

DYNAMICS OF INDO- JAPANESE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This article elaborates the relationship between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific region and key events leading towards the strengthening of their political, security and socio-economic ties. It is imperative to say that United States wants a strong foothold in Indo-Pacific region to balance out its position in competition with China. This article demonstrates that Washington perceives China as a threat to its status of global power and to contain China, United States cannot come on front line to confront this threat. In this regard this article provides a contingency plan of India and Japan that is based on different military, political and socio-economic agreements. It is a comparative analysis of balance of power versus balance of threat, which if India and Japan will collaborate with each other with full throttle, will create a balancing effect within the region against China. This article draws analysis about the future of the dynamic relationship between Japan and India keeping in view that its implications for United States will change the face of future standing of changing regional and global politics.

Keywords: indo- Japanese, united states, strategic

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of Indo-Japanese partnership have evolved over time due to shifting strategic goals and foreign policy in Indo-Pacific region. The economic liberalization of India and Japan's security concerns shaped their relationship since their initial interaction after the end of Cold War especially when Japan started crafting its strategic and security policies based on re-association with Asia. On the other hand the Japanese foreign office had been aiming towards connecting with South Asian states and found India as their viable partner. However, this partnership was not merely consequential since India was also progressing rapidly due to economic liberalization. For Japan, another reason to pursue this partnership was access to Indian market. In the last decade, India-

Japan strategic partnership has been more and more driven by the favorable geopolitical factors, political goals, economic dimension, and strategic concerns of both partners. The purpose of this article is to analyze the evolution of their strategic partnership, their respective foreign policies regarding each other and lastly, different dimension of their partnership.

Theoretical Framework:

The concept of the *balance of power* as proposed by Kenneth Waltz (1979) is composed of two major factors of 'self-help' and 'state' as a main actor of the stage of International Relations. Kenneth Waltz an advocate of neo-realism proposed that the most favourable condition for balance of power to thrive is the bipolar world;

when two powerful states are in coalition with each other, they try to gain support of weaker states as well gain maximum benefit of the situation by using their economic and military capabilities (Waltz, 1979). However, critics state that it is not necessary that balance of power theory only thrives in bipolar world, in fact there are few conditions that allows the state to create balance of power in international system and these conditions are also labelled as determinants or variables of balance of power theoretical framework, intentions, preference and contingency plan of a state (Meicen,2014)ⁱ.

The theory of *Balance of Threat* was proposed by Stephen M. Walt in 1985 in his article “Alliance formation and the Balance of World Power” and afterwards it was well elaborated in his book “The Origin of Alliances” in 1987. The main idea of a commendable contribution to the neo-realistic thinking. Later, Robert Kauffman expanded on the balance of threat by explaining that great powers pursue balancing policies only when they are pushed by a state’s aggressive policies or external threats to their own geopolitical, economic, political, or military interests. This foreign policy design also brings into perception, construction, or reaction to the threat. There are four important factors that determine the state’s perception about threat and then state decides to form alliance against threat or to go for bandwagon situation. It is important to note that these factors were proposed by Robert Keohane (1988)ⁱⁱⁱ, which are as follow:

this theory was to add variables of states behavior and perceptions that drive them to be a threat or to feel threatened from other states regardless of distribution of power. According to Stephen Walt (1987), states behave as per perceived threats, they join alliances against threats and usually these alliances work well to balance the situation but when it comes to decision making by weak states; they bandwagon with the increasing threat to save themselves for war like situations. The term ‘balancing’ means “allying against the perceived threat” while ‘band wagoning’ means alliance with the source of threat (Stephen, 1987)ⁱⁱ.

To be exact, Robert Keohane has reviewed this theory as a criticism of neorealism and even though it is admitted that balance of threat makes

- Aggregate power
- Geographical Proximity
- Offensive capability
- Perceived intention

According to balance of power, states form alliances to counter or balance stronger powers. This alliance is usually formed to protect the interests of the parties involved and prevent stronger nations from overpowering them strategically. Most of all the states forming an alliance do not want the superior resources of the stronger state such as military capabilities, population, technical power and energy resources or access to markets, to overpower their own interests and control in a region.

Theoretical Perspective Assumptions; Indo-Japanese Strategic Partnership and U.S foreign policy:

Theoretical framework Assumptions	Indo-Japanese Strategic Partnership (2000-2019)	U.S foreign policy	Potential Outcomes
Balance of Power	In order to contain economic and strategic expansion of China as well as other South East-Asian states	U.S is backing Tokyo and New-Delhi (even in military partnership)	Indo-U.S-Japan partnership will result in diverse business opportunities for Asian region rather than just China as a single
Intention			

Contingency	To gain control they have started; economic deals, military exercises and political meetings.	Bilateral alliance shift into multilateral alliances between three actors.	Long term partnership will result into U.S prominent presence in Asian regional politics regardless of China already ruling the regional economy.
Preferences	Both actors want to have free and open Indo- Pacific strategic approach, along with collaborated economic partnership	Washington has re-enforced its Indo-Pacific Strategy with a promise of more security and resilience against regional threats (White House, 2022) ¹	As a result, China will be encircled with three actors as well as its economic partnership with South East Asian states will be affected.
Balance of Threat Aggregate Power	India and Japan together with U.S and Southeast Asian states can be source of great threat to China	U.S foreign policy strategist have been designing their Indo-Pacific strategy to counterbalance China's dominant presence in Asia	With the passage of time, the progress of partnership will decide the fate of China's economic expansionist designs
Geographical proximity	India and Japan are located on ideal strategic position in proximity with China creating a sense of threat within China	U.S has successfully planned its Indo-Pacific strategy to create insecure environment for China within the region	This geographical encirclement will definitely develop a sense of consciousness in China especially when China is working over OBOR (one belt one road) Initiative.

¹ Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

Offensive Capability	Mutual military exercises have developed a sense of military strength within these two actors against China	Washington has backed these exercises to contain China	Military strength has always provided desirable results against competitor state
Perceived Intention	China can perceive the intentions of both regional actors as an offensive act	U.S probably wants China to perceive the threat and retreat its steps towards economic expansionist designs in collaboration with other regional actors	The more likely outcome can be either way, depends upon how a nation perceive and react against competitors.
Balance of Power versus Balance of Threat	Both actors are behaving to maintain balance of power to avoid threat from China and its futuristic hegemonic designs	Washington Strategic office is developing more concrete policies to force China to put its feet down and slow down its pace	It is possible that China will seek to develop new strategies that will create a whole new lot of opportunities for regional states. Thereby it will be seen with the passage of time.

Source: Authors' Own

Chronology of Indo-Japanese Strategic Partnership:

Since the 1950s, the bilateral relations between India and Japan were stagnant because India was more inclined towards Soviet Union and Japan on the other hand, had formed association with US (Yazaki 2016)^{iv}. Since after the end of Cold War and lost relevance of Non- Aligned Movement, both countries eventually became closer. During this time, India's open economy and market policies also proved conducive in being an active member in the open world. Buddhism laid the foundation of long-lasting relationship which followed into the start of unipolar world. From Japan's point of view, India would prove as a partner to hedge against China and rebalance Asia, a purpose which also serves United States. In the recent history, both India and Japan have also enriched their strategic goals to balance

Chinese rise in Asia as the centre of their strategic partnership because of growing military strength of China, Japan has listed China as a threat to its security as compared to the North Korean nuclear arms^v(Kelly, 2019). Following is the chronological view of ancient and recent developments in the Indo-Japanese strategic partnership which shows how their partnership has matured over time and reached the current state.

Colonial period- growing affinity between India and Japan:

India and Japan share rich cultural and religious connections owing to rise to Buddhism. Japan first came in contact with India during the rule of Emperor Kimmei in late 500 A.D (Sareen 2007)^{vi}. Moreover, this is the first common link between both cultures. This also paved way for Indian monasteries visiting Japan (Ladwig, 2009)^{vii}.

Another important factor in this chronology was the Pan-Asianism. During the period of **Indian Renaissance in 1900s**, they started identifying with Asian cultural spirit which was inspired by Japanese nationalism. An Indian Association was formed in 1900 which allowed Asian students to interact in both countries. If trade and economic agreements are tracked, India and Japan first engaged in bilateral trade contract in 1893 when Indian industrialist Ratan Tata united their spinning industry for cotton in 1893 which also led to the formation of establishment of Japanese consulate in Bombay (Murthy, 1996)^{viii}.

During the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, India also offered support while incorporating Asian identity. Persevering as an anti-colonial power, Indian admiration can be said to inspire the formation of Indian National Congress. During 1917, Annie Besant addressed Japanese victory as role model for combating colonialism (Raghavan 2008)^{ix}. Indian and Japanese leaders also formed Indo-Japan Friendship Association in 1903 which also resulted in student exchange. Till now, it is seen that India and Japan is becoming closer due to their cultural and religious affinities. Added to this is the dimension of Asianism which inspired India to attain more autonomy in local politics and political representation.

Post-colonial era and India-Japan estrangement:

However, the Indo-Japanese relations also suffered some setbacks when Japanese militarism led to Manchuria incident in 1930s and incessant support of greater Asian sphere which would be independent and self-sufficient bloc. During this time, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru also had a negative view of Japan's expansionism which to him seemed akin to Europe. However, it is also important to note that well after independence in Bandung Conference, which was held in 1955 brought it closer to China (Przystup 1999)^x. This era of cold relations followed both states into Second World War as well. Moreover, Japan's defeat in the war left it vulnerable to US led Allied forces and focused more on bringing peace with US which it did in 1951, in the **San Francisco Peace Treaty** leading to the end of conflict. During Cold War, Nehru did not want

Japan to fall into the hands of alignment with either side and wanted it to follow non-aligned foreign policy. Nonetheless, Japan later signed the International Military Tribunal for the purpose of demilitarizing East Asia and paving way for democratizing Japanese nation.

Cold-War Era, Bilateral Ties:

Starting with Cold War era, both India and Japan were in the opposite camps of USSR and United States, respectively. This contributed to the wider divide between India and Japan. When India started their nuclear program in 1974, Japan also pursued the open economy as opposed to India. India was also disturbed about China's closeness to its immediate neighbor like Myanmar and Pakistan. India was seen as a deterrent to China's economic power. This also set the precedent for India and Japan to pursue bilateral relations. Just like India and China were racing to acquire power through nuclear armament and weapons acquisition, they were also competing to engage economically and strategically with Southeast and Northeast countries. India's GDP was only \$350 million in 1991, it led to the formation of **'Look East'** policy in 1990s which later transformed into **Act East policy**. India, just like Japan faced friction with China which ultimately brought them closer. In 2000s, **'Global partnership'** was also initiated to recognize India as an important partner in the world community.

The launch of **'Rebalance to the Pacific'** by US foreign office indicated the need for a rules-based region to hedge Chinese rise. Both India and Japan aimed to minimize the rise of China. This can be classified as one of the reasons and driving forces of their strategic partnerships. Here, the role of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe cannot be ignored which proved integral to the development of this partnership. Under his government, the **'Confluence of the Two Seas'** was launched in 2007. The partnership transformed from bilateral to strategic partnership with the signing of first bilateral defense cooperation in late 2007 (A. Mohan 2014)^{xi}. In 2016, India also agreed on joining annual Malabar exercises with Japan where both became permanent members. This also allowed Japan to secure fuel agreements and import plans with India. Japan has also started

providing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Moreover, it has been actively involved in nuclear plant development. Joint measures have been taken for significant civil nuclear deal, future technology transfers, and protection of classified military information. Since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India in 2015, Japan has also invested in infrastructure development and investment from private companies like Toshiba (Coym 2015)^{xii}. Japan and India perceive China's rise as a strategic threat which is why Japan plays the role of security provider as India has border disputes with China.

Indian and Japanese foreign policy:

There are several drivers and motivations for India and Japan to seek this strategic partnership. Despite the obvious indicator of Chinese rise in recent history and US support for balancing India and Japan, there is a need to look at how India and Japan shaped their partnership from bilateral relations to strategic and global partnership. The relationship turned to strategic when Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Manmohan Singh met and confirmed that India and Japan shared convergence of political, economic, and strategic interests which is why dealing with regional and global challenges will only be possible through global partnership (A. Mohan 2014)^{xiii}. Moreover, the strategic focus of this partnership included: extensive economic engagement, cooperation in the United Nations, creation of an enhanced strategic dialogue, enhanced security dialogue, people to people contact and strengthening cultural and strategic ties via initiatives, and lastly, cooperation in the field of science and technology. When Shinzo Abe returned as Prime Minister, he also declared India as a pivotal partner and ascribed how Japan could further their national interests by strengthening ties with India. When it comes to India, Manmohan Singh also played a pivotal role in strengthening this partnership. This shift is also apparent in their foreign policy plans as seen below which reflects Indian and Japanese strategic thinking.

India's 'Look East' policy to 'Act East':

India's strategic thinking has opined that there are two leading thoughts regarding their Japanese strategic partnership. One of them supports that India is attempting to balance China and seeking cooperation with Japan will serve that purpose. Secondly, India is not only balancing but trying to achieve equilibrium in the regional dynamics of South Asia and larger Indo-Pacific region (Pant, Harsh & Yogesh 2015)^{xiv}. According to many strategic thinkers, Asian power dynamic will be balanced by Indo-Japanese partnership. This strategic partnership will prove conducive matching China's assertiveness and economic rise in the region. For India and Japan, there is a need to secure sea lines of communications, oil and gas trade, sphere of influence, and geostrategic ambitions. India and Japan also look forward to multipolar and rules based international order in Asia as opposed to maximization of one growing economy and this is where, strategic goals of US also come in. US is seeking to bring balance in the power equation of China and India, which explains its support of India's foreign policy ambitions (Khurana 2008)^{xv}.

However, the ambit of India's eastern outlook goes way back. In 1991, India faced severe payment crisis and its foreign exchange reserves fell to \$1 billion (Khan 2014)^{xvi}. That's why it needed support from the International Monetary Fund and approached Japan for bilateral assistance at that time. This led to the adoption of a reform program, but oil price hikes and devaluation of rupees did not help the situation. Moreover, India also realized that major restructuring was needed to improve lowering tariffs, import controls, foreign ownership, and devaluation. For this purpose, economic reforms were also introduced in the coming years. This restructuring tool place on a diplomatic level as well and focused more on economic based relations. They approached Japanese Prime Minister Narasimha Rao for this purpose. Resulting in high delegation meetings, consultations took place about nuclear issues and disarmament. The Indian delegation also visited Southeast and East Asia countries to pursue economic support. During this time, Japanese

proposal for joint working level was approved. This would allow India and Japan to work on issues of nuclear ambitions in the region. Finance Minister at that time, Manmohan Singh was also associated with international organizations. During his time, Japanese Prime Minister made an announcement of revision in Japanese policy towards India and the rest of South Asian region. Politically, India also began learning from East Asian economies which resulted in increased importance of SAARC South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It became a platform for resolving bilateral issues. This gave India the necessary foundation for forming 'Look East' policy where **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectorial Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** also helped (C. R. Mohan 2017)^{xvii}. Finance Minister also made direct links with Japanese Prime Minister to allow it access to Japanese business community. For the government of India, the formation of Look East policy, Japan became an important source of investment and technology. The model of 'Look East' policy was launched as a comprehensive economic and strategic relations charter for Asia-Pacific region. The five years of Modi government after 2014 were focused on engaging with **BIMSTEC**

which allowed it to expand and engage with its neighborhood. An example of this is BCIM the East–West Economic Corridor between Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam which would connect South and East Asia successfully (Kesavan 2017)^{xviii}. All these economic corridors to which Japan would also have access to is designed to create a safe bridge to the South China Sea and offer it alternative to India Ocean trade. However, it goes without saying that many of these trilateral highways and corridors have yet to make any sufficient development in terms of actualizing and helping India to achieve its strategic goals. Looking at what India has been able to achieve, its sea-based communication and connectivity has exceptionally improved with annual Malabar exercises which involved Japan, US, and Australia. Obviously, China's economic and infrastructure projects are unmatched which is why India's seemingly successful engagement with its neighbors and even powerful economies like Japan have not yielded tangible results. However, if looking at Indo-Pacific region and Indo-Japanese strategic partnership from the context of balance of power show how both actors involved are primarily motivated to hedge and balance China.

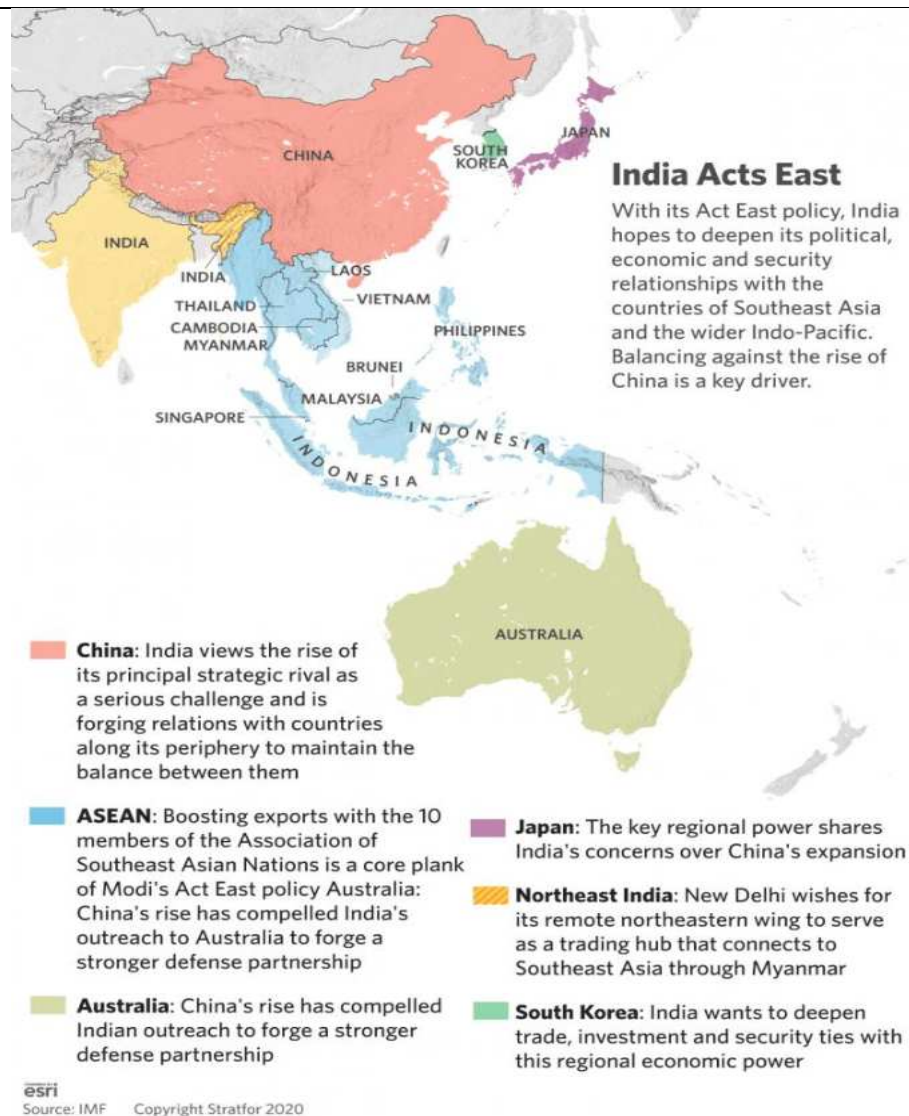


Fig 1.1: India's Act East policy ²

Japan's Opening Policy:

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has played an important role in promoting value-oriented diplomacy with India because it is concerned about its position in East Asia. Before formation and success of its opening policy, Japan also envisioned expansion on diplomatic front with US, Australia and India. China's military assertiveness in East Asia, South Asia, and South China Sea has evidently forced Japan to pursue strategic and security-based cooperation as opposed to traditional economic engagement.

Japan's policy is reflection of the Chinese rise. In his speech in 2006, Foreign Minister Taro Aso described Japan's forward thinking in a speech titled '**Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons**' (Brewster 2010)^{xix}. He mentioned that Japan aims on focusing on extending its influence, strategic and economic engagements in Central Asia, Northeast Asia and Baltics. Moreover, Japanese policies would be focused on promoting democratic values of human rights, freedom, along with universal values as well as free market

² Source: Shahzad, A. *Modi's Look East Policy*. Retrieved from: <http://globaltab.net/Articles/ArticleDetail/30255:September3rd,2019>.

and rule of law. As also explained that framework of international community will be starkly different from the policies of China. In ‘**Confluence of Seas**’, Prime Minister Abe also mentioned Indo-Japanese Strategic and Global Partnership (Sahoo 2015)^{xx} He ascribed that both actors would engage based on human rights, democracy and mutual strategic interests. The evolution of this policy affected the evolution of Indo-Japanese partnership. After this announcement, India was recognized for its role in bridging Asian countries. Japan aimed to create an elaborate network for people, good, capital and knowledge. In ‘**Confluence of Seas**’, Japanese foreign office gave a statement that security of sea lanes is their main goal so Indo-Japanese partnership could be maximized for security cooperation at sea and through land. Another article was authored by the Prime Minister Abe, namely ‘**Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond**’ mentioned and detailed its

goals in the Indo-Pacific region. Here, it was mentioned that a massive network would be formed for the purpose of peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Pacific and Indian Ocean (Baruah 2016)^{xxi} It recognized the need for connecting both seas and development in infrastructure and connectivity among states in a rule-based order would be needed. This is especially important as Japan faces trouble of safe navigation in South China Sea and East China Sea because of dominant Chinese maritime activities. This has set the precedent for pursuing India and other partnerships for the need of balancing Chinese rise in the region. Prime Minister Abe’s article also called for taking more share of responsibility for countering and hedging Chinese naval and territorial expansion. Following is a map of the South China Sea and the complex outlines of Japanese routes and Chinese claims in the maritime territories around Senkaku Island.



Fig 1.2: South China Sea trade route³

³ Source: Wang, L. *How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?* (<https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/> 2015)

In Japan's view, as mentioned above, securing trade routes has been a foreign policy priority and their expanding strategic horizons was mentioned in policy papers. Japan also initially planned on expanding and implementing mature maritime democracy, as it believes in it. Moreover, to safeguard these routes, Japanese foreign policy focuses on the strategy for bringing *United States, Australia and India in a quadrilateral partnership. According to Japan, this would allow them to secure and safeguard maritime security from Indian Ocean and Western Pacific*. During the Abe government, he was focused on joining Japanese capabilities to strengthen India and Australia. In 2015, when Prime minister of India and Japan met, a program was launched namely 'Japan and India Vision 2025' (Strachan 2017)^{xxii}. Based on the shared cultural ties and collective value system of democracy both countries of democracy, open market, and free market. Both countries focused on promoting open and stable rule-based order for which global and regional challenges will have to be dealt with. In the South China Sea, Japan has called for collective action to resolve tensions in the region. Another important reason for why Japan's attitude has changed from a latent to active role has been due to China's rise and decreasing US influence in the region. For Japan, India graduated from being a bilateral partner to strategic and key player in the region. Another important reason is the need to secure trade and energy networks as well as securing defense technology and maritime alliances in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan is also emerging as a partner for investing in development of Northeast which was a part of 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' and a combination of the Act East policy. Japanese Official Development Assistance has been supporting in development of major infrastructure development in India, *Adaman and Nicobar Island* and connecting it with Northeast India. Inter-regional development and connectivity is of much importance in Asia which Japan has prioritized apart from securing maritime trade routes. **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** countries is also

another example of convergence between Indian and Japanese policies which culminated into special focus on infrastructure investment and development (Chaudhury 2017)^{xxiii}. Enhancing connectivity has been the root cause and motivation of Japan which has been triggered by the Chinese rise, its own economic and technological development in the region as well as the need for regional connectivity. Moreover, when it comes to securing maritime routes has been done through Malabar exercise in 2017 and shared maritime cooperation with India for securing sea lines of communication. Japan is severely dependent on the Middle Eastern oil import which is why it has needed US naval forces to protect important sea lines of communication.

Dynamics of Indo-Japanese Strategic Partnership:

Economic Agreements:

Economic engagement between India and Japan has spanned over years of foreign direct investments and trade. Mostly the focus has been on the official development assistance which has focused on the infrastructure and poverty reduction. Under the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**, Japan has participated in the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project. This project has focused on the development of the 1483 kilometres of freight corridor as well. When it comes to investment regions, Corridor project has allowed India to develop them and enhance manufacturing facilities. India possesses a skilful workforce and Japan has the technological edge and capital advantage. Japanese firms like Nomura Holdings also shown keen interest in investing along with **Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation** is buying a 4.5 per cent stake in **India's Kotak Mahindra Bank** by spending almost US\$294.2 million (Murthy, 2011)^{xxiv}. Since 1950s and 60s, Japanese foreign office had formed 'Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' which included India as well. During this time, India needed machinery and equipment for development which is why starting in 1952, Japan offered grants for heavy electrical and industrial machinery and became a member of the \$681 million credits in Aid India Consortium. It also offered necessary funds for

bailout so Indian reserves could be stabilized and multiplied. Another trade agreement was signed in 1958, and both were given status of **Most Favored Nation (MFN)** to form relationship over tariffs, business, travel, trade and shipping. India during the 1990s, faced some issues despite the 'Look East' policies due to inability to coordinate with free enterprise economy of its counterpart.

The establishment of special economic zones was also done by Japanese firms and in 2006; both Prime Minister signed '**Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement**'. This agreement was based on the elimination on the hurdles on foreign investment, cooperation in all areas, and resolving trade barriers. Till 2011, these issues were resolved which resulted in smooth imports from Japanese suppliers. Now speaking of Indian trade with Japanese, it is mostly based on iron ore, steel, transport material, non-metallic mineral products, marine products, jewellery, textiles, and petroleum products. Another important event was the formation of an exclusive Japanese economic zone in 2008 which was signed under the JETRO and Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation. Among these are the seventeen other Japanese companies for power plant construction and construction of National Highway. Considering an increase in these private and public partnership, till 2010 the outward foreign direct investment to India was almost \$2,864 million (Mathur 2012)^{xxv}.

Under the India-Japan Vision 2025 in the current scenario, both countries have also been coordinating in their infrastructure development in Burma and Southeast Asia. Both are capitalizing on its sour relations with China which, since 2010 has been mildly frustrating. This can be seen from the increasing Japanese engagement as well India in infrastructure development. This can also be seen as a manifestation of the Indian 'Act East' policy. Japan, since 2016 has also been part of Indian collaborative venue in Chahbahar port in Iran. This would allow them to expand their trade routes from Iran to Central Asia and balance Chinese expansion via trade routes from Asia to Europe.

Defense and Security Cooperation:

There has been a regularization of the defense and security cooperation due to that only after 1990s was the period when Indo-Japanese relations matured to strategic partnership. Previously only a bilateral relation, India-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation was signed in 2008 and this was designed to achieve strategic consultations via regularized high-level visits (Scott 2007)^{xxvi}. In the areas of maritime security, threats of terrorism, and disarmament, India and Japan has also been involved in ASEAN-led mechanism, SAARC, and East Asian Summit. When it comes to maritime security, sea lines of communication are of importance and with the presence of growing economies like Japan or India and China in the region, energy consumption in Asia has significantly increased. Since 1990s, Japanese and Chinese trade has intensified from two prominent sea lanes like Strait of Hormuz and Malacca Strait. However, these sea lines of communication have been threatened by terror attacks, piracy, and oil spills, effectively increasing insecurity in the region. Indian Navy and its Japanese counterpart, the Maritime Self-Defense Force have worked since 2000s over Malabar exercises also ratified **Regional Cooperative Agreement for Anti-Piracy (ReCAAP)** in 2006 (Samuels 2008)^{xxvii}. India and Japan have also collaborated over Coast Guard in 2006 and signed Memorandum of Cooperation for protection of fishermen, terror attacks, and search and rescue operations. Regional institutions like East Asian Summit and SAARC have also become an important platform for Indian and Japanese interaction.

Since 2012, India and Japan have also engaged in Japan-India Maritime Exercise which has allowed both countries to deal with the maritime security issues. The Malabar exercises have been going since 2007 and have taken place in Bay of Bengal and Okinawa (Baruah 2016). US has been an active member of these partnership which has also enabled Japan to become a permanent member of the trilateral Malabar exercise. Role of US has been that of a conducive partner which has brought India and Japan closer as seen in the diagram below. Earlier in 2016, the two strategic partners were also engaged in **India-Japan Civil**

Nuclear Agreement (Chaudhuri 2015). This nuclear cooperation agreement was of importance due to Chinese ambitions. The annual bilateral summit also indicated close strategic as well as economic partnership. The basis of this partnership was based in areas including counterterrorism, defense industry, coordination in regional issues, and nuclear cooperation. This

is also the year when India-Japan Vision 2025 was also launched where India and Japan also cemented mutual interest of abating Chinese influence. Maritime security dialogue in 2010 has continued with regular staff talks between foreign ministry personnel and uninformed naval leadership (Brar 2016).

Date	India-Japan Strategic Documents and Milestones	Major U.S. Strategic Document/ Interaction with India	Comments
January 2014	India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership		Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi signed during Abe's landmark visit as first ever Japanese Chief Guest at India's annual Republic Day parade
January 2015		U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision (JSV) for the Indo-Asia-Pacific Region	Barack Obama and Narendra Modi signed during Obama's landmark visit as first ever U.S. Chief Guest at India's annual Republic Day parade
December 2015	India-Japan Vision 2025. Japan made permanent participant in annual Malabar exercise.		Vision included key human rights and governance themes in U.S.-India JSV; Japan invited to Malabar naval exercise
June 2016		U.S.-India Enduring Global Partnership	Announced by Barack Obama and Narendra Modi on occasion of Modi's fourth visit to United States since 2014
November 2016	India-Japan Civil Nuclear Agreement		Formal document signed after preliminary agreement in December 2015

Fig 1.4 Trajectory of Indo-Japan Strategic Partnership⁴

Since 2015, India has also been coordinating over Adaman and Nicobar island for diesel power plant with Japan. This will also allow India to evolve maritime base on these islands which would allow both partners

⁴ Source: Lynch, T. *India-Japan Strategic Cooperation and Implications for U.S. Strategy in the Indo-Pacific Region*. (Retrieved from: <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/inss/Strategic-Perspectives-24.pdf?ver=2017-03-14-123654-447> : 2017)

to track Chinese maritime activities. In 2017, Prime Minister Abe visited India and held the annual **Defense Ministerial Dialogue** (Lynch 2017)^{xxviii}. Here, the Indo-Japanese partnership was veered towards wider strategic and defense cooperation. The value of deepening defense cooperation for the development of defense industries was focused by both Indian and Japanese foreign office. Moreover, security challenges like North Korea or Pyongyang as well as Chinese maritime control in East China and South China Sea were recognized. For Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics, both countries signed MoU for research and development. Japanese Mitsubishi Industries and Kwasaki Heavy Industries have decided to collaborate with Indian navy for construction and development of advanced submarines (Chaudhury 2017)^{xxix}. These security plans also coincide with India's Make in India campaign. Since then, India and Japan have been focused on India-Japan Vision 2025 which is also the mirror of US '**Rebalance to the Pacific**' and encourages regional partners to work more on securing security relationships. When it comes to defense and security, US has an important role to play in bringing and supporting India and Japan in their arms transfer and technology in maritime domain especially. Although there are limitations in their dynamic and recently, roadblocks in regional integration in Asia considering the impending rise of China, there is room for improving their defense, security, and economic relations beyond their own states and into Indian Ocean. According to the World Bank, India's gross domestic product for 2014, the year Modi took office, was US \$2.04 trillion, making it the world's ninth largest economy. In 2018, it ranked seventh, with a GDP of \$2.73 trillion. During the same time, its defense spending rose from \$46.1 billion to \$66.5 billion, propelling it from eighth to fourth in the world, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Takenori, 2018). United States has its own interests at the stake both in the South China Sea and East China Sea and for this strategic objective to be achieved smoothly United States has decided to establish ASEAN as more than even independent and strong organization in South East Asia (Indo Pacific Strategy of the United States, 2022). United States is well aware of the fact that free and open trade policy is the only way to gain entrance in Asian Politics to secure all maritime routes without creating warning signals for China.

ANALYSIS

The study of bilateral relations between historical partnership of India and Japan has shown how both countries are connected via religious, ethnic, and cultural ties. Pushed into turbulent era of Cold War, both countries made humble start via economic investments and official assistance. Japan assisted in Indian economic survival via private to public investments and commercial activities; it was only in the last decade that Indo-Japanese bilateral relations changed to strategic and global partnership which spanned to defense and security partnership. Meanwhile, United States also supported and aided this partnership as to secure its power in the region against China. The Chinese rise and plans for regional connectivity in the region has allowed India and Japanese government to adapt Open and Free Indo Pacific and Act East Policy. Despite goals of hedging and balancing China in the region, the underlying U.S role in the region owing to Trump's protectionist policies has left much to assess about the future of balance of power in the region.

End Notes:

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