

The French-Japanese partnership in the Indo-Pacific

France and Japan share a vision of the Indo-Pacific region based on a joint commitment to a rules-based international order. Both countries are stepping up their cooperation to promote sovereign partnerships and support strategic autonomy, resilience and sustainable development in countries in the region.

In 2013, French-Japanese relations were upgraded to “exceptional partnership” status, which was implemented through a 2023-2027 bilateral roadmap, the first chapter of which focuses on the Indo-Pacific. French-Japanese cooperation in the region is based on several structuring mechanisms, including Comprehensive Maritime Dialogue, launched in 2019, dealing with maritime governance and navigation issues, as well as a bilateral working group on the Indo-Pacific set up in 2020, which is the focal point for discussing French-Japanese cooperation projects in the region.

France and Japan also collaborate within regional organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In the South Pacific, the two countries recognize the key importance of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and are stepping up cooperation, as demonstrated by the opening of a Japanese Consular Office in Nouméa in 2023.

A partnership to increase regional security

French-Japanese defence cooperation can be seen in the Indo-Pacific through joint exercises carried out during French deployments to the region (e.g. “Brunet-Takamori” land exercise first organized in Japan in 2024, “Pacific Steller” exercise with French, Japanese and American aircraft carriers in February 2025), in order to step up interoperability between our armed forces.

This cooperation also extends to the area of marine safety and security. France and Japan are thus promoting exchanges of information and coordination with regard to Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) as part of the roadmap for strengthening maritime cooperation signed in 2021 between the General Secretariat for the Sea and the Japan Coast Guard, and within international forums like the Coast Guard Global Summit and the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting.

Joint initiatives in response to global challenges

France and Japan place particular importance on addressing global issues in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with regard to environmental protection and resilience to climate change, including as part of concerted action carried out in third countries by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD, French Development Agency) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The “EVN Bac Ai” hydroelectric plant project, on which the two agencies are collaborating as part of the partnership to support the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) relating to Vietnam’s efforts to meet its goal of climate neutrality by 2050, is a prime example of this.

There is particular focus on Pacific Island States, in support of the PIF's Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, with the aim of increasing climate resilience, protecting marine ecosystems, developing infrastructures and boosting the local private sector. In the same vein, France and Japan are supporting the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and working together to help Pacific Island States build their capacities in the area of natural disaster prevention. Cooperation in the area of science also helps to improve our understanding of climate phenomena, such as through the observatory for deep-sea ecosystems in the Western Pacific based in Nouméa, which since 2019 has been run jointly by the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER) and the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC).

France is extending its partnership approach with Japan in the region as part of Japanese-European relations

France encourages synergies as part of EU-Japanese cooperation, linked through a Strategic Partnership Agreement (in force since January 2025), including within the framework of the EU Global Gateway strategy and multiple partnerships, including the EU-Japan connectivity partnership launched in 2019. EU-Japan cooperation is also growing in the area of defence, with an EU-Japan Security and Defence Partnership adopted in November 2024.