

POLICY BRIEF

Why do we need to engage with the Global South and how?

There has been much discussion about "engaging with the Global South". First, we need to understand why and then how. Why? While China's population is 4 times bigger the US GDP is 1.5 times bigger than China's and its defence spending is 2.5 times bigger¹. In short, the US is still the only superpower in the world in terms of national strength. However, although the US used to use its might to try to solve and end international conflicts even if it was hated for that, it is now less willing to engage directly in the form of boots on the ground in crucial international crises like those in Ukraine and Gaza. This is why these conflicts are bound to continue (no-win no-lose situations) despite continuing inhumane losses of lives and violation of human dignity. Against this background, in a world without a country assuming responsibility for conflict-solving, we need to share the responsibilities to deal with challenges ourselves

In short, we are in an era of "challenge sharing".

It used to be "burden sharing". In which the US could handle the challenges by itself while hoping that its allies would share some of the burden in the form of costs. Although the US is still the only superpower, its willingness to take on challenges by itself has been significantly weakened. 10 years have passed since President Obama said the US should not continue to act like the policeman of the whole world².

1 Global Note based on IMF <https://www.globalnote.jp/post-1409.html>

2 US Embassy in Japan's archives; <https://japan2.usembassy.gov/j/p/2013/tpj-20130912a.html>

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The US is divided over its readiness to more positively engage in global crises³ (57% supported more positive engagement to international conflicts).

There is no direct US boots on the ground style involvement in the Ukraine war (this was said even before it started). The new era of challenge sharing means that the US is no longer willing to take up challenges by itself and would like to see its allies share responsibility for handling challenges while sharing the burden is taken for granted. This means that allies and like-minded countries need to bear some responsibility for doing such things.

So, the rule of the game now is to create a majority in the international scene. Whatever solutions we come up with are not problem- or criticism-free. The more countries support them, the more sustainable they will become. This (making more friends) is where we have an advantage over Russia and China. Who are their meaningful friends, who not only show moral support but also act together to achieve a meaningful result? Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Not many countries are thrilled to associate themselves with this group of outlaws. On our side, there are European countries, the US, Canada and the democracies in Asia, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Indonesia. If we, including the US, try hard to coordinate. there should be more meaningful friends which follow. As PM Kishida said in his congressional speech back in April, "(A)lthough the world looks to your (the US) leadership, the US should not be expected to do it all, unaided and on your own." "You are not alone. We are with you"⁴.

Now, how can we make more meaningful friends in the Global South? We first need to understand which countries will become critical in our future efforts. For this purpose, we should first come up

with some predictions as to what may happen in the world and in the Indo-Pacific region 10-20 years in future.

First, a G3 will emerge in the 2030s. Although the US is the only superpower for now, its relative supremacy has been steadily declining and it is possible that within 10 to 15 years. both the GDP and defence spending of the US and China will become at the same level. Although this sounds like G2, India will join the superpower club soon. The UN recently predicted that in 2024, India's population will exceed China's.⁵ More importantly, it will keep on rising while China's population will be declining and its aging situation in 10 to 15 years could be as serious as that of Japan now⁶. As early as next year, 2025, India's GDP will exceed Japan's and become the world's No. 3⁷. So, the positioning of these 3 countries, the G3 and interaction among them will decide the basic direction of international affairs.

Second, where India and Indonesia stand will be decisive in creating a global majority. If we try to create a new G7 in 2040, who will we include? The G3, the US, China and India will be in. So will Japan and Indonesia, which by then will be the world's No.5 and No.6 economies, whichever comes above the other⁸. And then the EU if it stays united. And, whether you like it or not, Russia. We need to realize that Russia will not disappear even after the Ukraine war. Although and because the decline in its economic power is further accelerated, it will stick with its nuclear arsenals and never give up its existing privileges including its veto power in the UN Security Council. Russia will become more difficult to live with but cannot be ignored.

If something like the Ukraine war happens, it is likely that the US, Japan and the EU will stick together, and so will China and Russia, like the situation now.

3 Chicago Council Survey September 7-18 2023.

4 HP of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100652738.pdf>

5 Quote by Bloomberg; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-04-19/india-surpasses-china-as-world-s-most-populous-nation-un-says>

6 Chi Hung KWAN; Consulting Fellow, RIETI <https://www.rieti.go.jp/en/china/22102701.html>

7 IMF Report

8 ERIA; Project 2045 <https://www.eria.org/research/report-of-project-2045-for-joint-partnership-towards-our-common-future-a-joint-project-of-two-maritime-democracies>

Then, who is left in between? India and Indonesia. Where they stand will be decisive in creating a global majority.

Third, the de facto division will expand among the ASEAN countries. Southeast Asia will become the center of competition for influence among the G3 (the US and China, and then India). In public, the ASEAN countries say “Don’t force us to choose between the US and China because we will never choose.” But they have already chosen in their mind. Three big countries, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines are big enough to be ready to rely on Japan and the US to deal with a crisis with China, which is clearly shown by an opinion poll that Japanese MOFA has carried out since 2008, in which one of the regular questions is “Which country are you going to rely on more in future?”⁹ In these 3 big countries, Japan has always come above China. In medium-sized countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar, the results have swung between Japan and China according to different administrations. In small countries like Cambodia, the Lao Republic and Brunei, China has always come above Japan. Singapore is an exception, as the result of the opinion poll has clearly favoured China, Singapore has hosted the US Navy and Air Force since the 1980s. Its military force has been trained in Taiwan while its businesses have many interactions with China.

What does this mean for Japan’s future foreign policy in Southeast Asia? While the resources Japan possesses are increasingly limited, Japan needs to prioritise their use. Naturally, we need to respond, relatively speaking, more positively to those who are ready to rely on us in a time of crisis.

Finally, how? With the above future trends in mind, how can Japan and Europe work together to realize a safer and more stable Indo-Pacific? Firstly, as the relative supremacy of our common alliance partner, the US, is in sharp decline, in order to maintain the total deterrence power of the alliances, logically, we should become stronger ourselves. For Japan, this means increasing the defence spending by 2027 to 2% of GDP (it is great news that more than ever a number of European NATO countries are also expected to clear their 2% target). acquiring count-

er-strike capabilities and establishing seamless defence in all domains including introducing active cyber defence. Stronger and closer coordination will be established, including robust efforts in planning, in the alliance framework, and by creating a more practical and operational C2 (Command and Control) system.

Secondly, we need to establish maximum cooperation and coordination among the “3 pillars of stability”, which are both able and ready to work towards strengthening the existing rule-based international order, namely, Europe, North America (US and Canada) and Japan and other Asian democracies, such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India and Indonesia. Of these 3 pillars, Europe and North America have NATO and the US and Japan and other Asian democracies have the alliance networks. Therefore, it makes real sense to strengthen the missing link for security cooperation between Europe and the Asian democracies. The presence of IP4 heads of the executive at the NATO Washington Summit was a good way to keep up with the new tradition in the past 3 years. Steady participation by the military assets of European aspirants in joint exercises in the Indo-Pacific region is sending a clear and correct message to those who are trying to change the status-quo in the Indo-Pacific. The more scenario-based exercises around the choke points in the region with participation by Europe makes a lot of sense. If the Malacca Strait, the Bashi Strait, the Celebes Sea, the Lombok Strait and the Macassar Straits are closed to transport, not only the economies of Japan and the Republic of Korea but also several European countries’ economies will be severely affected so it makes sense for us to work together to keep these choke points open in a time of crisis. Europe’s enhanced security cooperation with India also sends the right signals to potential adversaries.

Thirdly, these efforts among allies may not be enough and we should make more efforts to strengthen security cooperation with LMCs in the form of networks. Typical examples are the Quad, the Australia-Japan-US-Philippines summit meeting, and the IP4 summit meeting.

9 MOFA’s HP; <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/pr/index.html>

In this regard, the abovementioned “3 pillars of stability” need to coordinate their efforts to engage with the more important Global South countries. We should first share recognition of 1) which are the priority Global South countries to engage with, 2) what we would expect from each of them and 3) what we are ready to do to achieve the expected result without overlapping with the efforts of others. There’s no country called the Global South. There’s no group of countries which have the same view or positioning which can be called the Global South a group. So, engaging with the Global South means using a tailored approach which reflects the strategic positioning of each Global South country. Some division of labour may make sense. For example, Japan should be in charge of engaging with countries in Southeast Asia while Europe should do more in Africa and the Middle East, and the US in Latin America. I cannot think of better framework for doing all this coordination than the G7. The value of the G7 has been rediscovered because of its capability as a solution provider, while the weight of the BRICS with new members in terms of PPP/GDP is overtaking the G7s¹⁰ thus creating more legitimacy for the BRICS. The G7 should do something to increase its legitimacy with such measures as creating a limited number of permanent outreach partners (POPs) and creating a list of countries which are invited to G7 meetings whoever is the host. South Africa and/or the African Union Chair, India, Brazil, Indonesia and/or the ASEAN Chair can be the initial POPs.

This is the time for Japan and the European Allies of the United States to support the “tired giant” by doing what we can to engage with important Global South countries while coordinating our efforts through such groupings as the G7s. We still have many advantages over the other side in terms of attracting the Global South and showing our collective power as problem solvers. The US has been leading us perhaps for too long. This is the time for us to show our leadership!.

10 IMF World Economic Outlook

The Global Governance Programme

The Global Governance Programme (GGP) is research turned into action. It provides a European setting to conduct research at the highest level and promote synergies between the worlds of research and policy-making, to generate ideas and identify creative and innovative solutions to global challenges. The Programme is part of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute, a world-reknowned academic institution. It receives financial support from the European Commission through the European Union budget. Complete information on our activities can be found online at: globalgovernanceprogramme.eui.eu

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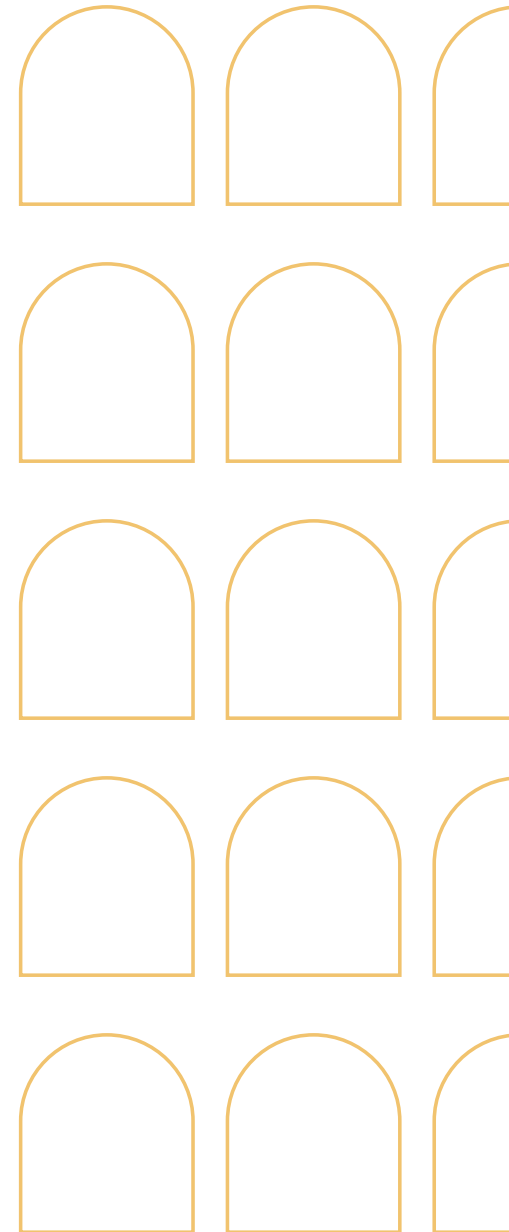
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