

Will Japan Join “The Five Eyes Spy Network”, Japan “Spy Eye” in Relation to China, North Korea, Russia and Southeast Asia?

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The Five Eyes spy network, an intelligence cooperation between the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, was established in 1956 at the height of the Cold War. Although Five Eyes is evidently an alliance of Anglo countries, Japan is not deterred from wanting to become a member and serve as an “eye” on Asia, or more specifically, on Russia’s East.

Initially, Five Eyes cooperation covered the field of electronic intelligence. Each alliance member was responsible for collecting and analyzing intelligence in certain areas of the world. Great Britain monitored Europe, the western part of the Soviet Union and the Middle East. The United States also kept an eye on the Middle East, China, the Soviet Union, Africa and the Caribbean. Australia was responsible for South and Southeast Asia, and New Zealand was responsible for the South Pacific. Canada spied on certain areas of the Soviet Union, China and some areas of Latin America.

The parties exchanged the data received, so in effect they worked together. Over time, cooperation between the intelligence agencies of the five countries has expanded to the fields of intellectual-technological intelligence and counterintelligence. Today, no country in the world can be sure that it is not under the surveillance of the Five Eyes.

Recently, Japan has shown special interest in the Five Eyes alliance. Last year, a Japanese delegation attended a meeting of the intelligence agencies of five countries in Canada, and recently, a meeting of senior military officials of the Five Eyes alliance took place in Japan. Thus, in an unofficial way, Tokyo is starting to cooperate with this alliance, and it cannot be ruled out that Japan will become the “sixth eye” of the spy organization.

The Five Eyes members highly appreciate Japan’s achievements in intelligence activities related to China, North Korea, the eastern regions of Russia and Southeast Asian countries. No less important is that Japan today owns seven advanced reconnaissance satellites for information gathering, such as the ability to identify human heads from space.

However, some issues could prevent Japan from joining the Five Eyes alliance. These include shortcomings in Japan’s legal basis and security system in classifying intelligence information and approving access to that information. Members of the Five Eyes fear the possibility of classified information leaking from the walls of Japanese intelligence agencies. Tokyo needs to upgrade its national security system to meet the standards of the Five Eyes.

Former prime minister **Shinzo Abe** and successive heads of government have tried to do this but have seen no results.

Furthermore, there is another point that sober-minded Japanese politicians cannot ignore: how becoming a member of a spy organization would affect Tokyo's relations with the countries that these "eyes" are watching.

One of the Japanese experts, Edo Naito, also questioned in the Japan Times **"whether Japan's inclusion in a hypothetical Six Eyes alliance could harm its close relationships with some Indo-Pacific partners who have previously viewed themselves as targets of Five Eyes scrutiny."**

The Japanese authorities seem not to worry about the reaction in Asian countries. For them, entering into any form of military cooperation with the United States and its allies is more important. Right now, Japan and the United States are jointly developing hypersonic missile interceptors and the next-generation Patriot anti-missile system. Japan is also cooperating with the United Kingdom and Italy to develop a sixth-generation fighter.

Cooperation in intelligence would strengthen Tokyo's ties with its allies but also promote a revival of militaristic sentiment in Japanese society. This is especially alarming for Japan's neighbouring countries, particularly Russia since Tokyo maintains territorial claims on the Eurasian Giant.

In an attempt to try and alleviate Moscow's worries about Japan's hoped integration into Five Eyes, Japanese prime minister **Shigeru Ishiba** said earlier this month that despite difficult relations with Russia, his country is still committed to "resolving the territorial issue" and signing a peace treaty. However, Moscow has repeatedly pointed out that there can be no comprehensive dialogue until Japan abandons its hostile policies "aimed at causing damage to the Russian Federation and its people."

Japan claims sovereignty of four islands from Moscow, which the Soviet Union took following the Asian country's surrender in World War II on August 15, 1945. The dispute over the Iturup, Kunashir, and Shikotan islands, as well as the Habomai islet group, known in Japan as the Northern Territories and in Russia as the Southern Kurils, has prevented the two countries from signing a postwar peace treaty.

Given that Moscow has no logical reason to hand over its sovereign territory to Japan, Tokyo's decision-makers are becoming increasingly frustrated. For this reason, they are hoping to bring the Anglo Alliance to their cause. Although Five Eyes will certainly be interested in cooperating with Japan against Russia, it is unlikely that this will translate into a new member of the spy organization, given it is an Anglo exclusive alliance.

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