

**Speech by Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick at the event: Japan and 10
Years of FOIP
(10 February 2026)**

**Distinguished guests,
Members of YCAPS,
Friends from academia, industry, and the diplomatic community,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A pleasure to be among you all at YCAPS. This idea of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific has been an important point of congruence for India and Japan in the 10 years gone by. I will begin by paying homage to the first leader who articulated this idea - Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. I will then recall Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea of SAGAR which linked up with this concept.

2. In 2007, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his historic address to the Indian Parliament titled "The Confluence of the Two Seas," spoke of the Indian and Pacific Oceans coming together as a single, interconnected strategic space. He described a region linked not only by geography, but by shared values of freedom, openness, and respect for rules. That vision was remarkably forward-looking. It helped shape the way many of us now understand the Indo-Pacific as a connected region with shared opportunities and shared responsibilities.

3. Around 10 years after that early articulation, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, giving the keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018, spoke of SAGAR or Security and Growth for All in the Region. Prime Minister in that speech spoke of how India's growing engagement in the East was accompanied by deeper economic engagement and defence cooperation. He detailed our many plurilateral groupings with ASEAN entities and gave a comprehensive overview of how the Indo-Pacific was a huge region of global opportunities and challenges and expressed his conviction that the destinies of all those who lived in the region were linked and could lead to success if we rose above divisions and competition to work together. He reiterated that his idea of SAGAR was inclusive and included all peace-loving nations.

4. The Indo-Pacific today is at the centre of global attention. It is home to more than half of the world's population, carries the majority of global trade and energy flows, and includes some of the most dynamic economies of our time. At the same time, the region faces complex challenges—geopolitical tensions,

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disruptions to supply chains, climate change, maritime security concerns, and rapid technological change. How we respond to these challenges will shape not just the future of the Indo-Pacific, but the future of the global order itself.

5. India and Japan approach the Indo-Pacific from similar perspectives. We are maritime nations, dependent on open and secure sea lanes for our economic well-being. We share a strong belief in democracy, the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Our relationship has evolved into a Special Strategic and Global Partnership that spans security, technology, infrastructure, clean energy, and people-to-people ties.

6. Our bilateral efforts are complemented by cooperation under the Quad, which brings together India, Japan, Australia, and the United States. Through initiatives focused on maritime awareness, logistics, HADR – Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, training, and maritime contour mapping, Quad partners have helped smaller countries in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, in other words, we have helped bring practical public goods to the region. Our member states worked together to provide Covid vaccines to smaller nations during the pandemic. These efforts are inclusive and aimed at strengthening regional resilience.

7. India is uniquely placed among probably all the nations today to play a bridging role and a peace-making role. Our size, our democratic credentials, our commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes and to multilateralism, our membership in diverse groupings such as BRICS, G-20, BIMSTEC, all fit us to maximise openings for peace. The fact that India has been a thought leader in Asia for centuries, that we have a genuinely free press, and a vibrant civil society mean that we cannot become an autocracy. But at the same time, we are not a G-7 economy, we are a developing country. Our multitudes of people are still to attain their full potential because of our scarce resources. Thanks to our hard-working farmers, engineers, scientists, builders and custodians of the national good, we have impressive achievements to our credit. Nevertheless, our road ahead is long and not easy when, as the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi said, our objective is “to wipe away every tear from every eye”. This means that India will always look at international relations through the prism of development, of the greater good of the greatest number, and never through the narrow prism of security alone.

8. The world in general, and not only the Indo-Pacific, is undergoing upheaval. Profound changes are afoot. Many in Europe are prepared much more

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than before to extend what they call the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture to the Indo-Pacific. The question to ask is – will such moves bring our Indo-Pacific community closer to peace or take us further away from it? It is sometimes difficult to predict what will be the realignments in our region. We observe that the United States' attention and resources are getting redirected closer home – an understandable development given the scale of the illegal immigration that the country has been subject to. New trade flows in new vectors will open up with the many new preferential trading arrangements that have fallen into place over the last 10 years, and even more significantly over the last 1 year. What realignments among states in the region will these developments result in? These are interesting avenues for speculation.

9. The one thing that our friends in the Indo-Pacific can always be sure of: India will be a steadfast voice on the side of peace. I will end with a famous line from the Upanishad, one of the important Sanskrit texts of ancient India. This line was famously borrowed by the seminal important American poet of a 100 years ago, T. S. Eliot, who chose to end his most celebrated poem, a classic of the early 20th century, The Wasteland with this line. He ended as I do now:

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti
Om Peace Peace Peace
