the status quo by improving the collective resilience of the international community. Through a multilayered diplomatic approach, Japan should create a geopolitical space that neutralizes the divisive effects of great power competition, thereby fulfilling its historic mission of avoiding the disaster of division of international relations into blocs.

## II. Proposals on regional diplomacy

### A. China and Taiwan

1. **Overview.** Japan and the United States, while strengthening their alliance and sharing the recognition with like-minded countries that China is attempting to challenge the existing order, seek to enhance deterrence against China. At the same time, Japan should recognize the importance of engaging openly with China, by maintaining a framework for dialogue, and directly expressing concerns about China. In addition, given the importance of China in global issues, Japan and the United States should seek to cooperate with China, while simultaneously encouraging it to play an active and constructive role.
2. **Economy and technology.** While it is in the common interest of the world for China to develop economically in accordance with international rules, Japan and the United States should recognize that if China were to unilaterally create new rules in line with its national interests, it would pose a challenge to the existing order. In addition, if China engages in non-market practices, economic coercion, unfair technology transfer, or data disclosure, Japan and the United States should address such activities and ensure resilience. On the other hand, Japan and the US should protect advanced industries by placing an emphasis on national security and should promote derisking and diversification with regard to economic resilience and avoid excessive dependence on supply chains.
3. **Maritime.** Japan and the US should pay close attention to the situation in the East China Sea and South China Sea, strongly oppose any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion and reaffirm that the acquisition of territory by the use of force is prohibited. Moreover, it is important to recognize the significance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and confirm that the July 12, 2016 arbitration ruling by the arbitral tribunal should be the basis for the resolution of the issue, and efforts should be made to encourage China to acknowledge this.
4. **Taiwan.** While maintaining their existing policies regarding Taiwan, Japan and the United States should reaffirm the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Furthermore, while Japan and the US would welcome a peaceful resolution of the cross-strait issue, they should respect the will of Taiwan's society and promote concrete measures for trilateral cooperation among Japan, the US, and Taiwan, and bilateral cooperation between Japan and Taiwan and between the US and Taiwan.
5. **Human rights.** Japan and the United States should continue to express serious concern about the human rights situation in China. The two countries should call on China to fulfill its own commitments under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, which provide for rights, freedoms and a high degree of autonomy

in Hong Kong. Japan and the US should unite in protesting the National Intelligence Law of the People's Republic of China and the Counter-espionage Law of the People's Republic of China and demand information disclosure. Japan should also consider enacting an anti-espionage law.

6. **Russia-Ukraine.** Japan and the US should urge China to put pressure on Russia to halt its military aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine, as well as to stop the export of dual-use goods to Russia, among other efforts to resolve the issue. Japan and the US should also approach countries in the Global South and others to press China to cooperate with the peace efforts for Ukraine.

## B. Korean Peninsula

1. **Institutionalization of Japan-US-ROK trilateral cooperation and closer consultations on DPRK policy.** The three countries—Japan, the US, and the ROK—should continue to implement the agreement reached at the August 2023 Trilateral Leaders' Summit at Camp David and promote institutionalization of trilateral cooperation. In particular, the new Japanese and US administrations should deepen consultations and share their respective policies toward the DPRK as well as coordinate their policies. They should understand and work together closely on the new unification policy announced by the ROK's Yoon Suk Yeol administration in August 2024. Based on the experience of the former Trilateral Coordination Oversight Group (TCOG), establishment of a consultative framework among high-level foreign affairs and defense officials with a view to coordinating diplomatic and negotiation strategies as well as deterrence against the DPRK should also be considered. Japan should also seek to resolve the abduction issue with cooperation from the US and the ROK.
2. **Continued expansion of Japan-US-ROK joint exercises.** The Japan-US-ROK joint exercise "Freedom Edge," which was implemented as a measure after the agreement at Camp David, should be continued on a regular basis to improve interoperability and joint response capabilities. It is also desirable to revitalize Japan-ROK security cooperation by steadily moving forward with the resumption of defense exchanges and cooperation between the two countries, agreed upon between the two countries in July 2024, and to link this bilateral security cooperation to evolve Japan-US-ROK trilateral security cooperation.
3. **Coordination on sanctions against the DPRK.** Given that international sanctions against the DPRK have been relaxed due to the actions of China and Russia, both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it is necessary for Japan, the United States, and the ROK to take the lead in efforts to strictly enforce sanctions against the DPRK. In particular, following the termination of the UNSC Panel of Experts, it is urgent to address alternative measures.

4. **Response to DPRK cyber activities.** Countermeasures against the DPRK's illicit cyber activities, which are also an important source of funding for the DPRK's nuclear and missile development, must be established and implemented. As Japan, the United States, and ROK have already held three meetings of the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Diplomacy Working Group for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats (in December 2023, March 2024, and September 2024) after the Camp David agreement, the three countries should collaborate to implement more concrete measures.
5. **Addressing Russia-DPRK and China-DPRK relations.** Bearing in mind that closer Russia-DPRK relations have led to a worsening of the global security environment beyond the Korean Peninsula, Japan, the US, and the ROK should discuss how to respond while monitoring trends in Russia-DPRK relations as well as China-DPRK relations. In particular, measures should be considered to address the use of DPRK-made weapons in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as the possibility that Russia-DPRK cooperation could advance the DPRK's nuclear and missile capabilities.
6. **Coordination in Indo-Pacific strategy.** As Japan, the US, and the ROK work together to promote the Indo-Pacific strategy, a trilateral consultative framework (Indo-Pacific Dialogue) has been established for the three countries to coordinate with each other. Moving forward, the three countries should select specific methods and areas for collaboration. Development and humanitarian assistance, maritime security, and economic security should be considered as promising areas for coordination and cooperation.

### C. Global South, Southeast Asia, and Pacific Island Countries

1. **Flexible and sustainable engagement with the countries in the Global South.** An attitude of imposing so-called universal values may not be appropriate for the countries in the Global South. In addition, the Global South countries should not be regarded as pawns in a great power competition; rather the way that these countries perceive the world should be respected. In the global discussion, the countries in the Global South should be acknowledged as sovereign actors with self-determination. In addition, the Global South, with its diverse political and economic systems, includes emerging and developing countries with various opportunities and potential. Japan should seek partners for economic development and form mutually beneficial cooperative relationships with them. Japan should also expand the recognition that it is in the interests of all nations to protect and promote a free and open international order. However, even in such cases, Japan should adopt an indirect and long-term approach that builds trust while realizing mutual benefits and shows flexibility in terms of the rule of law and democracy so that it is not criticized as interference in internal affairs. In proceeding with such sustained engagement, it is essential to have tailor-made approaches based on the specific conditions of individual states. For that reason, a human resource development program should be established to continuously train experts who have a deep understanding of the political, economic, social, cultural, and other contexts of the partner countries.

2. **Comprehensive engagement with Southeast Asian countries.** Southeast Asian countries are now an essential part of Japan's economic and social development. Japan should develop comprehensive engagement with the entire region with the goal of maximizing the potential for prosperity and development in the Indo-Pacific region and minimizing the risk of confrontation and conflict through economic and social exchange and maritime security cooperation with Southeast Asian countries. In doing so, Japan should strengthen bilateral relations across various fields with Southeast Asian countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Singapore. With ASEAN countries, Japan should steadily implement specific cooperative activities as outlined in the "Implementation Plan of the Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation—Trusted Partners" with "co-creation" as the key word, as proposed at the ASEAN-Japan Special Leaders' Meeting in 2023, on various issues including climate change, infectious diseases, and disaster prevention. Progress should be regularly reviewed, and areas and projects where cooperation is delayed should be given financial and political support as necessary to upgrade the cooperation to a more substantial level.
3. **Strengthening engagement with Pacific Island Countries.** Pacific Island Countries are important to Japan not only in terms of fishery and mineral resources, but also because in recent years, the United States and China have each been actively enhancing their defense cooperation with Pacific Island Countries. The Pacific Island Countries are on the front line of the threat of climate change, and Japan should implement a variety of cooperation measures that meet the needs of these countries, including disaster prevention, infrastructure development including submarine cables, and people-to-people exchange and human resource development. Using the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) as a platform, Japan should realize and sequentially implement projects in the seven thematic areas defined in the "2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent" of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF): (1) Political Leadership and Regionalism, (2) People-Centered Development, (3) Peace and Security, (4) Resources and Economic Development, (5) Climate Change and Disasters, (6) Ocean and Environment, and (7) Technology and Connectivity.

#### D. Russia

1. **Strengthening sanctions against Russia and promotion of international cooperation.** To counter Russia's violations of international law and its aggressive actions, Japan should work in coordination with the US and European countries to strengthen sanctions against Russia. Additionally, they should also strengthen the framework of international sanctions, close loopholes, and promote international cooperation, including with the Global South countries, to curb Russia's actions.
2. **Strengthening energy security.** Dependence on Russia's energy resources not only poses a serious risk to Japan's energy security but also supports Russia economically. While strengthening its energy cooperation with the United States and diversifying its energy supply sources, Japan should reduce its dependence on energy from Russia and strengthen its energy security by promoting a shift of energy to renewable energy, and other new energy sources.

3. **Securing US support for a peaceful resolution of the Northern Territories dispute.** Strong US support is essential for a peaceful resolution of the Northern Territories dispute between Japan and Russia, and Japan should work in solidarity with the United States to recover the territories.
4. **Strengthening cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries while monitoring China-Russia cooperation.** In response to the current strengthening of strategic cooperation between China and Russia, it is vital for Japan to strengthen its security framework in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing trilateral cooperation with the United States and the ROK, as well as within the Indo-Pacific Four (IP4) consisting of Japan, the ROK, Australia, and New Zealand. In this way, the goal should be for Japan to reduce the influence of China and Russia and maintain regional stability.
5. **Strengthening Japan-US cooperation in emerging technology fields.** To respond to the current situation in which Russia and China are strengthening cooperation in emerging technology fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computers, cyber security, and space technology, Japan should strengthen cooperation in these fields with the US to secure technological superiority.
6. **Strengthening soft power and developing values-based diplomacy through humanitarian assistance.** In order to decrease Russia's influence, Japan and the US should work together to strengthen soft power and values-based diplomacy through humanitarian aid and development assistance in the Global South and former Soviet states to contribute to regional stability and development.

## E. Europe

1. **Coordination with European countries that share values.** Japan should strengthen its ties with European countries and European international organizations that share its values and principles. With the growing influence of authoritarian countries such as Russia and China and the rise of countries in the so-called Global South, cooperation between Japan and countries that share its values in Europe is more important than ever, both for strengthening deterrence and for reorganizing supply chains for economic security concerns.
2. **Partnership with the EU's Indo-Pacific policy.** Japan and Europe are now key partners in promoting the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" concept. Since the EU announced its own Indo-Pacific strategy, the "EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," on February 21, 2022, the EU and its member states have been increasing their engagement in the Indo-Pacific. It is important for Japan and the EU to reinforce the international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific through Japan-EU collaboration to realize the FOIP concept and partnerships to enhance connectivity while working together with the United States.




3. **Partnership with NATO.** Since the NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022, Japan's prime minister has participated in the summit for three consecutive years. As one of the four Asia-Pacific partners, "AP4" (IP4 after July 2024), Japan should further strengthen cooperation with NATO along with ROK, Australia, and New Zealand. In particular, Japan-NATO cooperation in the area of cyber defense through the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn, Estonia is an area in which cooperation can be further expanded in the future. Amid discussions on the concept of an "Asian version of NATO" it would be more effective to develop the idea into a stronger partnership among the four "AP4" countries and work toward enhancing cooperation between NATO and the Asia-Pacific region.
4. **Continuation of Japan-UK security cooperation.** Cooperation between Japan and the UK has developed dramatically with the signing of the "Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement" on January 11, 2023, the "Hiroshima Accord: An Enhanced Japan-UK Global Strategic Partnership" on May 18, 2023, and the "Global Combat Air Programme — GCAP International Government Organisation" on December 14, 2023. After the formation of the Keir Starmer Labour government in July 2024, it is important to continue to actively explain the significance of Japan's role and the need for further strengthening bilateral cooperation while maintaining Japan-UK security cooperation.
5. **Further strengthening Japan-Europe science and technology cooperation.** Japan, the EU, and the UK all possess high standards of expertise in science and technology, innovation, and digital fields. It is important to expand cooperation in these areas. In Japan, the government is taking more initiative than ever to maintain Japan's strong position in science and technology through the "Key and Advanced Technology R&D through Cross Community Collaboration Program" (K Program) and the establishment of the "Think Tank on Safety and Security." From the perspective of economic security, strengthening cooperation between Japan and Europe, which share common values, is also important.

## F. The United States

1. **Promoting Japan-US defense cooperation.** While advancing a fundamental strengthening of its defense capabilities, Japan should promote defense cooperation with the US. In order to pursue the most effective roles, missions, and capabilities of Japan and the US in deterring changes to the status quo by force, Japan should continue to develop various operational concepts, conduct necessary training and exercises, improve command and control, optimize its force posture, and increase the resilience of bases. In addition to new domains such as space, cyber, and electromagnetic spectrum, Japan and the US should systematically implement initiatives that contribute to improving interoperability between the two countries, including the utilization of various advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and hypersonic technology. Furthermore, the two countries should continue to hold a series of ministerial-level discussions on expanded deterrence.

2. **Efforts to ease restrictions on arms exports to the US.** Japan should urge the US President and Congress to relax US arms export restrictions in order to strengthen the deterrent power of US allies, including Japan, and actively purchase advanced US weapons. In doing so, Japan should strike an appropriate balance between defense equipment from other countries and domestically-produced equipment. Japan should promptly establish an advanced information security system and also quickly create an environment that enables extensive implementation of research, development, and information sharing not only with the US but also with other like-minded countries.
3. **Involvement in the decision-making process of US restrictions on technology outflows to China.** Japan should urge the relevant US government departments and agencies to involve the Japanese government and corporations that would be affected by regulations in the decision-making process regarding US restrictions on transfer of advanced technology to China. Chinese authorities have threatened Japanese companies with retaliatory measures if they comply with the US government's semiconductor-related regulations, placing Japanese companies in a difficult situation. To prevent a situation in which the US government independently imposes regulatory measures causing Japanese companies to be caught in the middle, Japan should urge the US government to consult with the Japanese government, including on how to respond if China threatens or implements sanctions, before making decisions on technology transfer restrictions to China that will affect Japanese companies.
4. **Emphasizing the economic importance of Japan.** With the goal of promoting understanding of Japan's economic importance within the US while maintaining the No. 1 position in terms of investment in the US, Japanese public and private sectors should collaborate to invest in states and districts where legislators who oppose trade liberalization are elected, and work on building factories and creating jobs for local workers.
5. **Managing protectionism.** In the case of a second Donald Trump administration, Japan should collaborate with like-minded countries in Europe and Asia to strategically expand investments in the US. In addition, Japan should arrange summit meetings between the leaders of the top US investor countries and Mr. Trump to enhance Japan's presence. Further, Japan should encourage Mr. Trump to adopt the principle of "no tariffs on countries that invest in the US," and seek to mitigate the negative effects of mercantilist policies through negotiations on tariff exemptions.
6. **Promote multilayered exchanges with the US.** Even though there is a growing trend in the US to pursue nationalist policy lines, Japan's engagement with the US should not be reduced. Rather, Japanese public and private sectors should make concerted efforts to promote understanding within the US at various levels that US peace and prosperity are inextricably linked to those of Japan and the East Asian region in order to foster a sense of internationalism. Engagement should be strengthened and expanded at all levels, including between the leaders, cabinet members, authorities, legislatures, industries, universities, and between junior high



and senior high schools of Japan and the United States with a substantial increase in the budget for these initiatives.

7. **Strategic dialogue with US allies.** Japan should hold discussions with the authorities of US allies in the Indo-Pacific and Europe to discuss possible initiatives to be developed in coordination with the US in the areas of security, economy and technology, and politics. In these discussions, initiatives that can be coordinated among allies in terms of US diplomacy should be identified and implemented as appropriate.