



DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

VOL. 12 NO. 1

ISSN 2347 - 3703

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022

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Book Review

STRATEGIC VISION OF JAPAN IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: EMERGING DYNAMICS OF INDIA-JAPAN PARTNERSHIP

SIMRAN WALIA

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the Indo-Pacific lies fundamentally in the interest of dependence on the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean for the use of energy and trade. China's expansionist behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region has propelled India and Japan to form a partnership to cooperate in the region to ensure stability. The strategic relationship between India and Japan is vital for stability in the Indo-Pacific region. India possesses the potential to contribute to rebalancing the Pacific through a rules-based international order. India's maritime capability will give India a greater responsibility in the Indian Ocean which will also allow Japan and the United States to work in countering China's actions in the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

The inception of the strategy of the Indo-Pacific was first found in former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech, "Arc of

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freedom and prosperity in 2006-7”, wherein, he expressed his desire to form a grouping of countries like Japan, India, the US, and Vietnam. India-Japan cooperation in the Indo-Pacific commenced through former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe’s concept of the ‘Confluence of the two seas’ in 2007. Both nations have a defined framework for the Indo-Pacific which includes both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. India and Japan focus on the Indo-Pacific strategy based on the rule of international law, connectivity, maritime security and technology.

BACKGROUND

After the devastation of World War II and the appalling experience of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan believed in upholding the principle of being a pacifist nation and not indulging in the use of military operations overseas. The idea of a ‘Peace-loving nation’ was formulated in the Japanese Constitution. Article 9 of the constitution renounced the use of military force as a legitimate instrument and committed Japan to non-possession of any kind of potential of initiating war or warlike situation.¹

In 1945, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida attempted to formulate Japan’s security strategy in the post-war era, which came to be known as the Yoshida doctrine. The doctrine is best described as entrusting most of Japan’s security to the United States and minimising Japan’s own defence efforts due to Article 9.² Japan has also contributed to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region by enhancing and maintaining its alliance with the US. Article 9 has been the linchpin of Japan’s national security policy. Its persistence results in Japan’s reluctance to employ Japan’s Self-Defence Forces (SDF) personnel overseas in operations that require force.

The economic and military growth of the People’s Republic of China is the main strategic challenge for Japan. The Chinese economy has grown vigorously since the 2000s overtaking the Japanese economy in 2010 and becoming the second global economic power.

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1. The Constitution of Japan, at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html. Accessed on September 4, 2022.
 2. Bert Edström, “The Yoshida doctrine and the unipolar world”, *Japan Forum*, June 4, 2010. Accessed on September 6, 2022.

There has also been an increasing Chinese assertiveness regarding the claims over the Senkaku islands (Diaoyu for China) and the naval incidents around the archipelago have multiplied with critical episodes in 2010 and 2012 that have generated an increasing worry in Tokyo. North Korea is a strategic and security problem because of the development of its nuclear programme.

This has shown the eagerness of Japan in securing a proactive role in the security arena in terms of Japan's need for being in a normal state. After 9/11, Junichiro Koizumi, for the first time, supported the US in terms of sending its Maritime Self-Defense Forces (MSDF) to the Indian Ocean.³

BACKGROUND OF INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS

The Japan-India relationship dates back to the 6th and 7th centuries and involves both cultural as well as commercial interaction and engagement through the spread of Buddhism. The relationship between India and Japan saw a major boost in terms of security partnership after 2014 under Abe and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After World War II, India provided Japan with supplies of food and other equipment as an assistance programme. When PM Abe took over as Japan's Prime Minister, he brought dynamism to its relationship with India. Abe signed bilateral agreements with the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, one of which included the bilateral defence cooperation agreement. Both leaders also formalised their relationship as that of a strategic and global partnership between India and Japan. India became the largest recipient of Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2003-2004 and Japan has also focused on the development of industrial infrastructure.

Abe returned as Japan's PM in 2012 wherein he focused on accelerating the Indo-Japanese bilateral relationship. Over time, India signalled its deep commitment to Japan as its strategic partner and invited Abe to be the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations

3. Simran Walia, "Securing peace in Afghanistan: A primer on Japan's role", ORF Issue Brief No. 347, March 24, 2020, at <https://www.orfonline.org/research/securing-peace-in-afghanistan-a-primer-on-japans-role-63634/>. Accessed on September 15, 2022.

in 2014. In 2014, India and Japan upgraded their relationship to that of a 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'. Both nations also started cooperating on space and defence matters along with economic cooperation. Japan has been providing India with great economic assistance through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in terms of metro rail, bullet train projects and connectivity initiatives in the Northeast region of India. In 2015, Abe committed to fund and build India's first-ever high-speed rail to further enable the transfer of defence equipment and technology. Japan was also included as a permanent member of the Malabar annual naval exercises along with India and the US.

India and Japan carried out the 2+2 foreign and defence ministers' meeting and the first one was held in 2019 under Abe's tenure. Both nations launched the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in 2020, which is a military logistics pact that promotes reciprocal provision of logistical supplies and services between Japan's defence forces and the Indian army. In addition to this, India and Japan have cooperated extensively in securing the Indo-Pacific region as Japan was the first nation to come up with the concept of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' vision (FOIP).

QUAD AND JAPAN'S VISION OF THE INDO-PACIFIC

The introduction to the Quad came in 2004 when India, Japan, Australia and the United States coordinated to provide their humanitarian assistance operations during the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. During this specific time, Japan had strong ties with the United States and Australia due to their strong alliances. When India conducted its nuclear tests in 1998, countries like Japan, Australia and even the United States condemned those tests which deteriorated relations between these nations and India. However, relations improved over time due to economic cooperation between the nations, and Japan started seeing certain potential in strategic ties with these three countries for shaping a regional balance of power in 'Broader Asia'.⁴ In the early 2000s, ties between India

4. Kei Koga, "Japan and the Development of Quadrilateral Cooperation", at <http://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/011-Koga-ok-.pdf>. Accessed on September 20, 2022.

and Japan improved as they share common democratic values and several mutual interests. The US-Japan alliance was also enhanced along with Japan's security partnership with Australia and India. These strategic dynamics were taking place in the context of China's increasing military and economic capabilities in East Asia.

China's expansionist maritime activities in the East China Sea maritime borders became more visible over time. China's moves made Japan apprehensive regarding China's future behaviour and it is in this context that Japan took steps to formulate the Quad in 2006-2007.⁵ Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sought the creation of a democratic coalition for democratisation in 'Broader Asia'. In addition, Abe presented his historic speech at the Indian Parliament in 2007, 'Confluence of the two seas', which aimed at strengthening its strategic ties with India and focusing on a 'Broader Asia'. The Quad cooperation framework culminated in 2007 at the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila. The broader Asia concept meant an integration of East Asia and South Asia in which India and Japan would be key players. Abe also believed that cooperation between India and Japan regarding broader Asia would help develop a network with the United States and Australia.

However, due to China's concern about the Quad grouping, the Quad lost its dynamism in 2008 as China was concerned about the Quad's potential encirclement of China. Moreover, Japan's aim to pursue the Quad framework was driven by China's increasing power, and security concerns about China's intentions have increased in Japan because of their territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands.

The common understanding of the Indo-Pacific comes from the two oceans, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The Indo-Pacific region has gained prominence both geopolitically and economically over the last two decades. The Indo-Pacific construct is also entangled within the US-China rivalry. The tensions between these two Superpowers comprise several dimensions involving military threats, trade policy conflicts and competing ideas on regional order.

5. Ibid.

Japan's first-ever commitment to the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy was explained in Abe's speech during the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in 2016. Abe focused on the importance of connectivity between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as such values as freedom and the rule of law.⁶ Japan's vision of the Indo-Pacific has its origins in a speech by former Japanese Prime Minister late Shinzo Abe on the 'Confluence of the two seas'. The vision was based purely on intensive cooperation with the democratic states of the region for a free flow of goods, capital and knowledge in order to maintain freedom and prosperity. Abe believed that the security of the shipping routes is vital in the Indo-Pacific region. After returning to power again as Prime Minister in 2012, Abe expressed a desire to formulate the grouping of Japan-India-Australia-the US in the Indo-Pacific to counter China's expansionist behaviour. Southeast Asian countries also started grappling with China's growing maritime presence in the South China Sea and Japan too struggled to manage China's behaviour near the Senkaku Islands. Japan and China have tensions along the Senkaku islands as China claims the islands to be its own, while Japan has had a territorial claim over the islands since historic times.

Japan focused on strengthening its bilateral and trilateral ties with the Quad member states so that Japan could further the strategic networks in the future for a secure Indo-Pacific. For Japan, the Africa-Asia connection should be enhanced for which the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) hold prominence. Abe realised the importance of SLOCs, rule of law, freedom, prosperity, the non-use of coercion and a market economy too. One of the primary objectives of Japan's vision of FOIP is to maintain a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan's vision of the Indo-Pacific has become clearer over time by clearly pointing out its three important pillars:

- Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free trade.

6. Ibid.

- Pursuit of economic prosperity (improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnerships including EPA/FTAs and investment treaties).
- Commitment to peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, HA/DR cooperation, etc.).⁷

In 2017, at the bilateral summit between Japan and the US, both nations agreed on the principles of pursuing FOIP, which are: promotion and establishment of fundamental values, rule of law, freedom of navigation, etc., the pursuit of economic prosperity, improvement of connectivity and commitment for peace and stability. Subsequently, officials from Japan, Australia, India and the United States met in the Philippines to focus on means to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific which was also seen as the revival of Quad, or Quad 2.

For Abe, the Indo-Pacific waters are public goods that shall be protected in compliance with international law, that is, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Tokyo understands Indo-Pacific in geographical terms to span the entire area from the East Coast of Africa to the American Pacific Coast. The then Foreign Minister of Japan, Taro Kono also mentioned a free and open maritime order based on the rule of law in 2018.⁸

Tokyo aims to optimise connectivity between the Indian Ocean as well as the Pacific Ocean by expanding trade and investment through better infrastructure. Under Abe's *Partnership for Quality Infrastructure* initiative, Tokyo has earmarked \$200 billion for projects from Africa to the South Pacific.⁹ Japanese 'Quality Infrastructure' projects are designed to offer states in the region a fairer, more transparent, efficient and sustainable alternative to Chinese infrastructure projects.

7. Felix Heiduk, "From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific", Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs), July 1, 2020, at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/from-asia-pacific-to-indo-pacific#hd-d24373e1099>. Accessed on September 29, 2022.

8. Speech by H. E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Arctic Circle 2018, MOFA, at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000410409.pdf>. Accessed on October 5, 2022.

9. Jagannath Panda, "Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Corridors, Connectivity and Contours", IDSA, 2020, at <https://idsa.in/system/files/book/book-scaling-india-japan-cooperation.pdf>. Accessed on October 8, 2022.

Some of the Japanese projects include soft loans for port facilities in Mozambique, Kenya and Madagascar.¹⁰

The Indo-Pacific region faces a lot of security challenges ranging from maritime piracy to territorial disputes and also a dire need to enhance regional capacity for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief schemes. In a wider arena, commerce and security can be guaranteed through freedom of navigation and by securing sea lines of communication. These are some of the areas that are crucial for Japan. The Indo-Pacific supply chain is linked with key ports and rapidly growing infrastructure aimed at enhancing its connectivity.

Japan's FOIP approach is driven by concerns regarding China's regional assertiveness, especially in the maritime domain and through its BRI, and construction projects in littoral states in the Pacific and Indian oceans. Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific approach is now seen as a vision and not a strategy. Japan promotes its vision for FOIP as an inclusive one which is not aimed at any one country. Japan has also been expanding its focus beyond the US, Australia and India and pushed for involvement in the Indo-Pacific from like-minded countries in Europe, the UK, France and Canada that shared similar values, and norms and aim at securing a rules-based order. Initially, Japan's Indo-Pacific was framed to constrain China, however, it also goes beyond that in terms of regional security and territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas.

FOIP is also premised on improving physical connectivity in the region through the provision of quality infrastructures such as ports, railways, roads and energy supplies. Japan is focused on pushing for better people-to-people connectivity, through educational exchanges and other tools; and institutional connectivity, by setting higher thresholds on economic rules and regulations.

INDIA-JAPAN COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

India's wide strategy of the Indian Ocean was formally articulated in 2015 when PM Modi spoke about the Security and Growth for all in the region (SAGAR). This concept of SAGAR postulates the need to safeguard India's interests and to enable India's contribution to

10. Ibid.

further enhance its maritime security capabilities in the region. India's vision of the Indo-Pacific was formulated in 2018 during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore where Modi defined the region as stretching from Africa to America. India also supports Japan's vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, while emphasising the ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific. India also places great importance on connectivity in the Indo-Pacific by upholding a rules-based international order.

India and Japan cooperate extensively in the Indo-Pacific region *to be able to deal with the threats of China's expansionist behaviour*. Both nations issued a joint statement in 2017, "Toward a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific" which includes respect for international law, settlement of international disputes through dialogue and negotiation, freedom of navigation and a free and open trade investment system.

India and Japan cooperate in the Indo-Pacific region in the areas of *upholding international law* for the freedom of navigation, maritime and defence security, connectivity initiatives and further integrating Africa into the Indo-Pacific. The security of the maritime domain is one of the fundamental aims for the Indo-Pacific vision between India and Japan as both nations prioritise bilateral maritime exercises and Japan's participation in the Malabar exercises.

India and Japan have also been exploring *the transfer of defence technology and equipment* in terms of enhancing their defence security. Recently, in September 2022, India and Japan held their defence and foreign ministerial 2+2 talks wherein both nations committed to strengthening their defence ties through conducting joint military drill exercises to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the region. China's illegal territorial claims have further prompted India and Japan to embrace their defence cooperation keeping in mind their shared security concerns. Moreover, regarding connectivity initiatives, the security of the SLOCs is crucial for both India and Japan as it is dependent on the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

India and Japan have also been cooperating with like-minded countries to form trilateral and multilateral mechanisms to secure the Indo-Pacific region. For instance, India-Japan-US formed their

trilateral mechanism to work towards securing a free and open Indo-Pacific. The three nations held their first trilateral dialogue in 2015 after which this mechanism saw a boost. Furthermore, there are several potential mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region like the India-Japan-Russia trilateral and India-Japan-Italy trilateral.

CONCLUSION

The Japanese foreign policy has transformed from being a reactive one to developing gradually to being more proactive. Japan's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific shows how Japan has been bolstering its presence in the vast territory. Japan's two-pronged strategy regarding the Indo-Pacific vision has been at the forefront. The main aim of the FOIP is to enhance the rules-based international order.

The recent US house speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan angered China which China targeted and criticised Japan by conducting military exercises around Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). China has been trying to put pressure on Japan since it possesses US forces in Okinawa which could further act as the base for sending US troops for supporting Taiwan's operations. Japan views China as a serious threat to the existing international order. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and other EU member states have raised serious concerns about China and are seeking security and economic cooperation with regional states to push back against China's assertiveness.

This trend points towards a closer alignment of Japan with the United States and its partners, such as Australia and India, to further strengthen diplomatic pressure and military deterrence against China.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration focuses on securing a free and open Indo-Pacific and has promised a 'FOIP plan for peace' by Spring 2023. This continues the legacy of the founding father of the FOIP, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. But the strategic environment is changing rapidly and is very different from 2016. It is Kishida's responsibility to address emerging challenges so that Japan remains a pivotal player and contributor to peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

The Ukraine and Taiwan crises have shown Japan that it is vital to increase its military capabilities to face the threat posed by China and to secure stability in the Indo-Pacific vision. Kishida fears that Japan should not become the next Ukraine and therefore focuses on new realism diplomacy. PM Kishida has also claimed that Japan would bolster its defence capabilities in the next five years to further its military capabilities for a secure international order. The free and open Indo-Pacific vision is seen as a shared approach that is likely to gain more support in the coming years.

Shinzo Abe was assassinated on July 8, 2022, during a rally for the Upper House elections which came as a huge shock to the entire international community.¹¹ The ever-growing strategic partnership between India and Japan is known to be transformational in shaping the balance in the Indo-Pacific region. In the 14th Annual Summit between India and Japan, Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida focused on deepening the ties between the two nations and working towards securing the free and open Indo-Pacific region. This summit also marked the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Japan. The two countries further reaffirmed the special strategic and global partnership paving the way for deeper security and defence cooperation to counter China's behaviour. PM Kishida selected India as a destination for his first bilateral visit and reaffirmed his commitment to work towards strengthening the partnership between India and Japan. Both nations have shown a strong willingness to play a vital role in the QUAD cooperation by enhancing the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) as well as FOIP.

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