

# Identifying Gap and Exploring Opportunities in AOIP and FOIP Synergy Efforts

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## I. Background/Context

### AOIP and FOIP: Struggle to Reclaim Strategic Space in the Indo-Pacific

The global geopolitical and geo-economic landscape is becoming more complex, uncertain and is constantly changing. Europe has been experiencing the largest war on its soil since World War II as well as in the Middle East provoked by the United States and Israel against Iran. Consequently, seismic shift happening due to the United States slowly but certain retreat from liberal international order (globalization, economic openness, multilateral institutions and rules-based order). It does prompt U.S. allies to recalibrate their global and regional engagements including their relations with the U.S. Concepts such as “strategic autonomy”, “autonomy”, “independent” are increasingly debated among U.S. allies, including those in the European Union and Japan. As a result, seeking regional relevance and deepening regional cooperation has become a strategic choice for many states, particularly Japan.

This landscape pushes middle-sized countries—such as Indonesia and Japan—to exercise their greater agency in the Indo-Pacific. However, their limitations make regional cooperation an indispensable road map for achieving their strategic objectives to preserving stability, openness, inclusivity, free, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

Japan and Indonesia have been advocating for the Indo-Pacific because of its political-security and economic significance. Both countries understand that the Asia-Pacific paradigm is no longer sufficient to sustain growth, create prosperity, and ensure political-security stability. In 2007, the late Prime Minister Abe addressed the Indian parliament and delivered a speech about the confluence of the two seas. In 2013, Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa proposed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, known as the Treaty of Indo-Pacific, at CSIS in Washington D.C. Unfortunately, the idea never gained traction.

The conception of the Indo-Pacific regained momentum in 2016 when the late Prime Minister Abe introduced the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) during the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. Later, in 2017, President Donald Trump endorsed the Free and Open Indo-Pacific at APEC in Viet Nam. However, Southeast Asia perceives the U.S. endorsement of the Indo-Pacific as an effort to contain China, which is not favoured by countries in the region.

In response to this concern, Indonesia catalysed Southeast Asia's own Indo-Pacific strategy in 2019, which was adopted during the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok with the name: ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). This is a strategic framework to preserve and to promote inclusive cooperation and dialogue between stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific.

Furthermore, Japan enjoys a high degree of trust from Southeast Asian countries. In the ASEAN People's Perception Survey (APPS) 2024 by the Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia (FPCI) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), Japan ranks first (41,47%) among the 11 ASEAN Dialogue Partners as the most trustworthy and reliable partner.<sup>1</sup>The 2025 State of Southeast Asia Survey by the ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore reports the same result.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FPCI-ERIA APPS. (2024). 2024 ASEAN perceptions survey: Data table. ASEAN Perceptions Survey. <https://www.aseanperceptionssurvey.com/2024-data-table>

<sup>2</sup> ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. (2025). State of Southeast Asia 2025 survey report. <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/frontpage-publications/state-of-southeast-asia-2025-survey-report/>

This trust serves as both an asset and a potential liability when both sides become complacent or overly satisfied with the relationship. Although ASEAN and Japan have not remained idle—evidenced by the recent Joint Statement of the 28th ASEAN–Japan Summit on Further Promotion and Implementation of the AOIP—synergy AOIP and FOIP remains neither simple nor straightforward. Even so, current geopolitical landscape becomes direct challenge to ASEAN and Japan. Southeast Asian trust towards Japan should be the modality to build stronger ASEAN–Japan relationship.

### The Immediate Strategic Hurdles

With both AOIP and FOIP on the table, the idea of connecting the two has been recommended and discussed. The expert panel on the Japan–ASEAN 50th anniversary recommended the synergy, and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi endorsed it in 2023. Rayoga Jehan from Kobe University wrote a paper discussing the synergy between AOIP and FOIP. However, three years after Indonesia's chairmanship, the operationalization of AOIP itself is losing momentum. Lao PDR Chair-ship did give birth to the Leaders Declaration on the Future-Ready AOIP which serve as clarity of the AOIP continuity, yet the East Asia Summit (EAS) as the key AOIP institution failed to agree on anything. Last year, 2025's chair, Malaysia, focused on ASEAN Vision 2045 and regional economic integration such as Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) while also distracted by Cambodia and Thailand border conflict. On the other hand, ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum in Malaysia was downsized from leaders' level into track one point five dialogue.

Meanwhile, Japan FOIP under the new administration of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is different compared to her predecessor particularly with Prime Minister Kishida administration. Her approach to China makes Japan–China relationship more difficult and trust building between the two setbacks. Difficult Japan–China relationship will affect Southeast Asia political-security and economy. Furthermore, it drives away from the vision of AOIP itself.

Aside from the effort to synergize the two strategic concepts, the United States' foreign policy under President Trump's second-term administration raises significant concerns. President Trump's statement that “I do not need international law,”<sup>3</sup> combined with his decision to forcibly removed a sitting head of state in a sovereign country and provoked war in the Middle East, reflects a posture that does not respect international law. This directly challenges the foundational principles shared by AOIP and FOIP: the rules-based international order.

Consequently, for FOIP, an important question emerges: *What is the position of the United States within FOIP if it continues behavior that undermines international law and norms?* Such developments require a recalibration of FOIP—particularly regarding the role of the United States and its approach toward China. Hence, the immediate hurdle for FOIP is the United States alone.

The challenge for AOIP lies in its relevance. The issue is not the principles themselves but the implementation and influence of those principles. Former Deputy Secretary-General for the ASEAN Political-Security Community, Michael Tene, emphasized that AOIP's success depends on operationalizing the “ASEAN + One Open-Ended” formulation meaning cooperation involving three or more parties. Although the formulation is not written in AOIP documents or others ASEAN documents, according to Michael Tene, it has been ASEAN standing on operationalizing the AOIP. In the current geopolitical context, achieving cooperation under such

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<sup>3</sup> New York Times. (2024). Trump Says His Only Limit on His Global Powers Is His ‘Own Morality’ [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtube.com/shorts/ysZJUjhnt3M?si=XpKjKSpGegIPQYQn>

a format is increasingly difficult.

To reclaim strategic space in the Indo-Pacific, both AOIP and FOIP must find ways to maintain their relevance and prove its deliverable concrete and impactful. They should not allow major powers to dominate the discourse in ways that contradict their core principles.

All in all, both serve as key frameworks for both ASEAN countries and Japan to exercise its strategic agency. For ASEAN countries Indo-Pacific region must be a place for everyone to work together without excluding anybody – building a strong positive cooperation without perception of threat.<sup>4</sup> It allows ASEAN to shape regional norms and prevent the Indo-Pacific from becoming a theatre of great-power confrontation. For Japan, it is strategic to ensure the ASEAN regional cooperation remains balanced, open, rules-based and stable. In addition, AOIP-FOIP can serve as means for Japan to exercise a degree of autonomy over its alliance with the United States.

## II. Research Objectives

This research project aims to identify the gap between AOIP and FOIP due to their differences, explore alignment opportunities, and formulate policy recommendations. Gaps means the conceptual, institutional, or implementation inconsistencies between AOIP and FOIP that prevent the two frameworks from reinforcing each other effectively. Opportunities means the areas of convergence, complementary strengths, or potential collaboration that ASEAN and Japan can leverage to enhance AOIP–FOIP alignment. It means the process of aligning principles, mechanisms, and practical initiatives between AOIP and FOIP so that both frameworks can operate coherently and support mutually reinforcing Indo-Pacific cooperation.

## III. Problem Statement and Research Questions

From the beginning, AOIP and FOIP are not naturally aligned because they emerge from different strategic contexts. AOIP emerge as a response towards others Indo-Pacific concepts proposed by many economies and its agency is to emphasizes on ASEAN centrality and inclusivity in managing the Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile, FOIP carries nuances of counter-balancing China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)<sup>5</sup>.

However, more importantly, the **US strategic retreat from the liberal international order** becomes its key challenges for FOIP and AOIP. The war in the Middle East carried out by the U.S, Israel, and Iran posed direct challenge to the core values of FOIP and AOIP. This will implicate the operationalization of the two in the region.

**Skyrocketing oil prices have triggered an energy crisis and rising inflation.** The war in the Middle East between the U.S.–Israel coalition and Iran has led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz — a critical chokepoint through which about 20% of the world’s daily oil supply passes. The implications are now unfolding in East Asia, where the disruption has caused a sudden energy crisis and a surge in inflation in the following year

**At the Implementation level, it remains a concern.** Experts at the AOIP Vision Group Conference collectively agree that AOIP has yet to achieve meaningful implementation—meaning

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<sup>4</sup> Anwar, D. F. (2020). Indonesia and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 111–129.

<sup>5</sup> Takahashi, T. (n.d.). Japan's new ASEAN policy under the Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Its continuities and discontinuities from the Fukuda Doctrine and the role of Cambodia.

implementation that becomes a genuine game-changer in the region.<sup>6</sup> According to the ASEAN–Japan Joint Statement, AOIP–FOIP cooperation includes around 130 initiatives, yet these efforts **have not facilitated meaningful cooperation** among major Indo-Pacific countries, particularly between China and the Quad members the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. Unfortunately, the current geopolitical landscape makes it more difficult to do such cooperation.

Given these three challenges, AOIP-FOIP synergy have potential to address the challenges. Therefore, this research aims to identify the gaps first in order to understand the standing of both frameworks. Then, it explores the opportunities between AOIP and FOIP. Accordingly, it addresses three research questions:

1. *What are the key conceptual, institutional, and implementation gaps between AOIP and FOIP?*
2. *What opportunities exist for ASEAN and Japan to enhance alignment between AOIP and FOIP, particularly in the current geopolitical landscape?*
3. *What forms of meaningful implementation can AOIP and FOIP pursue together to strengthen Indo-Pacific cooperation?*

#### IV. Theoretical Approach

To answer the research question, this research applies three theoretical approaches as follows: **policy coherence & alignment framework, alignment analysis** and **regime complex theory**. These approaches help to understand the data collected and organize it into comprehensive conclusions and practical recommendations.

Policy coherence & alignment framework helps research to test the coherence of policies with strategic goals and understand it through an alignment framework which is like the compass and navigational chart. It ensures every policy across different sectors is correctly oriented to the targeted goals and avoids conflicting or overlapping between policies<sup>7</sup>. In practice, this approach allows analysis on three levels: **conceptual alignment** (principles, values, etc), **institutional alignment** (mechanisms, platforms, funding etc) , **and implementation alignment** (projects, deliverables, outcomes, etc).

To compliment the above theory and sharpen the analysis, alignment analysis by Prof. Cheng Chew Kuik focuses on three elements as follows; **convergence of interest, consultation of coordination, and compatibility enhancement** – often called as the three Cs<sup>8</sup>. In the situation of the three elements are met, according to Prof. Kuik it can be named as alignment. Hence, to identify the gap and opportunities, this framework can be employed to enhance the accuracy.

While Regime complex theory provides a third analytical lens by examining how AOIP and FOIP operate within an overlapping institutional environment. This approach helps to compare the two Indo-Pacific approaches – AOIP and FOIP and to analyze **the degree of divergence regarding**

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<sup>6</sup> AOIP Vision Group Conference. (2024). AOIP Vision Group recommendations. Bali, Indonesia, 6–8 March 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Policy alignment frameworks. (n.d.). Sustainability Directory. <https://climate.sustainability-directory.com/term/policy-alignment-frameworks/>

<sup>8</sup> Kuik, C.-C. (2026). Actively choosing not to choose: Neutrality-plus agency in Southeast Asia (IKMAS Working Paper No. 1/2026). Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

the principles, norms, rules, or procedures or their elemental regimes.<sup>9</sup> According to Raustiala and Victor's definition of complex theory, regimes must overlap partially. Both AOIP and FOIP overlap in many ways, particularly on maritime issues and connectivity issues. Meanwhile, both have strategic differences in the concept of inclusivity – whereas that point constitutes as the complexity of AOIP and FOIP.

## V. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology designed to systematically examine the conceptual, institutional, and implementation dynamics of AOIP–FOIP synchronization. Given the exploratory nature of the research questions—identifying gaps, mapping opportunities, and assessing meaningful implementation—qualitative methods provide the most appropriate tools for capturing expert perspectives, policy narratives, and institutional interpretations across ASEAN and Japan.

Data collection relies primarily on in-depth semi-structured interviews with experts and officials from Japan and Southeast Asia. Interview questions are designed to correspond directly with the three research questions, ensuring consistency and analytical relevance. In addition to interviews, the study synthesizes from various official documents, policy speeches, joint statements, and peer-reviewed academic literature to triangulate findings and strengthen validity.

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<sup>9</sup> Orsini, A., Morin, J.-F., & Young, O. R. (2013). *Regime complexes: A buzz, a boom, or a boost for global governance?* *Global Governance*, 19(1), 27–39. [https://www.chaire-epi.ulaval.ca/sites/chaire-epi.ulaval.ca/files/publications/orsini\\_morin\\_young\\_2013.pdf](https://www.chaire-epi.ulaval.ca/sites/chaire-epi.ulaval.ca/files/publications/orsini_morin_young_2013.pdf)

## VI. Discussion

### A. AOIP & FOIP Alignment Matrix

	AOIP	FOIP
<b>I. Conceptual Alignments</b>		
<i>Strategic Vision</i>	ASEAN Centrality, Inclusive Architecture & Rules-Based Order	Rules-Based Order & To Balance (Check) China
The region coverage: How does each concept imagine the geographical scope of the Indo-Pacific: from the West Coast of the U.S. to the East Coast of Africa, or as a triangle between Japan, India, and Australia?	Southeast Asia Centric	Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean (Indo-Pacific is about connecting the two maritime theaters)  Atlantic Ocean (Koizumi, 2025)
The desired order	Rules-based order	Rules-based order
The purpose of cooperation	To turn confrontation to cooperation in the formulation of ASEAN + One, Open Ended.	Cooperation with those who shared the free and open Indo-Pacific principles
The role of major powers	(US, China, & Russia) To Cooperate and Support ASEAN Centrality	(US) To safeguard Open and Free Indo-Pacific. (China) to create strategic environment that constraints its aggressive behavior.
<i>Core Principles and Values</i>	Inclusivity	Free and Open
<i>Inclusivity</i>	Including China and Russia in AOIP cooperation framework	Welcomes cooperation with all countries that share FOIP values <sup>10</sup>
<i>Problem Framing</i>	Asia Pacific and Indian Oceans continue to experience geopolitical and geostrategic shift. <sup>11</sup>	Attempts to change the status quo, piracy, terrorism, proliferation of WMD, & Natural Disaster. <sup>12</sup>
How does each concept define problems or threats in Indo-pacific? Which issues should Indo-Pacific nations prioritize for cooperation?	The Four Pillars: Maritime, Connectivity, SDGs, & Economics and others	Three pillars: Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, Pursuit of Economic Prosperity, and Commitment for peace and stability
How do both concepts prioritize the balance between security and development?	Prioritize development	Prioritize both security and development
How does each concept perceive China?	Partner of AOIP	Competitor

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan.(n.d.). Free and Open Indo-Pacific [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.mod.go.jp/>

<sup>11</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2019). ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN Secretariat

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (n.d.). Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e\\_000278.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html)

Is the Indo-Pacific being seen as the arena of cooperation or competition?	Cooperation	Cooperation and Competition with China
How does each concept perceive landlocked countries with interests in the Indo-Pacific?	Nothing specific, but Lao DPR is a land-locked countries that supported AOIP.	Any country that supports & shares the principles of FOIP is partner.
How does each concept address security issues?	Maritime Security & Safety and Freedom of Navigation & Overflight	Free: no nation shall be subjected to coercion. Open: Every nation can cooperate and contribute by its own will <sup>13</sup>  Securing the stable use of major sea lanes.  Preventing contingencies through CBMs  Regional engagement <sup>14</sup>
<b>II. Institutional Alignments</b>		
<i>Governance Structure:</i> Whether the institutional bodies responsible for AOIP and FOIP	ASEAN led mechanisms, ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF)	Quadrilateral Dialogue, ASEAN led mechanisms, European Union (EU), Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), and Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) <sup>15</sup>
<i>Coordination Mechanisms:</i> Joint-Working Group, inter-ministerial committees, dialogue mechanisms, track 1,5 or track 2 platforms	ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (Track 1,5), AOIP Vision Group Conference (Track 2)	
<i>Implementation Platforms:</i> The institutional “vehicles” through which project is delivered	All ASEAN mechanisms include ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum and AOIP Forum.	Related Ministries and Agencies (METI, MoFA, MoD, JAICA, Japan Foundation, etc)
<i>Resource Allocation &amp; Funding Mechanisms</i>	ASEAN Cooperation Fund, ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, Dialogue-Partner Cooperation Fund ( <i>Nothing specific for AOIP</i> )	Official Development Assistance (ODA), Official Security Assistance (OSA), ASEAN-Japan Integration Fund (JAIF), ASEAN-Japan Resilience Initiative etc

<sup>13</sup> Koizumi, M. (2026, January 12). The role of the defense community for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific [Speech]. Honolulu Defense Forum, Honolulu, HI, United States.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan.(n.d.). Free and Open Indo-Pacific [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.mod.go.jp/>

<sup>15</sup> Shinoda, K. 2026. Strengthening the international order and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in an age of multipolarity: Policy recommendations toward the 10th anniversary of FOIP. National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS).

<i>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Monitoring System</i>	ASEAN Coordinating Council	ASEAN-Japan Integration Fund (JAIF) and Japan Mission to ASEAN.
<b>III. Implementation Alignments</b>		
<i>Program &amp; Project Alignments:</i> project undergoes its concept	Any project in the format of ASEAN + One (Open Ended)  ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum  Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC)  Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF)	130 ASEAN-Japan Programs and Projects; i.e Japan-ASEAN Cyber International Law Seminar, Japan-ASEAN Seminar on Climate Change and Security, Capacity Building Program Specially on WPS for ASEAN, etc  ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan  Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure  Official Security Assistance (OSA)  Ten 2+2 Meetings including two with The Philippines and Indonesia.  Japan-ASEAN Ship Rider Cooperation Program
<i>Implementing Agency and Operational Coordination</i>	Government agencies or ASEAN bodies/entities	
<i>Resource Mobilization</i>	-	-
<i>Timeline and Sequencing</i>	-	-
<i>Stakeholder Participants</i>	-	-

## B. Identifying the Gaps

Using the three levels of the policy coherence and alignment framework, this study finds gaps between AOIP and FOIP at the conceptual, institutional, and implementation levels. The conceptual gap is the most consequential because it shapes the institutional and implementation dynamics. To understand the gap, this paper found five key gaps. This demonstrates that AOIP and FOIP are not identical by design, but they do not fundamentally conflict with one another.

**First, AOIP and FOIP share common values –rules-based order, openness, freedom, and inclusivity but they emphasize these principles differently.**

AOIP places greater weight on inclusive architecture and ASEAN centrality. Inclusivity means keeping China and other economies that has interest in the Indo-Pacific within the AOIP framework and its four pillars of cooperation. ASEAN centrality means advancing Indo-Pacific cooperation through ASEAN-led mechanisms. This emphasis does not imply that inclusivity is the only priority; rather, it stands alongside other AOIP principles.

FOIP, by contrast, stresses the “free and open” dimension to create a strategic environment conducive to peace, stability, and prosperity. FOIP also accepts the principle of inclusivity, but conditionally: China and Russia are welcome only if they adhere to international law, a condition FOIP proponents argue is not currently met.

**Second, AOIP and FOIP differ in how they conceptualize the geography of the Indo-Pacific.** Neither framework draws explicit geographic boundaries, yet their operational paradigms diverge.

AOIP situates Southeast Asia at the center of the Indo-Pacific, positioning the region as the hub connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans. During Indonesia’s 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship, ASEAN advanced inter-regional cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

FOIP adopts a broader operational paradigm. While it recognizes Southeast Asia as central, FOIP projects span six economic corridors stretching from the East Coast of Africa to Southeast Asia, including the Nacala Corridor, Mombasa/Northern Corridor, Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor, Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt, Yangon–Mandalay Railway, East–West Economic Corridor, and Southern Economic Corridor.<sup>16</sup> Under Prime Minister Takaichi, Japan further expanded FOIP’s geographical vision. At the Honolulu Defense Forum on 12 January 2026, Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi introduced the idea of the “confluence of three seas” –the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans arguing that FOIP must incorporate Europe into Indo-Pacific dynamics. He stated that “the vision of FOIP is no longer limited to the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>17</sup>

**Third, AOIP and FOIP diverge in their approach toward China.**

AOIP promotes inclusivity to strengthen regional resilience and facilitate constructive dialogue and cooperation. It is the only Indo-Pacific framework formally acknowledged by China, as

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (n.d.). Japan’s effort for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/>

<sup>17</sup> Koizumi, M. (2026, January 12). The role of the defense community for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific [Speech]. Honolulu Defense Forum, Honolulu, HI, United States.

reflected in the ASEAN–China Joint Statement on Mutually Beneficial Cooperation on the AOIP<sup>18</sup>.

FOIP, however, prioritizes cooperation among states that share the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific —principles championed by Japan and the United States.<sup>19</sup> Interviews with Japanese officials and scholars confirm that FOIP does not exclude China outright but expects China to meet FOIP’s normative conditions.

**Fourth, AOIP and FOIP adopt different approaches to security affairs.**

AOIP addresses security primarily through its maritime pillar, focusing on maritime safety and security, and freedom of navigation and overflight, grounded in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>20</sup> AOIP promotes dialogue to manage differences and encourages practical defense cooperation, as reflected in the latest ADMM-Plus Joint Statement in Malaysia.<sup>21</sup>

FOIP embeds security in its first and third pillars: promoting the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, and ensuring peace and stability. Japan’s Ministry of Defense operationalizes FOIP by securing major sea lanes, preventing contingencies, and contributing to regional stability.<sup>22</sup> Again, in Hawaii, Defense Minister Koizumi emphasized three strengths underpinning FOIP’s realization: a clear vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific “free” meaning no coercion by force, and “open” meaning voluntary cooperation; the Japan–U.S. alliance; and “peace through strength.”<sup>23</sup> This can be understood as Japanese posture on Indo-Pacific security.

**Fifth, AOIP and FOIP differ in their institutional architecture.**

AOIP relies entirely on existing ASEAN-led mechanisms. The East Asia Summit (EAS), ADMM-Plus, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) operationalize the maritime pillar. The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) coordinates the connectivity pillar. EAS also addresses the SDGs. The EAS Economic Track, and ASEAN Plus Three (APT) mechanisms support the economic pillar.

FOIP works through ASEAN-led mechanisms as well, but supplements them with additional architectures beyond ASEAN’s scope, particularly for Africa and the Pacific. Japan uses the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) to advance FOIP cooperation in those regions. FOIP also relies on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and Japan’s 2+2 mechanisms to address maritime domain awareness, critical technologies, supply chains, connectivity, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

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<sup>18</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations & People’s Republic of China. (2023). ASEAN–China Joint Statement on Mutually Beneficial Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN Secretariat.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (n.d.). Japan’s effort for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/>

<sup>20</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2019). ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN Secretariat.

<sup>21</sup> ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus. (2025). Joint Statement of the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus. ASEAN Secretariat.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan.(n.d.). Free and Open Indo-Pacific [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.mod.go.jp/>

<sup>23</sup> Koizumi, M. (2026, January 12). The role of the defense community for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific [Speech]. Honolulu Defense Forum, Honolulu, HI, United States.

The five gaps discussed above are **not meant to be resolved** between AOIP and FOIP. These gaps exist because each strategic concept reflects a different nature and intent. FOIP is designed to safeguard the liberal international order in the Indo-Pacific, whereas AOIP aims to prevent tensions from escalating into conflict and to promote cooperation rather than confrontation. Therefore, AOIP–FOIP synergy rests on their **complementarities**, which create opportunities for alignment. This paper argues that the current geopolitical landscape —triggered by the seismic shift of the United States’ strategic retreat from the liberal international order—creates a significant opportunity for AOIP–FOIP cooperation.

### C. Exploring the Opportunities

Before exploring the opportunities between AOIP-FOIP, this paper believes that the two must acknowledge first the key challenges that facing them. The challenges are not exclusive to each of them, even it is affecting them. The first is challenge towards the rules-based order posed by major powers which deepen mistrust, eroding confidence, shrinking space for dialogue/diplomacy and heightening uncertainty. Second is challenge towards appetite for cooperation over confrontation between those who are competing. Hence, the complementarity found below can be further developed to address the two challenges.

The opportunities are analyzed based on the framework of partnership in 3Cs by Prof. Cheng Chew Kuik<sup>24</sup> which categorized opportunities in three levels of analysis (convergence of interest, consultation of coordination, and compatibility enhancement). An alignment can be constituted if it meets the three levels.

#### Convergence of interest

At this level, the convergence of interest between ASEAN countries constituted in AOIP and Japan constituted in FOIP can be grouped into two – strategic interest and geo-economics.

**At the strategic domain**, both sides share concerns about the U.S. strategic retreat from the liberal international order and the erosion of the rules-based international order. From a Southeast Asian perspective, respect for a rules-based order is essential to keeping the region safe, stable, and prosperous. If this order weakens and the rules are no longer respected, it becomes a direct threat to smaller states such as those in ASEAN. President Prabowo of Indonesia has repeatedly warned that the region cannot afford a world where “might is right,” stressing that small and medium-sized states depend on international law to safeguard their sovereignty and security.

Moreover, ASEAN countries also share a common interest in modernizing their military equipment to enhance national defense capabilities. Southeast Asia’s military expenditure has risen steadily over the past decade, increasing by more than 33% between 2013 and 2023, according to SIPRI estimates. Several ASEAN members such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines have significantly expanded their defense budgets to upgrade naval, air, and surveillance assets in response to intensifying geopolitical competition and maritime security challenges.

For the United States military presence, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines openly argue that the region requires a continued their military presence to balance China’s growing military power. Singaporean leaders have consistently emphasized that a stable U.S. presence contributes to

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<sup>24</sup> Kuik, C.-C. (2026). *Actively choosing not to choose: Neutrality-plus agency in Southeast Asia* (IKMAS Working Paper No. 1/2026). Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

regional equilibrium, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noting that the U.S. plays an “indispensable role” in maintaining peace and strategic balance in Southeast Asia.

Tokyo also shares similar concerns about the erosion of the rules-based international order, the need to strengthen Southeast Asian defense capabilities, and the implications of the U.S. strategic retreat from that order. In her address to the Diet, Prime Minister Takaichi emphasized that Japan’s security and prosperity depend on a stable, predictable, and rules-based international environment, warning that any weakening of international norms would embolden coercive behavior and undermine the rights of smaller states. She underscored that Japan must work with like-minded partners to uphold international law, protect freedom of navigation, and ensure that power is not allowed to override principles.<sup>25</sup>

Japan’s defense diplomacy with ASEAN is also steadily increasing, ranging from joint training activities to the introduction of the Official Security Assistance (OSA) program, with the Philippines, Viet Nam, and Indonesia as its first recipients. Japan’s defense engagement with ASEAN is guided by Vientiane Vision 2.0, which reaffirms Japan’s commitment to strengthening defense cooperation in support of ASEAN centrality and unity. In Vientiane Vision 2.0, Japan emphasizes that its cooperation with ASEAN aims to enhance regional capacity, promote a rules-based security environment, and contribute to peace and stability through practical, mutually beneficial defense initiatives.

As for the United States’ military presence, Tokyo remains firmly committed to its strong alliance with Washington. During Prime Minister Takaichi’s meeting with President Trump in Washington, D.C. in March 2026, both leaders reaffirmed the enduring strength of the U.S.–Japan alliance. Prime Minister Takaichi emphasized that the alliance is the “cornerstone of Japan’s security” and stressed that close coordination with the United States is essential for maintaining regional stability, deterring coercion, and upholding a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>26</sup>

On the rules-based international order, ASEAN and Japan have repeatedly reaffirmed their shared commitment to upholding international law and strengthening multilateral institutions. Both sides consistently emphasize the importance of a strong and effective United Nations, including the need for member states to meet their financial obligations and support UN reform efforts. ASEAN leaders have stressed that a well-resourced UN is essential for maintaining global peace, development, and humanitarian operations, while Japan has underscored its long-standing role as one of the largest financial contributors to the UN and its commitment to strengthening the organization’s governance, peacekeeping, and development functions.

**At the geo-economic domain**, this is where the strongest convergence between ASEAN countries and Japan can be found. In the AOIP, all four cooperation pillars are fundamentally tied to economic development and regional prosperity. Similarly, in the FOIP, the second pillar explicitly focuses on economic prosperity. Long before AOIP and FOIP emerged, the 1977 Fukuda Doctrine laid the foundation for Japan’s long-term developmental role in Southeast Asia. By committing to “heart-to-heart” relations and pledging never to become a military power in the region, Japan positioned itself as a neutral and trustworthy partner amid the ideological divisions

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<sup>25</sup> Takaichi, S. (2025, October 24). Policy speech by Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae to the 219th Session of the Diet. Prime Minister’s Office of Japan.

<sup>26</sup> The White House. (2026, March 12). Readout of President Donald J. Trump’s meeting with Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae of Japan.

of the Cold War. <sup>27</sup>This approach enabled Southeast Asian states to develop enduring confidence in Japan as a reliable, non-coercive economic partner.

AOIP’s pillars align closely with Japan’s FOIP priorities. On maritime cooperation, ASEAN and Japan have expanded joint activities through the Japan–ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Initiative, including capacity-building for maritime domain awareness, coast guard training, and support for implementing UNCLOS. Japan has also provided patrol vessels and maritime surveillance equipment to Southeast Asian states such as the Philippines, Viet Nam, and Indonesia.

On connectivity, Japan remains one of ASEAN’s largest infrastructure partners, contributing more than USD 259 billion in cumulative investment to ASEAN between 2000 and 2022. <sup>28</sup>Through the MPAC 2025, Japan supports flagship projects such as quality infrastructure development, smart city networks, and cross-border transport corridors.

On the SDGs, Japan and ASEAN cooperate through the Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), which finances projects on disaster management, climate resilience, health security, and sustainable development. Japan is also a major supporter of ASEAN’s disaster response mechanisms, including the AHA Centre and the ASEAN Disaster Emergency Logistics System (DELSA).

On the economy, Dr. Jayant Menon, Visiting Senior Fellow at the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute suggested the current geopolitical landscape made possible for the closer alignment between Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Even he suggested that the European Union can be the third party to the larger trade framework.

The emerging issues in Southeast Asia and in Japan increasingly revolve around economic security, particularly the need to build resilient and diversified supply chains. ASEAN’s economic ministers have identified supply-chain resilience as a top regional priority, especially after the COVID-19 disruptions, with ASEAN reporting that nearly 60% of firms in the region experienced supply-chain bottlenecks between 2020 and 2022. <sup>29</sup>Japan faces similar concerns: Tokyo’s Economic Security Promotion Act (2022) allocates more than USD 2.2 billion to strengthen supply-chain resilience for critical goods such as semiconductors, batteries, and rare-earth materials. Both sides recognize that over-dependence on single-country suppliers creates strategic vulnerabilities, making economic security cooperation a central pillar of ASEAN–Japan relations.

<i>Convergence of Interest Table</i>	AOIP	FOIP
Strategic Domain	U.S. strategic retreat from the liberal international order, the erosion of the rules-based international order, and modernizing SEA military equipment to enhance national defense capabilities.	
Geo-Economic Domain	Maritime : Japan–ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Initiative	
	Connectivity: MPAC	Japan Quality Infrastructure
	SDGs: Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF)	
	Economy: RCEP and CPTPP (possibility)	Economic Security and Resilient Supply Chain

<sup>27</sup> Takahashi, T. (n.d.). Japan's new ASEAN policy under the Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Its continuities and discontinuities from the Fukuda Doctrine and the role of Cambodia.

<sup>28</sup> Japan External Trade Organization. (2023). JETRO Global Trade and Investment Report 2023: Japan’s trade and investment with ASEAN. JETRO.

<sup>29</sup> ASEAN Secretariat. (2022). *ASEAN Integration Report 2022*. Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

### Consultation of Coordination

Consultation between AOIP and FOIP is anchored in the governance structures that bring ASEAN and Japan into regular strategic dialogue. ASEAN-led mechanisms—such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF)—serve as the primary platforms where Japan aligns its FOIP priorities with ASEAN’s AOIP principles. These bodies institutionalize routine consultations at ministerial and leaders’ levels, ensuring that FOIP initiatives are filtered through ASEAN’s consensus-based processes. On the Japanese side, FOIP is also coordinated through frameworks like the Quadrilateral Dialogue, TICAD, and PALM, which complement ASEAN-centric forums rather than compete with them. Together, these governance structures create a multi-layered environment where AOIP and FOIP priorities are discussed, harmonized, and translated into cooperative agendas.

Coordination between AOIP and FOIP is further strengthened through dedicated consultation mechanisms that operate across Track 1, Track 1.5, and Track 2 diplomacy. The ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF) functions as a Track 1.5 platform that brings together policymakers, experts, and private-sector actors to align AOIP’s development-oriented agenda with FOIP’s emphasis on openness, connectivity, and rules-based order. Meanwhile, the AOIP Vision Group Conference (Track 2) provides a space for scholars, think tanks, and policy practitioners to deliberate on long-term strategic alignment, identify gaps, and propose policy innovations. These coordination mechanisms allow AOIP and FOIP to evolve through continuous consultation, ensuring that Japan’s FOIP initiatives remain responsive to ASEAN priorities while ASEAN benefits from Japan’s strategic clarity and resource commitments.

Consultation also occurs through the implementation and funding platforms that operationalize AOIP–FOIP cooperation. ASEAN mechanisms such as the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum and AOIP Forum serve as vehicles for project delivery, while Japan mobilizes its ministries such as METI, MOFA, MOD, JICA, and the Japan Foundation to align FOIP programs with AOIP pillars. Funding coordination is facilitated through instruments like the ASEAN Cooperation Fund, ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, and Dialogue-Partner Funds on the ASEAN side, and Japan’s ODA, OSA, JAIF, and the ASEAN-Japan Resilience Initiative on the Japanese side. Monitoring and evaluation are jointly supported by the ASEAN Coordinating Council and Japan’s JAIF mechanisms, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuity. Through these institutionalized channels, AOIP and FOIP maintain a steady rhythm of consultation that translates strategic alignment into concrete, measurable cooperation.

### Compatibility Enhancement

The compatibility between AOIP and FOIP should be assessed by examining how the two strategic frameworks can cooperate to address the challenges identified in this paper. In their engagement with major powers, AOIP and FOIP synergy lies in ensuring that major powers remain constructively involved in Indo-Pacific initiatives in Southeast Asia as part of broader confidence-building measures (CBMs). This approach also helps sustain major-power participation in the East Asia Summit (EAS), where both Chinese and American leaders are members. The objective is straightforward: to maintain an open space for dialogue between major powers, with ASEAN facilitating discussions and proposing cooperative agendas.

Furthermore, another form of AOIP–FOIP synergy can be found in the development of structured dialogue platforms between ASEAN and the Quad. In 2024, the Foreign Policy

Community of Indonesia (FPCI), together with the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India Missions to ASEAN in Jakarta, co-hosted the first Southeast Asia–Quad Dialogue. This Track 1.5 initiative explored potential areas of cooperation between ASEAN and the Quad, demonstrating that such experimental platforms are worth further investment. Importantly, this exercise does not aim to create exclusivity; rather, it expands the channels and forums available to facilitate cooperation.

Consequently, the AOIP Vision Group Conference can be further developed into a Track 1.5 dialogue platform that provides regular consultation and produces policy recommendations across all AOIP pillars. Institutionalizing such a mechanism would strengthen AOIP–FOIP coordination, ensure continuity of dialogue, and generate actionable proposals that reflect both ASEAN priorities and the strategic interests of FOIP partners.

Beyond that, Tokyo can invite ASEAN to be an observer in QUAD, TICAD, and PALM meetings. Japan–ASEAN can develop a joint project implemented in the third countries like in African countries or in Pacific countries. For instance, developing pathways for cross-institutional reinforcement – the outcomes of Quad Working Group or TICAD Connectivity Initiatives can be fed into ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum or AOIP Vision Group Conference. This exercise will operate the synergy between AOIP and QUAD.

Enhancing compatibility between AOIP and FOIP also requires closer alignment of their implementation vehicles and funding mechanisms. Compatibility enhancement therefore involves coordinating resource streams so that FOIP-supported initiatives reinforce, rather than run parallel to, AOIP's four pillars. Japan's OSA and maritime capacity-building programs, for instance, can be explicitly tied to AOIP's maritime cooperation agenda, while JAIF and Japan's quality-infrastructure programs can be systematically aligned with MPAC 2025. Joint monitoring through the ASEAN Coordinating Council and JAIF's evaluation mechanisms would further strengthen transparency, sequencing, and coherence. Through such alignment of budgets, timelines, and implementation pathways, AOIP–FOIP cooperation can move from conceptual convergence to practical, mutually reinforcing outcomes.

In terms of energy security, the instability in the Middle East and the resulting spike in global oil prices have accelerated Southeast Asia's urgency to diversify energy sources and advance green and clean-energy transitions.

In the medium to long term, ASEAN–Japan synergy can be significantly strengthened through existing institutional platforms such as the ASEAN–Japan Energy Cooperation (AJEC), the ASEAN Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation (APAEC), and Japan's Asia Energy Transition Initiative (AETI). These mechanisms provide structured pathways for scaling renewable energy, hydrogen and ammonia co-firing, regional power-grid interconnection, and long-term decarbonization financing.

In the short term, however, cooperation must focus on stabilizing supply chains and mitigating immediate energy shocks. This includes strengthening the ASEAN+3 Emergency Oil Stockpiling Initiative, coordinating LNG procurement strategies with Japan, enhancing maritime security for energy transport routes, and deploying JAIF or AETI funds for rapid-response energy-efficiency programs. By combining short-term stabilization measures with long-term transition frameworks, ASEAN and Japan can build a more resilient, diversified, and sustainable energy architecture for Southeast Asia.

## VII. Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific is entering a period of profound strategic uncertainty, marked by geopolitical fragmentation, economic volatility, and the erosion of long-standing norms. **In this environment, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) represent two of the most important regional frameworks through which Southeast Asia and Japan seek to reclaim strategic space, preserve stability, and preserve rules-based order.** Although AOIP and FOIP emerged from different strategic contexts and embody distinct priorities, **this study demonstrates that the two frameworks are neither inherently contradictory nor structurally incompatible.** Instead, they contain significant areas of convergence that if strategically aligned can strengthen regional cooperation and enhance the resilience of the Indo-Pacific order.

**The analysis of conceptual, institutional, and implementation gaps reveals that the most consequential divergence lies at the conceptual level. AOIP's emphasis on inclusivity and ASEAN centrality contrasts with FOIP's conditional inclusivity and its nuance position toward China. However, it is important to understand Tokyo's perspective whereas FOIP never excludes any country, but it does not tolerate any states that using threats or force to alter status quo.**

AOIP seeks to transform confrontation into cooperation through ASEAN-led mechanisms, while FOIP aims to uphold a rules-based order by shaping the strategic environment in ways that constrain coercive behavior. **These differences reflect the distinct strategic identities of ASEAN and Japan: ASEAN as a convening power that manages diversity through dialogue, and Japan as a middle power navigating alliance obligation, regional expectations, and its own strategic space. Yet, despite these differences, both frameworks share foundational commitments to openness, freedom, rules-based order, and regional stability. These shared values provide a strong basis for alignment.**

**Institutionally, AOIP and FOIP operate within overlapping but asymmetrical architectures.** AOIP relies exclusively on ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), ADMM-Plus, and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC). FOIP, while engaging ASEAN mechanisms, extends beyond Southeast Asia through platforms such as TICAD, PALM, the Quad, and Japan's 2+2 dialogues with key Indo-Pacific countries. This asymmetry is not a structural flaw; rather, it reflects the broader geographic and strategic reach of FOIP. The challenge is not to merge these architectures but to ensure that FOIP's wider networks reinforce, rather than bypass, ASEAN-centered processes. The institutional matrix developed in this study demonstrates that such reinforcement is possible through coordinated governance structures, multi-track consultation platforms, and complementary implementation vehicles.

**At the implementation level, the study finds that AOIP–FOIP cooperation remains uneven and insufficiently integrated.** Although ASEAN and Japan have identified more than 130 initiatives under AOIP–FOIP cooperation, these efforts have yet to produce meaningful breakthroughs in major-power cooperation or region-wide impact. The geopolitical environment—marked by U.S.–China rivalry, Japan–China tensions, and the United States' retreat from liberal international order further complicates implementation. Yet, the implementation gap is not a sign of failure; it is a reflection of the complexity of Indo-Pacific governance. The challenge is to move from symbolic alignment to practical, measurable cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the opportunities for AOIP–FOIP synergy are both significant and urgent. **This study identifies three domains where convergence of interest, consultation, and compatibility enhancement can be strengthened.** **First**, convergence of interest is evident in maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic resilience. These areas align directly with AOIP’s four pillars and FOIP’s three pillars, providing natural entry points for cooperation. **Second**, consultation and coordination can be deepened through Track 1.5 and Track 2 platforms such as the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum and the AOIP Vision Group Conference. These mechanisms allow ASEAN and Japan to socialize priorities, manage expectations, and co-produce policy recommendations without the political constraints of Track 1 diplomacy. **Third**, compatibility enhancement can be achieved by aligning implementation vehicles and funding mechanisms—such as AJEC, APAEC, AETI, JAIF, and the ASEAN Cooperation Fund—to ensure that FOIP-supported initiatives reinforce AOIP’s objectives.

Energy security illustrates how compatibility enhancement can translate into concrete outcomes. The war unfolding in the Middle East that led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have exposed Southeast Asia’s vulnerability to external shocks, underscoring the need for both short-term stabilization and long-term transition. **In the short term, ASEAN and Japan can strengthen emergency oil stockpiling, coordinate LNG procurement, and enhance maritime security for energy transport routes. In the medium to long term, AJEC, APAEC, and AETI provide structured pathways for renewable energy development, hydrogen and ammonia co-firing, and regional power-grid interconnection.** These instruments demonstrate that AOIP–FOIP synergy is not merely conceptual; it can deliver tangible benefits for regional resilience.

Ultimately, the future of AOIP–FOIP synergy depends on political will, institutional creativity, and the ability to navigate great-power dynamics without compromising core principles. AOIP offers a vision of an inclusive Indo-Pacific where cooperation prevails over confrontation. FOIP offers a vision of a rules-based Indo-Pacific where openness and freedom are protected. These visions are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually reinforcing. For ASEAN, aligning with FOIP strengthens its ability to shape regional norms and prevent the Indo-Pacific from becoming a theater of great-power rivalry. For Japan, aligning with AOIP reinforces its commitment to an open, stable, and inclusive regional order while allowing it to exercise strategic autonomy within its alliance framework.

In a region where strategic uncertainty is the new normal, AOIP–FOIP synergy is not a luxury it is a necessity. Strengthening this synergy will help ASEAN and Japan reclaim strategic space, preserve regional stability, and build a more resilient Indo-Pacific order capable of withstanding the geopolitical shocks of the coming decade.

## VIII. Policy Recommendations

To reclaim strategic space, preserve stability, and uphold a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, AOIP–FOIP synergy must be approached through short-, medium-, and long-term perspectives. Synergy requires focusing on complementarity at the conceptual, institutional, and implementation levels. The following policy recommendations reflect this multi-stage approach.

Short – Term : 2026 - 2030

1. **Clarify the criteria for AOIP cooperation projects.** ASEAN should articulate clear criteria for AOIP cooperation projects in an ASEAN Leaders’ Statement. Interviews with experts indicate the existence of an informal “ASEAN Plus One Open-Ended Formula” as a practical criteria for AOIP projects, yet this formula is neither introduced nor explained in AOIP documents. If ASEAN intends to use this formula as its preferred modality, it should be formally clarified in a Leaders’ Statement on AOIP.
2. **Strengthen ASEAN–Japan coordination on energy security.** Given the unfolding conflict in the Middle East, ASEAN and Japan should coordinate emergency oil stockpiling, LNG procurement, and maritime security for critical energy transport routes. As ASEAN updates the ASEAN Petroleum Security Agreement (APSA), it should explore creative ways to link APSA with Dialogue Partner support while maintaining ASEAN centrality.
3. **Upgrade the AOIP Vision Group Conference to a Track 1.5 forum.** The AOIP Vision Group Conference has proven effective as a Track 2 and informal consultation platform on AOIP and FOIP. ASEAN should elevate it to a Track 1.5 mechanism to ensure that discussions and recommendations reflect both ASEAN and Dialogue Partner perspectives. The upgraded platform can also serve as the think-tank engine supporting the ASEAN Forum on the Indo-Pacific.
4. **Develop thematic Track 1.5 AOIP–FOIP conferences.** ASEAN and Dialogue Partners should convene thematic Track 1.5 conferences on issues where AOIP and FOIP interests converge, such as maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic resilience. These platforms (together with Recommendation 3) will help incubate practical cooperation initiatives.
5. **Continuing the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF).** It should remain the primary framework for advancing practical cooperation between ASEAN and its Dialogue Partners across the four AOIP pillars.
6. **Identify and promote AOIP flagship projects.** ASEAN should identify or propose flagship projects under each AOIP pillar. Flagship initiatives are essential for demonstrating progress and ensuring meaningful AOIP operationalization.

Mid-Term: 2030 – 2045

7. In light of 50<sup>th</sup> years of Fukuda Doctrine in 2029 which has been the Japanese foundation on building its relationship with ASEAN, **ASEAN-Japan should jointly renew its doctrine into a vision that has three elements of the following:**
  - a. Collaboration to safeguard and restore the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific.
  - b. Collaboration to strengthen Southeast Asia’s resilience and development.
  - c. Collaboration to address shared challenges, including climate change, global health, economic security, connectivity, and human development.

8. **Expand AOIP–FOIP cooperation to third regions.** ASEAN and Japan should extend AOIP–FOIP cooperation to the Pacific, South Asia, and Africa. Both sides can leverage their complementary strengths to support resilience and development in these regions.
9. **Develop a joint AOIP-FOIP synergy funding framework.** ASEAN and Japan should establish a joint funding mechanism to support priority projects that align AOIP flagship initiatives with FOIP priorities. Financing should be structured through co-funding arrangements involving ADB, the World Bank, JBIC, and private-sector partners.

Long Term 2045 Beyond

10. By this stage, ASEAN has achieved its ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and is moving toward a new long-term vision. **AOIP–FOIP synergy should already serve as the foundation of shared norms, strategic vision, and cooperative frameworks guiding the ASEAN–Japan relationship.** The emphasis must shift decisively toward co-creating, co-financing, and co-addressing regional and global challenges. The relationship should no longer resemble a donor–recipient dynamic; instead, it should reflect a naturally complementary and interdependent partnership grounded in mutual strategic interests. To sustain this trajectory, ASEAN and Japan will require a robust, permanent, and adaptive institutional mechanism capable of responding to emerging challenges in the Indo-Pacific.
11. **Creation of Indo-Pacific Resilience Community (IPRC).** IPRC is to reinforce ASEAN centrality and extend AOIP-based cooperation to a wider set of partners in Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific. The IPRC would be developed in collaboration with ASEAN, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the African Union, forming a new generation of South–South cooperation (2.0). This long-term platform would promote resilience in climate adaptation, disaster governance, energy security, digital transformation, and sustainable development—areas where ASEAN and Japan possess complementary strengths and shared interests.