

The Middle East & The Indo-Pacific: The New Geopolitics
Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore

Book presentation for
*Indo-Pacific Strategies:
Navigating geopolitics at the dawn of a new age*

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Eurasia as a parallel agenda of the Indo-Pacific (a section from Ch. 1)

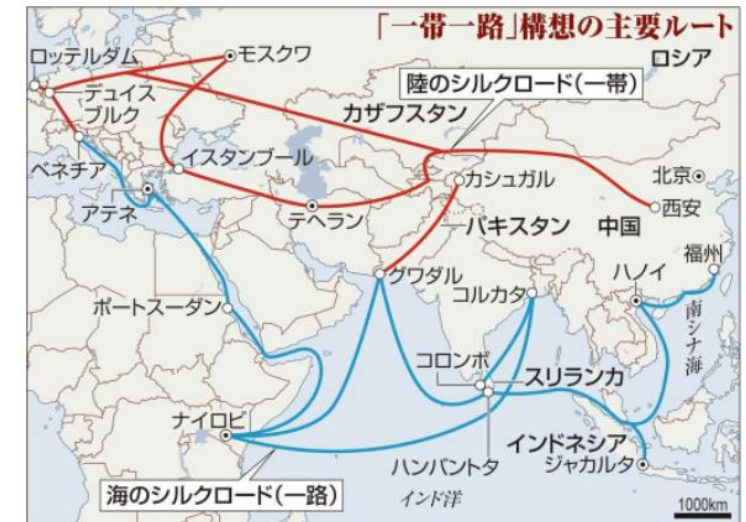
- The Indo-Pacific concept as a wide-ranging concept that sees a large maritime area spanning two oceans as a single geographical and strategic space.
- Some areas and spaces were eclipsed in the Indo-Pacific discourse (e.g., global governance).
- The Indo-Pacific is a purpose-oriented concept.
- The absence of Eurasia is striking, and its conceptual positioning remains unclear.

- Eurasia is geographically contiguous and strategically connected to the Indo-Pacific.
- Geographically, the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia are the “twins”: the Indo-Pacific is the maritime counterpart of Eurasia.
- This inter-connectedness does not appear clearly in the Indo-Pacific strategies.
- The Indo-Pacific discussion seems to relativize the strategic importance of what is called the world’s “geopolitical chessboard.”

- The classical geopolitics and its (past) focus on the Eurasian “heartland.”
- The geographical factors amid the great power competition between Britain, Germany and Russia unfolding in Eurasian.
- The “Indo-Pacific” region of today was Eurasia’s periphery, or “rim.”
- Implicit reference of Eurasia and Asia in the ongoing Indo-Pacific debate: **the Indo-Pacific is part of “maritime Eurasia” and overlaps with a “maritime Asia.”**
- Indo-Pacific strategies are a kind of Eurasian strategy conducted from the two oceans, if not from the “back door,” to counter a risen China.



- The hybrid nature of China's Belt and Road Initiative (一帯一路).
- A broad strategy to shape Eurasia and beyond by a terrestrial "belt" and maritime "road" (both through Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21 Century Maritime Silk Road.)
- The "Maritime Silk Road" as China's own Indo-Pacific initiative; but the Quad states do not have an equivalent of the Silk Road Economic Belt (except for individual projects).



From *Sankei Shimbun* (May 3, 2019)

- The need for further intellectual and policy attention to Eurasia.
- The rapid rise of a *Pax Sinica* from around east Eurasian.
- The strategic implications of the Ukraine war (as covered by the Japanese edition of *Indo-Pacific Strategies*).
- Russia as a political loser of the war and China as a growing leader in east Eurasia.
- China may lead Russian President Vladimir Putin's "Greater Eurasia" idea.
- Russia's "Indo-Pacific strategy," as Russia is cut off from Europe, and it looks to India and Asia-Pacific.

Thank you!

Japan and the Indo-Pacific (Ch. 5)

- Japan's adoption of the Indo-Pacific as a "strategic roadmap"
- The formation of geostrategic thinking behind Japan's discourse on the Indo-Pacific
 1. Japan's political geography
 2. The formation of geostrategy: Japan's Indo-Pacific foreign policy
 3. Japan's diplomatic and security partnership: Realignment and enlargement
 4. Japan's complicated entanglements



Quad Summit of September 2021
Image from the Prime Minister's Office
of Japan

- Japan is a country surrounded by the sea on all sides, which conditions Japan's diplomacy, security and geo-economy.
- It has one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world (EEZ), benefitting greatly from the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- The surrounding sea as a natural fortress.
- Japan's geography requires considerable national defense and coastguard capabilities.
- In particular, the deployment of troops to the Nansei Islands in the south is a major issue.



Image from Japan Coast Guard

- Japan finds itself in a geopolitically challenging region: Russia, China, North Korea, and South Korea.
- Japan is a solitary island in Northeast Asia: an “insular Ukraine.”
- Washington as an unreliable ally in times of a crisis. There is no NATO in Asia, either.
- As a maritime trading nation, it became increasingly challenging to protect the sea lines of communication (SLOC) overseas, particularly in South China Sea.

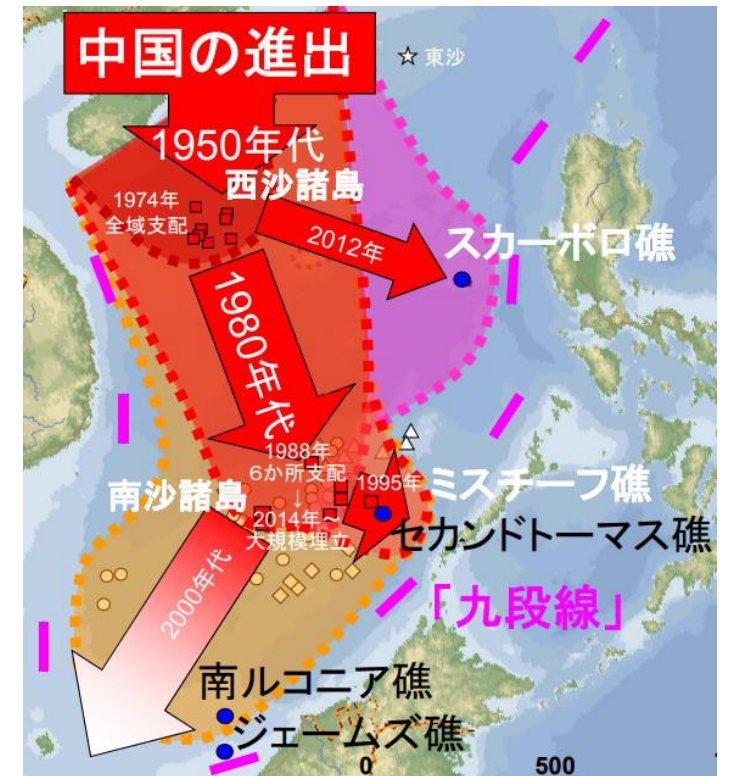


Image from Ministry of Defense of Japan

Japan's efforts to create a favorable international environment for its survival.

The Indo-Pacific initiative and the Quadrilateral cooperation (or the "Quad").

The "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" as one of the achievements of Abe's diplomacy.

It was launched by Abe at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in Nairobi in August 2016.



Shinzo Abe's words in Nairobi speech

- Abe said, “What will give stability and prosperity to the world is none other than the enormous liveliness brought forth through the union of two *free and open* oceans and two continents [emphasis added].”
- He also stressed Japan's responsibility for “fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values *freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion*, and making it prosperous.”

Shinzo Abe's words in our Foreword

*Bringing about the FOIP, given its spatial scope, means **protecting and nurturing the most important public good for the world and humanity.** On the contrary, any attempt to make the Indo-Pacific a confined and closed place is harmful and futile for everyone. It must not be allowed.*

This is the reason why democratic countries that revere freedom, respect the rule of law, and have open governments must join forces. For it is obvious that the guardians of public goods must be such countries.

Foreword

ABE Shinzō, Prime Minister of Japan (former)

In the summer of 2007, I visited Delhi and addressed the joint house of the Indian Parliament. I spoke of an envisaged nautical chart for our shared future. Until that time, the area of East Asia where Japan is located was known as the "Asia-Pacific." It was thought to be a political and economic zone separate from the Indian Ocean region.

However, there has been a dynamic coupling between the two, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans are now becoming one. Convinced that this would be the case more and more in the future, I named my speech "Confluence of the Two Seas," borrowing an appropriate title from an Indian classic.

At that time, I spoke of the strong ties between India and Japan, which are bound together by the commonality of values that they espouse. At the same time, I unintentionally introduced a new geographical concept, "Indo-Pacific," and created a maritime identity that had not existed before.

I just said "new." However, the combination of the Indian and Pacific Oceans has been in place since time immemorial, which is simply nothing new. A word in Tanzania, "huti," is said to be derived from an Austronesian word "punti." Both refer to bananas. The banana crossed from the Pacific Ocean to the east coast of Africa. It was the fathers of the coastal and island nations of today who carried them, and the Indo-Pacific has long provided opportunities for free activity for merchants and voyagers with ambitions to grow.

When I hear the words "free and open Indo-Pacific," what comes back to my mind is such an expansive seascape. What brought about the dramatic growth of post-war Japan, come to think of that, was also the endlessly free and open waves of the Indo-Pacific. Japan is a country that knows the benefits of the Indo-Pacific more than any other. The four letters of FOIP continue to remind me of Japan's responsibility to preserve it.

Bringing about the FOIP, given its spatial scope, means protecting and nurturing the most important public good for the world and humanity. On the contrary, any attempt to make the Indo-Pacific a confined and closed place is harmful and futile for everyone. It must not be allowed.

Image from *Indo-Pacific Strategies*

- A geostrategic thinking existed well before the FOIP's launch
- Japan's Indo-Pacific approach started with Prime Minister Abe's speech, "Confluence of the Two Seas," delivered at the Indian parliament in August 2007.
- Abe himself is the originator of the Quad. In a book published in 2006, titled *To A Beautiful Country* (『美しい国へ』), Abe wrote, "it would be marvelous if we could hold quadrilateral summits or foreign ministers' meetings of Japan, the US, Australia and India (Asia-Pacific Democratic G3 plus the US) and discuss from a strategic perspective how we can contribute and work together, particularly in Asia, to share these universal values [...] with other countries."

- FOIP's spatial scope: The Indo-Pacific concept is far from "global" in its scope.
- FOIP's potential to explore a wide range of diverse issues.
- Unlike the Belt and Road Initiative of China, FOIP has specific geographical boundaries. FOIP has a challenge in policy expansion geographically.
- The eventual need for Japan and other key Indo-Pacific partners to create an imaginary geographic space with connectivity, just as China's Belt and Road, but one that is capable of transmitting the essential values of FOIP.

Thank you!

Reference:

Brendon J. Cannon & Kei Hakata (eds.),
*Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating
Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age*,
Routledge, First published in 2021

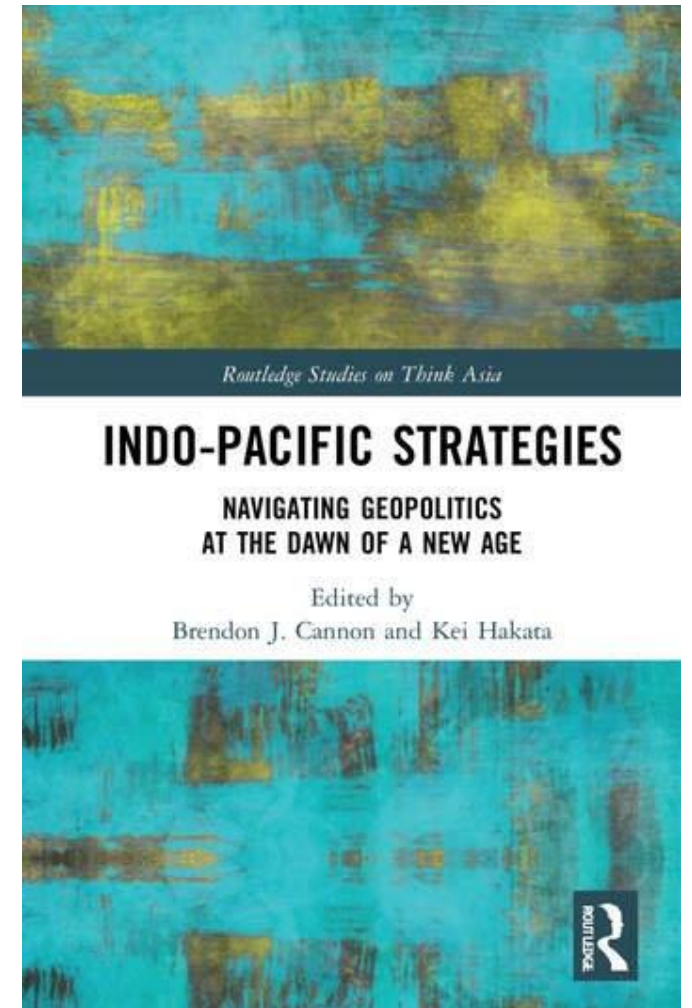


Image from Routledge