
— Opinion

By getting out in front on China, Australia led the world

If by defending a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific Canberra made itself an outlier to the whims of authoritarians, then we are all outliers says Tokyo's representative in Australia.

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Japanese Ambassador



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Without a doubt, the recent visit by Foreign Minister [Penny Wong](#) [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5c7se>] to China and the restarting of dialogue between Australia and China is a welcome development.

As emphasised by the Australian government, the visit represents the first steps in the “stabilisation” of the relationship and so understandably there are expectations that it will lead to the resolution of core issues that span the breadth of Australia-China ties.



Prime Ministers Anthony Albanese and Fumio Kishida recognise the importance of trilateral cooperation with the US and the Quad in realising a free and open Indo-Pacific region. AP

For its part, Japan too aims to build a “constructive and stable” relationship with China and places a great importance on dialogue. Hence preparations are currently underway for a visit to China by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi.

The key question is: what order do we seek to achieve through dialogue? What I have stated time and again is that the rules-based international order is a fundamental interest of both Japan and Australia and the international community as a whole.

Australia’s refusal to give in to pressure is indeed worthy of praise. It was a watershed moment in history and led the world in its response.

Refusing to accept the economic coercion applied against various Australian goods, opposing any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, and upholding the rules-based international order are all pressing issues for Japan, Australia, the US and other like-minded countries. They are major prerequisites for world peace and prosperity.

Nowadays, Australians are acutely aware that the undue use of influence on politicians, investment in key areas of infrastructure to the detriment of national security, economic coercion that undermines the functioning of and confidence in

the rules-based multilateral trading system, and the use of cyberattacks have rapidly made “distance” a moot point.

When Australia was subject to undue pressure through economic coercion [<https://www.afr.com/link/follow-20180101-p5c7yf>] from a major regional power, its political parties put aside their differences to respond as one. Australia’s refusal to give in to pressure is indeed worthy of praise. It was a watershed moment in history and led the world in its response.

Given that Japan was subject to similar coercion in 2010, this is why we have continued to insist that “Australia is not walking alone”.

It is through measures such as AUKUS, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, and the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation that regional deterrence has been strengthened in response to changes in the regional security environment.

Collectively they make an important contribution to the continuation of peace and stability. Both Prime Ministers Fumio Kishida and Anthony Albanese have recognised the importance of trilateral cooperation with the US and the Quad in realising a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Japan and Australia continue to stand at the forefront of measures to uphold the international rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is an order that reflects our shared values, the fundamental dignity of human rights, the exercise of trade without coercion, the freedom to express one’s views without fear of reprisal, accountability in government and the use of dialogue to resolve tensions.

If defending this order means becoming an outlier to the whims of authoritarians, then we are all outliers.

Shingo Yamagami is Japan’s ambassador to Australia.



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