



Consortium of Indo-Pacific  
Researchers

## **Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail on US-Japan Alliance 2025**

---

Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific. Press the reply button for your feedback and comments.

### **Project Report-US-Japan Alliance: Defense and Security in the Indo-Pacific**



CONSORTIUM OF INDO-PACIFIC RESEARCHERS  
& U.S.-JAPAN FOUNDATION



### **U.S.-Japan Alliance: Strengthening Defense and Security in the Indo-Pacific**



Figure 1 Defense officials from the US and Japan during a military exercise/Image /state.gov

This special edition of CIPR's Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail features a project report titled "US-Japan Alliance: Defense and Security in the Indo-Pacific," produced in collaboration with the [United States-Japan Foundation](#).

**Introduction:** The U.S.-Japan alliance assumes significant importance owing to China's assertive behavior in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Moreover, China-Russia collaboration and North Korea's advancing missile program alarm the security of the Indo-Pacific Region. The growing alliance between the United States and Japan, along with the increasing network of security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, serves to address a wide range of security challenges. These challenges include maritime security, nuclear proliferation, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and territorial disputes. China is frequently identified as the primary instigator in these disputes, employing grey zone tactics.

This project aims to comprehensively analyze the multi-faceted aspects of strengthening defense and security cooperation between the United States and Japan. It also intends to cultivate a comprehensive understanding through observational assessment and analytical research, thereby advocating a perspective that safeguards sovereignty and territorial integrity of free states while advancing a rule-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.

The project explores three research areas as follows:

**First research area** comprehensively reviews the evolution of the U.S.-Japan alliance to the “core” of the Indo-Pacific network of security diplomacy with attention to the level of strategic coordination and hurdles ahead.

**Second research area** at a more tactical level focuses on joint responses by the United States and Japan (or lack thereof) to the grey zone tactics of China.

**Third research area** is on defense planning and focuses on-The Future of U.S.-Japan Alliance Pivots on Defense Planning. [Read More](#)

---

## **Evolution of the U.S.-Japan Alliance: Growing Strategic Coordination and Hurdles Ahead**

This research paper assesses the transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance over the past seventy years in response to changes in the international security environment. It has adapted to domestic shifts and the transition from the Cold War's bipolar confrontation to the uncertainties of the post-Cold War era. Today, the alliance faces challenges such as China's rise, weapons proliferation, terrorism, cybercrime, and hybrid grey-zone threats. Efforts to upgrade the alliance are underway amid a new political landscape marked by Japan's declining conservative leadership and the Trump administration's consideration of an offshore balancing strategy.

Furthermore, this paper reflects on the unease within the US-Japan alliance that persists due to the Trump administration's perspective on Japan's contribution, the value of the alliance in Americans, the primary purpose of US forces stationed in Japan, and the collective response regarding a Taiwan contingency. [Read More](#)

---

## **U.S.-Japan Joint Response to China's Gray-Zone Tactics in the Indo-Pacific Region**

This research paper examines U.S.-Japan joint responses to China's gray-zone tactics in the Indo-Pacific region. It analyzes the role of the two other QUAD actors (Australia and India). Finally, it explains how the U.S. and Japan's commitment to trilateral Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) with the Republic of Korea (ROK) acts as an effective deterrent to the PRC' (People's Republic of China) gray-zone tactics, particularly in the East China Sea (ECS), and also extends across the Indo-Pacific.

Indeed, the Indo-Pacific is the "priority theater" for the US Department of Defense, driven by China's assertiveness in the region. The US faced challenges in other parts of the world, such as in LATAM, the Middle East, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the threat of violent extremist organizations. Additionally, within the alliance, reciprocity in trade agreements and burden-sharing in defense and security have put current alliances under strain and threaten to empower Beijing in the endless struggle for Indo-Pacific dominance.

The recommendations of frequent military exercises with allies and partners and resuming use of Senkaku Islands as bombing ranges are among others to deter the PRC gray zone tactics. [Read More](#)

---

## **The Future of U.S.-Japan Alliance Pivots on Defense Planning**

This paper examines Japan's defense planning in the context of how it shapes the JSDF's (Japan Self-Defense Force) readiness as well as strengthening Japan-U.S. alliance. The paper's assessment first looks at the increasingly challenging security environment that has pushed for new defense planning measures to enhance the JSDF's readiness. The second section outlines the strategic and defense plans introduced in December 2002, discussing the key changes expected to transform JSDF's readiness. This is followed by the third section which discusses the constraints and vulnerabilities that remain. The fourth and final section explains the implications and the road ahead for the Japan-U.S. alliance. [Read More](#)

---

## **Indo-Pacific Quiz**

When did Japan normalize its relations with People's Republic of China (PRC)?

- a. 1969
- c. 1970
- b. 1971
- d. 1972

Which context is the "Meiji Restoration" most associated with?

- a. political and economic reform in Vietnam
- b. political and economic reform in Japan
- c. political and economic reform in China
- d. eliminating the emperor from Japanese society

---

## Consortium Highlights

- ❖ Podcast on USNSS 2025 and Indo-Pacific, Dec. 23, 2025, at 8:00 AM ET

[Recording Link](#)

---

## Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for December 21 Newsletter Quiz

Q. When did China do its first nuclear test?

d. 1964

Q. Which city is historically known as Saigon?

d. Ho Chi Minh City

---

Contributions: Indu Saxena