

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
(Australia and the Pacific), (KAS) Security Conference
28 October 2024**

1 Introduction

Before I begin my remarks, I'd also like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet this morning and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Mr Bertil Wenger,

Mr Nicolas Zippelius,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to speak at the KAS Australia & the Pacific 3rd Security Conference 2024.

Since we have quite a few European participants, let me start with an interesting historical fact about Russia – or the Soviet Union a little less than 40 years ago.

In the 1980s, the Sea of Okhotsk, located further north of Hokkaido, was a sanctuary for Soviet nuclear submarines operating in the Pacific Ocean. The Soviets were also trying to obtain fishing rights and port access to Kiribati and Vanuatu, which caused concern for the US government.

Japan also became worried as Soviet subs were crossing the Pacific Ocean from north to south, passing through Japan's vital sea lanes.

Japan strategically utilized our ODA to assist Kiribati and Vanuatu, coordinating with the US and Australia. It was really the first instance where these three countries worked together to cope with strategic challenges in the Pacific.

The reason I know a little about this history was because it was the theme of my study under Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski's US-Soviet workshop at Columbia University in New York 37 years ago.

The grade I received for that class is top secret, though.

Thirty-seven years have passed, and today the world has changed. The elephant in the room has also changed.

But what has not changed over the years is the close link between what happens in Europe and this region.

Take North Korea as an example. Not only are they launching numerous types of missiles around Japan, but they are now sending their weapons and soldiers to Russia. In June, President Putin visited North Korea and signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty with Kim Jong-Un.

Recently retired former Prime Minister Fumio KISHIDA left us with these words: Quote/Unquote - "Today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia." - When the core principles of the UN Charter, such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, are ignored, Europe is no longer 'someone else's problem' for our region, and indeed vice versa.

For decades, it has been critical for the international community to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order, based on the rule of law.

Yet in recent years, this order has begun to face more fundamental challenges.

One key factor has been the advance of digital technology.

Massive amounts of information cause confirmation bias and are open to manipulation, and greater surveillance is now possible.

Digital technology certainly fosters economic growth, but at the same time, it can be used as a tool of control.

The current spread of misinformation and acts of disinformation shows how we are being severely challenged in this regard.

There are also growing calls to listen to a wider range of opinions concerning global issues. At the same time, questions over disparities in wealth have risen to the surface.

The world faces a crisis compounded by an entanglement of different ideas; existing global challenges and new ones brought on by scientific and technological developments. The more vulnerable a nation, the greater the sacrifice they are forced to make. A sense of diversion over unfairness and double standards has also been permeating.

Today, unfortunately, the international community lacks a guiding perspective that is acceptable to all about what the international order should be.

2 Changes in Japan's Pacific Strategy

How then can we have this guiding perspective or a wider shared vision within the international community?

I think Japan's past experience of engaging with the very diverse politics, economics, and cultures of this region for over 50 years gives good food for thought.

As you are aware, the basic strategic architecture of this region during the Cold War was the "hub and spokes" model of security cooperation created with the United States at its core.

From the Cold War, to the post-Cold War, and into the twenty-first century, a major challenge for Japan's diplomacy in the region has been creating a multilayered framework for cooperation that would complement this hub and spokes architecture in a parallel way without denying it.

For this reason, Japan embarked on in-depth discussions with the US, Australia and ASEAN on the frameworks for ① APEC, ② the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and ③ East Asia Summit (EAS), and contributed to making them a reality.

In contrast to Europe, a special characteristic of this region is its extraordinary diversity in societies, cultures, religions, political systems and stages of development. So there was a need both to create confidence building mechanisms through dialogue and to secure the economic development of the region as a whole.

This required the creation of flexible and multilayered networks in which many countries could participate, featuring aspects of soft power rather than military power.

Moreover, Japan placed greater emphasis on ASEAN because even though it was still a relatively loose regional grouping compared to what you have in Europe, geo-strategically it occupied a crucial position and so its stability and development were highly desired.

Nowadays everyone supports ASEAN centrality, but Japan was the first to pioneer this as a third-party nation.

It was with this background and list of achievements that Japan under Prime Minister Shinzo ABE took to promoting the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (a FOIP).

3 A Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

The Indo-Pacific is the centre of global activity, encompassing half of the world's population. The Asia-Pacific in particular has been called "the centre of global growth".

However, it is also a region where many nations possess large military forces, and where we have seen

activities that have shaken the rule of law.

The region also directly faces various threats, including infectious diseases, piracy, terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and illegal business operations.

With these challenges in mind, Japan established the core principles of FOIP to defend “freedom” and “the rule of law”, and respect for “diversity”, “inclusiveness” and “openness”.

At present, when there is no consensus on what the underlying perspectives for a new era should be, these principles have won a lot of sympathy from the international community, including a significant number of emerging and developing countries.

Japan has adopted an approach to FOIP that emphasises its strengths. For a nation like Japan, with its unique historical background, it humbly acknowledges that there are diverse values, cultures and histories on this planet.

While it is a challenge to fully comprehend them all, Japan believes that the best way forward is to respect the other party and cooperate through dialogue.

This is why, as clearly shown in this morning's handout, Japan does not seek “the Free and Open Indo-Pacific” but “a Free and Open Indo-Pacific”. Japan does not impose its own methods on other countries. Ultimately Japan welcomes various pathways to realise FOIP.

For example, ASEAN has its own strategies summarized in AOIP, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, but we fully support them given the fundamental principles that we share.

One of the key words in the Joint Vision Statement released at the 50th Japan-ASEAN Commemorative Summit last year was “Co-Creation”. Japan and ASEAN declared that we would jointly strive to “Co-Create” a prosperous and sustainable economy and society.

It is in the spirit of this Co-Creation that even within FOIP, it is important that everyone takes ownership of it. Page 3 of the handout paper explains in detail the 4 pillars that Japan is promoting under FOIP, and I'll provide a brief explanation about them. Please use this as a reference for FOIP as a whole.

The first pillar is "principles for peace and rules for prosperity", which is the backbone of FOIP.

Countries and people in vulnerable environments suffer the most from the erosion of the rule of law.

Japan seeks to uphold the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and opposes

unilateral changes to the status quo by force. These principles indicated in the UN Charter should be adhered to in every corner of the world.

Japan will cooperate with any country as needed. For over twenty years we have supported the Philippines in its fight against poverty and terrorism. We continue to proactively support peace and reconstruction efforts, including providing assistance to Ukraine based on the tenets of "dialogue" and "cooperation".

Japan also provides support that caters to the needs of women, taking in the perspective of WPS, or Women, Peace and Security.

Creating a free, fair and just economic order that does not foster division is essential. Using WTO rules as a foundation, Japan promotes efforts such as the CPTPP with countries that have the will and ability to pursue higher levels of liberalisation.

Creating rules to prevent opaque and unfair development finance is necessary for autonomous and sustainable growth. The failure of a nation has an enormous impact on the lives of its citizens. It is with this in mind that Japan will promote the implementation of the G20 Principles for "Quality Infrastructure Investment".

The second pillar is "addressing challenges in an Indo-Pacific way", which is a new focus area of cooperation for FOIP.

In the modern era, the importance of "global commons" including climate and the environment, global health and cyberspace is dramatically increasing.

Japan will address various challenges related to these in a realistic, cooperative, and practical 'Indo-Pacific way', enhancing the resilience and sustainability of each society to achieve an "equal partnership" among autonomous nations.

On climate change, Japan will lead a clean market and cooperate on innovation in order to realize the global Green Transformation, or GX. We will promote AZEC, or the "Asia Zero Emission Community" concept as a regional platform, and will also use our ODA and provide support for the introduction of renewable energy to island countries.

To help countries build resilient societies, Japan will cooperate with regional disaster prevention and recovery, countering the proliferation of disinformation, and ensuring a free and fair cyberspace. The third pillar is a "multi-layered connectivity", which is a core element of the cooperation for FOIP.

Although connectivity assists in realizing economic growth, connections that rely solely on one country alone might breed political vulnerability. By providing connectivity alternatives, we aim to increase a country's choices, help them overcome their vulnerabilities and pursue economic growth in a way that benefits everyone.

This is particularly relevant in the Pacific Islands.

The Pacific Islands region is exposed to many climate and environmental challenges. To cope with these and other issues, Japan has engaged in large scale infrastructure projects.

One example of this is the new Palau International Airport Terminal.

The East Micronesia undersea cable supported by Japan, the U.S. and Australia is another example.

The 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in July in Japan also showed its strong support for the unity of the region by expressing its commitment in a number of areas, such as people exchanges and human resource development for more than 6500 people over the next 3 years.

The fourth pillar is “extending efforts for security and safe use of the sea to the air”. In other words, protecting and nurturing all within the “public domains” of the seas and skies.

Japan has sought to strengthen the maritime law enforcement capabilities of countries in the region through human resource development, improving coast guard agencies and conducting joint training with them.

The stable and safe use of the air has led Japan to promote the transfer of warning and control radars, as well as human resource development exchanges with the region.

To enhance cooperation, Japan has also been working with aviation authorities to address new technologies such as drones.

4 Conclusion

Bringing all these points to a conclusion, Japan has been observing with great enthusiasm the increased level of activity by European countries in the Indo-Pacific region over recent years.

Japan welcomes the broad range of European initiatives in this part of the globe, such as the expansion of joint training (Exercises Talisman Sabre, Pitch Black, and Kakadu), the provision of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) by Germany to the Philippine Coast Guard, the development of AUKUS, and the UK's

accession to the CPTPP.

These efforts are key to enhancing multi-layered cooperation to secure a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

At the same time, what we need today is a forward-looking, inclusive vision to bring like-minded nations together. We will then be more effective and harmonized in our approach to the Indo-Pacific, knowing that no single nation alone can set the future course of this vast region.

Thank you.

[Ends]