

India-Japan in the Indo-Pacific

*A Strategic Convergence for Peace, Progress
and Prosperity*



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India-Japan in the Indo-Pacific: A Strategic Convergence for Peace, Progress and Prosperity

Abstract

Over the last three decades, with the economic rise of India, Japan, China, Korea, ASEAN combined with Australia and New Zealand, Indo-Pacific has surely emerged as the new theatre of Great Power contest. The idea of Indo-Pacific and its coordinates such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and Supply Chain Resilience Initiatives (SCRI) are the brain Childs of modern Japan's visionary Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. With the benefit of his historical insights and political legacies, partnership with India has emerged as the centrepiece in his scheme of global political restructuring. His approach to the concept is truly transcendental. Domestically, the idea seeks to address many of the contentious issues that have persistently dominated the political discourse in Japan related to Asianism, Japan's identity, war time issues with neighbouring nations and now the pursuit for an autonomous civilisational space. Globally it charts out a pathway for Japan's role as one of the eminent centres of global politico-economic management in defence of peace, freedom, democracy and well being of the people. It is a vision to provide for Japan's long term economic security and peaceful coexistence.

Bilaterally, among all the stakeholders in the region, India and Japan hold greater stock of commonality in perspectives and objectives. The fundamental objective is to achieve economic prosperity for the people living in the region with peace, democracy and the rule of law. That entails developing a web of trade and economic ties with resilient and secure supply chains. Both are committed to peaceful solution of all issues rather than any military alliance or any sort of containment strategy. QUAD is seen as an overarching umbrella of like-minded democracies to secure these supply chains and ensure long term prosperity. Soft power projection leading to smart power is the preferred means of achieving this goal.

Introduction

Indo-Pacific has decisively turned into a major theatre of global geopolitics and geo-economic contest among great powers. Throughout human history, water surfaces of the world have always been the theatre of Great Power rivalries; the growing contest over Indo-Pacific this time is no different. Over the last three decades the rise of major economies of India, China, Japan and the ASEAN combined with Australia and New Zealand has led to a major shift of economic growth centre from Atlantic-Europe to Asia and the Indian Ocean, making the area a hub of global trade and energy supply. Hence the notion of 'Indo-Pacific' has become a new rallying point for major stakeholders to articulate their strategic postures.

Currently, the region accounts for two-thirds of world's container trade. Major economies of the world are dependent on Indo-Pacific sea routes for their trade and energy supply. The region is also a home to more than 50% of the global population and rich in mineral and marine resources. By 2050, the Indo-Pacific is expected to account for over 50% of global GDP—and this is a significant factor re-shaping the global order. Besides the threat of growing piracy, the security of these sea routes is important

as the two important maritime choke points- Bal al Mandeb and the Malacca Strait are located on either side of the Indo-Pacific.⁽¹⁾ The sea-lanes through the region are crucial for the global economy and the very survival of countries such as Japan. The concept Indo-Pacific also intersects various geographical areas, a number of different disciplines - geopolitics, maritime security, trade and development etc- and a host of nation-states.

Beginning with an article by Gurpreet S Khurana published in the January 2007 issue of the *Strategic Analysis* (IDSA Journal) (Khurana, 2007)⁽²⁾ further elevated by Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in his speech before the Indian Parliament in August 2007 (Abe Shinzo 2007)⁽³⁾ and strategically reinforced by the Modi-Trump Joint Statement in 2017 the concept Indo-Pacific is firmly embedded in the mental map of global strategic analysts, policy planners and global political elite. The United States has even renamed its Pacific Command as 'Indo-Pacific Command'. Inevitably, the idea of Indo-Pacific with all its unresolved issues and questions is here to stay. Even if the term evokes divergent perspectives (Wrenn 2004, Wada, 2020)⁽⁴⁾ yet each of the stakeholders has its own calculus of interests in the region which, inter alia calls for promoting an enabling environment for peace, stability and prosperity through a rule based regional order in the Indo-Pacific. The question is not about containment of China but constructing a stable and sustainable regional order in the Indo-Pacific in which the interests of all countries are secure. That order needs significant commitments and contributions from all the stakeholders. Thus, an open, free and peaceful Indo-pacific anchored on a rule-based order remains the desired goal.

Within the existing set of divergent interests among major stakeholders there exists the most intimate convergence of perspectives and objectives held by India and Japan. Building policy perspectives based on their cultural heritage and civilisational value system both the countries have

evolved a unique approach. The common strategy is anchored on the collaborative mechanism establishing a web of ties across the entire Indo-Pacific—both bilateral and multilateral - with an objective to project the “soft power” on an international scale and consolidate it as smart power. Only very basic military cooperation, within bilateral or plurilateral framework is intended to ensure the security of established as well as new supply chains created through this web of trade and economic ties.

Abe Shinzo: Challenges and the Indo-Pacific Construct

Known as one of the most consequential Prime Ministers of modern Japan, a great visionary, intellectually vibrant and an ardent believer in Japan’s destiny as a Great Power Abe Shinzo often sought inspiration from the dictum that *‘there’s no better way to make a better future than to learn from the past’*. Employing his deep historical sense Abe constructed his political strategy to remodel domestic economic system through *Abenomics* and the external threat perceptions through ‘Indo-Pacific’ vision as a futuristic path for Japan’s long term economic security and well being. Conceptualising ‘Indo-Pacific’ was not an off-the-cuff exercise. Abe propounded the concept in the middle of an agonising national crisis marked by the experiences of not just the ‘lost decade’ but the ‘lost two decades’ during which Japan descended to a gravest social, political and economic turmoil since the post war. Japan was shaken by the ‘double disaster’ of earthquake and sarin gas attack in 1995; and in 2011 it was hit once again by the ‘triple disaster’ of earthquake, tsunami and the nuclear meltdown.

The economy plunged into a prolonged deflationary cycle touching zero or even negative growth rate, high unemployment, shrinking international markets, deep decline in factory output, consumer confidence to the lowest level; all these combined to engender a deep social and political crisis.

On the political front the upheaval shook the foundations of Japan's long time ruling party LDP since 1955; warring factions within the party splintered ideological cohesion resulting in popular discontentment to the extent of losing the election. In the twenty-odd years since 1990, Japan went through fifteen prime ministers until Abe's second term. Political churning looked like a revolving door where the prime ministers made their entry and exit almost on an annual basis. Even the external observers were tempted to comment that "the growing sense of self-loathing in the LDP reflects a national crisis of confidence" (Watts, 2001)⁽⁵⁾ that has been building up for over two decades of economic stagnation.

Such politico-economic disruptions led to a social crisis that was even more fundamental and excruciating. The social crisis that reflected in the rampant unemployment, the rapidly aging and declining population causing shortage of labour force. More painful were the youngsters leaving their homes and studies for part-time jobs, career insecurity and unprecedented rise in the number of suicides.

Coupled with such domestic turmoil the events in external affairs added to the national anxiety. The U S - Japan Security alliance after the Peace Treaty, even if resented in the beginning, had been a defining paradigm for Japanese identity during which Japan achieved phenomenal economic success to emerge as the second most powerful economy, became a member of the UN system and closely integrated with the democratic free world. All that changed with the demise of the cold war. Diminishing U S security concerns and capabilities in the Pacific had jolted Japanese national psyche. Concurrently the economic rise of China that displaced Japan from its position of the second largest global economy added with China's military posturing around Japanese territories sent shock waves in Japan fuelling a sort of existential crisis. The comfort of harmonious existence was seriously challenged. In the Japanese society, harmony lies

at the heart of everything, from politics to society in general.

The crisis was even more fundamental. The entire nation sank into the heartbreaking catastrophe of ‘identity crisis.’ “When a country is confronted with new and fundamental challenges the pursuit of its identity becomes most vigorous” (Kitaoka, JFIR).⁽⁶⁾ Not many people in the world feel such burning passion to define their own national identity as the Japanese. Throughout much of modern history, the Japanese have spent a great deal of time and effort in search of their identity. One of Japan’s last renaissance men and a leading thinker of 20th century Kato Shuichi remarked, “the Japanese are a people who will continuously and tirelessly ask who are the Japanese,” (Kato, 1997)⁽⁷⁾ “The Japanese have historically swung like a pendulum between an inferiority complex and a superiority complex in their attitude toward other countries.” (Reischauer & Craig, 1978)⁽⁸⁾

Against the background of such state of affairs, Abe set out to construct his political strategy to establish Japan as a proactive and leading power in global affairs. In search of Japanese identity Abe could not fall back on classic Japanese response of shutting themselves off from the outside and find their peace within harmony. Abe has been a devout follower of the ideals of Meiji leadership who advocated *kaikokushinshu* (the need to open the country to the outside). His vision for ‘New Japan’ is well illustrated in his book *Utsukushi Kuni e* (Towards a Beautiful Country) owing inspiration to *Kojiki-Nihongi* imagery of ‘*Archipelago of Heavenly Peace, Prosperity and Happiness*’. The writings contained in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* form the basis of many practices in Japan that are deeply ingrained in the culture and way of life of the Japanese people.

Formulating strategy to pull Japan out of its present predicament, infuse self- confidence among the mass of the common citizens for great power Japan in the world affairs, Abe once again sought inspiration from history.

Throughout his prime ministership he constantly invoked the *Meiji* spirit exhorting Japanese people to learn from the ancestors. Being a proud descendent of *Choshu* clan that played a pivotal role in *Meiji* restoration Abe sought to draw lessons from the policies and processes that set Japan on the course of modernisation. In his mental model he drew many parallels from *Meiji* era. For him the “lost decade” of Japan at the end of 20th century paralleled the chaos that prevailed in the final years of Tokugawa regime from 1853 to 1868. He found that the import of *Meiji* slogans *fukokukyohei* (strong economy, strong military) *shokusan kogyo* (industry and productivity) *bunmei kaika*, (Civilization, enlightenment) and *chukunaikoku*, (loyalty, patriotism) greatly relevant for planning his policies and political strategy for reinvigorating Japanese spirit and reinstating Japan as an important member of the global community in the 21st century. Strong economy (*Fukoku*) is fundamental for the success of any policy so *Fukoku* and *shokusan kogyo* formed the basis of his *Abenomics* that propelled revival of Japanese economy. His emphasis on *kyohei* was to refurbish Japan’s self image as a normal nation, a nation advocating peace, democracy, rule of international law not under compulsion of victor imposed constitutional obligation but as part of its responsibility as an equal partner in the emerging global order.

A group of experts and Abe’s close advisers on foreign policy and strategic affairs based in *Japan Forum on International Relations* and the *Institute of International Policy Studies* advised him that:

“Japan’s days of separation from the world and isolation from global culture are over. Heading into the next millennium, the Japanese must try to hold on to its intrinsic national character while carefully adapting to the world changing around them. The identity held by individuals living in Japan is now multifaceted, and there is nothing wrong with that. Today, we are faced with a growing need to ask questions about Japan’s identity.”(Ito, 2005) ⁽⁹⁾

In order to ameliorate all domestic and international issues Abe propounded his strategic vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP). Abe elucidated the concept in his speech at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Nairobi, Kenya (TICAD VI)⁽¹⁰⁾. Abe specially emphasized on the importance of connectivity between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as such values as freedom and the rule of law. He identified three significant levels of connectivity to strengthen the ties in the region lying between the two oceans.

Three Connectivities

1. *Physical connectivity:*
2. *Quality infrastructure (ports, railways, roads, energy and ICT)*
3. *People-to-people connectivity: education, training and friendship*
Institutional connectivity: Harmonization and common rules including through EPA/FTA

Prior to that, Abe Shinzo had spoken about the “Confluence of Two Seas” in his speech before the Indian parliament on 22 August 2007. He stated that “the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A ‘broader Asia’ that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form”. (Abe Shinzo 2007)⁽¹¹⁾

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo envisaged Japan as a leading promoter of international rules and a guardian of the global commons in the Indo-Pacific, bolstered by alliances with fellow democracies. Emphasis on rules and benefits of global commons are the tools serving soft power diplomacy. Expressing Japan’s willingness to play its part as a great power Abe went on to elaborate in his speech at Nairobi that “*Japan bears the responsibility of*

fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.” (TICAD, 2016)⁽¹²⁾ He envisioned the stability and prosperity for the international community in the dynamism that is created by combining ‘Two Continents’: Asia that is rapidly growing and Africa that possesses huge potential of growth”. In his vision, the Indo-Pacific stands for ‘international public good’ which is open and inclusive, free from dominance of any one. It is not intended to create new institution nor override / undermine existing organizations. Invoking his historical sense in projecting future imagery Abe spoke in the parliament that “since ancient times, the people of this region have enjoyed affluence and prosperity from this large and free body of water. Freedom of navigation and the rule of law form their bedrock. We must ensure that these waters are a public good that brings peace and prosperity to all people without discrimination into the future.”(Abe Shinzo, Kantei 2018)⁽¹³⁾

An analysis of global research, discussions, diplomatic exchanges and strategic planning on Indo-Pacific over the last decade or so has led to one overwhelming conclusive thought that “The Indo-Pacific is an idea with a crucial purpose: “avoid war”. (Dobell, 2020)⁽¹⁴⁾ Such an Indo-Pacific that avoids the cataclysm of war will be constructed on “multipolarity, solidarity and a confident kind of strategic patience”. (Metcalf, 2020)⁽¹⁵⁾ Such thinking precisely forms the backdrop for Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s conceptualisation of his multi-pronged strategic vision on “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”. (Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt, 2020)⁽¹⁶⁾

Being a member of an influential political family, Abe Shinzo inherited a great deal from his predecessors. The idea of ‘cooperation with free countries’ was introduced by his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke; his father Abe Shintaro the Foreign Minister under whom Abe Shinzo did his

apprenticeship, introduced the idea of ‘value oriented creative diplomacy’ to extend Japan’s influence in the world politics. When Abe Shinzo became Prime Minister, he was assisted by a group of officials who worked under Abe Shintaro and believed in the potential gains that could come from engaging in soft-power politics and introducing a broader scale of tools in diplomatic outreach. Abe Shinzo’s emphasis on universal values of peace freedom and democracy strongly reflects the influence of Abe Shintarō’s creative diplomacy. Earlier his Foreign Minister Aso Taro, in his speech on the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” had advanced the idea of “values-oriented diplomacy,” which involves placing emphasis on “universal values” such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and market economics as we advance our diplomatic endeavours, and designing an “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” by supporting budding democracies that line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent (Taro Aso, 2007 ⁽¹⁷⁾) The idea of “avoid war” is not a product of any altruistic thinking. This is the compelling outcome of two decades long global geopolitical and geo-economic shift that has brought to fore the need to stabilise the emergent multipolar international system and geostrategy of the two joined oceans webbed by the shipping lanes - the lifelines of the Indo-Pacific.

Dimensions of Abe’s FOIP Strategy

1. Abe’s ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ (FOIP) vision is truly transcendental in approach linking the modernising history of Japan since Meiji and charting its future path, on the one hand, and addressing various contentious issues in Japan’s domestic politics. Abe’s FOIP vision is Japan’s tryst with destiny. Finding a place of honour in the comity of nations has been an abiding theme in Japanese political discourse. In one sweeping stroke the Indo-Pacific vision charts out a long term path securing Japan’s eminent position as the principal partner in managing global

politico-economic stability, peace and progress in the emerging multi-polar world order.

2. The Indo-Pacific vision seeks to redefine a new global politico-economic structure. And Japan's place is anchored on a system of partnerships with like-minded democracies.
3. The approach emanates from a pragmatic thinking that Japan can never remain confined to a corner of Asia to be able to sustain its economic prosperity, security and yet perform its global responsibility.
4. In one sweeping stroke the concept irons out a plethora of contentious propositions that have permeated the Asiatic debates. The question of Japan's identity as an Asiatic nation and Asianism has been an agonising theme in Japanese politics giving rise to a number of conflicting theories, driving Japan into undesirable wars and consequential horrendous experiences are all put to rest. Japan shall no longer be known only as an island nation in Asia but a global power ready to undertake its global responsibilities.
5. It seeks for Japan to become a sovereign strategic centre of global politico-economic management. Japan's post-World War II role as pacifist nation based on Article 9 of the constitution has had certain dichotomy in Japanese politics. While most people have felt a sense of pride in their nation's projection as a pacifist nation yet a section of 'nationalists' have viewed this as compromised sovereignty. Security of the web of supply chains demands that the sovereign economic player must be able to ensure security of those channels. Abe's pursuit of modifying the constitutional provision to enable Japanese forces to provide basic security cover must be seen in this context.

6. It breaks out from the constricted Sino-Korean centric vision of Japanese Asianism that is now subsumed by the broader Indo-Pacific concept with Japan as a new centre of a global power structure.
7. Inspired by Japan's historical experiences the vision seeks to ensure Japan's sustainable economic security through vast linkages extending up to Australia, Africa and even Latin America. Being aware of the risks involved in assuming future Chinese benevolence and the continuity of US commitment to the region, Japan is now attempting to create a regional geopolitical order that is resilient to non-traditional security threats as well as resistant to potential coercive military, economic, and political activities. (Wallace, 2013) ¹⁸
8. He seeks to refurbish Japan's image as the promoter of peace and prosperity in the region as a sovereign nation no longer seen as an appendage to a great power.
9. The vision at once ameliorates the latent apprehensions of neighbours who often stoke war time memories to the embarrassment of Japanese leadership. Indo-Pacific vision corroborates to Japan's newly acquired reputation as a nation with 'exotic and cool culture'- attributes of a soft power- which has become acceptable among the youth of many Asian countries. (Otmazgin, 2012)¹⁹
10. Indo-Pacific provides for a new comprehensive security structure to ensure Japan's greatly autonomous geo-economic and geopolitical security. It involves free channels of communication, open trade routes and secure supply chains. Strengthened relationships with Southeast Asian nations, India and Australia will enable Japan to

pursue a neo-mercantilist economic policy while also supporting the socio-economic development of other regional players essential for future multi-polar balance. (Wallace, 2013)²⁰

11. Domestically, it accommodates various contentious foreign policy perspectives across a broad Japanese political and ideological spectrum
12. In his 'nationalistic-internationalism' Abe seems to espouse a forceful trend in Japanese nationalism that seeks to situate the Japanese identity in a civilisational role within the context of global history. The Indo-Pacific concept offers an opportunity for building a 'Japanese perspective on world history' and assert its claims to a civilisational role (Nishio)²¹

For Abe, sharing common democratic values is a very important element for Japan's partnership building. India, as the largest Asian democracy with pro-Japanese sentiments appears as the most favourable country for close partnership. He reminded that during his first administration (2006-2007) Japan has had successful strategic dialogues with democratic India, the United States, and Australia, which also share democratic values. Abe proposed that Japan should lead a quadrilateral summit or foreign ministerial meeting to discuss strategy issues. (Abe Shinzo 2013)²²

Within Japan there are divergent opinions with regard to Abe's real policy objectives. Many Japanese scholars contend that Abe's FOIP strategy is clearly meant to counterbalance the rise of China.(Yakushiji, 2015)²³ Watanabe, however, maintains that Abe's FOIP strategy is not just a response to the rise of China but also an attempt to compensate for the declining U S Interest in the region. "The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy is thus a product of interaction between Japanese and

American experts at both the governmental and nongovernmental levels”. (Watanabe, 2015)²⁴

The FOIP proposal coinciding with the rise of China on the one hand and the diminishing U S security concerns in the region on the other, may have led to a range of divergent perspectives. But the hard calculus of individual interest of each stakeholder suggests that the establishment of free and open channels of communication, international trade and supply chains and their security are the indispensable goals. Japan has clearly laid out its strategy for the success of the FOIP that requires ‘connectivity’ between Asia, the Middle East, and Africa for the purpose of expansion of trade and investment ties through improved infrastructural links. Peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Pacific Ocean are inseparable from peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean. As one of the oldest sea-faring democracies in Asia, Japan is willing to play a greater role - alongside Australia, India, and the US—in preserving the common good in both regions. Abe committed that Japan should provide more resources to maintain international public goods in the security area, both bilaterally with the US and multilaterally with like-minded states. (Abe Shinzo 2012, TICAD, 2016)²⁵ In an effort to build such partnerships Abe advocated three fundamental principles that will form pillars of Japanese policy towards Indo-Pacific.

Three pillars of Japan’s efforts to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific

1. *Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. and maintain fundamental principles of the international order, which are the foundation of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.*
2. *Pursuit of economic prosperity Improve three connectivities Physical connectivity: quality infrastructure (ports, railways, roads, energy*

and ICT) People-to-people connectivity: education, training and friendship Institutional connectivity: harmonization and common rules including through EPA/FTA

3. *Commitment for peace and stability Capacity-building - Maritime Law Enforcement - Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)- Human Resource Development HA/DR - Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief- Anti-Piracy - Counter-Terrorism - Non-Proliferation - Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)*

High Stakes in the Indo-Pacific: The Supply Chains

The issues relating to geo-politics and geo-economics can never be truly separated. It is now a common knowledge that the geo-economic transformation of Asia-Pacific over the last few decades lies behind the evolution of the concept Indo-Pacific. The burgeoning economic prosperity is symbiotically linked to the expansion of supply chains. Therefore, free, open and secure movement of sea lanes and supply chains crisscrossing the two oceans like the life lines must necessarily be the goal of all the stakeholders for the economic well being of all the people living in the region. An I L O study suggests that the region plays a prominent role in global production and employment through global supply chains (GSCs)(ILO 2016)²⁶ Multiple factors underscore this transformation in the global supply chains (a) innovations in information and communication technology; (b) reduced trade costs, including tariff reductions; (c) harmonized standards and liberalized services under multilateral trade pacts; (d) bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements; and (e) upgrading infrastructure and logistics. (Baldwin, 2013)²⁷

Development of resilient supply chains and their security lies at the heart of Abe Shinzo's concept of Indo-Pacific. India has quickly and enthusiastically

endorsed the idea with a view to “ensuring a trustworthy, dependable, and reliable supply chains in the Indo-Pacific region.” Describing the importance of Australia, India and Japan as crucial players in the region, India’s Minister of Commerce said that during 2019, the cumulative GDP was \$ 9.3 trillion while cumulative merchandise goods and services trade were \$ 2.7 trillion and \$0.9 trillion respectively (Goyal, DD News)²⁸

Supply Chain Management (SCM) has been an integral part of management function for long but in recent years it has assumed greater significance globally not just within the academic community but more strongly among the business and political leaders. The issues concerning SCM are affecting the economic well being of many nations especially in the Indo-Pacific region that demand global solutions. Serious scholarly research on SCM began in the UK at the beginning of the 21st century. Many definitions of supply chain have appeared since then but in view of the current focus on ‘resilience’ of supply chains we have taken a broad view in order to capture the dynamics of turbulence and complexity. A definition offered by Pettit, Fiksel and Croxton “as the network of companies involved in the upstream and downstream flows of products, services, finances, and information from the initial supplier to the ultimate customer” (Pettit et al 2010)²⁹ is found more appropriate for our purpose. .

Factors Contributing to Potential Supply Chain Disruption

The traditional management literature has identified factors such as a) the rise of Globalised Supply Chains (GSCs) b) specialised factories c) centralised distribution d) increased outsourcing e) reduced supplier base f) increased volatility of demand g) technological innovations as the key disruptors of supply chains (Pettit et al 2010).³⁰ But in the recent years many other issues have appeared demanding a concerted strategy to evolve resilient supply chains.

Recent Incidents Causing Supply Chain Disruption

In the current scenario the world faces unique and complex challenges that

are disrupting our lives, businesses and confidence. Disruptions in supply chains can be natural or man-made; for example:

- India suffered a major supply chain disruption in 2004 due to Tsunami originating from Indonesian waters.
- In Japan's case, the Tsunami that hit Japan on 11 March 2011 setting off a nuclear disaster (Fukushima Daiichi) triggered a steep decline in Japanese automobile exports to the United States.
- Terrorist drone attacks on oil refineries in Saudi Arabia in September 2019 resulted in a drop of 5.7 million barrels of oil per day. The attack also triggered a steep plunge in Saudi Arabia's stock market and a sharp spike in global oil prices.
- The growing US-China trade conflict led the United States government to impose restrictions on the export of microchips to China's biggest semiconductor manufacturer SMIC
- There is a growing trend towards weaponisation of trade and technology.
- China has imposed sanctions on key Australian exports of grain, beef, wine, coal, etc for demanding an inquiry into the origins of the corona virus and advocating a robust Indo-Pacific vision.

A cumulative experience of such events topped by the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 has drawn a sharp attention of major stakeholders in the

Indo-Pacific to the issue of supply chains. As a result of these geopolitical, economic, and technological forces as well as shocks such as pandemics, resilience and access to critical supplies and markets are emerging as rising priorities. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, it had an immediate and telling effect on supply chains emanating from China. Japan was one of the biggest losers in these disruptions. For example, according to data from [tradingeconomics.com](https://www.tradingeconomics.com), Japan exported \$135 billion worth of goods to China in 2019; and imported \$169 billion worth from the world's second-largest economy, accounting for 24% of its total imports, seriously affecting its economic activity. A Bloomberg report found that Japanese imports from China fell by half in February, a period when the latter was battling the peak of the virus impact (Yuko & Fujioka 2020).³¹

Supply chains of the region have been disrupted by the COVID-19 and are likely to remain in turmoil as the major economies begin to work on reconfiguring supply chains in view of the ongoing US-China trade and business hostilities. Excessive dependence on China and the apprehension about China's propensity to leverage this dependence for coercive measures is a common concern among all the major players in the Indo-Pacific.

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative

Supply chains are the blood streams of the international trading system. For Indo-Pacific, the region that is being seen as the future theatre of global economic growth and prosperity at an unprecedented scale, nothing could be more precious than the security of these life streams. The outstanding players have high stakes in protecting these life streams. Recent studies on international trade have highlighted the 'supply chain resilience' as an effective approach to obtain diversification of a country's supply risks across a clutch of supplying nations instead of being dependent on just one or a few. With such an understanding Japan has proposed the idea of

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) as a trilateral approach to trade in partnership with India and Australia. It is not without any reason that Abe Shinzo emphasized the significance of connectivity in his very first proposal on Indo-Pacific.

From the supply chain perspective, the region's major economies and populous nations are located in a triangular zone between Japan and Korea in the north, Australasia in the southeast, and the Indian sub-continent at the western boundary. Approximately 70% of the world's container traffic passes through ports in the Asia-Pacific region. Most Asia-Pacific businesses reach their markets through complex supply chains, often comprising many trading partners and a host of different paths to market. Supply chains in this region are often significantly more difficult to manage than in many other parts of the world. Many of the businesses in the Indo-Pacific are very dependent on the export markets in the United States and Europe and have suffered as a result because of directional imbalance of flow. Indo-Pacific also has more varied customer demands than anywhere else on earth. (Hong et al 2014)³²

Building a network of resilient supply chains is dependent on a closest possible cooperation among the major players in the region at all levels. The effective reorganisation of supply chains within the Indo-Pacific might become easier if Indo-Pacific countries, particularly those in Asia such as India, Australia, Japan and South Korea, agree on a few essential rules of the game. These include investment-promoting provisions such as a multi-country commercial arbitration framework; common tax rules particularly relating to digital tax; and a set of incentives that businesses would be eligible for if they relocate supply chains and reposition them within the common group of countries. (Palit 2020)³³

India-Japan and Indo-Pacific Convergence

Since the time immemorial, the India –Japan relations have been profusely endowed with rare potential to evolve into a great partnership. Unfortunately, a variety of factors have impinged keeping it from harnessing this latent potential. Apart from geographical seclusion and the absence of early protagonists, coupled with the absence of conducive international environment in later years has led to sublime indifference. In order to be able to fathom the depths of this relationship and harness for future progress it is important to understand the huge reserve of goodwill and compatibility (Rawat, 2020).³⁴

India and Japan enjoy natural complementarities in pursuit of their economic goals. While the Japanese technology and finance capital has the potential to assist India in upgrading its infrastructure and manufacturing sector; India's massive consumer market and investment needs offer opportunities to uplift Japan's ailing economy. The lack of historical baggage and mutual recognition of each other's importance in Asia's rapidly changing geopolitical situation has induced both the countries to prioritise their relations. The emerging partnership between the two countries is based on the "convergent global interests, critical maritime interconnection and growing international responsibilities" and Japan's place "at the heart of India's Look East Policy." (MEA, 2014) ³⁵

Building on the trust in the political system between India and Japan and increasing convergence of interests, Modi-Abe vision has sought to offer alternatives in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (Economic Times, 2019)³⁶ Underscoring this perspective, Abe Shinzo, stated that "both India and Japan place importance on the universal values and strategic interests that we commonly share. Both countries are major Asian democracies and global powers. ...and I'm determined that Japan and India will lead

the way towards peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the world” (Bhattacharjee 2017)³⁷ Many perceptive observers feel that historical context and geography aside, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept is underpinned by today’s closer India-Japan relations. (Avdaliani, 2020)³⁸

In Abe’s values-based approach, conforming the primacy of universal values like rule of law, democracy and human rights, India has featured as an anchor in Japan’s important strategic formulations like the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity,” “Confluence of the Two Seas,” “Quadrilateral Initiative,” Asia’s “Democratic Security Diamond” and the latest “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision.” For the Japanese leadership, a culturally vibrant, democratic country with a large pool of talented population pursuing socio-economic mobility, a country with a large stock of soft power attributes, confident of its growing role in the international community in support of democracy, international cooperation, commitment to multilateralism and stability, India holds great attraction to build lasting partnership. Modi’s foreign policy is clearly focussed on improving bilateral relations to higher levels with strategically located Asian countries like Japan, Vietnam, and Australia without forging any formal security alliance in the Indo-Pacific region.

Japan was the first country with which India began to discuss the Indo-Pacific as a region. In pursuit of their collaborative strategy both the countries have adopted measures to strengthen their bilateral ties with an objective to present reliable policy framework. Japan has extended wide ranging technical and financial support to modernize Indian economy. In this context, strengthening of connectivity in India’s North-east by road, rail and digital to further connect with the Indo-Pacific through the Bay of Bengal has emerged as the priority area. Working towards fulfillment of their converging vision both the parties are committed to the development of a road from the Assam-Bhutan border to Meghalaya’s border with

Bangladesh. This project involves the development of a network of road, rail, and port links along the Bay of Bengal designed to increase connectivity between South and Southeast Asia, and in the process balancing the links China is attempting to establish between North and the South Asia. India has even invited Japan to help revive its schemes for transport corridors from Western Asia, through Afghanistan to Central Asia. The two nations have already announced plans for an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor that will span both land and ocean. The first nodes for the project have been identified in Kenya and Mozambique.

Areas of India-Japan Convergence

1. Collaboration is considered as one of the most effective modes of public diplomacy for interaction with other states. Both India and Japan seek to cooperate to build architecture for peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. It is assumed that common prosperity and security require the countries to evolve a common rules-based order for the region.
2. India's national goals to emerge as the manufacturing hub coincide with Japan's desire to diversify its production bases away from China.
3. India's pursuit of "Look East" and now "Act East" policy coincided with Japan's desire to expand its ASEAN centric economic activity and link with new and emerging centres of growth.
4. There is a strategic convergence in Abe's Broader Asia Indo-Pacific vision and Modi's SAGAR MALA concept unveiled in 2015.
5. Confluence of several regional trends, including the continuing rise of India as a major international player, anxieties about some aspects of Chinese behavior, the state of the rules-based order

and the development of Southeast Asia as a more prosperous and significant region in its own right.

6. In the Indo-Japanese perspectives, Indo-Pacific stands for a free, open, and inclusive region for all nations who have a stake in it. In their convergent perspective on geographical span both India and Japan consider the area from the shores of Africa to the shores of America.
7. Both India and Japan support a rule-based, open, balanced and stable trade environment in the Indo-Pacific Region, necessary to lifts up all nations on the tide of trade and investment.
8. The policy perspectives of India and Japan seek a unified ASEAN. Both the countries have put in place their respective cooperative mechanisms with ASEAN members to shun any divisive strategy.
9. India and Japan do not share any containment policy. Both the countries look for peaceful negotiated ways through which they can work together with all stake holders.
10. India and Japan being major democracies of Asia would like to play a leading role in democratising the region.
11. Both India and Japan envisage the Indo-Pacific region free from the domination of a single hegemon. Therefore both the countries are pursuing multilateral arrangements to ensure that no one country can dominate the region.

Soft Power

True meaning of India-Japan cooperation in Indo-Pacific lies in their concerted efforts towards projection of Soft power on global scale and elevate it to the realm of 'Smart Power' to achieve long term objectives

of peace, progress and prosperity through the security of supply chains. Soft power is defined as the ability of a country to cause other countries to support its goals without having to employ material threats or inducements. It results from a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies and how these are perceived by the people of other countries. It has been observed that the attitudes toward a country's culture tend to change relatively slowly, but perceptions of its political values and foreign policies can change more rapidly as these are reflective of its response to political developments within the country and in its policies toward the outside world.

Globally, the soft power is recognised as a desirable tool for expanding influence and achieving diplomatic objectives. It has now become a vital part of every nation's foreign policy. In an environment of geopolitical uncertainty, the effective leveraging of soft power diplomatic tools is even more critical. One of these tools is public diplomacy, which has now become increasingly popular. In recent times, soft power appears more often in official documents and scientific literature indicating a growing interest in this tool and its elements. The public diplomacy and one of its derivatives –cultural diplomacy –have been applied not only in the theoretical and academic sense but also in practical terms in pursuit of foreign policy objectives in many states (Cull, 2008).³⁹ In particular, public and, for that matter, cultural diplomacy is a structural components of soft power as well as powerful tools in achieving it. (Nye, 2004, Melissen, 2005)⁴⁰

Neither India nor Japan is unfamiliar to the value of soft power. India's entire cultural and civilisational value system is a model of soft power. India's Soft power emanates from its Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) defined as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated

therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).⁴¹ For Christian Wagner India is a ‘soft power by default’, he calls it a ‘defensive soft power’ (Wagner, 2010).⁴² Pursuit of Soft Power greatly depends on the *capabilities* (Vishwanath, 2019).⁴³ In India’s case, even “*while possessing enormous stock of soft power attributes the phenomenal complexity ... and its diversity does present a gargantuan task in terms of branding the idea of India, to project the kind of country it is, and what it intends to become. However, the same complexity of the country also presents its attractiveness of being a kaleidoscope and unity in diversity...*” (Tourangbam, 2020)⁴⁴

Throughout its history Japan has accumulated a huge stock of soft power attributes. The international environment as it appeared after the Second World War inspired Japan to rely almost exclusively on its soft power as a strategy of international exchange. The status that Japan enjoys in the world affairs today is the outcome of its effective use of soft power tools. Joseph M Nye who articulated soft power as the structured thought and a foreign policy tool singled out Japan as an example of a state *that most vividly applies the strategy of soft power in its foreign policy*. According to Nye, *a country’s soft power stems from three sources: ‘its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)’* (Nye, 2004).⁴⁵ The Japanese experience shows that cultural policy, even when inward-looking, is not isolated from a country’s geopolitical position and its ambitions in the world, regardless of the political system under which it operates. (Otmazgin, 2012)⁴⁶

India’s soft power holds deep attraction for Japanese leadership in many ways. India’s demographic evolution– a predominantly young population, its widespread diasporas, rapid economic growth, its achievement in the IT field and its increasing military strength are all the reasons for Japanese

attraction to India's soft power. For long, India's non-alignment was held in high respect by many Japanese for its ability to let India carve out an independent path in foreign policy.

Based on the wealth of its cultural splendour, Japan has built an attractive image for itself in the region, actively using the resources of public and cultural diplomacy. This creates favourable conditions for the promotion of national interests and the implementation of foreign policy objectives. Today, some experts argue that the ideological persuasiveness and cultural attractiveness of a country as factors of influence are becoming more important than military power and the possession of nuclear weapons. (Arase & Akaha, 2010)⁴⁷ For Japan, the emphasis on cultural diplomacy is not an innovative tool; conversely, as Nye pointed out, '*Japan can be considered one of the pioneers of cultural diplomacy in the modern concept of this term*'. Particularly, Japan has focused on cultural diplomacy that helped rebuild the image of the country and become a model of economic development for other states. One of the motivating factors behind Abe's Indo-Pacific is his desire to project Japan as the soft power and a partnership with India seems most desirable in this regard.

India has been equally proactive in putting forward its preference for the soft power. Reiterating his trust in soft power, during one of his trips to Japan, Prime Minister Modi propounded an important principle of soft power and said "eighteenth century mind-set of *vistaar-vad* or expansionism won't work and *vikaas-vad* or peaceful development is needed for sustainable peace and tranquility in the world". India's well known diplomat statesman Shashi Tharoor has been one of the most forceful proponents of soft power in Indian diplomacy. He makes an argument that soft power and not economic or military or nuclear strength, 'is one attribute of independent India to which increasing attention should now be paid around the globe' (Tharoor, 2008).⁴⁸ However, the mere possession

of soft power resources does not guarantee that a country would know how to use them to influence the behaviour of others. Soft power is about people's perceptions and, hence, works in a longer perspective. It is subject to individual contexts. What can be seen as attractive for some can be perceived as repulsive by others. (Kugiel, 2012)⁴⁹

Most analysts of soft power have decisively concluded that for soft power to be effective it must be backed by hard power. "In my approach" says Shashi Tharoor, "*hard power is exercised, soft power is evoked*". (Tharoor, 2012)⁵⁰ An appraisal of India's present and putative soft power assets underscores the need for greater hard power resources in order to harness soft power more effectively. "*Indeed, soft power without hard power is a chimera, and they should not be seen in oppositional terms, especially for an aspiring global power*". (Paul, 2014)⁵¹

Many years ago Theodore Roosevelt said 'speak softly and carry a big stick'. Soft power becomes credible only when you have hard power behind it. That made the US so successful. Significance of this realism and Japan's own Post War experience would not have been lost on Abe's perceptive mind. Japan's participation in QUAD and Abe's quest for seeking autonomous defense mechanism for Japan must be seen as a strategy to create a back up for his pursuit of soft power.

India – Japan: QUAD and the Indo-Pacific

While the genesis of the Quad may be traced to the 'core group' of four countries formed in 2004 to coordinate their response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. However, the idea drew attention of Australia and the US largely because of their relations with China and a grouping was formed on the sidelines of ASEAN summit in 2007. Abe realized the value of such a formation and advanced the idea in the form of a Quadrilateral Security

Dialogue (QUAD) as an *essential coordinate of his Indo-Pacific concept* securing a rules-based global order; liberal trading system and freedom of navigation as the guiding principles. The idea remained dormant for a while due largely to the Australian withdrawal and Indian indifference until the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a key strategic region and a growing convergence between the four countries on key challenges in the region. The QUAD was soon revived as a loose grouping in 2017 at the level of senior officials. As India's comfort levels grew and all four countries faced challenges from an increasingly assertive China, the QUAD was upgraded to the level of foreign ministers in September 2019. (US Dept of State, 2021)⁵² India's interest in QUAD now is no longer tactical, it is strategic.

The grouping has often been described as a military alliance to contain China or as an Asian-NATO but as late as in 2020 the U S administration described the QUAD, as “a four-country coalition with a common platform of protecting freedom of navigation and promoting democratic values in the region”. (Congressional Research Service, 2020)⁵³

The divergent perspectives held by the four countries on various issues such as their threat perceptions, military capability, strategic priorities, capacity to bear the costs of potential Chinese retaliation, strategic culture and constitutional imperatives have impinged on the Quadrilateral cooperation. But notwithstanding these factors, and given the forward-looking policies and positive mindsets the four countries have realized that there is definite need and scope for deeper cooperation on issues of mutual concern. The initial thinking set on issues such as standard-setting, diplomatic messaging, practical economic measures to sustain a liberal rules-based order, and incrementally build interoperability and other forms of strategic cooperation. In face of the continued Chinese intransigence the four countries have begun to realize greater value in the

continuation of this grouping and have begun their interest alignment. Mutually shared values include:

- *All four nations share a deep interest in maintaining a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific and preventing a regional state from becoming dominant.*
- *All four nations share an interest in deterring the use of force or coercive practices to resolve political and territorial disputes in the region*
- *As trading nations, and committed to common good, all Quad members share a deep interest in maintaining a maritime order based on the free movement of goods and services across the oceans.*
- *All four states are committed to the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific. This is based on principles of free trade, open investment environments, open competitive tendering, the rule of law, and standards of good governance from which all continue to benefit.*
- *All four countries are united in their common interest of supporting and strengthening liberal democratic governance within the Indo-Pacific.*

The most recent Quadrilateral summit held on 12th March 2021, even in virtual space, has been described by all the parties as a historic event. Successful organisation of the summit put to rest all speculations relating to its relevance, utility, longevity and above all the very survivability of the idea. The event not only heralded the revival of the idea but secured the elevation and institutionalization of this informal forum to the level of a summit where the Heads of Governments are committed to participate.

Right at the outset the participants announced that *“We bring diverse perspectives and are united in a shared vision for the free and open Indo-Pacific. We strive for a region that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, anchored by democratic values, and unconstrained by coercion.”* The statement further elaborated that

“we support the rule of law, freedom of navigation and over flight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity.” The summit concluded by adding that *“we will continue to prioritise the role of international law in the maritime domain, particularly as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and facilitate collaboration, including in maritime security, to meet challenges to the rules-based maritime order in the East and South China Seas”*. The force of intent revealed in the statement is a strong assertion of QUAD members’ determination to enhance their cooperation for common good.

It is significant to note that even though the forum is called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue there has been no mention of military security in their discussion. Secondly, even when all the four states share their common concerns with regard to China the summit leaders have refrained from targeting China as an inimical state. Conversely, all the four states have demonstrated their faith in the value of soft power. *“The Quad is being positioned as a benign grouping, not against any country, yet focussed on free and open Indo-Pacific and rule-based order.”*(Gupta, 2021)⁵⁴ Prime Minister Modi did not miss the opportunity to project India’s belief in the soft power as he invoked India’s age old cultural tenet *“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”* (The world is a family). QUAD is like an overarching umbrella providing a security cover to the supply chains – the life lines of

the region – ensuring peaceful uninhibited navigation, free flow for trade, tourism and people’s interaction.

Conclusion

India-Japan relations can be traced to antiquity but their potential has remained untapped due to various factors. For the first time in history, now, the profound transformation in international environment offers historic opportunity for the two countries to build up this unique Asian relationship. India’s ‘Look East’ ‘Act East’ policies coincided with Japan’s efforts to seek economic opportunities beyond its usual sphere of influence. These complementarities have lent greater depth and breadth to the relationship covering areas that have remained unexplored.

Modi-Abe bonhomie witnessed the exponential growth of bilateral relations especially in boosting India’s infrastructural modernization. India’s infrastructural map is dotted with high value projects having substantive Japanese investments. Japan has become the single most important ODA supplier and one of the three top foreign investors in India. A survey among Japanese manufacturers in 2019 has revealed India as the highest ranked preferred destination for Japanese companies. Number of Japanese companies registered in India now stands 1441, a quantum jump from 352 in 2006. One of the most significant developments is the growing Japanese interest in Indian startup scenario. Japanese VC funders are extremely active in scouting for potential startups. (Data Labs, 2019)⁵⁵

Evolution of the Indo-Pacific construct is a historic mind-shift driving the two nations to build foundations of the new multipolar structure of international system. Among all major players in the region there exists the most intimate convergence of perspectives, objectives and policy approaches between India and Japan. Taking into account their respective

history, culture and civilisational values both the countries are building their policy responses relying on the stock of their soft power. Projection of soft power to build a new international structure is the key to India-Japan collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.

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