

# Foreword

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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.

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.

The first drop of water that I threw into the stream became a powerful current in the ocean, and the FOIP became a highly magnetic concept. I think this book is the timeliest attempt to bring together the wisdom of eleven people to present a multifaceted view of the FOIP. As a reader, I would like to express my gratitude to the editors and contributors for their valuable intellectual contributions.