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## JAPANESE PM ISHIBA'S "ASIAN NATO" IDEA MEETS CRITICISM

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The new Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's concept for an "Asian NATO" has faced an outpouring of criticism in Southeast Asia.

For years, Ishiba, a former defense minister, has advocated for the establishment of an Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance in the Asia-Pacific region.

After taking office on Oct. 1, the 67-year-old senior diplomat did not elaborate on his long-mulled idea of a NATO-style security framework in his inaugural policy speech to parliament. The omission has spurred speculation that his administration is looking to quietly shelve the proposal in the face of widespread criticism from analysts and foreign officials. Even within Ishiba's newly appointed cabinet, there appears to be little enthusiasm for advancing the idea.

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