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India-Japan Strategic Cooperation: After Shinzo Abe

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Abstract

India and Japan share a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership', which has evolved over the years from economic cooperation to a comprehensive partnership covering various sectors. Both countries have expanded their cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, where they face common challenges and opportunities. The India-Japan-Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative was started by the two nations in 2020 with the goal of strengthening and diversifying their trade and investment ties. Additionally, they committed to spearheading the India-Pacific Ocean Initiative's commerce, connectivity, and maritime transport pillars. India has suggested this platform as a means of fostering regional collaboration. The first "2+2" ministerial discussion between the foreign and defence ministers of the two nations took place in 2021, during which they talked about measures to improve their security and defence cooperation. Additionally, they inked a deal on the reciprocal supply and service provision between their armed forces, which will enable coordinated training and operations. They commemorated their 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2022 and reiterated their resolve to collaborate for global peace and development in the Indo-Pacific area. In the areas of digital technology, education, health, and sustainable energy, he also unveiled a number of new projects. The 15th annual summit between their prime ministers took place in 2023, during which they discussed the partnership's development and laid forth their future goals. Additionally, they decided to work together on cyber and space security as well as co-develop and co-produce military weapons.

Key Words: India-Japan, Strategic, Security Cooperation, Industrial Corridor, Shinzo Abe

Introduction

India and Japan share deep and multidimensional relations marked by historical, cultural, and economic ties. Over the past few decades, there has been a notable improvement in the bilateral relations between these two Asian powers. The formal establishment of diplomatic relations by the signing of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1952 marked a significant turning point in their bilateral relationship. Economic cooperation is one of the relationship's main tenets. Japan has been a significant source of foreign investment and technological know-how for India, supporting the country's industrial, innovation, and infrastructure development sectors. Along with their shared concerns for maritime security and regional stability, the two nations are also closely collaborating on strategic and security issues.

Deeper understanding between nations has resulted from the flourishing of people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, India and Japan have worked together to address concerns like climate change and sustainable development on a number of international forums, such as the United Nations. The "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe envisioned has created a solid basis for a long-lasting partnership, making Japan and India significant players in the developing geopolitical landscape of Asia. Particular ties existed between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The Prime Minister of India was among the few international politicians that he, the lone Japanese leader, followed on Twitter.

Historical background

The cultural, religious, and economic exchanges between India and Japan have a long and rich history that spans several centuries. However, in the present day, the post-World War II era saw a notable increase in the significance and momentum of diplomatic ties between Japan and India. Both countries embarked on their journeys towards development and rebuilding after World War II's devastation and India's 1947 independence from British colonial rule. India and Japan engaged in limited engagement in the early years, Japan mostly with the United States and India with non-alignment. The 21st century saw a sea change in India-Japan ties due to common strategic goals and geopolitical shifts. India and Japan are bolstering their bilateral ties as a result of their growing economic might and China's expanding sway over the area.

The 2008 signing of the "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India" was a significant turning point in the two countries' relationship since it acknowledged their common ideals of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Increased collaboration in a number of areas, including trade, investment, technology, security, and defence, was made possible by this proclamation and is still going strong today.

With the establishment of the "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 2014 visit to India, India-Japan relations got even more impetus. The partnership's goals are to strengthen people-to-people exchanges, infrastructure development, and marine security while also strengthening political, economic, and defence connections.

Cooperation in Security and Strategic Partnership

A significant result of the collaboration between Japan and India is the idea of "Indo-Pacific," which aims to advance an inclusive, free, and open region. In order to maintain the Indo-Pacific region's freedom of navigation, rules-based order, and adherence to international law, both nations have actively collaborated.

India and Japan's military ties have advanced quickly in the last several years. Although there was initially little interaction between the two nations, in recent years there has been a noticeable increase in arms shipments and military-technical collaboration. Japan has proposed to sell India its US-2 amphibious aircraft and Soryu submarines as part of an arms transfer agreement. The US-2 aircraft will strengthen India's coastal defence, and the Soryu submarines will give the Indian Navy a major capacity boost.

India and Japan have made progress in their combined military training and exercises at MTC. Additionally, both nations have consented to exchange military technology and equipment. This collaboration can enhance both nations' military prowess and advance security cooperation throughout the Asia-Pacific area. Japan's ideas are not without difficulties. The size and cost of Soryu submarines are prohibitive for India's Navy. Another consideration is the price of US-2 aircraft. It's unclear how much Japan's suggestions would be

embraced in the end because India is also in talks to strengthen its military with a number of other nations. However, more advancements are being made in this area at a higher level.¹

In recent years, India and Japan have strengthened their defence and security cooperation, particularly with regard to the Indo-Pacific area. The following are some of the most significant defence exchanges that took place between the two nations between 2020 and 2022 and demonstrate how closely they cooperate on security:

- On September 9, 2020, Japan and India signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which established a foundation for further military cooperation through the reciprocal supply and service provision of goods and services.
- The fourth iteration of the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), which featured helicopters, planes, and naval vessels from both countries, took place in the Arabian Sea in October 2020.²
- The first-ever joint naval drill in the Indian Ocean between the Quad countries took place in November 2020 when Japan, India, and the United States took part in the Malabar naval exercise alongside Australia and the US.³
- The Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation had its 14th meeting in December 2020, with India and Japan hosting. During the discussion, they covered a range of topics related to bilateral defence cooperation as well as regional security concerns.
- The Cyber Security Dialogue began in January 2021 with a meeting between India and Japan. During the discussion, they discussed developing technologies, cyber threats and countermeasures, and collaboration at international fora.
- During their 13th round of Foreign Office Consultations in February 2021, India and Japan reviewed the status of their unique strategic and global cooperation and talked about problems of mutual importance on both a regional and global level.
- The Joint Working Group on Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation convened twice, in March 2021, with India and Japan delving into prospects for collaboration across a range of defence domains.
- The fifth iteration of the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), which featured helicopters, planes, and naval vessels from both countries, took place in the East China Sea in April 2021.
- At the fourth meeting of the India-Japan Act East Forum, which took place in May 2021, the two countries discussed the advancement of their collaboration in the development of India's northeastern region and decided to explore additional areas of mutual interest.
- The third Cyber Security Dialogue conference took place in June 2021 between Japan and India. Topics of discussion included capacity building programmes, collaboration in multilateral forums, and cyber security problems in the post-COVID-19 age.
- The Malabar naval drill, which took place in July 2021 with participation from Australia, the United States, and India, was the second joint naval exercise between the Quad nations in the Pacific.
- The Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation convened its fifteenth meeting in August 2021, with India and Japan sharing perspectives on the state of regional security and the execution of their defence cooperation agenda.
- The Joint Working Group on Space collaboration convened again in September 2021, with India and Japan discussing collaboration in the areas of space security, outer space, and civil space.
- India and Japan had the 14th Defence Policy Dialogue in October 2021, during which they examined the state of their defence cooperation and deliberated on strategies to strengthen their alliance in the Indo-Pacific area.

- The sixth iteration of the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), which involved naval vessels, planes, and helicopters from both countries, took place in the Bay of Bengal in November 2021.
- The Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation met for the sixteenth time in December 2021, with India and Japan discussing the results of the Malabar exercise and potential avenues for future maritime cooperation.
- The Joint Working Group on Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation convened for the third time in January 2022, with India and Japan delving into the topics of cooperative R&D, co-production, and co-development of defence equipment and technology.
- India and Japan convened the 14th round of Foreign Office Consultations in February 2022, during which they examined problems of mutual concern on both a regional and global scale and evaluated the development of their unique strategic and global partnership.
- India and Japan convened the fourth Cyber Security Dialogue meeting in March 2022, during which they discussed emerging technologies, cyber threats and countermeasures, international fora cooperation, and cyber security policy.
- The seventh iteration of the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), which involved helicopters, planes, and naval vessels from both countries, took place in the South China Sea in April 2022.
- The fifth meeting of the India-Japan Act East Forum took place in May 2022. During the meeting, the two countries discussed the advancement of their collaboration in the development of India's northeast region and determined new areas of mutual interest.

In addition to the yearly summits, monthly meetings take place at other high levels with the National Security Advisor (NSA), the Minister of Defence, and the Minister of External Affairs. The two-plus-two ministerial conversation is crucial to the security alliance. The two nations' Special Strategic and Global Partnership Agreement is a crucial component that gives their relations a fresh perspective.

Economic Cooperation

India and Japan have established robust commercial and investment ties. Japan has been a significant supplier of foreign direct investment (FDI) to India, particularly in the industrial, infrastructure, and automotive sectors.

(US Dollar billion)

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
India's export to Japan	6.10	6.81	5.38	4.66	3.85	4.73	4.86	4.52	4.43	6.18	5.46
India's import from Japan	12.41	9.48	10.13	9.85	9.75	10.97	12.77	12.43	10.9	14.39	16.49
India-Japan trade	18.51	16.29	15.51	14.51	13.60	15.71	17.63	16.95	15.33	20.57	21.96

(India-Japan Bilateral Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, Gov. of India Report 2023)

Together with Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Kishida, a joint statement titled "Partnership for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous World after COVID" was released in March 2022. There has been a notable surge in economic cooperation between India and Japan since their relationship was elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Both nations have said that they share the goal of achieving JPY 5 trillion, or around US\$42 billion, in public and private investment.

In the meantime, the two countries signed an exchange of contracts pertaining to seven JPY loan projects, for which Japan will provide a total of 300 billion yen (\$2.7 billion), and they hailed the establishment of the Japan-India Clean Energy Partnership (CEP). Will supply additional.

A Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) was signed between Japan and India on July 20, 2023, marking a key step towards collaboration in the areas of semiconductor design, production, research, talent development, and strengthening the chip supply chain. By creating an implementing organisation to support these initiatives, the pact seeks to foster cooperation between governments and businesses.⁴

Infrastructure and Connectivity Projects

Furthermore, the two nations have worked together on well-known infrastructure projects, such as the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail (bullet train) project and the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor.

In recent years, a number of connectivity and infrastructural initiatives have started between Japan and India. Among the well-known ones are:

- The 1,483 km long Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), a massive infrastructural project with the goal of creating new industrial hubs and encouraging commerce and investment. Japan has contributed financially and technically to this initiative, making it a significant partner.
- The Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) is a railway project that would build two high-speed, high-capacity freight corridors: the Dadri to Jawaharlal Nehru Port Western Corridor and the Dankuni to Ludhiana Eastern Corridor. Japan has contributed money and knowledge to help build the Western Corridor.
- The Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh states would benefit from the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC), a regional development project that will improve connectivity and encourage manufacturing and industrial expansion. Japan participated in this project's master planning and feasibility studies.
- The North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project is a road development initiative aimed at enhancing the north-eastern Indian states' accessibility and connectedness. Japan has contributed grants and loans for the building and upkeep of the project's roads and bridges.
- The two major cities of Mumbai and Ahmedabad will be connected in approximately two hours by the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR), a bullet train project. Soft financing and technology transfer have been provided by Japan for the project, which is anticipated to be finished by 2028.

These initiatives are anticipated to strengthen the strategic and economic alliance between Japan and India as well as support regional integration and the growth of the Indo-Pacific area.

Cultural exchange and contact between citizens of both countries

Mutual respect for each other's history, art, and philosophy, as well as cultural similarities, define India-Japan ties. Tourism, educational initiatives, and cultural exchanges have strengthened the links between the two nations' citizens.

- India and Japan commemorated their diplomatic relations' 70th anniversary in 2020. To foster mutual understanding between Japan and India, a number of cultural events were held under the subject "Revitalised Japan, Vibrant India: New Perspectives, New Exchanges" in both nations.

- India founded the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a global effort to promote solar energy, and Japan became a member in 2021. This demonstrated the two nations' close collaboration on climate change and sustainable development.
- At their 15th annual meeting in 2022, Japan and India reiterated their support for the Special Strategic and Global Partnership as well as their common goal of an open and free Indo-Pacific. Additionally, they decided to expand interpersonal interactions, particularly between young people, by implementing initiatives like the Japan-India Friendship Year and the Japan-India Student Conference.

Conclusion

Cooperation between Japan and India aims to curb Chinese behaviour in order to stabilise the Indo-Pacific area. India focuses on land, but Japan emphasises maritime capabilities due to differences in geography. Additionally, there are distinctions in that India is not a formal military ally of the US, although Australia and Japan, two other Quad members, are. However, anxieties of China are driving the new initiatives and directions; in this regard, Japan and India serve as the two main pillars of the open and free Indo-Pacific.

Overall, because of shared principles, economic complementarity, and geopolitical considerations, India-Japan relations have developed into a multifaceted alliance. It has significant influence over Indo-Pacific regional dynamics and great potential for future collaboration in a range of fields, including trade, security, technology, and cross-cultural interactions.

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