

## India-Japan Ties in Indo-Pacific

*GS Paper II: International Relations*

### Why in News?

Following Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to India, New Delhi and Tokyo unveiled a pathbreaking Economic Partnership Framework alongside a pact to co-develop military hardware.

### What is the significance of the recent visit?

- **10 Years of FOIP** - This engagement marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ***Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision***, a concept fundamentally rooted in India-Japan collaboration.
- **Hardware Pact** - Moving beyond mere joint military exercises, the visit delivered a formal pact to co-develop military hardware together.
- **Relaxed Export Restrictions** - The visit capitalizes on Japan's historic domestic policy shift allowing the export of critical defense systems to 17 allied countries.
- Thus, it directly positioning India as a primary beneficiary of niche Japanese defense technology.
- **Economic Partnership Framework** - The two nations unveiled a new framework focusing heavily on supply chain resilience for critical materials, energy, and the creation of economic infrastructure.

### What are the core drivers of Japan's regional outreach?

- **The 'Washington Recession' Paradox** - A perceived contraction or uncertainty in the United States' long-term security commitments in Asia has forced Tokyo to pivot toward regional multi-alignment and strategic hedging.
- **Countering Chinese Revisionism** - Beijing's intensifying economic coercion and assertive maritime activities across the South China Sea and the Sea of Japan pose direct threats to Tokyo's territorial and trade security.

- **The Legacy of Leadership** - India holds the foundational position in Japan's maritime vision.
- The "Indo-Pacific" concept was first birthed by PM Shinzo Abe before the Indian Parliament in 2007, and updated via PM Kishida's "New Plan for FOIP" in New Delhi in 2023.

## What role does economic security play?

- **Key Pillars**
  - **Pillar 1: Energy Liquidity & Stockpiling** - Focusing on stabilizing energy supplies through financial aid initiatives, building resource stockpiles, and creating emergency fallback reserves.
  - **Pillar 2: Critical Infrastructure for AI & Data** - Building secure, resilient economic infrastructure with advanced technologies, ensuring the safe flow of data, and strengthening supply chains for critical components like semiconductors.
  - **Pillar 3: Mineral Alliances & Mutual Swaps** - Securing steady access to critical minerals by forming strategic partnerships.
  - It also establishes mutual-swap or joint-stockpiling agreements for vital raw materials with allied nations.
- **The POWERR Asia Initiative** - To mitigate West Asian energy vulnerabilities, Japan extended \$10 billion in financial aid under the **Partnership on Wide Energy and Resource Resilience (POWERR)** to Southeast Asia.
- Alongside releasing 50 days' worth of domestic oil reserves to stabilize regional supply chains.
- **Critical Mineral Monopolies Countermeasures** - Tokyo signed critical mineral supply chain deals with Australia and finalized joint stockpiling, crude oil, and LNG mutual-swap mechanisms with South Korea.

## How is Japan expanding defence cooperation?

- **Financial & Hardware Diplomacy** - Tokyo scaled its Official Security Assistance (OSA), its dedicated military aid framework, by a massive 125% to \$116 million, expanding recipient nations from 8 to 12.
- **High-Value Defense Contracts** - Japan solidified a \$7-billion agreement with Australia to deliver 11 advanced *Mogami-class frigates*.
- Meanwhile, rapidly scaling up maritime search-and-rescue drills and capability-building with the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Korea.
- **Multilateral Security Institutionalization** - Deploying mini-laterals to enhance inter-operability and crisis response like the

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Japan-Pacific Defence Dialogue (involving 14 Pacific nations) and
- the inaugural Japan-New Zealand-Australia Defence Ministers' Meeting.

### What domestic changes complement Japan's regional strategy?

- **Unprecedented Fiscal Expansion-** Japan passed its largest-ever defense budget of 122.3 trillion yen, rapidly approaching the milestone target of 2% of its National GDP.
- **Dismantling Export Restrictions** - Japan relaxed its stringent post-war arms export controls, explicitly legalizing the sale and co-development of critical defense systems with 17 allied nations, positioning India as a primary beneficiary.
- **Intelligence & Cyber Upgrades-** Deep structural overhauls are underway within Japan's cyber-defense command and intelligence-sharing protocols to match Western standards.

### What is the Strategic Blueprint for India-Japan Ties?

Strategic Domain	India's Deliverable / Gain	Japan's Deliverable / Gain
<b>Defense Technology</b>	Access to niche Japanese military hardware, stealth tech, and co-development opportunities.	Market diversification; establishing a reliable security anchor in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
<b>Supply Chain Resilience</b>	Institutionalizing the SCRI (Supply Chain Resilience Initiative); alternative manufacturing hub.	De-risking critical industries and semiconductor inputs away from Chinese dependency.
<b>Digital &amp; AI Infrastructure</b>	Deep talent pool of software engineers and data scientists.	Export of physical high-tech infrastructure, supercomputing elements, and capital.

### What is the way forward?

- The evolution of Japan into a "proactive contributor to peace" provides India with its most dependable, technologically sophisticated partner in Asia.
- Transition quickly from signing frameworks to actual field manufacturing of military hardware under the relaxed export guidelines.
- It seamlessly merges India's connectivity projects with Japanese capital to offer transparent, viable infrastructure alternatives to China's Belt and

Road Initiative (BRI) across East Africa, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

- By balancing defensive deterrence with robust economic interdependence, the India-Japan axis will remain the defining element for stability in the twenty-first-century Indo-Pacific.

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## Reference

[The Indian Express | Japan expanding its role in Indo-Pacific](#)

