

Asian Strategic Review 2015

INDIA AS A SECURITY PROVIDER

Editors

S D Muni | Vivek Chadha

ASIAN STRATEGIC REVIEW 2015

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S.D. MUNI
VIVEK CHADHA



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES & ANALYSES
NEW DELHI



PENTAGON PRESS

Asian Strategic Review 2015: India as a Security Provider
S.D. Muni, Vivek Chadha (Eds)

First Published in 2015

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ISBN 978-81-8274-825-5

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Published by

PENTAGON PRESS
206, Peacock Lane, Shahpur Jat,
New Delhi-110049
Phones: 011-64706243, 26491568
Telefax: 011-26490600
email: rajan@pentagonpress.in
website: www.pentagonpress.in

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In association with

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New Delhi-110010
Phone: +91-11-26717983
Website: www.idsa.in

Printed at Avantika Printers Private Limited.

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India-Japan Security Cooperation: Expectation, Challenges and the Way Forward

Titli Basu

The East Asian theatre is rapidly evolving. India is increasingly being perceived as an important player in addressing Japan's strategic challenges. Japan is faced with the issue of managing an increasingly 'assertive' China and the declining regional influence of its most valued strategic partner, the United States. Japan understands that solely relying on the US-Japan security alliance might not serve national interest in the fast evolving regional security architecture. Therefore, Japan made attempts to manoeuvre geopolitical advantage through security frameworks like the Quadrilateral Initiative or Democratic Security Diamond, aimed at diluting the Chinese sphere of influence, motivating constitutional revisionism and responding to the critique of being a 'passive free rider' on the US-Japan alliance. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is channelising Japanese resources to balance the emergence of a Sino-centric Asian order. Meanwhile, the Indian leadership has articulated the goal of 'act'ing East. Japan is vital in India's Look, Engage and Act East policy.

India is being perceived as a 'net security provider' in the Western Pacific by the US, Japan and several regional players. Japan initially was reluctant towards India and lost valuable time comprehending India's emerging power prospects. However, under former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Abe's bold leadership, India became a significant part of the Japanese idea of Asia. Strategic partnership enabled Japan to better manage the ongoing redistribution of power in Asia.¹ The National Security Strategy and National Defence Programme Guidelines of Japan, released in December 2013, identify India as a "primary driver" of the shift in the balance of power and argues that "Japan will strengthen its relationship with India in a broad range of fields, including maritime security, through joint training and exercises as well as joint implementation of international

peace cooperation activities.”² It is important to underscore that while the ‘China threat’ theory is making Abe explore alternatives like India, containment of China has never featured in India’s strategic discourse. Meanwhile, India is expected to pursue its quest for multi-polarity, great power identity and pragmatically engage with all the important players including China, Japan and the US in the fast altering security environment to ensure regional peace and stability which is critical for facilitating development.

This chapter will critically analyse China and US-Japan security alliance as intervening variables in the India-Japan security cooperation; map the domestic debates in both the countries and explore Japanese expectations from India as a security provider; evaluate the progress and identify the challenges in our security cooperation; and study the ways and means to broaden the scope of India-Japan security cooperation. Conclusion will present the analytical findings and evaluate if India is a security provider for Japan.

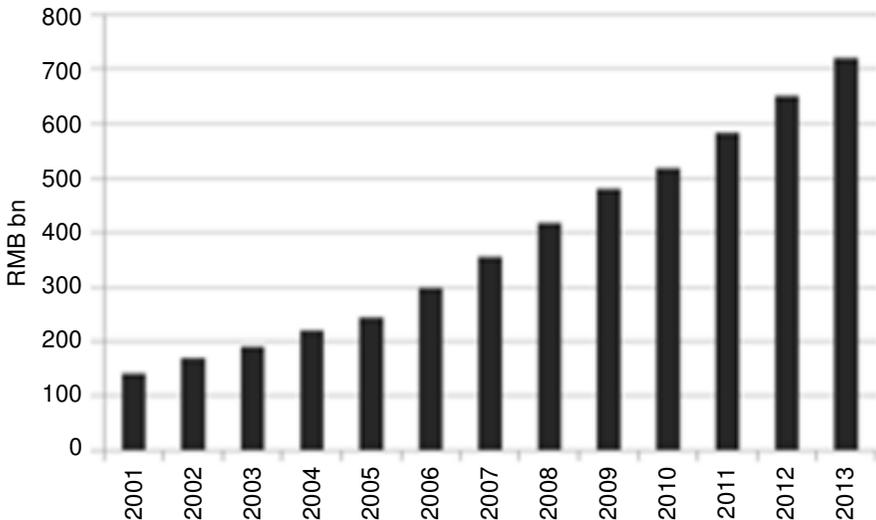
Evolving Regional Security Landscape

The geostrategic developments in the Asia-Pacific are shaping Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s initiative to enhance deterrence vis-à-vis an ‘increasingly severe’ security environment and manage the threats emanating from an ‘assertive’ China and ‘destabilising’ North Korea. Escalated tensions over territorial claims related to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the fear of entrapment rationale prevailing among a section of the US strategic community is making Japan seriously weigh its policy alternatives. The power struggle between China and Japan over these contested islands witness dangerous escalation since the ‘nationalisation’ of three of the five disputed islands—Uotsurijima, Kita-kojima and Minami-kojima—by Japan in September 2012. Escalating tensions between China and Japan manifested in rising nationalism in both countries; repeated violation of territorial waters and airspace; assertive diplomatic postures; and reorientation of security policy. The Chinese Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea in November 2013 is often argued as an attempt to target Japan and demonstrate Chinese resolve to shape regional sphere of influence and put the pivot strategy to a litmus test. The US President Obama, in April 2014, expressed “strong concern” with regard to the heightened tensions in the East China Sea. The complexity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands conundrum is intensified by mutual trust deficit, respective domestic constituencies, and role of extra-regional power in the East Asian security architecture.

China has been developing its military capabilities facilitated by a continued increase in military budget. Japan is concerned that the volume of Chinese defence spending augmented by roughly four times in the last ten years and 40 times in the last 26 years.³ Abe has, for long, nurtured and recently pursued the goal of

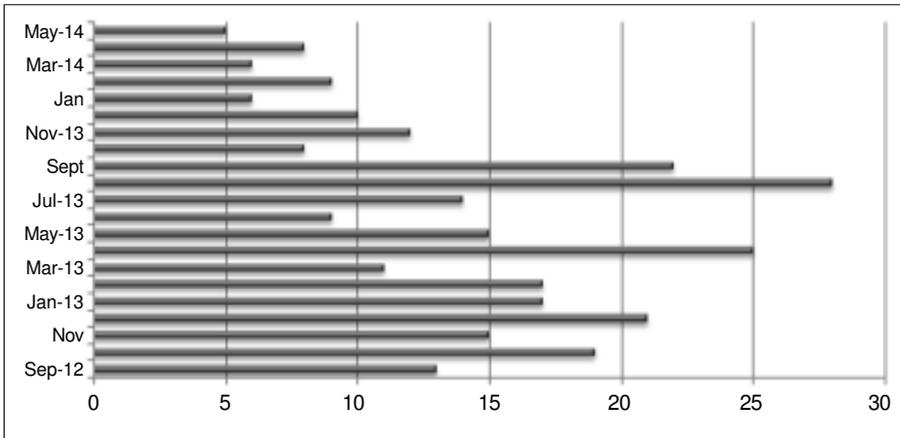
a ‘normal’ Japan by way of his concept of ‘active pacifism’. In July 2014, Abe has managed cabinet approval concerning re-interpretation of the pacifist constitution, allowing Japan to redefine its right to collective self-defence. Abe argues that his objective is not to wage war or permit Self-Defence Forces (SDFs) to be dispatched in a foreign country for combat, but to enhance deterrence to manage the security threats.⁴ The rising nationalism in both countries is reflected in the opinion polls conducted by various organisations. For instance, the ninth Japan-China public opinion poll conducted by Genron NPO and *China Daily* revealed that over 90 per cent of Japanese and Chinese have an unfavourable impression of each other’s countries. The main cause for the unease is owing to the “territorial issue”.⁵

Figure 1: 2001–2013 PLA Budgets



Source: “Chapter Six: Asia”, *The Military Balance*, 2014, p. 210.

Japan is critical of China for attempting to alter the status quo by coercion. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) stated that Chinese ships traversed the adjoining waters of the Senkaku Islands more frequently since September 2012. Despite robust economic engagement between the two nations, Senkaku dispute along with the wartime history including the Yasukuni Shrine visits by the Japanese leadership has created an impasse which has the potential to escalate into a serious military confrontation. Hence, Japan is rethinking its strategy to strengthen its capabilities. Beyond catering to nationalism, China has a larger stake in Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as China’s posturing in the dispute in East China Sea will hold a message for the contending states in the South China Sea.

Figure 2: Chinese vessels Identified within the Japanese Territorial Sea

Source: Data drawn from MOFA, 2014.⁶

Moreover, Japan is nervous about the depth of US commitment to the region. One school of thought argues the case of US's conscious decision of not antagonising China and nurturing the 'new type of major power relations'. Abe is cautious regarding the fear of entrapment logic prevailing in the US. There is a school of thought who argues that the US is worried about getting dragged into Japan's conflict. While for 60 years, Japan was worried that the US would pull them into war but now the US is nervous that it may get involved in a conflict owing to the security alliance.⁷ The fear of entrapment has shifted from Japan to the US. While Japan keeps the US anchored in East Asia, US's military preoccupations in the Middle East and Central Asia and its reactions in Ukraine, the changing dynamics of the US pivot/rebalancing strategy in the region and anxiety over cutbacks in the US defence budget raised Japanese worries vis-à-vis the US obligation.

Additionally, North Korean nuclear and missile programme is intensifying tensions. Continually ignoring United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions, its provocative rhetoric and behaviour is believed to be posing a severe threat to Japanese security.⁸ Besides conducting three nuclear tests and further developing smaller nuclear warheads, North Korea has deployed ballistic missiles with a range that encompasses entire Japan. Furthermore, it is developing ballistic missiles that would reach the US. Recently, North Korea has engaged in firing a series of short-range ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan raising Japanese concerns.

Mapping the Japanese Thinking Concerning India

India is touted as the 'new hope' concerning Japan's threat perception. Satoru Nagao articulates that since regional stakeholders including Japan, Australia and

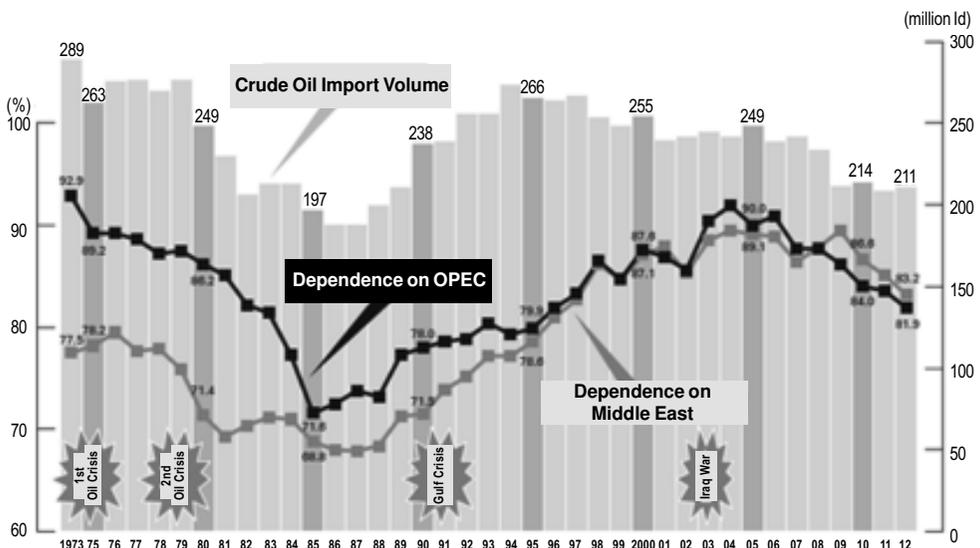
the South China Sea littoral states are likely to face an assertive China owing to their relatively weaker military strength, Japan requires a 'new rising power'. Since both "share similar concerns" regarding Chinese military modernisation, the case of strengthening India-Japan military cooperation is argued owing to the sophistication of Indian naval capabilities in safeguarding the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean; India's ability of emerging as a security provider to South East Asia owing to its robust engagement with the region; and India's reputation as a "trustworthy" nation.⁹ However, another stream of scholarship argues that a 'more reliable partner'—the United States will continue to constitute the core of Japanese security landscape while managing the threats emanating from China. While Japan comprehends the potential of Indian blue water navy with regard to the developments in the contested Senkaku Islands, Indian 'intent' is focused on the south rather than in the east.¹⁰ Abe argues that China's escalating military spending is 'distorting' the Asian power balance, and to manage the balance, cooperation between India and Japan, as well as the United States, has a 'vital role'.¹¹

There is a school of thought which argues that Japan is establishing a robust partnership with India while maintaining the balance of power vis-à-vis China. Scholars argue that China variable is "especially important" in Japan's policy orientation towards India.¹² Noted Japanese scholar, Takenori Horimoto articulated that emerging China led Japan and India deepen their potential strategic partnership.¹³ Section of Japanese media (conservative right-wing) underscored that a strong India-Japan security engagement is "vital" in managing developments in the contested waters of the East and South China Seas and the Indian Ocean and safeguarding the sea lanes.¹⁴ From geo-political and strategic perspectives, scholars cite China while enunciating that as democracies, India and Japan would be the "stabilising factors in the equations of Asian security".¹⁵ Scholars argue that an initially reluctant Japan is nurturing India as a 'counterweight'¹⁶ and pursuing a strategic alliance to 'balance' a rising China'.¹⁷ It is important to underscore that some scholars do not weigh India for its own merit but analyse India as an important card with reference to China. Japan was unable to comprehend the diplomatic significance of India devoid of the 'China factor'.¹⁸ Meanwhile a separate strand of literature articulates that Japan's approach to India should not aim at managing China.¹⁹ Moreover, former Foreign Minister Taro Aso stressed that Japan considers strengthening Japan-India relations to ensure peace and stability, and it is not aimed at containing China.²⁰

Moreover, India is projected to be a credible naval power.²¹ India's military influence, especially naval capabilities, is favourably perceived by Japan vis-à-vis China.²² Japan intends to cooperate in protecting the Indian Ocean since it is anxious concerning Chinese abilities to interfere in SLOCs passing through the Indian Ocean. Energy starved Japan is severely reliant on Middle Eastern oil

imports, trafficked through the Indian Ocean.²³ One strand of scholarship underscores the convergence of interest and ‘shared responsibility’ in securing the SLOCs as a ‘public good’ for the region.²⁴ Often the logic of obligation to ‘secure peace and stability along sea-lanes’ is articulated for India-Japan cooperation.²⁵ Assessing the regional developments with regard to China’s rise and ‘fragile partnership’ with the United States, Japan is prepared to engage with India on critical issues concerning sea-lane security.²⁶ The Indian Ocean is critical for Japanese petroleum imports from the Middle East. Japan has traditionally relied on the United States Navy to secure their vessels in the Indian Ocean. However, Japan is gradually grasping India’s constructive role in securing the regional sea-lane. Infrastructure facilitation by China along the Indian Ocean has made India, the United States and Japan concerned. India’s maritime capabilities are expected to ensure secured passage of Japanese vessels through Malacca Strait.²⁷ Beyond securing energy interest, SLOCs, especially Malacca Strait is vulnerable to piracy and terror incidents. India extended cooperation during the 1999 M/V Alondra Rainbow piracy incident.²⁸ India is perceived as a significant security partner in terms of its emergent maritime power projection ability to preserve the security of vital SLOCs and chokepoints connecting the Middle East to the Indian Ocean²⁹ and further. The Far Eastern Naval Command and the Eastern Naval Command serves as an important connection between India and the East Asia, consolidating India’s status as a credible naval power with power projection capability.³⁰

Figure 3: Japanese Crude Oil Import Developments and Reliance on OPEC and Middle East



Source: Petroleum Industry in Japan 2013.³¹

Tracing the Trajectory of India-Japan Security Cooperation

The December 2013 National Defence Programme Guidelines, issued by the Abe administration, clearly articulate that Japan intends to strengthen its relations with India in a wide variety of issues including maritime security, through joint training and exercises.³² The 2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation pledging to safeguard vulnerable SLOCs, India-Japan bilateral naval exercise (JIMEX), the coastguards' exercise to develop a coordinated response to security challenges like piracy, poaching and other unlawful activities, negotiations on joint production of the Shin Maywa Industries (7224.T) amphibious aircraft in India, ongoing discussion on the civil nuclear cooperation agreement reflects the deepening bilateral security cooperation.

The October 2008 Joint declaration on Security Cooperation followed by the December 2009 Action Plan based on the Joint Declaration laid the foundation of a robust India-Japan security engagement, which is a significant component of the Strategic Partnership. The shift in Japanese approach towards India is shaped by few important variables including the emergence of China as a formidable force; eroding US position in the region; escalating US interest vis-à-vis India; and securing trade networks in critical maritime space. Beyond common values and shared interests, India is an understandable choice for Japan owing to increased US interest in India as a stabilising factor in Asia. Since the US Defence Department acknowledged India as a long-term security partner, it facilitated the India-Japan relations. As the US developed robust relations with India, Japan was compelled to re-evaluate its stance. While then US President Bill Clinton's India visit in early 2000 was followed by then Japanese Prime Minister Mori's India visit in August 2000, the Indo-US nuclear deal provided Japan the confidence to add value to the strategic partnership.³³ The 2007 US-Japan Security Consultative Committee referred to nurturing cooperation with India.³⁴

In the 2011 annual summit, then Prime Minister Noda and Manmohan Singh emphasised on maritime security cooperation together with safety and freedom of navigation. Multi-faceted defence exchange frameworks are in place involving the Defence Ministers, Defence Secretary and Vice Ministers'-level Defence Policy Dialogue, Service Chief Meetings, Comprehensive Security Dialogue at the Joint Secretary/Director General level, Military to Military consultations between Joint Secretary, and Deputy Director General, MOD of India and Japan, Service staff dialogues and officers exchange on training programmes.³⁵ Annual Subcabinet/Senior Officials 2+2 dialogue was instituted in 2009. The 2008 Joint Declaration underscores information sharing and policy coordination on regional matters; bilateral cooperation in multilateral frameworks including the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery

against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP); defence dialogue and Coast Guards cooperation; safety of transport; dealing with terrorism and transnational crimes; disaster management; and disarmament and non-proliferation.³⁶ Moreover, dialogue involving the National Security Advisors is instituted in 2014 following the establishment of the Japanese National Security Secretariat to strengthen cooperation on security concerns.³⁷

Then Minister of Defence Itsunori Onodera visited India in early January 2014 for the Japan–India Defence Ministerial Meeting with his then Indian counterpart A.K. Antony and underscored the need to strengthen consultation and cooperation related to maritime security to deepen the Strategic and Global Partnership.³⁸ During the November 2011 meeting, then Defence Minister Antony and Ichikawa resolved to perform bilateral exercise involving the Japanese Maritime SDF (JMSDF) and the Indian Navy. India and Japan has held the third Defence Policy Dialogue and the second ‘2 plus 2’ dialogue. Moreover, the first India-Japan Maritime Affairs Dialogue was hosted by India in January 2013.³⁹ To further consolidate the relations and strengthen maritime cooperation, India has invited Japan to participate in the Malabar naval exercise 2014 despite Chinese reservations witnessed in 2007. Joint coastguard exercises on anti-piracy, search and rescue operations are organised since 2000.⁴⁰ The Japanese Coast Guards and their Indian counterparts performed a joint exercise off the coast of Kochi and JMSDF and the Indian Navy conducted second bilateral exercise off the coast of Chennai in January 2014 and December 2013, respectively. The 18th edition of the Malabar naval exercise involving India, United States and Japan commenced on July 24 in the JMSDF Sasebo base in Nagasaki.⁴¹ While India and the United States are conducting the annual exercise since 1992, Japan participated following India’s invitation, making this its third time. Earlier in 2007, China expressed reservations on Japan’s participation in the Malabar exercise, which also included Australia and Singapore, as a containment policy targeted at China. Taking note of the trilateral naval exercise, the Chinese authorities expressed that the activities by the involved nations should facilitate mutual trust and regional stability.⁴² China reacted by underscoring its desire for a ‘harmonious’ and ‘stable’ Asia-Pacific region. Furthermore, the Joint Working Group (JWG) negotiation on the Shin Maywa Industries Utility Seaplane Mark 2 (US-2) amphibian aircraft is ongoing. Both the countries are weighing the possibility of assembling the US-2 aircraft in India, which will provide India the opportunity to access Japanese military technology.

Furthermore, the 2009 Action Plan outlined cooperation framework with regard to capacity building for disaster management. Information sharing on disaster prevention and preparedness through dialogue involving the Indian National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMA) and the Cabinet Office of Japan

through Asian Disaster Reducing Centre (ADRC) is established. Additionally, Ministry of Home Affairs India and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Japan agreed to cooperate in developing a Tsunami Disaster Map of India.⁴³ Following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, India has sent a relief and rehabilitation team comprising of a 46-member National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to Onagawa (Miyagi Prefecture) in March-April 2011.⁴⁴

Maritime security lies at the core of India-Japan security cooperation. Maritime security cooperation is crucial for augmenting energy security beyond dealing with piracy and security of SLOCs. Moreover, India, Japan and China are cooperating in coordinating their initiatives on anti-piracy in the Gulf of Aden.⁴⁵ India and Japan have engaged in anti-piracy mission off Somalia.⁴⁶ Moreover, India acceded to ReCAAP in June 2006;⁴⁷ thus expanding the scope for deepening security cooperation.

Challenges in the Security Relations

Despite the India-Japan bonhomie, one of the challenges in the bilateral relations is negotiating the Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. While the Abe-led administration is in favour of nuclear export to boost the economy, one of the biggest hurdles in redefining the India-Japan bilateral relations is negotiating the civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement. Despite the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear catastrophe and severe reservations of the domestic anti-nuclear interest groups, Japan has negotiated agreements with a number of countries including Jordan and Turkey, while negotiations are ongoing with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates; and Abe is lobbying with governments in Central Europe. However, among all the agreements, negotiation with India is difficult for Japan since India have nuclear weapons and it choose not to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), thus jeopardising Japan's national identity as a crusader of non-proliferation and disarmament. The *Hibakusha*⁴⁸ groups have registered strong protest vis-à-vis nuclear cooperation with India articulating that "a nation that has suffered atomic bombings itself is now severely weakening the NPT regime, which is beyond intolerable".⁴⁹

While in the 2014 Tokyo Declaration, the leadership mentioned about the 'significant progress in negotiations', fundamental difference on NPT and CTBT⁵⁰ continues to make the negotiation difficult. In September 2008, Japan agreed to extend special treatment to India by allowing exemption from the 1992 Export Guideline of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). However, the negotiation related to India-Japan civil nuclear cooperation is navigating through a difficult path. Japanese psychological scar of the atomic bombing led it to believe that every nation ought to be a party to and entirely stand by NPT. There is school

of thought in Japan that argues that US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement and the NSG discussion on India's special treatment is contrary to the NPT principle.⁵¹ However, it is important to note that for a country enjoying the nuclear umbrella of the US, it is unfair to be a judge of India's nuclear weapons programme. Moreover, the reasons for India's reservation with the NPT are well-established. While Japan imposed sanctions on India following the 1998 nuclear test arguing that it has worsened the regional security setting, it quickly reverted its policy once it grasped the strategic importance of India, its ascend as a regional economic powerhouse, its maritime clout in the Indian Ocean, its sphere of influence in South Asia and its growing strategic importance to the US.

Japan understands Indian policy concerning moratorium on nuclear tests, strict export control system and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguard Agreement promoting clarity regarding India's nuclear developments. However, Japan's fundamental point that India must stay within the NPT framework and sign CTBT persists.⁵² The negotiation started in June 2010 which later got disrupted following the nuclear accident in the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear facility. Authorities stressed that since key NSG member countries clinched or are negotiating civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement with India, engaging in negotiation with India rather than maintaining the status quo is necessary. Japan insists on incorporating a well-defined termination and cessation provision in case of future nuclear testing in the agreement.

Following the 2008 Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) waiver, India has entered into civil nuclear agreements with several countries including France, Argentina, Russia, Mongolia, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Canada, and Namibia, despite being a non-signatory to the CTBT. Moreover, the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2008 is the framework on which India wants to model her subsequent agreements where India's unilateral commitment to abstain from nuclear tests is acknowledged as adequate guarantee.⁵³ Additionally, in the unlikely case of a nuclear test, decision to suspend the agreement will be called forth following a year of consultation. However, Japan argues that India should renounce its right to conduct nuclear tests and proposes an immediate termination of cooperation in case India fails to comply with her voluntary moratorium.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Japan also stresses India to agree not to enrich or reprocess any fuel of Japanese origin. But the provision in Japan's recent agreement with Turkey permitting enrichment of uranium and extracting plutonium in case established in writing further complicates the negotiation.⁵⁵

Abe is navigating through the difficult choice of Japan's position on nuclear non-proliferation and the commercial interest of Japanese nuclear businesses who are struggling to cope with the post-Fukushima financial loss. Moreover, the agreement is vitally important for French and US nuclear businesses. Without

the India-Japan civil nuclear agreement, their projects in India are unable to make progress since critical components for the nuclear reactors are expected to be provided by the Japanese corporations. For instance, Toshiba, Hitachi and Mitsubishi have stakes in Westinghouse, General Electric and Areva respectively. Additionally, the nuclear lobby within Japan is exerting enormous pressure on the political leadership of Japan to facilitate nuclear technology export to avoid losing out to the South Korean and Russian businesses capturing the multi-billion dollar Indian nuclear energy market.⁵⁶ Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) strongly favours nuclear cooperation with India.⁵⁷ After the Fukushima meltdown, Japanese companies are looking for markets to compensate for the loss following the offline reactors at home. Delay in negotiation runs the risk of escalating cost. However, once the differences are addressed, this agreement is expected to cement a strong foundation further consolidating the bilateral relations.

India's energy appetite is expanding in order to fuel the economic engine. Energy-starved India considers nuclear energy as an indispensable element of its national energy mix and aims to achieve 20GW nuclear capacity by 2020. With tall plans for nuclear energy, it is indispensable for India to manage support from innovative nuclear technological bases including Japan to strengthen its civilian nuclear industry.⁵⁸ By 2020, India intends to build 18 more nuclear power reactors which may perhaps amount to \$86.1 billion market.⁵⁹ Being a leader in civilian nuclear technologies, Japan is critical in sourcing nuclear generation technology and the development of India's nuclear industry. A civil nuclear cooperation agreement with the Japanese, allowing nuclear technology to India, is imperative for enabling India's growth. Toshiba, Hitachi and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries are leading nuclear power businesses in the international market and civil nuclear agreement with India will prove beneficial for the Japanese firms owing to the enormous scope for investment in the fast expanding nuclear energy market of India and further cooperate in development of newer and advanced fuel cycle technologies.⁶⁰

Besides civil nuclear cooperation, India is discussing the possibility of sourcing Japanese defence technology since 2006. In the following years, consultation mechanism for high technology trade was instituted deliberating on loosening Japanese principles concerning arms export to India. While India had assured the Hatoyama administration that such technology will not be shared with third countries, considerable progress is yet to be made on high technology trade. Joint Working Group (JWG)⁶¹ negotiation on the Shin Maywa Industries Utility Seaplane Mark 2 (US-2) amphibian aircraft is ongoing. India reportedly plans to obtain 15 US-2 aircrafts following a Request for Information (RFI) in 2010-11 which will be used in patrolling Andaman and Nicobar islands and conducting

search and rescue operations in the Indian Ocean. Due to Japan's 1967 voluntary ban with regard to arm's export,⁶² a civilian version devoid of the IFF system is being offered to India. India and Japan are exploring the prospect of assembling the US-2 aircraft in India which will provide India the chance to access to Japanese military technology.

Defence cooperation, until now, is restricted primarily to joint naval exercises. India's defence modernisation and procurements present opportunities for Japan to build better partnership, depending on the extent to which Japan liberalises its defence exports and transfer of technology and joint-production. While there remains pressure, exerted by the Nippon Keidanren, on the administration to enable arms export since Japanese defence industry is losing out as it is restricted to domestic demand and barred from participating in international projects aimed at developing and producing military equipment. Many countries including India present profitable commercial opportunity to the defence industry in Japan. Regardless of the strategic implication of the US-2 amphibian aircraft deal, negotiations have proved to be difficult as Japan perceives India as unyielding on technology transfer requirements. Moreover, owing to political obligations, Japan favours removing some features from the aircraft. Japan expects that the 'symbolic importance' of this deal will facilitate escaping few obstacles connected with Indian defence procurements.⁶³ Better access to Japanese defence technologies including the stealth technology, communications, electronic warfare technologies, surveillance radars is needed. While Japan is undoing some of its voluntary constraints vis-à-vis defence technology exports, India should exploit this opportunity to access the sophisticated Japanese defence technology.⁶⁴

Is India a Security Provider to Japan?

While Japanese exceptions from India as a security provider is acquiring depth following the convergence of security and strategic concerns vis-à-vis China, India is expected to offer a measured response since it officially upholds strategic autonomy, articulating a position that its security policy is not aimed at any particular country. China argues that Japan has fabricated the 'China threat theory' to mislead the international community and has registered its protest against any Japanese initiative of nurturing new strategic partnership with countries like India. Indian leadership has taken a cautious approach and argued that India's strategic partnerships with other countries are defined by economic interests, needs and aspirations and that it is not aimed at containing China or anyone else. While Japan is working hard to garner support for the fiercely contested territorial and sovereignty claims in the East China Sea, India is hesitant to get involved in the dispute and venture in the East China Sea where China has firmly defined its sphere of influence. While former Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh stressed that India is “well positioned to become a net provider of security in our immediate region and beyond”,⁶⁵ India’s approach towards geopolitical realities is guided by a balance between engagement and autonomy.⁶⁶ Hence, Japan continues to trust the US as a “more reliable partner to address the China threat”.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the scope of expanding India-Japan security cooperation will be shaped by the unfolding changes in Japanese pacifist orientation, which will have implications for the restrictions imposed on the MSDF. The principal obstacle holding back the extension of India-Japan security cooperation is the ‘post-World War II regime’ upheld by the Japanese Constitution.⁶⁸ While the security engagement clearly defines a shared obligation for both India and Japan in securing SLOCs, but until now given the constitutional boundaries, the responsibility is “asymmetrical as Japan expects India to provide maritime security in the Indian Ocean as part of the arrangement”.⁶⁹ Given Abe’s pursuit for ‘active pacifism’, India and Japan may consider cooperating in UN-commanded operations in maritime domain once Japan categorically outlines how it intends to operationalise the re-interpretation of its Article 9 and exercise its right to collective self-defence. Moreover, the Indian Navy and the MSDF may consider jointly patrolling the SLOCs.⁷⁰ Counter-terrorist operations unit of the Japanese coastguard is trained by the US Navy’s SEAL unit.⁷¹ Indian counterparts will greatly benefit in case both coast guards explore the possibility of deepening cooperation regarding counter-terror attacks and averting further criminal activities at sea. Additionally, departure in Japan’s policy position on transfer of defence equipment and technology has raised India’s hopes about new vistas of high-end defence technology cooperation. India is eager to secure supply of high-end defence technology and collaborative projects in defence equipment and technology with Japan since it is among the foremost manufacturer of sophisticated military technologies. While India is hesitant to assert its influence in East Asia, co-development and co-production of defence technologies and signing the civil nuclear energy cooperation agreement will take India-Japan security relation to the next level.

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