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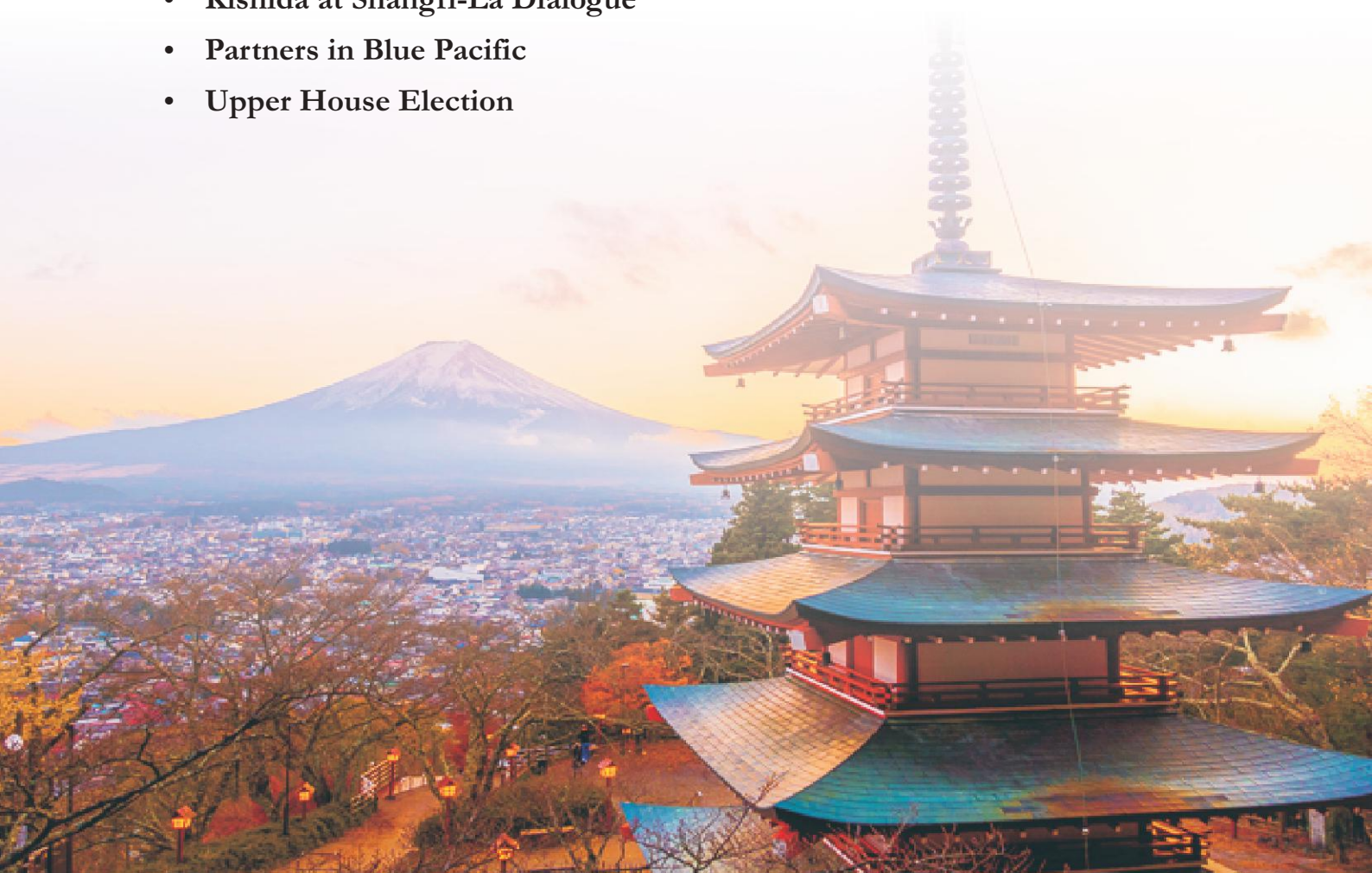
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JAPAN

Digest

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Japan's deepening engagement with NATO

Following the Ukraine conflict, Japan has closely aligned its response with the G7 countries and the emerging trends indicate a deeper cooperation with the NATO. Fumio Kishida is the first Japanese Prime Minister to attend the NATO Summit in Madrid on 29-30 June. At the NATO summit, Kishida said that as the international community stands at a crossroads of history, security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific region are inseparable. He reiterated that Ukraine might happen in East Asia tomorrow, which is why it is important to unite in order to demonstrate that unilateral attempts to changing status quo by force will not succeed. He prioritised cyber and maritime security cooperation.

Earlier Admiral Rob Bauer, Chair of the NATO Military Committee visited Japan from 5-9 June and [argued](#) that 'Japan is NATO's longest-standing partner from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. We share the same values and challenges, which makes us natural partners'. In May, Gen. Koji Yamazaki, chief of staff of the Joint Staff for the first time attended the NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defense Session in Belgium. On 24 March, Prime Minister Kishida met with NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg when he visited Belgium to attend the G7 Summit following an extraordinary NATO Summit. Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force conducted [joint training](#) exercises in the Mediterranean Sea with the Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) ships on 6 June. Foreign Minister Hayashi in April attended NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in Belgium. Japan and NATO bolstered their cooperation by way of a joint political declaration in 2013. There is an Individual Partnership and

Cooperation Programme which was renewed in 2020. In 2020, Japan for the first time took part in the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, alongside Australia, Finland, South Korea, New Zealand, Sweden deliberating on the international power balance and the rise of China.

On the side-lines of the NATO summit, Kishida held [trilateral meeting](#) with US President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol discussing key regional security concerns, especially the threats posed by Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes.

Kishida at the G7 Summit

Prime Minister Kishida attended the G7 Summit in Schloss Elmau, Germany alongside other G7 leaders where the Partnership for Global Infrastructure (PGII) was launched. It committed to mobilize [\\$600 billion](#) by 2027 in global infrastructure investments. In this, the US will mobilize \$200 billion in the next five years through grants, federal financing, and leveraging private sector investments. Europe has indicated to mobilise around [EUR 300 billion](#) until 2027 through public and private sources. Japan offered [\\$65 billion](#) dollars targeted at developing sustainable infrastructure.

Ukraine remained the key focus of the discussions. During the meeting, Kishida drew attention to the severe security situation in East Asia and emphasised the urgency for the G7 leaders to put forward a united front in order to avoid other nations drawing the 'wrong lessons' from Ukraine War.

China-Japan Consultations on Maritime Affairs

On 23 June, China-Japan [virtual talks](#) on maritime affairs happened. The primary focus was to discuss suspected gas field

explorations by Beijing in East China Sea. Japan's Foreign Ministry on 20 May confirmed ongoing construction by China of a facility believed to be meant for unilateral gas field development in the East China Sea. Japan and China agreed on joint gas development in the area in 2008, but negotiations were suspended in 2010 when tensions increased following a Chinese trawlers collision with a Japan Coast Guard vessel. MOFA lodged a protest with the Chinese embassy in Tokyo, saying it is regrettable that China has pushed forward with unilateral development. This is the first virtual meeting at the director-general level since last November. Separately in early June, Japan [confirmed](#) Chinese ships were spotted releasing what is reportedly observation equipment into the sea in Japan's exclusive economic zone near the southern prefecture of Okinawa.

Japanese Defense Minister Kishi [met](#) with his Chinese counterpart on the side-lines of the Shangri-La Dialogue. During the meeting, Japan conveyed 'grave concern' over China-Russia joint military activities around Japan. With regard to the situation in the East China Sea, Japan urged Chinese 'self-restraint on the continued unilateral attempts to change the status quo by coercion'. Importantly, Kishi argued that Japan's 'basic position on Taiwan remains unchanged'. In addition, militarisation of the South China Sea was also on the discussion agenda.

Kishida at Shangri-La Dialogue

Prime Minister Kishida unveiled his [Vision for Peace](#) while delivering the keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Japan will put together a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Plan for Peace' where the focus will be on enhancing maritime law enforcement capabilities, cyber security, digital and green initiatives, and economic security. Kishida indicated that in the next three years, Tokyo will draw

on technical cooperation, train and reinforce human resources networks to support the maritime law enforcement capacity of 20 nations. Japan also pledge to extend around US\$2 billion in assistance, such as the provision of maritime security equipment including patrol vessels and development of maritime transportation infrastructure to Indo-Pacific countries. Additionally, Kishida mentioned the urgency with which Japan aims to strengthen its own defence capabilities within the next five years. He also underscored the significance of realising the world without nuclear weapons, and urged Washington and Beijing to engage in dialogue on nuclear disarmament and arms control. In addition, Kishida also talked about new policy areas such as economic security.

Partners in Blue Pacific

The US, the UK, Japan, Australia and New Zealand collectively have launched a new initiative called [Partners in the Blue Pacific](#) (PBP) with the aim of advancing effective cooperation in support of Pacific Island priorities. The Statement on 24 June underscored that PBP will be 'led and guided by the Pacific Islands' and prioritise principles of Pacific regionalism, sovereignty, transparency, and accountability. Keeping delivery as the key goal, individually and collectively, they will align projects with Pacific Islands Forum's upcoming 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Upper House Election

Japan is heading for Upper House election on July 10. With rising food and energy prices, parties are promising wage hikes and tax cuts in their campaign. The war in Ukraine is also bringing national security into sharp focus, prompting some opposition parties to promise strong defence capabilities.