



# CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES

## In Focus

New Delhi

CAPS InFocus: 70/2022

01 October 2022

## Abe's State Funeral and the Legacy of India-Japan ties

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**Keywords:** India, Japan, Shinzo Abe, Kishida



Image African The Free Press Journa



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A state funeral for Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was held in Tokyo on September 27. It was the first state funeral for a Prime Minister in 55 years. The last state funeral that was held was of Yoshida Shigeru, who contributed to Japan's post-war reconstruction, which was also known as the 'Yoshida Doctrine.'<sup>1</sup>

Shinzo Abe was assassinated on July 8, during a rally for the Upper House elections.<sup>2</sup> The funeral was held amidst public anger-raising controversies due to the cost of the ceremony. The funeral was attended by many political dignitaries from around the world including the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Other leaders include US Vice President Kamala Harris, Singapore's PM Lee Hsien Loong, South Korean PM Han Duck-soo, Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc,, Australian PM Anthony Albanese, British foreign secretary James Cleverly, etc.

PM Modi shared a personal bond and chemistry with Abe and admired his legacy. This relation helped in elevating India-Japan relations to new heights. Post the event, PM Modi and Japanese PM Fumio Kishida held bilateral talks wherein, they exchanged views on deepening India-Japan cooperation in strategic spheres.

Abe was one of the few internationally recognised political leaders in Japan's modern history. He is prominently known for his proactive contribution to Japanese diplomacy during his second tenure from 2012-2020. Abe's vision of proactive diplomacy made it evident that Japan was working towards becoming a global player. In lieu of Abe's idea of promoting Japan's proactive diplomacy, changes made to Japan's military became more significant. Abe introduced legislation in 2014 that reinterpreted Japan's pacifist post-war constitution, which further allowed Japan the right to exercise 'collective self-defence'. This also means that Japan will be able to join its US ally in military actions beyond its borders.

Abe could foresee the rising threat from China. Japan faces severe threats to its security from China's expansionist behaviour and nuclear development and ballistic missiles from North Korea. Therefore, the US was also in favour of Japan being capable enough to defend itself. Owing to Japan's economic and technological power, it has the capability to have strong military power. However, it has been constrained due to the pacifist constitution. Thus, Abe's leadership was very profound.

Over time, Abe found willing partners in India and Australia. PM Modi also declared a National Day of Mourning on July 9 in India after Abe's assassination. Abe showed a willingness to take a lead in Asia, which was showcased in Abe's speech on 'Confluence of the Two Seas' in India in 2007. In this speech, he focussed on the concept of 'Broader Asia' and the integration of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. This idea further laid the foundation for the concept of the Indo-Pacific as well as the formation of the Quad (India, Australia, Japan, and the US). Abe believed that securing a stable Indo-Pacific region was possible by countering China's expansionist behaviour, as he also focused on cooperating with like-minded partners.

Modi and Abe upgraded India-Japan ties to that of a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2015 when Abe visited India. This partnership encompassed several areas of cooperation between the two nations, such as the economic partnership, such as bullet trains to quality infrastructure and connectivity, maritime security, civil nuclear energy, India's Act-East policy to the Indo-Pacific strategy, and security and defence cooperation. Regarding India-Japan economic partnership, India decided to introduce the Shinkansen system, which is a project on bullet trains. India and Japan also formed an Act East Forum under which Japan has been engaged in connectivity and infrastructure projects in India's Northeast region.

Under Abe's tenure, the two nations also decided to hold the 2+2 foreign and defence ministers' meetings. The first 2+2 dialogue between India and Japan was held in 2019. The two nations further started negotiating regarding the launch of the Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (ACSA), a military logistics pact which promotes the reciprocal provision of logistical supplies and services between Japan's self-defence forces and the Indian Army.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, ACSA was launched in September 2020. Abe further promoted the vision of a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' region (FOIP). He also focused on strengthening Japan's security ties with its strongest ally, the US.

During Modi and Kishida's bilateral talks, one of the main issues of India-Japan cooperation, that is, the Indo-Pacific region, was widely discussed, and Kishida believes in continuing with Abe's vision of the Indo-Pacific. PM Modi highlighted and admired Abe's contributions to strengthening the India-Japan partnership as well as his conceptualisation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region. Abe believed that securing stability in the Indo-Pacific against China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea and the East China Sea was possible only through cooperating with India and other like-minded nations. Moreover, the Japanese government also hosted a delegation from Taiwan at Abe's state funeral, which portrayed Japan's willingness to support Taiwan amidst Taiwan's tensions with China.

India has paid huge respect to Abe by honouring him with the Padma Vibhushan award in January 2021. Japan is one of the most trusted strategic partners for India, and Modi and Kishida reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen their bilateral partnership in the areas of trade and investment, defence cooperation, infrastructure, digital space, industrial development, and human resources, among others. Moreover, both nations share deep collaboration and convergence in the vision of the Indo-Pacific region. This bilateral meeting will prove to be another opportunity to focus on strengthening the strategic and global partnership between India and Japan. The legacy of former PM Shinzo Abe and the commitment of PM Modi and PM Kishida will continue to guide the India-Japan partnership to new heights.

**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Hiroyuki Hoshiro, “Deconstructing the ‘Yoshida Doctrine’”, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Cambridge University, February 08, 2022, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/japanese-journal-of-political-science/article/deconstructing-the-yoshida-doctrine/FC8977F907AF6297D9F36D711267003E>, Accessed on September 27, 2022

<sup>2</sup> “State funeral for Shinzo Abe held in Tokyo amid controversy”, *The Guardian*, September 27, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/27/state-funeral-for-shinzo-abe-held-in-tokyo-amid-controversy> , Accessed on September 28, 2022

<sup>3</sup> “Signing of the Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of India”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (MOFA), September 10, 2020, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_002896.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002896.html), Accessed on September 28, 2022

