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New paradigm puts nation’s diplomacy to the test

Japan faces ‘friendshoring’ dilemma

◆Focus  
NORIYUKI SUZUKI  
SAN FRANCISCO  
KYODO

A growing sense of urgency to ensure economic security is precipitating the formation of like-minded groups in the Asia-Pacific, where the re-engagement of the United States is met with China’s quest for greater influence.

The new paradigm is putting Japan’s diplomacy — and its ultimate vision for its own engagement in the region — to the test.

It is pushing for a rules-based, “free and open Indo-Pacific,” seen as a counterbalance to China, but it also needs to avoid alienating countries that are much closer to Beijing than to Tokyo and ruffling the feathers of the Asian powerhouse.

The delicate balancing act was evident when Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited San Francisco for a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum that concluded Friday. He underscored the importance of allies and partners joining forces, and in particular, warming relations with South Korea as they both face China — an assertive neighbor but key trading partner.

At the summit of the Indo-Pacific Economic Partnership coinciding with APEC, Japan and 13 other nations reached an agreement on all but one pillar of the U.S.-led trade initiative that does not include tariff cuts like free trade agreements, a key step toward what the United States calls “friendshoring” or diversifying supply chains among like-minded partners.

“It’s a framework that is designed to protect the economic security of the United States, which will also benefit Japan and other nations,” said Junichi Sugawara, a principal at Owls Consulting Group. “But it’s not as if we are going to completely decouple from China so the question is how far friendshoring can go.”

Some experts see the momentum build-

ing for a more fragmented world in which states defend their own national interests, in a potential blow to multilateral, free trade arrangements.

As talks continued to complete as many pillars of the IPEF as possible, a Japanese government official said reducing reliance on a single nation for strategically critical items was a “good” course of action.

“That being said, it does not and should not mean that partners with similar views can also undermine the free trade system,” the official added.

Japan enjoyed the benefits of free trade during its high growth era with bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Even without the participation of the United States, Japan pushed for the conclusion of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, while joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which also involves China, South Korea and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

APEC members also share the ambitious goal of creating an Asia-Pacific free trade area.

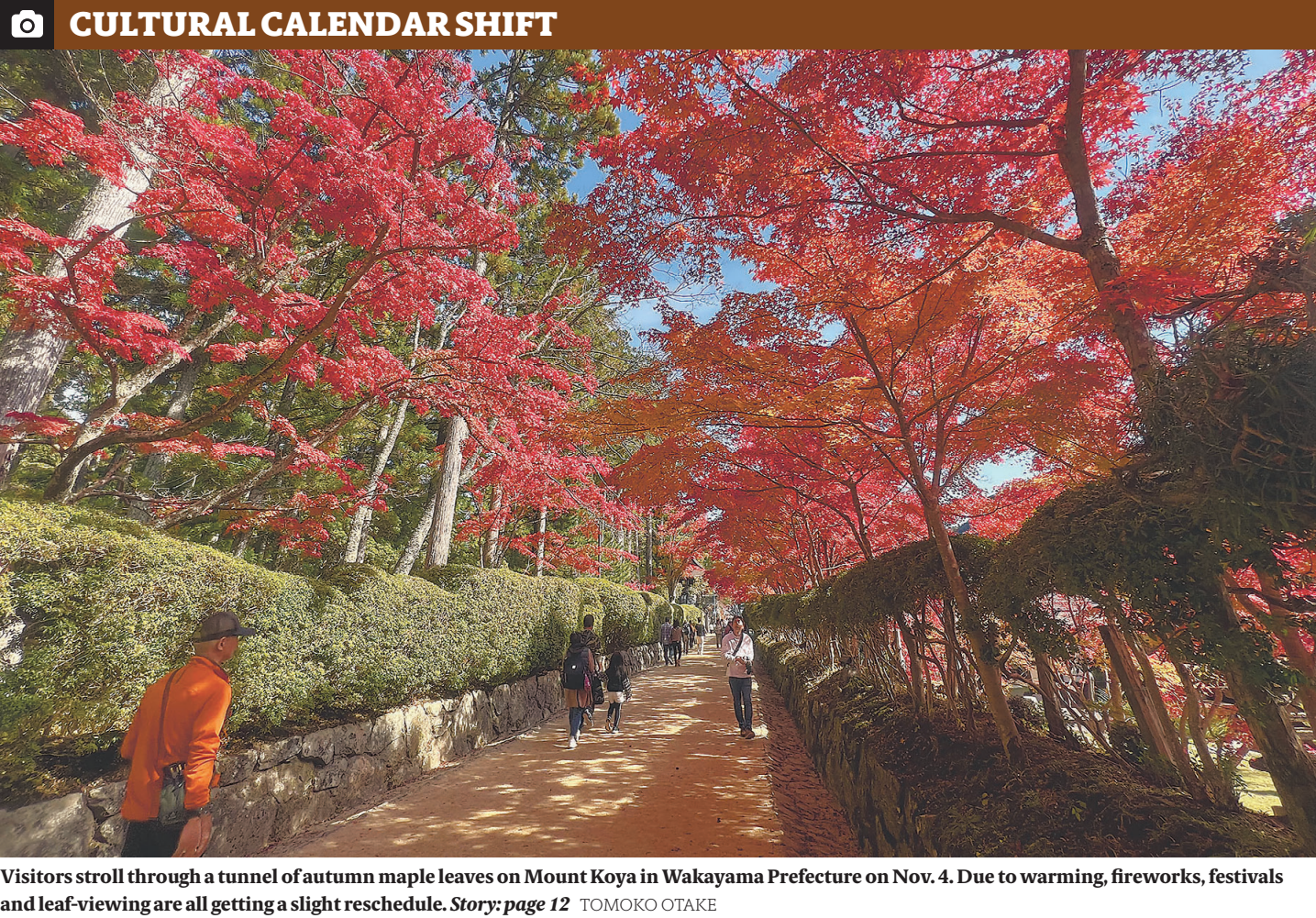
During the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, shortages of goods, notably chips, made some nations more inward-looking. “With supply chains disrupted and goods not coming in, people started looking at (the importance of) their own national borders,” Sugawara said.

Still, economic benefits are bringing countries closer together, such as Japan and South Korea, which were until recently unlikely bedfellows due to differences over wartime labor compensation and other issues.

In a rare joint appearance with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol at a Stanford University event, Kishida spoke of the need for Japan, South Korea and the United States to jointly drive transformations.

“It’s natural that South Korea is getting closer to Japan and the United States because it has been taking a big hit from this U.S.-China rivalry,” said Toru Nishihama, chief

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Visitors stroll through a tunnel of autumn maple leaves on Mount Koya in Wakayama Prefecture on Nov. 4. Due to warming, fireworks, festivals and leaf-viewing are all getting a slight reschedule. Story: page 12 TOMOKO OTAKE

Israel risks long insurgency in Gaza

SAMIA NAKHOUL, HUMEYRA PAMUK  
AND MATT SPETALNICK  
REUTERS

Israel risks facing a long and bloody insurgency if it defeats Hamas and occupies Gaza without a credible postwar plan to withdraw its troops and move toward the creation of a Palestinian state, U.S. and Arab officials, diplomats and analysts said.

None of the ideas floated so far by Israel, the United States and Arab nations for the postwar administration of Gaza have managed to gain traction, according to two U.S. and four regional officials as well as four diplomats familiar with the discussions, raising fears the Israeli military may become mired in a prolonged security operation.

As Israel tightens its control over northern Gaza, some officials in Washington and Arab capitals fear it is ignoring lessons from the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan when swift military victories were followed by years of violent militancy.

If Gaza’s Hamas-run government is toppled, its infrastructure destroyed and its economy

ruined, the radicalization of an enraged population could fuel an uprising targeting Israeli troops in the enclave’s narrow streets, diplomats and officials say.

Israel, the U.S. and many Arab states agree that Hamas should be ousted after it launched a cross-border raid on Oct. 7 that killed some 1,200 people and took around 240 hostages. But there is no consensus on what should replace it.

Arab countries and Western allies have said a revitalized Palestinian Authority (PA) — which partially governs the West Bank — is a natural candidate to play a greater role in Gaza, home to some 2.3 million people.

But the credibility of the Palestinian Authority — run by 87-year-old President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah party — has been undermined by its loss of control over Gaza to Hamas in a 2007 conflict, its failure to halt the spread of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and accusations of widespread corruption and incompetence.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that the Palestinian Authority in its current form should not take charge of Gaza. He said the Israeli military was the only force

capable of eliminating Hamas and ensuring that terrorism did not reappear. In the wake of Netanyahu’s comments, Israeli officials have insisted that Israel does not intend to occupy the Gaza Strip.

Mohammed Dahlan, who was the Palestinian Authority’s security chief for Gaza until it lost control of the strip to Hamas and has been suggested as a future leader of a postwar government there, said that Israel was mistaken if it believed that tightening its control of Gaza would end the conflict.

“Israel is an occupying force and the Palestinian people will deal with it as an occupying force,” Dahlan said in his office in Abu Dhabi, where he now lives. “None of the Hamas leadership or fighters will surrender. They will blow themselves up but won’t surrender.”

Dahlan has the backing of the influential United Arab Emirates to lead a postwar administration in Gaza, according to diplomats and Arab officials. But he said no one, certainly not him, would want to come in to govern a broken and demolished territory without a clear political path in sight.

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IN TODAY’S NYT:  
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OF LIFE IS FADING  
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Asian regulators turn focus to Big Tech

◆Focus  
ELIZABETH BEATTIE  
STAFF WRITER

Last week saw a flurry of stories about Big Tech giants getting in trouble — Apple is in hot water in the U.S. over concerns that the Chinese government is influencing the company’s program commissioning, and in Australia Elon Musk’s X has failed to pay a fine imposed by Australian regulators, to cite just two examples.

In many markets, regulators and governments are increasingly eyeing stricter rules for tech companies — and emphasizing the need for compliance.

Just as the European Union and U.S. are taking action — through new legal powers in the former’s case, and by proposing new digital payments regulations in the latter’s — Asian countries are also showing increased concern about how a few tech giants are dominating the digital landscape.

Across the region, there are indications that Big Tech may soon have to comply with standards that could become international benchmarks.

Here is a look at how scrutiny of tech firms is playing out across the Asia-Pacific region:

**Japan**

In October, the Fair Trade Commission (FTC) revealed that it had begun an investigation into Google blocking rival services and a potential breach of antitrust regulations.

And in June, a government panel headed by Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno proposed regulations that would open up the Apple and Google app stores to competition, as well as stop a bias toward the companies’ respective smartphone operating systems that the panel says is created by making it difficult to download apps or use payment services developed by third parties. Apple and Google both charge commissions on app payments.

The Justice Ministry has also pushed for foreign technology companies to register their overseas headquarters in the country in order to extend government oversight in online harassment cases, with victims able to file lawsuits in Japan rather than overseas. After a 2022 warning that 48 foreign tech

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Skating icon’s marriage ends  
Yuzuru Hanyu divorces amid slander and stalking troubles | NATIONAL, PAGE 2

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OpenAI board pressed to reinstate Sam Altman

BLOOMBERG

OpenAI’s biggest investors are pressing the company to reinstate Sam Altman as chief executive officer after the board’s stunning decision to fire him on Friday, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Microsoft, the startup’s biggest backer with a more than \$10 billion stake, is working with investors including Thrive Capital and Tiger Global Management to bring back Altman, said the people, who asked to remain anonymous discussing private information.

As part of the effort to reinstate the CEO, investors are also pressing for the replacement of the current board, the people said. The directors have considered stepping down, though they’re currently balking at such a move, the people said. The situation is fluid and final plans have not been set. If the board steps down, investors are reviewing a list of possible new directors. One contender is Bret Taylor, the former co-CEO of Salesforce Inc.

The OpenAI board has been subjected to intense criticism over its decision to remove Altman, which came as a surprise to both investors and to Altman himself. Over the



Sam Altman, then CEO of OpenAI, at the company’s headquarters in San Francisco in March  
JIM WILSON / THE NEW YORK TIMES

years he pushed hard to change the company from a nonprofit to a commercially successful business and was the driving force behind new tools that have revolutionized the way people complete tasks from homework to coding. His ouster did not sit well with the firms that backed OpenAI.

Thrive, which was expected to lead a tender offer for employee shares, has not yet wired the money and has made it clear to

OpenAI that Altman’s departure will affect its actions. Thrive, the largest OpenAI investor aside from Microsoft, is working to reinstate both Altman and Greg Brockman, the startup’s president who quit on Friday in protest.

Altman is open to returning to the company, some of the people said. However, they said if he were to return, he would ask for changes in the way the company is governed.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has been in touch with Altman and pledged to support him in whatever steps he takes next, the people said. Nadella was blindsided by the board’s decision, according to people familiar with the situation.

Several employees, including OpenAI co-founder Brockman, have departed the company in protest following Altman’s ouster. The resignations are likely to continue, the people said.

If he does not return, Altman has been considering launching a new venture, possibly with former staffers of OpenAI, according to several people. In a statement on X, formerly Twitter, venture capitalist Vinod Khosla said that his firm wanted Altman “back at OpenAI but will back him in whatever he does next.”



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