



Consortium of Indo-Pacific

Researchers

Indo-Pacific Weekly Mail March 16-22, 2026

Greetings Colleagues,

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

Japan's Prime Minister Takaichi visits the White House



Figure 1: Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi with the US President at the Oval Office /March 19, 2026

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's meeting with US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office signals a step forward in the alliance, as they discuss shared interests and concerns. Following her landslide victory in the February snap election, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi—Japan's first female leader—arrived in Washington with a clear goal: to secure the US security umbrella while navigating President Trump's "America First" policy.

The "Best Buddies" personal rapport: Takaichi leaned heavily into a "charm offensive," even declaring in English during the state dinner that she and Trump are "best buddies" and that "Japan is back." Trump reciprocated by calling her a "popular, powerful woman" and taking some credit for her record-setting electoral win. This personal chemistry is vital at a time of America's tumultuous alliance relations with European allies and NATO, particularly the UK, are falling apart for coming ahead for guarding the Strait of Hormuz, on which Trump lambasted this week in front of Ireland's Prime Minister at the White House.

The \$40 Billion nuclear cooperation: The headline economic takeaway was the announcement of a \$40 billion deal between GE Vernova and Hitachi to build small modular nuclear reactors in the US. This is part of Japan's broader \$550 billion investment pledge made last year. Furthermore, both countries reiterated to expand critical mineral cooperation and energy supply chain. Last week of Indo-Pacific Energy security summit in Tokyo attracted 17 countries to invest \$50 billion in US.

The timing was complicated by the ongoing U.S.-led operations in the Middle East. Trump was quite direct, stating he expects Japan to "step up to the plate" regarding the security of the Strait of Hormuz, especially since Japan relies so heavily on that energy route. Takaichi has to walk on the tightrope to maintain the delicate balance as She explained the legal constraints of Japan's pacifist Constitution but signaled readiness to contribute through energy-security initiatives and joint oil-reserve projects.

The two countries will work together to improve cooperation on missile development and deployment to strengthen deterrence. Additionally, the two sides committed to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, as an indispensable element of regional security and global prosperity, and are committed to the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

The Takaichi-Trump meeting was positive; however, the "Pearl Harbor moment" made Prime Minister Takaichi feel awkward. When replying to a reporter's question, President Trump joked about the importance of military surprise by asking, "Who knows better about surprise than Japan?" Takaichi reportedly handled the remark with poise, keeping the focus on current security cooperation. [Read More](#)

Germany and Japan Agree to Expand Defense Cooperation

The [meeting at the Yokosuka Naval Base](#) between German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius and Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi marks the

most significant expansion of bilateral security ties since the end of the Cold War. While the two nations signed an ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) in 2024 to share fuel and ammunition, the new agreement moved toward a much deeper "Visiting Forces" framework that would make joint exercises smoother and more effective.

Japan and Germany have been deepening security cooperation, especially as Russia's war in Ukraine has reinforced the view that the security of the Indo-Pacific and that of Europe is inseparable. German Defense Minister said, "The era where Germany could view the Indo-Pacific as a distant economic theater is over. Our security is now anchored in the stability of these waters."

The two ministers discussed the situation in the Middle East and agreed to collaborate on safe passage efforts. Specifically, Germany has signaled a willingness to provide mine-clearing capabilities in the Persian Gulf once active hostilities cease. [Read More](#)

ODNI Releases Threat Assessment for 2026

The office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released the 2026 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community (IC). The assessment analyzes the challenges to the US homeland and its interests across the region. The intelligence report notes that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea view the US as a strategic competitor and potential adversary, and

due to their selective cooperation, these countries seek to weaken US dominance and interests globally. The report states, “China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan have been researching and developing an array of novel, advanced, or traditional missile delivery systems with nuclear and conventional payloads, that can strike the Homeland.”

China seeks to achieve “the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation” by 2049 and intends to increase its power and influence in the region to create optimal conditions for its goal and to reduce US military presence and operations in its periphery. The US Intelligence says China continues to seek eventual reunification of Taiwan but has no fixed timeline for unification. The IC assesses that “Chinese leaders do not currently plan to execute an invasion of Taiwan in 2027, nor do they have a fixed timeline for achieving unification.”

Additionally, Russia is the primary challenger in the Arctic and seeks to expand its influence through maritime trade. Russia, in cooperation with China, has been advancing its strategic and economic benefits. [Read More](#)

16 countries Boost Defense Industrial Resilience

The Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR) member countries held 2nd annual meeting to boost defense industrial cooperation. Thailand and the UK have joined the group of countries- the United States, Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway,

Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Sweden. Taiwan has participated as an adviser in the Forum.

This multilateral initiative is reshaping defense collaboration in the Indo-Pacific. The Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR) brings together 14+2 partner nations from the Indo-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic to strengthen supply chains, advance co-production efforts, and accelerate the repair and deployment of critical technologies. [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which country initiated the Polar Silk Road?

- a. Russia
- b. Canada
- c. China
- d. Denmark

Who was the first American envoy in Japan?

- a. Douglas MacArthur
 - b. Commodore Perry
 - c. Robert H. Pruyn
 - d. Townsend Harris
-

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ [Web Recording](#) **Dynasty, Power, and Stability: Post Election Bangladesh and Nepal**, March 19, 2026, 10:00 AM EST
- ❖ Upcoming podcast on **Meiji Japan and what it teaches about rising Asian powers**

Indo-Pacific Quiz Key

Here are the **Answers** for March 15 Newsletter Quiz

Q. When is the Communist Party of Vietnam founded?

a. 1930

Q. Where is Fujairah Port located?

b. United Arab Emirates

Contributions: Indu Saxena