

India-Japan Vision 2025: Deciphering the Indo-Pacific Strategy

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Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's strategic pursuit of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, anchored in his conceptualisation of the 'Confluence of the Two Seas' and founded on the principles of universal values and norms, has created space for India in Japan's grand strategy. India has been identified as a key variable in the geopolitical churning that is shaping the Indo-Pacific discourse, both in Japan and the USA. However, as policy positions are articulated by respective leaders, ambiguities around the Indo-Pacific puzzle demand more clarity. While President Trump and Prime Minister Abe are aligned in terms of pursuing the Indo-Pacific strategy - with the objective of managing the US-led strategic order amidst Chinese attempts in claiming equity in international affairs with alternative ideas, institutions, and infrastructure - Prime Minister Modi has articulated India's Indo-Pacific vision as a free, open and 'inclusive region, including all countries in the geography as also others beyond who have a stake in it'.¹ Although there are certain gaps in each country's nuanced interpretation of the Indo-Pacific construct, a few common elements define the India-Japan 'winning combination' in the Indo-Pacific, such as upholding ASEAN centrality; the objective of securing strategic stability and economic prosperity based on the pillars of shared universal norms and values; facilitating infrastructure and connectivity between the sub-regions, including Bay of Bengal, the Mekong region, and the Indian Ocean for better economic integration and leveraging regional production networks and value chains; and securing maritime global commons by strengthening security cooperation with like-minded partners.

As three major Asian powers, China, Japan and India, with their apparent asymmetry in relative national power, do pursue their respective geostrategic and geo-economic ambitions solely guided by their national interests. India's approach toward geopolitical realities is guided by a balance between engagement

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and autonomy.² While there is an alignment of interests which has led India to develop an ‘action oriented partnership’ for its Indo-Pacific Vision 2025 with Japan, and pursue robust security and economic engagement with the USA, the containment of China has not been the objective of India’s foreign policy approach. It is true that all three actors - Japan, India, and the USA - have their divergences with China; yet all of them are engaging China at their own pace, given its significance in the international system. New strategic designs, including Japan-US-India (JAI) and India-Australia-Japan, Japan-US-Australia-India Consultations (Quad), do coexist with the India-China-Russia framework, SCO, and BRICS frameworks.

Meanwhile, Japan’s strategy is shaped by the complex interplay of security and economic interests within the Japan-USA-China triangle.³ Japan is also pursuing a dual hedge, safeguarding security interests through its alliance with the USA and economic interests through trade with China.⁴ While Japan will certainly continue to invest in its post-war alliance with the USA as the top priority to shape the regional balance of power serving its own national security and other interests, Japan’s China policy is gradually reflecting a ‘tactical detente’⁵ and the accommodation from ‘competition to cooperation’.⁶ The China-Japan Summit, after a hiatus of seven years, is primarily driven by geo-economic variables, including the implications of President Trump’s America First policy, underpinned by trade protectionism, the intensifying trade war between the USA and China, and upholding free trade mechanisms. There is an urgent need to protect the global economic order. While Japan has successfully led the difficult TPP-11 or CPTPP negotiations following the US exit from the mega regional deal, China is increasingly emerging as an advocate of globalisation. Japan, China, and India are working together in shaping another mega free trade agreement, namely the RCEP. Even as Prime Minister Abe invested diplomatic and political capital in managing the US-Japan alliance under the Trump Presidency, America’s transactional approach with its allies has not given Tokyo much latitude, whether it is tariffs on steel and aluminium or the initiation of investigation by the Department of Commerce under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, with the objective of determining if auto imports threaten to impair the national security. These developments are making China and Japan weigh the prospects of economic cooperation. While the US-Japan alliance remains the fundamental pillar of post-war Japan’s security and foreign policy, alliance management and hedging against US abandonment under the Trump Presidency is testing the choices of Japanese policymakers. Accordingly, Japan has diversified its strategic relationships, and invested in its strategic pivot to Australia, ASEAN, and India, rooted on

the pillars of mutuality of interests and shared universal values while weaving the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Connecting the Growth Poles in the Indo-Pacific

One of the top priorities in pursuing the Indo-Pacific Strategy is promoting critical infrastructure financing, with the aim of connecting the sub-regions, and enabling better economic integration as markets. The Indo-Pacific has been mapped by India and Japan for an ‘action-oriented partnership’ in The Vision 2025 where leaders called for coordinating bilaterally and with other countries - for instance, the India-US-Japan trilateral for advancing regional economic linkages, infrastructure and connectivity, capacity building, nurturing value chains and enabling industrial networks. Inter-regional and intra-regional connectivity and infrastructure development in Southeast Asia, South Asia, including Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, and collaborative projects in Africa, are priority areas.

India and Japan conceptualised the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) with the aim of realising inter-connectedness between and within Asia and Africa, and the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. It underscores synergising the strategic convergence between Abe’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific and Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (EPQI) and India’s development cooperation with Africa and Act East policy. The institution of a Platform for Japan-India Business Cooperation in the Asia-Africa Region⁷ in order to cultivate industrial corridors, SMEs, and networks across sectors as well as the MoU between Export Credit Guarantee Corporation and Nippon Export and Investment Insurance to help business projects in third party countries such as Africa,⁸ will facilitate concrete projects under the AAGC. The AAGC is at a nascent stage, and details of the projects in various sectors, including health and agriculture, manufacturing and connectivity are being explored in accordance with the development priorities of Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals. The IDE-JETRO study on AAGC has suggested that it is important to strategically allocate resources based on the distribution of economic activities and current infrastructure since it is difficult to cover the entire geography of the two continents while developing quality infrastructure. Japan’s funding in Africa is focussed on corridor development and Tokyo is keen on the expansion of the Mombasa Port, the development of the Mombasa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) as well as the Nacala Port in Mozambique which links with the Nacala Corridor connecting Malawi and Zambia.⁹

Japan's approach towards infrastructure financing in the Indo-Pacific is shaped not just by geostrategic imperatives but also by the need to revive the Japanese economy.¹⁰ The appetite for infrastructure in emerging economies presents enormous opportunities. The ADB estimates that emerging Asia alone needs US\$ 26 trillion investments through 2030. The 2013 Revitalization Strategy articulated the requirement to create new frontiers for growth by capturing the international infrastructure market, and tripling infrastructure sales by 2020. The Ministerial Meeting on Strategy relating to Infrastructure Export and Economic Cooperation has been instituted within the Cabinet Secretariat since 2013. As competing financing frameworks started taking shape with the AIIB, Japan emphasised the quality component of Japanese infrastructure exports through its Partnership for Quality Infrastructure (PQI) initiative, which was later upgraded to EPQI in 2016 with the objective to provide US\$ 200 billion financing over a period of five years.

The future of the Indo-Pacific will be defined by the developments in sub-regions like the Bay of Bengal, the Mekong region, and the Indian Ocean. Hard and soft connectivity needs to be developed to facilitate expansion of production networks from East Asia to Southeast Asia to South Asia. While Japanese development assistance is not only fuelling India's mega-infrastructure initiatives, including the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, and the Mumbai-Ahmedabad *Shinkansen* project (with phased transfer of technology and 'Make in India'), the JICA is steadfast in developing connectivity in the strategically significant areas such as the Northeast. Enhanced infrastructure and inter and intra-regional connectivity in the Northeast, often peddled as India's gateway to Southeast Asia, is a significant variable in determining the success of India's Act East policy.

Japan has emerged as a 'natural partner for the development of northeast'⁹. Institutional structures have been put in place to facilitate India-Japan cooperation in the Northeast, including the Act East Forum and the Coordination Forum on the Development of Northeast. The Japanese ODA is utilised in Meghalaya, including in Tura-Dalu (NH-51), Shillong-Dawki (NH-40), and in Mizoram Aizawl-Tuipang (NH-54). Meanwhile, the second Act East Forum meeting (hosted earlier in October 2018) suggested pursuing the Gelephu-Dalu Corridor aimed at connecting the Northeast with neighbouring countries, in partnership with the ADB. In addition, Japan is assisting with regard to the Dhubri/Phulbari bridge project as a part of Phase 3 of North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project.¹¹ The Northeast is the strategic space where Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's Act East policy converge since it is situated at a key junction between India and

Southeast Asia, on top of the Bay of Bengal nations. Northeast infrastructure projects will enable connecting India to Southeast Asia through the Trilateral Highway between India, Myanmar, and Thailand - a network linking Moreh in India with Mae Sot in Thailand through Bagan and Mandalay in Myanmar, extend to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam, and further align with Asian Highways 1 and 2. Meanwhile, developing quality infrastructure and connectivity also features as a key pillar in the Tokyo Strategy 2018 for Mekong-Japan Cooperation.

As the Bay of Bengal increasingly features as one of the economic and strategic hubs in the Indo-Pacific, Japan is heavily invested in infrastructure building in the Bay of Bengal, including in Myanmar and Bangladesh. India and Japan have accelerated bilateral coordination in the South Asian neighbourhood, including pursuing the LNG terminal in Sri Lanka, upgrading road and bridges on Ramgarh Baraiyarhat section, offering rolling stock and constructing the Jamuna Railway Bridge in Bangladesh, and doing housing, education, and electrification projects in the Rakhine state in Myanmar. In this regard, India and Japan can also explore further cooperation in a trilateral framework, along with the USA. The India-Japan-US mechanism has instituted a Trilateral Infrastructure Working Group aimed at supporting improved connectivity in the Indo-Pacific. With the US International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) and the enactment of the Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development (BUILD) Act aimed at utilising private sector capital and skills in the economic advancement of developing economies, India, USA and Japan must explore trilateral projects.

Both India and Japan individually, bilaterally, and regionally have supported infrastructure development in accordance with global governance standards, including respect for sovereignty, responsible debt financing practices, and in keeping with the priorities of the host economies. Since the 2017 Belt and Road Forum (BRF), and subsequently with the recent China-Japan Third-Party Market Cooperation Working Mechanism instituted during Abe's visit to China culminating in 50 private sector joint infrastructure projects in third countries, it may appear to be an unexpected shift in Japan's policy. But a closer look at Japan's strategy suggests that Prime Minister Abe has undertaken a carefully considered attempt to shed a narrow approach - pursued in the case of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) - and engage with China with the aim of shaping it as a responsible actor, and upholding the highest standards of global governance in accordance with international norms.¹² Earlier, a few instances of cooperation did emerge, with China and Japan agreeing to cooperate in the Eastern Economic Corridor in Thailand

and Japan's Nippon Express using the Eurasian rail route to carry cargo from China's east coast through Central Asia to Europe.¹³ Japan's conditional support to the BRI - based on economic viability, fiscal soundness, openness, transparency, and fairness - was underscored not just in National Diet policy speeches but also during the Japan-China CEO Summit. There is a school of thought in Japan arguing that Japan's BRI strategy has not really changed; but its tactics have become sophisticated. Earlier, concerns over international norms and governance standards restricted Japanese engagement in Chinese projects; but now Japan is employing the same set of variables as preconditions for Tokyo's participation in the BRI.¹⁴ Positive engagement between Asia's two biggest economies is desirable in terms of fostering regional infrastructure and connectivity projects, since it will eventually serve the larger goal of empowering developing economies to advance national growth, and improve their general ability to compete in the international economy.

Securing Maritime Commons in the Indo-Pacific

As maritime democracies, India and Japan have pursued maritime security cooperation with utmost priority following the 2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation. Furthermore, India has emerged as an important pillar in Japanese security discourse, and has featured in Japan's first ever National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2013. Japan's National Defence Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond (NDPG) urged for reinforcing Japan's relationship with India in maritime security, 'through joint training and exercises as well as joint implementation of international peacekeeping activities'.¹⁵ Securing the global maritime commons and upholding rules-based international maritime order is one of the key priorities in India-Japan Indo-Pacific Vision 2015. It is underpinned by mutuality of interests and shared universal values. The 'shared responsibility' in safeguarding the regional SLOCs as a 'public good'¹¹ reinforces bilateral maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The role of the Indian Navy in guarding the Indian Ocean SLOCs is valued by Prime Minister Abe. As an energy deficient nation, Japan depends on critical energy imports from the Middle East, and hence the Indian Ocean is of vital importance to Japan. In addition to guarding energy interests, SLOCs (mainly the Malacca Strait), are vulnerable to the threats of piracy and terror incidents. India's support during the 1999 M/V Alondra Rainbow piracy incident consequently led to confidence-building between the two countries, and a robust framework of cooperation has been nurtured between the coast guards and navies of both countries.

Fostering a robust security cooperation within the framework of the Special Strategic and Global Partnership, India and Japan upgraded the 2+2 Vice-Ministerial level dialogue to 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue involving the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries in 2018.¹⁶ The 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue has been instituted in conjunction with the standing mechanisms - for instance the annual Strategic Dialogue, the Defence Ministerial Dialogue, the Defence Policy Dialogue, the National Security Advisers' Dialogue, and the Staff-level Dialogue of each service. In June 2018, the fifth India-Japan 2+2 Vice-Ministerial level dialogue was hosted in New Delhi, with the objective of reinforcing security cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, maritime security, defence equipment and technology, and peacekeeping operations. Moreover, there is a Maritime Affairs Dialogue since 2013 wherein both India and Japan pursue common maritime security concerns, including non-traditional threats, possible areas of cooperation in shipping, marine sciences and technology, and marine bio-diversity. The fourth round of the Dialogue was held in July 2018, with focus on firming up maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as search and rescue operations. Besides bilateral mechanisms, maritime security cooperation is also pursued through trilateral frameworks, including the India-US-Japan and India-Japan-Australia arrangements.

With the goal of advancing maritime domain awareness (MDA) in the Indo-Pacific region, the Implementing Arrangement for deeper cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) was signed in October 2018. Furthermore, in order to add depth to the bilateral security cooperation, India and Japan are negotiating on the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), with the objective of facilitating reciprocal support concerning Logistics, Supplies, and Services between the armed forces. This will enhance operational capacity during joint exercises, joint training as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief initiatives.

With the aim of augmenting interoperability between the navies of the three democracies in the Indo-pacific region, the India-US-Japan Malabar Exercise has expanded in scope and complexity to manage a range of shared maritime security threats. In 2018, the Malabar Exercise was held in Guam, and focussed on Aircraft Carrier operations, Air Defence, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Surface Warfare, and Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS). Also, the India-US air exercise, 'Cope India', scheduled at the Kalaikunda Air Force Station in India, in December 2018 will have Japanese participants as observers. Since its commencement in 2004, Cope India has developed in scope with the participation of fighter aircraft and force

multipliers, including Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). At bilateral training interactions, both navies are focussed on anti-submarine warfare and mine countermeasures. The third Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) was hosted in October 2018 (following a hiatus of five years) in Visakhapatnam, with the prime objective of boosting interoperability between the two navies and the emulation of each other's best practices. Besides navy to navy cooperation, there are dialogues and training between the two Coast Guards.

The Return of the Quadrilateral Initiative (Quad)

The return of Quadrilateral Initiative (Quad) in the format of India-Australia-Japan-US Consultations after the hiatus of a decade in 2017, mooted as a concert of democracies, underpins ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific architecture. Quad is often analysed through the prism of balancing the emergence of a Sino-centric order. But, the lack of institutionalisation and strategic clarity on what are the objectives of such an informal consultation has initiated a regional debate. Compared to the 2007 edition of Quad, the strategic environment has evolved, with relative gains in China's comprehensive national power, a transformative shift in India's engagement with each of these stakeholders, and the greater interdependence of all Quad countries on the Chinese economy. Since India has brought in the narrative of an 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific in 2017,¹⁷ its Quad partners have also opened up to this discourse, as witnessed in the November 2018 India-Australia-Japan-US Consultation. The informal consultative mechanism has been formed to pursue the shared objectives of promoting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. The goal is to further the 'coordinated and complementary engagement' on regional security issues including maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, non-proliferation, and economic cooperation. Also included are connectivity and infrastructure based on the principles of universal values and good governance, including sustainable financing and upholding sovereignty and territorial integrity. The November 2018 Quad Consultations discussed regional developments, including in Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The balance of interest is motivating the Indian leadership as it does not perceive a zero-sum game. India's free, open, and 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific approach underscores that it 'is not a club of limited members'.¹⁸ India does not engage in traditional alliance formation. Under Prime Minister Modi, India has articulated greater strategic coordination with like-minded nations; but

this should not be construed as the thinning of the fundamental values of Indian foreign policy. India is anticipated to pragmatically engage, but certainly not align, with all regional actors to leverage partnerships. India is likely to pursue its quest for multi-polarity and great power identity, and pragmatically engage with every significant actor, including the USA and China to safeguard regional peace and stability, which are indispensable for enabling development. As India pursues modernisation, it strives for resources and technology from strategic partners. This is the primary emphasis in India's diplomatic endeavours. Former Foreign Secretary Jaishankar argued that

Both the United States and China - and indeed the ASEAN, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Europe - can contribute to this transformation. The centrality of this commitment ensures that India will set a positive and inter-active agenda with other major powers and groupings.¹⁹

India-Japan and ASEAN Centrality

Both ASEAN unity and centrality lie at the core of the Indo-Pacific Strategy of both India and Japan. Robust cooperation between India, Japan, the ASEAN, and ASEAN-led mechanisms -comprising of the ASEAN Plus Six, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asian Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) - synergises efforts to further the objectives of regional peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific by upholding international norms and principles. Japan has played a constructive role in supporting India's inclusion in the EAS. As the idea of EAS germinated, Japan and China debated India's role and status in this regional forum for strategic dialogue. While China asserted that the EAS structure should be restricted to the ASEAN plus three framework, Japan argued for open regionalism, including Australia, India, and New Zealand to reduce China's influence.²⁰

Today, both India and Japan are supporting the EAS along with other member states as a platform for constructive dialogue on wide-ranging strategic, political, and economic matters, such as maritime security, terrorism, non-proliferation, irregular migration, and regional connectivity with the intention of upholding regional peace and stability. At the 2016 EAS, both countries have worked together with the other member states in crafting the Vientiane Declaration on Promoting Infrastructure Development Cooperation in East Asia. This urges members to identify cooperation projects and utilise financial resources and technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank

(ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Japan's Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, and India's Credit Line of US\$ 1 billion. Both India and Japan have aligned their respective physical and digital connectivity initiatives in accordance with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 (MPAC 2025) and the ASEAN ICT Masterplan 2020 (AIM 2020).

Both Japan and India have fostered a strategic partnership with the ASEAN defending universal values, including the rule of law, the freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful maritime commerce, the peaceful resolution of disputes without force or the threat of the use of force, and respecting the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). To facilitate productive dialogue on common political and security issues, India and Japan have worked with other member states within the ARF framework to help confidence-building and expand preventative diplomacy on several important regional issues, including the de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the effective implementation of UNSC resolutions, and non-militarisation and self-restraint in South China Sea. Japan is advancing defence cooperation with the ASEAN under its Vientiane Vision which focuses on capacity building and supporting multilateral cooperation through regional frameworks, such as ADMM-Plus. Drawing from the transnational security challenges, ADMM-Plus has emerged as an important framework for discussing security issues and fostering cooperation in areas of HADR, maritime security, military medicine, counter terrorism, and peace-keeping operations. The Indian Navy, under the umbrella of the ADMM-Plus, coordinates with the participating navies, including the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Forces (JMSDFs) in maritime exercises - for instance, the ADMM-Plus Exercise on Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism (Ex MS & CT).

Furthermore, India and Japan are working together in shaping geoeconomics by negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which represents 40 percent of the global GDP, to achieve a mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement among the ASEAN member states, and ASEAN's FTA partners. The aim is to rationalise and consolidate the current ASEAN+1 FTAs, reinforce regional production and supply networks, and integrate into the global economy. While the TPP-11 do practice higher standards (with a wider scope and coverage than RCEP), RCEP - underpinned by the ASEAN consensus building mechanism - recognises the reality of different needs among members, and permits flexibility in opening their economies.

The Way Ahead

India-Japan Vision 2025 is rooted on an ‘action oriented partnership’ advancing universal values and furthering a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Aligning Modi’s Act East Policy with Abe’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, underpinned by ASEAN centrality, is crucial for securing a stable Indo-Pacific. The depth and scope of this Special Strategic and Global Partnership is underscored by the mutuality of strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. As regional fluidity, both in terms of geopolitics and geo-economics, is unfolding greater uncertainty, India and Japan as two major Asian powers and economies have coordinated in forward thinking while steering the challenges and realising the opportunities that this maritime super-region has to offer. With the purpose of realising the goal of making the Indo-Pacific an artery for growth and prosperity, it is vital for both India and Japan to prioritise their action oriented partnership towards each sub-region.

Since the Bay of Bengal serves as one of the key economic and strategic poles in the Indo-Pacific, India and Japan need to intensify their efforts to finding opportunities for developing robust regional economic and connectivity corridors, particularly in Bangladesh and Myanmar. While India and Japan have initiated joint projects in third countries (including in the Bay of Bengal states), synergizing resources and capabilities and, above all, guaranteeing the efficient implementation of joint projects will be critical. The Bay of Bengal states have been huge beneficiaries of Japanese Overseas Developmental Assistance. Japan is pursuing the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth-Belt in Bangladesh, and assisting in modernising the Mandalay Port, the Dawei SEZ project, as also the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Myanmar. Meanwhile, India has supported the development of coastal shipping and inland waterways in Bangladesh, and engaged in the development of the Sittwe port in Myanmar. Though improving Northeast India’s regional connectivity via Bangladesh and Myanmar is vital for economic development, occasionally the complexity of India’s relationship with its neighbours or the federal structure of Indian polity compromise the larger good. In this context, pursuing Japanese involvement may defuse the concerns for host economies. On the other hand, it is imperative to note that although their strategic interests enmesh, the realisation of any collaboration would be contingent on how their diverse approaches in terms of professional culture are synergised. Furthermore, India should invest political and diplomatic capital to bring in Japan at the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), drawing from Tokyo’s vigorous bilateral relations with the

member states and the commonality of India-Japan strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Southeast Asia is another key component of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's Act East Policy. India and Japan will benefit by joining forces in terms of capacity building as well as investing in advancing fresh trilateral frameworks with countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore with the aim of increased coordination on issues of mutual interests, such as maritime security. However, there should be a realistic expectation of what these have proposed and what the existing trilateral frameworks can achieve. Additionally, as India and Japan explore opportunities for cooperation in Africa, the focus will be on East Africa with regard to the geographical scope. Exploring cooperative projects on infrastructure, capacity-building and human resource development in East African nations like Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, and Sudan may be of interest. The participation of the private sector will be crucial for initiating infrastructural development programmes in Africa. While planning cooperative developmental projects, India and Japan need to engage the local stakeholders to comprehend the requirements and sensitivities of the host economies instead of pursuing projects unilaterally.

The Indo-Pacific construct comprises of different sub-regions. Each of these sub-regions is driven by a differing set of political, economic, and security undercurrents. The Indo-Pacific should not be analysed exclusively through the prism of the containment of China strategy. As major powers are realigning to shape the broader Indo-Pacific order, India's vision for the Indo-Pacific is an 'inclusive' one. For achieving a peaceful Indo-Pacific order, India and Japan both have to work individually, bilaterally, and at a regional level to make China constructively engage in maintaining the liberal order, and shaping the evolving regional architecture underpinned by universal values.

Notes :

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