

# Indo-Pacific Diplomacy, the Quad and Beyond: Democratic Coalition in the Era of U.S.-China Global Competition

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In recent years, the term “Indo-Pacific” has become an important concept in the world of diplomacy. In Japan, the Abe administration set forth the vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) as a pillar of Japan's foreign policy in 2016,<sup>1</sup> which the current Suga administration succeeded.<sup>2</sup> In the U.S., President Trump announced FOIP’s vision at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vietnam in 2017,<sup>3</sup> and the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) mentioned it in the context of a geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>4</sup> In 2018, the National Security Council (NSC) created the U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific (“the Framework”), which was declassified in January 2021,<sup>5</sup> and the U.S. Pacific Command was renamed the “Indo-Pacific Command.” The Biden administration has since succeeded FOIP, establishing a new “Indo-Pacific Coordinator” in the NSC to which former Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell was appointed.

Other countries than Japan and the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region are also increasingly emphasizing the Indo-Pacific. In India, Prime Minister Modi shared his vision of an Indo-Pacific focus at the Shangri-La meeting in 2018,<sup>6</sup> and the Ministry of External Affairs established an Indo-Pacific Division in 2019.<sup>7</sup> Australia stated in its 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, the first release in 14 years, that the Indo-Pacific was of primary importance to the country, determining to realize “a secure, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific.”<sup>8</sup> In the Quad, a cooperation framework among Japan, the U.S., Australia, and India that resumed in 2017, all four member states confirmed the vision of the Indo-Pacific at its first summit meeting in March 2021.<sup>9</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” at its 2019 summit.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Chapter 1: International Situation and Japan's Diplomacy in 2018,” *Diplomatic Bluebook 2019* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, October 17, 2019), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2019/html/chapter1/c0102.html#s01>.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Address by Prime Minister Suga at the Seventy-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, September 26, 2020), [https://www.mofa.go.jp/jp/unp\\_a/page4e\\_001095.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/jp/unp_a/page4e_001095.html).

<sup>3</sup> White House, *Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit | Danang, Vietnam*, (Washington, DC: White House, November 10, 2017), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam>.

<sup>4</sup> White House, *National Security of Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, December 2017), 45-46, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> White House, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, by Robert C. O'Brien (Washington, DC: White House, January 5, 2021), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/O'Brien-Expanded-Statement.pdf> and White House, *U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific* (Washington, DC: White House, August 2018), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, India, *Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, India, June 1, 2018), <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>.

<sup>7</sup> Indrani Bagchi, “In a show of intent, external affairs ministry sets up Indo-Pacific wing,” *The Times of India*, April 15, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/in-a-show-of-intent-external-affairs-ministry-sets-up-indo-pacific-wing/articleshow/68880720.cms>.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, November 2017), 3, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/minisite/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper/fpwhitepaper/pdf/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> White House, *Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: “The Spirit of the Quad”* (Washington, DC: White House, March 12, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad>.

<sup>10</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* (Jakarta: Association of Southeast Asian nations, June 23, 2019), <https://asean.org/asean-outlook-indo-pacific>.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific is expanding beyond the Indo-Pacific region. In Europe, France released “France and Security in the Indo-Pacific” in 2018;<sup>11</sup> Germany released its policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific region in 2020;<sup>12</sup> and the U.K. emphasized the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region in the “Integrated Review 2021.”<sup>13</sup> European Union (EU) High Representative Josep Borrell emphasized the EU needed its strategy for the Indo-Pacific in March 2021.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, while the geographical concept of the “Indo-Pacific” is generally shared among the above-mentioned countries, it is not clear if its goals or vision are commonly defined. While the U.S. and Japan use the phrase “FOIP,” India states a “free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific,”<sup>15</sup> Australia mentions a “secure, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific,” and ASEAN, France, Germany, and the U.K. simply refer to the “Indo-Pacific.” When then President-elect Biden used the phrase “secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific,” some scholars viewed this as a signal of the change of FOIP policy, although the Biden administration clarified its adherence to FOIP after its inauguration.<sup>16</sup>

In light of this situation, this paper will analyze the background, significance, and future prospects of FOIP and the Indo-Pacific. For this analysis, the paper will attach importance to the Quad as a framework embodying FOIP. The paper will also explore the possibility of the development of multi-layered cooperative frameworks among like-minded democratic nations as an extension of FOIP and the Quad and present specific policy recommendations.

## FOIP of Japan: Values, Security and Economic Development

It was Japan’s Prime Minister Abe who first proposed FOIP. While Abe formally announced FOIP in his speech at TICAD VI in 2016,<sup>17</sup> he stated that its roots dated back to his “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech on his visit to India in 2007<sup>18</sup> and the value-based diplomacy called the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” proposed by Foreign Minister Aso under the first Abe administration.<sup>19</sup> Abe also published a paper titled “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond” at the beginning of the second administration in 2012, in which he emphasized the importance of quadrilateral security cooperation between Japan, the U.S., Australia

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of the Armed Forces, France, *France and Security in the Indo-Pacific* (Paris: Ministry of the Armed Forces, France, June 2018 updated in May 2019), <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/layout/set/print/content/download/532754/9176250/version/3/file/France+and+Security+in+the+Indo-Pacific+-+2019.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Federal Foreign Office, Germany, “*Germany – Europe – Asia: shaping the 21st century together*”: *The German Government adopts policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific region* (Berlin: Federal Foreign Office, Germany, January 9, 2020), <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/regionaleschwerpunkte/asien/german-government-policy-guidelines-indo-pacific/2380510>.

<sup>13</sup> U.K. Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (London: U.K. Government, March 16, 2021), 66-67, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>.

<sup>14</sup> Josep Borrell, “The EU needs a strategic approach for the Indo-Pacific,” *European Union External Action Service*, March 12, 2021, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/94898/eu-needs-strategic-approach-indo-pacific\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/94898/eu-needs-strategic-approach-indo-pacific_en).

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, India, *3rd India-Australia-Japan-USA Quad Ministerial Meeting* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, India, February 18, 2021), [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33540/3rd\\_IndiaAustraliaJapanUSA\\_Quad\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33540/3rd_IndiaAustraliaJapanUSA_Quad_Ministerial_Meeting).

<sup>16</sup> Sebastian Strangio, “Is Biden Preparing to Tweak the Indo-Pacific Strategy?,” *The Diplomat*, November 20, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/is-biden-preparing-to-tweak-the-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI)* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 27, 2016), [https://www.mofa.go.jp/af/af2/page4e\\_000496.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/af/af2/page4e_000496.html).

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Confluence of the Two Seas: Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 22, 2007), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Shinzo Abe, “*Jiyu de Hirakareta Indo Taiheiyo ni Miru Senryakuteki Shiko* (Strategic Thinking in a Free and Open Indo-Pacific),” *Gaiko*, Vol. 65 (Jan./Feb. 2021), 95-96, [http://www.gaiko-web.jp/test/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Vol65\\_p94-99\\_specialinterview\\_Shinzo\\_Abe.pdf](http://www.gaiko-web.jp/test/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Vol65_p94-99_specialinterview_Shinzo_Abe.pdf)

and India in the Indian and Pacific oceans, stating that FOIP was a more sophisticated version of this vision.<sup>20</sup> The Suga administration inaugurated in 2020 has inherited FOIP.<sup>21</sup>

The 2017 Diplomatic Blue Paper discusses Abe's 2016 TICAD VI speech, noting that: (1) The key to the stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by the synergy between two continents, Asia, which is recording remarkable growth, and Africa, which is full of potential, and two free and open seas, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans; (2) democracy, the rule of law and the market economy have already taken root in Southeast Asia and South Asia; (3) Japan intends to promote peace and prosperity in the region by improving connectivity of Asia, the Middle East and Africa; and (4) to this end, Japan will strengthen strategic cooperation with the U.S., India, Australia, and other countries.<sup>22</sup> Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs identifies the three pillars of FOIP as: (1) the promotion and solidification of rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade and so on; (2) the pursuit of economic prosperity through enhancing connectivity with quality infrastructure development in accordance with international standards; and (3) commitment for peace and stability to assist capacity building on maritime law enforcement, cooperation in such fields as disaster risk reduction and non-proliferation.<sup>23</sup> Given its roots and contents as described above, FOIP contains three major elements: (1) emphasis on values of democracy, rule of law and liberal economy; (2) security centered on territorial sovereignty, freedom of navigation and non-proliferation; and (3) support for economic development through infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific region. The first and second points both mainly aim to deal with threats from China in light of its authoritarian system and human rights issues; its state-led capitalism and unfair economic practices; and its overwhelming military power threatening the freedom of navigation and territorial sovereignty of other countries in the South and East China Seas. Japan believes that the U.S., Japan, Australia and India share this concern and thus is working with these countries to deal with challenges posed by China. As such, FOIP and the Quad are closely related concepts.

On the other hand, the third point is not necessarily related to competition against China. Some argue that FOIP should be regarded as a countermeasure against China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), given that China's infrastructure projects are frequently criticized due to their flawed governance. Abe, however, stated in 2017 that Japan could accept the BRI as long as it "adequately" incorporated "the thinking held in common by the international community regarding the openness, transparency, economic efficiency, financial soundness, and other such aspects of the infrastructure" and cooperate with China in infrastructure development.<sup>24</sup> On Abe's visit to China in 2018, the two countries exchanged 52 memorandums of cooperation for businesses in third countries,<sup>25</sup> which implied that Japan would not object to the BRI.

<sup>20</sup> Shinzo Abe, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012,

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe?barrier=accesspaylog>.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Address by Prime Minister Suga at the Seventy-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly*.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Chapter 1: International Situation and Japan's Diplomacy in 2016," *Diplomatic Bluebook 2017* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, September 15, 2017), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2017/html/chapter1/c0102.html#s03>.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Chapter 1: International Situation and Japan's Diplomacy in 2018," *Diplomatic Bluebook 2019*.

<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, *Press Conference by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Following His Attendance at the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, ASEAN-related Summit Meetings, and Other Related Meetings* (Tokyo: Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, November 14, 2017), [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98\\_abe/statement/201711/00007.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201711/00007.html).

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Prime Minister Abe Visits China* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, October 26, 2018), [https://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/c\\_ml/cn/page3e\\_000958.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_ml/cn/page3e_000958.html).

Regarding the first and second points mentioned above, Japan has carefully avoided clarifying implications of targeting China because it does not only pursue to compete, but to stabilize relationship with China. For instance, while Abe stated “FOIP Strategy” in his policy speech in 2018,<sup>26</sup> he described FOIP as a “vision” in his policy speech in 2019.<sup>27</sup> This change of phrase reflects Japan’s deliberate consideration for relationship with China, considering in particular that Abe made an important visit to China in October 2018 for the first time in nearly seven years. Consequently, when it comes to realization of specific policies, the first point of FOIP has not produced meaningful outcomes, while the second point is basically limited to reactive defense measures against Chinese ships entering Japan’s territorial sea in the East China Sea. Only the third point has been productively advanced as shown by a variety of infrastructure projects in Asia.

### FOIP of the U.S.: Strategy for Competition against China

In the U.S., after the Trump administration was inaugurated in January 2017, Secretary of State Tillerson mentioned FOIP for the first time in his speech on India in October<sup>28</sup> and President Trump announced his vision of FOIP in his policy speech at APEC in Vietnam in November.<sup>29</sup> In December, the 2017 NSS mentioned the importance of FOIP in the chapter “Indo-Pacific” and emphasized the need to counter China's military and economic threats.<sup>30</sup> The Framework was then created by the NSC in February 2018.<sup>31</sup>

The Framework should be regarded as the most important document for analysis of FOIP because it was prepared for purely internal use for Trump administration’s national strategy. This document clarifies strategic guidance with respect to FOIP. In the section entitled “National Security Challenges,” it states that:

- How to maintain U.S. strategic primacy in the Indo-Pacific region and promote liberal economic order while preventing China from establishing new, illiberal spheres influence, and cultivating areas of cooperation to promote regional peace and prosperity?

In the section entitled “Assumptions,” it states that:

- Strategic competition between the U.S. and China will persist, owing to the divergent nature and goals of our political and economic systems. China will circumvent international rules and norms to gain an advantage;
- China aims to dissolve U.S. alliances and partnerships in the region. China will exploit vacuums and opportunities created by these diminished bonds;
- Chinese economic, diplomatic, and military influence will continue to increase in the near-term and challenge the U.S. ability to achieve its national interests in the Indo-Pacific region;
- China seeks to dominate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and bio-genetics, and harness them in the service of authoritarianism. Chinese dominance in these technologies would pose profound challenges to free societies; and

<sup>26</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, *Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 196th Session of the Diet* (Tokyo: Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, January 22, 2018), [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98\\_abe/statement/201801/\\_00002.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201801/_00002.html).

<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, *Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 198th Session of the Diet* (Tokyo: Prime Minister of



- China's proliferation of its digital surveillance, information controls, and influence operations will damage U.S. efforts to promote our values and national interests in the Indo-Pacific region and, increasingly, in the Western hemisphere and at home.

In the section entitled "Actions," it states:

- [The U.S. should] invigorate U.S. technical assistance to friendly governments to promote rule of law and civil institutions while communicating the strings attached to China's Belt and Road Initiative; and
- [The U.S. should] develop a robust public diplomacy capability, which can compete with China's information campaigns; puncture the narrative that Chinese regional domination is inevitable.

In the section entitled "China," it referred to a document called the "U.S. Strategic Framework for Countering China's Economic Aggression." At the same time, it states that "[the U.S. should] cooperate with China when beneficial to U.S. interests." However, it only states this simple sentence, no specific policy being explained.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" released by the Department of Defense in June 2019 elaborates challenges posed by China first in its "strategic landscape" chapter.<sup>33</sup> Another report, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision," released by the Department of State in November 2019 does not directly refer to China, but states that the U.S. "is implementing a whole-of-government strategy to champion the values that have served the Indo-Pacific so well: (1) respect for sovereignty and independence of all nations; (2) peaceful resolution of disputes; (3) free, fair, and reciprocal trade based on open investment, transparent agreements, and connectivity; and (4) adherence to international law, including freedom of navigation and overflight."<sup>34</sup> This explanation obviously implies that FOIP is primarily targeting China. Further, Congress demonstrated its support for FOIP through the passage of the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act and the Asia Reassurance Initiative (ARIA) Act in 2018, which both have an aspect of countering against China's expanding influence in the region.<sup>35</sup>

In light of these documents and policies, the essence of U.S. FOIP strategy mirrors U.S. diplomacy toward China. U.S. foreign policy toward China has evolved over the years; for a long time since the two countries' diplomatic normalization, it had been an "engagement" approach as the U.S. looked to reap economic benefits of China's vast economy. The U.S. had expected that China's authoritarian regime would inch toward democracy throughout economic development. While there was growing alarm about China's

Japan and His Cabinet, January 28, 2019), [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98\\_abe/statement/201801/\\_00003.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/201801/_00003.html).

<sup>28</sup> Rex Tillerson, "Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-our-relationship-india-next-century-address-us-secretary-state-rex-tillerson>.

<sup>29</sup> White House, *Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO Summit | Danang, Vietnam*.

<sup>30</sup> White House, *National Security of Strategy of the United States of America*, 45-46.

<sup>31</sup> White House, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, by Robert C. O'Brien; and *U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific*.

<sup>32</sup> White House, *U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific*, 1-4, 6-8.

<sup>33</sup> Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Defense, June 1, 2019), 7-12, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/department-of-defense-indo-pacific-strategy-report-2019.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, November 4, 2019), 6, <https://www.state.gov/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-advancing-a-shared-vision>.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Yiwei, "Can US' Asia Reassurance Initiative Act contain China?," *Global Times*, January 21, 2019,

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1136474.shtml>; and Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

military expansion, the U.S. had attempted to “hedge” such risks, believing that China’s democratization would diminish the concerns over time. Based on such erroneous assumptions in hindsight, the mainstream policy of the U.S. toward China had been to engage China in the global economy through conciliatory measures such as backing the entry of China into the World Trade Organization.

However, since the second term of the Obama administration in 2013, the U.S. approach had shifted from engagement to “competition.” This was because, first, unfair practices of Chinese companies and China’s nationalistic trade and industrial policies came to be seen increasingly intolerable by U.S. business communities. Second, the Xi Jinping regime inaugurated in 2012 rolled back the democratization and transparency of Chinese Communist Party’s political system that had been promoted under the previous regimes, even strengthening political and social control. Third, the foreign policy of China had become increasingly oriented toward great powers and aggressive expansionism. In 2014, President Xi advocated the “Chinese Dream,” a vision of the great revival of the Chinese nation and the realization of a powerful country, launching the BRI, a global infrastructure development strategy. The Xi regime also announced “Made in China 2025” in 2015, and declared its intention to become a “strong” country espousing “socialism with Chinese characteristics” at the National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2017. Both clearly demonstrated China’s ambition of becoming a great power. The U.S. establishment was disappointed by these China’s behaviors, and came to view China as a “competitor,” resulting in the U.S.’s strong stance against China.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the fundamental change of the U.S. approach toward China, the Trump administration took aim at trade imbalances, particularly massive imports from China to appeal to voters who had been economically hurt by trade liberalization. This policy further toughened American attitude toward China in its public opinion and law makers. The Trump administration’s strategy was clarified by the 2017 NSS, which officially positioned China as a “strategic competitor” and “revisionist power” that challenges the influence and interests of the U.S. The U.S.’s FOIP has been formulated in the course of such a policy shift with respect to China over the past years.

### Indo-Pacific Strategy of India and Australia: Emphasis on Inclusiveness

The “Indian Maritime Security Strategy” released by the Indian Navy in 2015 had pointed out a shift in the world from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific.<sup>37</sup> The concept of the Indo-Pacific for India, however, became a full-fledged vision through Prime Minister Modi’s speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.<sup>38</sup>

India has traditionally been cautious about using the phrase of Indo-Pacific because it did not want recognition as a member of a coalition of Western nations against China. This attitude was indicated by India’s initial response to the Quad, of which original concept was presented by Prime Minister Abe’s “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech in August 2007 and supported by Prime Minister Singh along with the

<sup>36</sup> For understanding the shift in U.S. policy toward China, see for example: Hal Brands and Zack Cooper, “After the Responsible Stakeholder, What? Debating America’s China Strategy,” *The National Security Review*, Vol 2, Iss 2 (February 2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/1943>; Melanie Hart and Kelly Magsamen, “Limit, Leverage, and Compete: A New Strategy on China,” *Center for American Progress*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2019/04/03/468136/limit-leverage-compete-new-strategy-china/>; and Hal Brands and Jake Sullivan, “China Has Two Paths to Global Domination,” *Foreign Policy*, May 22, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/22/china-superpower-two-paths-global-domination-cold-war>.

<sup>37</sup> Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (New Delhi: Indian Navy, October 2015), foreword iii, [https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_25Jan16.pdf](https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, India, *Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue*; and Darshana M. Baruah, “India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi’s Theater of Opportunity,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205>.

Vice President Cheney and Australian Prime Minister Howard.<sup>39</sup> Australia then participated in Malabar, a joint maritime military exercise by Japan, the U.S., and India in September 2007. However, in response to criticism from China, Singh quickly claimed that the Quad carried “no security implication.”<sup>40</sup> Abe said in retrospect that Singh’s support for the Quad was actually lukewarm.<sup>41</sup> Following Abe’s resignation and Australia’s leadership transition from Howard to Rudd, the Quad lost its momentum. Australia decided not to participate in Malabar in 2008, resulting in the termination of the Quad cooperation.

However, since 2017, the Quad was revived at working level, leading to the first foreign ministers’ meeting in 2019. The second foreign ministers’ meeting was held in October 2020 where they agreed to gather on a regular basis. Australia then participated in Malabar in November 2020 for the first time since 2007. Shortly after the Biden administration was inaugurated in January 2021, the foreign ministers’ teleconference was held in February, followed by the first summit meeting held online in March. According to the joint statement released after the meeting, the leaders declared that they were “united in a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific,” and determined to “strive for a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion.”<sup>42</sup> The leaders also agreed to hold an in-person summit by the end of 2021. As India and Australia were invited to the G7 summit meeting scheduled for June 2021, there is a good chance that the in-person summit would be held on this occasion.

What are the factors that have encouraged India to actively participate in the Indo-Pacific and the Quad in contrast to its cautious stance to the Quad in 2007? First, the threats of China have been becoming significantly imminent in recent years. India has been highly wary of China’s infrastructure development in the Indian Ocean and Pakistan through its “String of Pearls” strategy and BRI.<sup>43</sup> Further, after years of border conflicts, India and China engaged in two months of standoffs and skirmishes in the border region of the Dokram Plateau in 2017. In 2020, the two countries had military clashes in the border region of Ladakh, resulting in fatalities for the first time since 1975. Since then, India has drastically sharpened its vigilance against China by military preparedness and economic measures centered on restriction on imports and investments from China.

<sup>39</sup> Before Abe’s speech in 2007, the four countries’ maritime cooperation had been realized in the joint response of the four countries to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami disaster. President Biden noted this as an origin of the Quad at the Quad summit meeting on March 12, 2021. See: White House, *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Modi of India, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Suga of Japan in the Virtual Quad Leaders Summit* (Washington, DC: White House, March 12 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/12/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-modi-of-india-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-suga-of-japan-in-virtual-meeting-of-the-quad>. Also, the first meeting of the initial Quad was held in May 2007 in the informal format on the occasion of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Manila. For understanding the initial Quad, see: Patrick Gerard Buchan and Benjamin Rimland, “Defining the Diamond: The Past, Present, and Future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 16, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-diamond-past-present-and-future-quadrilateral-security-dialogue>; and Tanvi Madan, “The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Quad,” *War On The Rocks*, November 16, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/11/rise-fall-rebirth-quad>.

<sup>40</sup> Brahma Chellaney, “This Quartet Has A Future,” *The Times of India*, July 18, 2007, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/LEADER-ARTICLE-This-Quartet-Has-A-Future/articleshow/2212192.cms>.

<sup>41</sup> Shinzo Abe, “*Jiyu de Hirakareta Indo Taiheiyō ni Miru Senryakuteki Shiko* (Strategic Thinking in a Free and Open Indo-Pacific),” 95.

<sup>42</sup> White House, *Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement: “The Spirit of the Quad.”*

<sup>43</sup> India has never joined the support for BRI in the joint communique of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit meetings unlike other member states, nor sent its delegation to either of the two Belt and Road Forums in 2017 and 2019. Responding to a question about India’s absence in the 2017 Forum, Indian government spokesman emphasized the importance of good governance in connectivity projects and announced India’s concern about BRI’s projects in Pakistan. See: Ministry of External Affairs, India, *Official Spokesperson’s response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, India, May 13, 2017), [https://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl%2F28463%2FOfficial Spokespersons response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum](https://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl%2F28463%2FOfficial+Spokespersons+response+to+a+query+on+participation+of+India+in+OBOR+BRI+Forum).

Second, the political philosophy of Modi, who was sworn in as prime minister in 2014, has been influential to India's foreign policy. Modi has placed much emphasis on economic growth led by economic liberalization, and actively promoted cooperation with the U.S., Japan, and other Western countries. As a passionate nationalist, he has also emphasized a resolute stance in confronting China's security threats. Such Modi's approaches are different from India's traditional non-aligned diplomacy and socialist policies.

India, on the other hand, has not adopted FOIP in the same way as the U.S. and Japan. Although Modi has demonstrated his strong attachment to the West, Delhi has still maintained its traditional foreign policy of "strategic autonomy." That is why he always states that the Indo-Pacific region should be a "free, open, inclusive region" and that "India does not see the Indo-Pacific region as a strategy or as a club of limited members, nor as a grouping that seeks to dominate."<sup>44</sup> The word "inclusive" indicates that the Quad should not exclude other countries including China. Presumably, due to India's insistence on "inclusiveness," the joint statement released after the Quad summit meeting in March 2021 included phrases "a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion" and "a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific."<sup>45</sup>

India's considerations for the relationship with China originates from concerns about the risk of military conflict with China and strong economic ties between the two countries. China is India's biggest trade partner and exporter to India in 2020. At the same time, India's trade deficit with China is substantial, and its over-reliance on Chinese products has been a serious problem. In recent years, India has pursued restriction on imports from China to foster domestic industry.

Australia made it clear that the Indo-Pacific was the most important diplomatic concept in its 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. Like India, Australia had been cautious about cooperation in the Quad because of Australia's dependence on Chinese economy. With the development of the Chinese economy since 2000, Australia's exports of natural resources and agricultural products to China have significantly increased. Accelerated further by China-Australia Free Trade Agreement's entry into force in 2015, China has grown into Australia's largest trading partner and importer, playing an indispensable role for Australia's economic development.

Australia, on the other hand, has become increasingly wary of growing Chinese investment in important sectors such as infrastructure and land and interference in Australian politics, and therefore implemented countermeasures such as tightening restrictions on foreign investment in 2016 and banning political donations from abroad in 2018. In 2020, China reacted violently to the Morrison administration's insistence on investigations into the origin of COVID-19, imposing a series of restrictions on imports of agricultural products and coal from Australia. This feud has significantly deteriorated the two countries' relationship and Australians' attitude toward China. According to the poll in 2020, only 23% of Australians trust China to act responsibly in the world.<sup>46</sup>

The rise of the Chinese threat and the deterioration of the diplomatic relations has encouraged Australia to place greater importance on the Indo-Pacific and to actively engage in the Quad. Having said that, given the importance of China for its economy, Canberra still needs to stabilize this relationship. That is why,

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, India, *Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue*; and White House, *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Modi of India, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Suga of Japan in the Virtual Quad Leaders Summit*.

<sup>45</sup> White House, *Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: "The Spirit of the Quad."*

<sup>46</sup> Lowy Institute, *Poll 2020: Relations with the US and China, Trust in Global Powers (2020)*, <https://poll.lowyinstitute.org/charts/trust-in-global-powers>.



although FOIP could work as a strategic concept to counter China, Australia does not desire to flatly exclude China. Its ultimate goal is to create a rules-based Indo-Pacific region which does not critically antagonize China.

ASEAN adopted the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” at its 2019 summit meeting.<sup>47</sup> ASEAN’s vision of Indo-Pacific cooperation is to pursue dialogue and cooperation with aim to promoting development and prosperity of all countries in the region and ASEAN emphasizes that it should play a central role. It does not indicate that China should be contained, but rather places an emphasis on inclusiveness to avoid exclusion of specific countries, namely China. Here, the objective of the “Indo-Pacific” is to alleviate tensions with China in contrast with FOIP.

### Prospects of FOIP and the Quad: Mutually Complementary Function

As mentioned above, Japan, the U.S., India, Australia and ASEAN have had different approaches to the Indo-Pacific. Although they share the term, “free and open Indo-Pacific” or “Indo-Pacific,” the goals and policies of each country are not exactly the same. The biggest factor that divides their approaches is each country’s relationship with China. As noted earlier, the Trump administration viewed China as a “strategic competitor” and a “revisionist state” that challenges U.S. power, influence, and interests, and developed FOIP as a means of countervailing such threats. The Biden administration has also clearly stated that China is “the greatest geopolitical challenge of the 21st century” and that, unlike the threats posed by Russia and Iran, China is “the only country” that can “seriously challenge the stable and open international system” and “all rules, values, and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, there will be highly likely no fundamental change in U.S. policy toward China.

In contrast, while Japan, Australia, India, and ASEAN, recognize the need to cope with China’s security threats and unfairness in economic policies and practices, they have attempted to avoid provoking China to stabilize the relationship, given China’s dominant military power and economic influence. While it would be preferable if the U.S. could deter China’s aggressive behaviors by taking a hawkish stance, the countries would be concerned about the retaliation if they cooperate with such U.S. policy. India’s traditional diplomacy of strategic autonomy and Japan’s constitutional constraints on military use would be an obstacle for collective security among the four countries. China has criticized the Indo-Pacific strategy and the Quad because they aim at building a “new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)” in the region,<sup>49</sup> but there is no such possibility, considering the above-mentioned reality.<sup>50</sup>

If FOIP or the Quad will not develop into a military alliance, what will be their prospects? Will they end up merely a symbolic institution for message sharing? It is true that FOIP and the Quad are not expected to rapidly enhance military cooperation among the four countries. However, they could be effective platforms for policy coordination to deal with China’s threats for the following reasons: First, while the U.S. regards

<sup>47</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*.

<sup>48</sup> White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: White House, March 3, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/03/interim-national-security-strategic-guidance/>; and Department of State, *A Foreign Policy for the American People* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State, March 3, 2021), <https://www.state.gov/a-foreign-policy-for-the-american-people>.

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *Wang Yi: U.S. “Indo-Pacific Strategy” Undermines Peace and Development Prospects in East Asia* (Beijing: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, October 13, 2020), [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1824140.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1824140.shtml).

<sup>50</sup> Michelle Ye Hee Lee and Joanna Slater “Meeting of leaders signals the ‘Quad’ grouping will become central part of the U.S. strategy in Asia,” *The Washington Post*, March 13, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/quad-diplomacy-counter-china/2021/03/12/9317aee8-8299-11eb-ac37-4383f7709abe\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/quad-diplomacy-counter-china/2021/03/12/9317aee8-8299-11eb-ac37-4383f7709abe_story.html).

China as a “competitor,” it does not aim for regime change in China, nor does it adopt “containment” policy as it once did against the Soviet Union.<sup>51</sup> Given China's economic and military power, the stability of its regime, and the deepening economic interdependence between China and other countries, such a goal and policy are not feasible at least through external pressure (though the possibility of self-destruction through internal dissent should not be denied).<sup>52</sup> The U.S. aims at competition with China in the areas of military, technology, and global influence to uphold values and rules that the U.S. desires. That means, if such a goal can be achieved, even cooperation with China is unlikely to be ruled out.

In other words, the U.S. and China are neither in total confrontation, nor the world is divided into two blocks. In this sense, describing the U.S.-China relationship as a “new Cold War” or “all-out decoupling” provides an inaccurate image. To the contrary, the total trade between the U.S. and China amounted to \$560 billion in 2020, down only 3% from 2016 even during the war-on-trade period, and U.S. exports to China increased by 8% in 2020.<sup>53</sup> Foreign direct investments in China reached \$163 billion, up 4% from the previous year even during the pandemic period, ranking first in the world in 2020.<sup>54</sup> Goldman Sachs has also been expanding its investments in China.<sup>55</sup> Decoupling is expected to advance only to the extent that technology and supply chains of critical goods are related due to U.S. policy to exclude China in these fields. Accordingly, the U.S. would not expect the framework of FOIP to play a role to “contain” China, while such a role would be also difficult for other allies and partners to accept.

Second, countries related to FOIP and the Quad other than the U.S. strongly desire U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. could place substantial pressure on China, which is what other countries need but are unable to realize. The phrase “secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific” used by Biden’s team instead of “FOIP” raised some concerns among Japanese intellectuals because they thought it would send a signal of a U.S. commitment setback.<sup>56</sup> Presumably at the request of the Suga administration, the Biden administration has since started to use FOIP.

Third, FOIP and the Quad are not only meant to counter China directly or militarily, but also serve as a framework for regional and global cooperation among relevant countries in a broader sense. In the Quad’s first summit meeting in March 2020, the leaders agreed on the partnership for vaccine manufacturing and delivery, climate change and important technology without mentioning ever “China” in the joint statement or fact sheet.<sup>57</sup> These areas were not conventionally regarded as security issues, but their importance has been growing in terms of economic security. The Quad summit meeting has provided an opportunity to strengthening multilateral cooperation in such fields.

For the above-mentioned reasons, it would be beneficial for all countries involved in FOIP and the Quad that: (1) The U.S. demonstrates a strong commitment to the Indo-Pacific, increasing deterrence and

<sup>51</sup> Richard Fontaine and Ely Ratner, “The U.S.-China confrontation is not another Cold War. It’s something new,” *The Washington Post*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/02/us-china-confrontation-is-not-another-cold-war-its-something-new/>.

<sup>52</sup> Zack Cooper and Hal Brands, “America Will Only Win When China’s Regime Fails,” *Foreign Policy*, March 11, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/11/america-chinas-regime-fails/>.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Trade in Goods with China* (Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau), <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5700.html>.

<sup>54</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Investment Trends Monitor* (Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, January 2021), [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaeiain2021d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaeiain2021d1_en.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Scott Murdoch “Goldman Sachs shifts to full ownership of China securities joint venture,” *Reuters*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-goldman-sachs-china-idUSKBN2810F0>.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Crabtree, “Let’s Keep It the “Free and Open” Indo-Pacific,” *The Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research*, February 8, 2021, <https://www.tkfl.or.jp/en/research/detail.php?id=798>.

<sup>57</sup> White House, *Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement: “The Spirit of the Quad.”*; and White House, *Fact Sheet: Quad Summit* (Washington, DC: White House, March 12, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/fact-sheet-quad-summit>.

pressure on China; (2) other countries support such an approach, simultaneously managing their relations with China; and (3) all countries pursue multilateral cooperation in not only the field of conventional security, but also of economic security. If the U.S. and other relevant countries share this understanding, FOIP and the Quad will continue to function and develop as a mechanism for coordinating the policies of the countries.

The most important factor is the U.S.'s continued commitment. Therefore, other countries need to make every effort to keep the U.S. in the region. As mentioned earlier, the U.S. is expected to play the vanguard role in countering and pressuring China since other countries are vulnerable to China's aggressive behaviors. Given such differences in position and interests, other countries are expected to play a complementary role as effectively as possible. For example, the Quad's current joint military exercises should be continued and even intensified. Cooperation in economic security such as technology and supply chains should be further strengthened. Moreover, with the Quad at the core, it would make sense to expand cooperation to other Indo-Pacific countries such as ASEAN, South Korea, the EU or the U.K.

### Policy Recommendations: Multi-layered Coalitions of Democratic Countries

This paper concludes with recommendations for cooperation in the framework of FOIP and the Quad and beyond. As already discussed, the driver for FOIP and the Quad cooperation is China. The rise of new superpower and its growing competition with a traditional superpower have forced Indo-Pacific countries to consider how to deal with this new reality. A possible solution is a functional approach to partnership and cooperation. The two great powers are in competition with each other in a variety of areas, including military, security, economy, and global influence. The essence of the competition—what the goal should be, how it should be achieved, and what countries should be involved—varies in different areas.

Regarding areas of cooperation, on the military and security front, it will be necessary to thoroughly deter China so that the sovereignty of Indo-Pacific countries will not be infringed. On the economic front, negotiation and compromise should not be excluded if China's economic policies and practices become fairer and more transparent. On the technology front, as far as crucial and emerging economic security technologies such as telecommunication, semiconductor, cyber security, and AI, are concerned, considering China's dual-use policy, it should be significantly important to defend against China's threats and slow down China's technological progress. Further, it should also be important for the U.S. and other democratic states to promote multilateral cooperation towards development of such important technologies. The same applies to the issue of supply chain. Indo-Pacific countries are diverse in their political and economic systems; their relations with China also have their own characteristics. Not all countries can completely agree on the policies that the U.S. pursues toward China. Forcing Indo-Pacific countries to choose between the U.S. and China would place them in a quandary, undermining the solidarity of Indo-Pacific countries as a consequence.

Regarding participants in cooperation, the Biden's team announced its intention to host a "global summit for Democracy."<sup>58</sup> However, the question regards which countries to invite and what themes to discuss. In the Indo-Pacific region, Vietnam and post-coup Myanmar are clearly not democratic countries. Thailand and Cambodia are at the very least in a dubious situation considering their oppressive governance. There is no doubt that Taiwan would be a highly controversial issue. Dividing Indo-Pacific countries by such

<sup>58</sup> Biden Harris, *The Power of America's Example: The Biden Plan for Leading the Democratic World to Meet the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, <https://joebiden.com/americanleadership>; and Joseph R. Biden, Jr. "Why America Must Lead Again," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2020), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

selection would not be appropriate for countries involved in FOIP and the Quad to pursue their policies jointly toward China. Accordingly, it would be more appropriate to take a functional approach. That means, the Quad should be the core group, and, depending on the area of cooperation, other countries should be invited. This would create multi-layered coalitions of like-minded democratic countries. Major possible areas of cooperation are: military and security; technology; supply chain; governance (democracy and human rights); and economic development assistance.

First, regarding military and security, the issues to be addressed are free navigation in the Indo-Pacific, respect for every country's sovereignty, and regional stability. As the U.S. has the most effective military capacity to contain China's aggression in the South and East China Seas, the U.S. should emphasize its commitment and clarify a red line to prevent China from expanding its threatening activities toward Indo-Pacific countries. Other countries are required to provide full-support to the U.S.'s initiatives. Joint maritime military exercises should not only be continued and strengthened, but also attempt to involve appropriate ASEAN countries, the EU and the U.K. The Trump administration's excessive pressure on allies for burden-sharing of military bases through bilateral negotiations could have undermined the trust of allies. Such sensitive issues for recipient countries' domestic politics should be deliberately discussed taking into account their external implications. Also, the U.S. could present an overall strategy for military deployment in the Indo-Pacific region to relevant allies so that all parties could pursue a fair solution.

Second, regarding technology and supply chain, the Trump administration implemented various measures centered on export controls and investment restrictions, and the Biden administration is likely to succeed most of the measures after its review.<sup>59</sup> In contrast to the Trump administration's unilateral approach, the Biden administration emphasized the need for multilateral cooperation. In this field, other countries are facing similar challenges to the threat of Chinese military technology and dependence on China for critical goods. Thus, the countries have a great deal of interests in common. Accordingly, multilateral talk should be pursued, and the Quad should play a core role. The "T-12," a concept of a framework for tech cooperation among 12 countries (G7 excluding Italy, plus Sweden, Norway, Israel, South Korea, Australia, and India), also deserves consideration.<sup>60</sup>

Third, governance (democracy and human rights) is an area where democratic groups centered on the Quad could make the most of its potential. The countries should seek to express a coordinated message on issues in China such as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Tibet, and Hong Kong. Democratic countries such as South Korea, the EU and the U.K. could be included for this cooperation. As the U.K. invited South Korea, India and Australia to the G7 summit meeting in June 2021, some argue that a "D10" group of 10 democracies should replace G7 with the addition of these three countries. This approach is more practical than Biden's democracy summit.

<sup>59</sup> White House, *Executive Order on America's Supply Chains* (Washington, DC: White House, February 24, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/24/executive-order-on-americas-supply-chains>.

<sup>60</sup> Jared Cohen and Richard Fontaine, "Uniting the Techno-Democracies: How to Build Digital Cooperation," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/2020-10-13/uniting-techno-democracies>.



Finally, economic development assistance is an area where Japan has actively promoted in the Indo-Pacific region mainly through infrastructure projects, but it should be further enhanced in the Quad and FOIP framework in the same way that the Blue Dot Network functioned.<sup>61</sup> The Quad's cooperation for manufacturing and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines agreed on the summit meeting should be highly evaluated as an appropriate model.

## Conclusion

The rise of China and its competition with the U.S. are the most important geopolitical factors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No country in the world, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, can be distant from this two superpowers' competitive coexistence or avoid considering how to deal with this issue. FOIP, the Indo-Pacific, and the Quad are outcomes of this global trend.

As the U.S., Japan, India, Australia, ASEAN, and Europe have their own agendas and interests, each of them discusses its own concept of Indo-Pacific. Its substance is multifaceted, and the goals of each country are not exactly the same. However, there are many areas of overlap, especially with respect to the issue of China, thus it has the potential to function effectively as a mechanism for coordinating the policies of each country. The key to its successful coordination is the U.S.'s continued commitment in the region, which need to be supported by each country's efforts for mutually complementary cooperation.

As the U.S. and China are competing over dominance in various areas, allies and partners of the U.S. are likely to form multi-layered coalitions. FOIP's vision and the Quad framework have a great potential to play a central role for these coalitions. Key issues for these coalitions will be military and security, technology, supply chain, governance (democracy and human rights) and economic development assistance. The four democratic countries, the U.S., Japan, India and Australia should wield strong leadership. In particular, Japan is expected to play the leading role for this cooperation, considering its historically solid alliance with the U.S., broad and stable partnership with India, Australia and Southeast Asian countries as well as long-term experience of managing relations with China.

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*The opinions expressed in this paper are the author's own and do not reflect the view of any other person or organization including one to which the author belongs.*

<sup>61</sup> Department of State, *Blue Dot Network* (Washington, DC: United States Department of State), <https://www.state.gov/blue-dot-network>.