

International Lecture of the Eurasia Foundation, Fall Semester 2022  
Series Lectures (10): “Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of  
East Asiaology”

Topic: Japan’s Indo-Pacific Strategy and Security in Taiwan Strait

For the 10th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 2022 academic year of Chinese Culture University, we invited Professor Hsien-Sen Lin from the Department of East Asian Studies of National Taiwan Normal University to give a speech entitled “Japan’s Indo-Pacific Strategy and Security in Taiwan Strait.” Professor Lin used to be a member of a national security think tank, specializing in Japanese foreign and security policies, Indo-Pacific regional security, and China’s foreign strategy. As US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met face to face during the G20 summit held in Indonesia, this lecture is particularly catching up on current world events and helps students understand the current international situation. Professor Lin first indicated the importance of the Indo-Pacific geographical location to illustrate that the Indo-Pacific has become a new strategic space for power competition. Then Professor Lin introduced the cooperation of infrastructure construction and joint naval exercises of the United States, Japan, India and Australia in the Indo-Pacific region. Finally, Professor Lin talked about Taiwan and its geostrategic value, which connects the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and locates in the center of the first island chain in the Western Pacific.

### **The Significance of Indo-Pacific Strategy**

Since the rise of emerging countries such as China and India, Sea lines of communication (SLOCs) connecting the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean region have become an indispensable maritime economic and trade artery for global trade, and an economic growth center with half of the world’s population. Therefore, the safety of this SLOCs has been the subject of concern.

China adopts military and diplomatic measures to ensure the safety of SLOCs and countries, such as the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, want to ensure the rights of freedom of navigation. As a result, the “security dilemma” has appeared between China and these states and the Indo-Pacific has become a new strategic space for power competition.

(1) Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe proposed the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” strategy at the “Tokyo International Conference on African Development” in August 2016, (2) US President Trump echoed this strategy in November 2017, indicating

that the US and Japan jointly lead the Indo-Pacific strategy, and the US-Japan-India-Australia (QUAD) mechanism has come to fruition. (3) After the establishment of the Tsai Ing-wen Administration, the tension rose across the Taiwan Strait, which is located in the center of the first island chain in the Western Pacific. Accordingly, Taiwan Strait is regarded by foreign media as the most dangerous area in the world.

### **Policy Implications of Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy**

In the above-mentioned "Tokyo International Conference on African Development" in August 2016, Abe announced FOIP strategy that (1) regards India as the main partner of cooperation; (2) strategically aims to ensure the maritime traffic line in the Indo-Pacific region; and (3) promotes the development of the region and the regeneration of Japanese economy through infrastructure construction.

In other words, the third arrow "growth strategy" of Abenomics – "strategy of exporting infrastructure construction system" – constitutes one part of the Indo-Pacific strategy: through exporting infrastructure related to people's livelihood, such as electricity and transportation, to ASEAN, South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and other regions, it aims to promote the growth and regeneration of Japan's economy, enhance Japan's diplomatic status and foreign economic cooperation, and ensure the stable and cheap import of overseas resources and energy.

### **QUAD's infrastructure cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**

(1) In June 2018 Abe promised that Japan would create a new financial structure and provide a total of US\$50 billion from the government and private sector for investment and financing within three years to respond to the needs of infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region. (2) In November 12, 2018, Japan, the United States and Australia issued a joint statement on the "Trilateral Partnership for Infrastructure Investment in the Indo-Pacific" and signed a memorandum of cooperation. Through the MOU, the Trilateral Partnership intends to consult with governments of Indo-Pacific countries to select infrastructure projects for potential development and provides funding to enhance the economic development in the Indo-Pacific region. (3) In November 2019, the United States announced the "Blue Dot Network" plan, indicating that Japan, the United States, and Australia will jointly lead the construction of infrastructure, including roads, ports, and energy systems in the Indo-Pacific region. (4) In May 2022 in Tokyo, President Biden of the United States launched the "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)" with 14 countries, including QUAD. All the participants will make agreements

on four key pillars, including trade, supply chain, decarbonization, and infrastructure, taxation and anti-corruption.

### **QUAD Naval Joint Exercise**

The joint US-India naval exercise “Malabar” began in 1992. In 2007, Japan, Australia and Singapore were invited to participate in this exercise. Japan and Australia became official members of Malabar in 2016 and 2020 respectively. Therefore, QUAD has both dialogue and naval joint training mechanisms.

### **Indo-Pacific Strategy and Security in Taiwan Strait**

Taiwan is located in the center of the first island chain in the Western Pacific Ocean, connecting the East China Sea and the South China Sea. It is related to the security of SLOCs in the Indo-Pacific region and has become a key position for China to access the Pacific Ocean.

(1) Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2) (March 2021), U.S.- Japan Joint Leaders’ Statement (April 2021), and the QUAD summit jointly statement: emphasizing the importance of peace across the Taiwan Strait, and will urge the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues.

(2) Since 2021, high-level Japanese officials have talked about how Taiwan and Japan share a common fate. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated that “a Taiwan emergency is a Japanese emergency, and therefore an emergency for the Japan-U.S. alliance.” In January 2022, Japanese media reported that the U.S.-Japan “2+2” meeting decided to initiate the drafting of a joint combat plan between the Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military in response to “a Taiwan emergency.” (3) During the Trump administration of the United States, Taiwan was regarded as a partner in the Indo-Pacific strategy. The Biden administration positioned the confrontation between the United States and China as “democracy vs. autocracy.” The Biden Administration released a new version of the Indo-Pacific strategy in February 2022 and stated that the United States will work with partners inside and outside of the region to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

At the end of the speech, Professor Lin concluded: (1) After Biden came to the office, the pattern of “US-China confrontation” was finalized. Japan and the United States sent out a clear message to assure the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait through the 2+2 meetings and summits, QUAD, G7 statements, etc. These messages aim to strengthen the

deterrence against the CCP from military invasion of Taiwan. (2) The CCP has incorporated the U.S. and Japan's involvement in the Taiwan Strait war into its military operational plan, so it is meaningless to argue that the U.S. strategy is vague or clear. (3) If the structure of the "US-China confrontation" in the international system remains unchanged, Japan would choose to bandwagon with the US to balance against China and protect Taiwan; if the "US-China confrontation" relationship abates, it is highly possible that Japan would improve Japan-China relations.

(Web link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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