

India Japan Strategic Partnership: An Evaluation

¹Loitongbam Jaya Devi

¹Research Scholar, Ph.D, (Under the Supervision of Ph.D. Supervisor, Dr. Lazarus Samraj, Professor)

¹Department of Politics and International Studies

¹Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry, India

Abstract: India Japan Strategic Partnership occupies a wide range of area focusing not just development of individual states but also takes up interest in regional issues as well as global concerns. Steady numerous attempts from the both side, with multiple official level visits and talks and gradual building up of trust and respect has made the signing of the historic 'Japan-India Global and Strategic Partnership' in 2006 which was further upgraded to 'India - Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014. The partnership of the two big Asian democracies has been eyed curiously by many, not just strategist but also the world's community with great expectations. In this regard, the paper attempt to shed light on historical background of India Japan Strategic Partnership till present context. It also discusses in detail the India-Japan Maritime Security Cooperation, followed by India Japan Cooperation in Countering Terrorism and Partnership in United Nations Security Council Reform. The paper concludes with the author's observation in the above context.

IndexTerms - Strategic Partnership, Maritime Security, Counter Terrorism, United Nations Security Council Reform

I. INTRODUCTION

The relation between India and Japan has opened up new scopes and directions and evolved immensely in the wake of 21st century, with the hope of bringing peaceful regional environment, economic and technological advancement and securing energy passes. Both Japan and India occupy special significance in the emerging Asia's geopolitics and are expected to contribute in shaping the vigorously changing Asian Strategic Landscape. Both the countries also share similar world outlook of peaceful coexistence, mutual benefits, rule of law and sustainable development. India Japan relation is regarded as one of the most vibrant and promising one by many observers and scholars in the geopolitics of Asia and Asia Pacific.

The strategic relation between India and Japan starts in the year 2006 with the signing of "Japan-India Global and Strategic Partnership" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017). Prior to this, India and Japan has been connected with economic interest and engagements for decades, though a steady one. The Indo-Japan Peace treaty of 1952 becomes the first official relation after Indian Independence, providing peaceful and friendly relation on commerce, shipping, aviation etc. (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India). Even before the relationship start to grow, both directed opposite ways during the cold war period, Japan alliances with US and India follow non alignment policy, yet tilted towards USSR. Also India following policy of import substitution remain aloof from the competitive world outside. Furthermore, Japan did not even consider India when it was booming economy along with the Asian Tigers. However the end of Cold War brings a new shift in Indian policy. The opening of its market and joining the international market brings about new opportunities, a new turn, a new hope for India in joining the Asian economy. At the same time Japan was focusing on the substitute of the US, exploring the word for alternate networks to fill the vacuum left by US. The then Prime Minister of Japan Takeshi Kaifu visited certain parts of Asia including India, calling for creating a more secure and peaceful Asia by focusing on "multifaceted efforts that suits the region" (Murthy, 1992). However the relationship got strain by the Indian sudden nuclear test of 1998. Japan condemn and boycotted India by sanctioning all the grants. According to Japanese ambassador to India Hiroshi Hirabayashi, "It was particularly perceived as a slap in the face by Japanese people. To be frank, I was rudely shocked and felt betrayed by Indians, which I believed to be an anti-nuclear champion. Pokharan test chilled our relationship to a great extent," (Kesavan, 2002). But it was soon lifted following other countries, like US, close ties toward India. The rescue of Japanese vessel Alondra Rainbow by Indian Coast Guard in 1999 which has been hijacked by pirates turned the table.

The beginning of 21st century brings about auspicious and favorable changes in the relation of India and Japan. And the economic engagement and interaction between the two countries shortly transformed into a strategic partnership which not only focus on Economic Partnership but also trusted each other with regional and global security concerns. Prime Minister of Japan Mr. Mori visited India in 2000 and signed the "Indo Japan Global Partnership in 21st century" with the Indian counterpart Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, looking forward to 'strengthen India Japan relation not just bilaterally but also regionally and internationally' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014). Japanese Prime Ministerial India visit after a gap of 10 years also recognizes "India as an important partner to work with not only for our respective peoples but also the world community at large" (Kesavan, 2002). Year 2005 marked the starting of India-Japan Regular Annual Summit by signing "Towards India-Japan Partnership in a New Asian Era: Strategic Orientation of India-Japan Global Partnership" (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India). "Global and Strategic Partnership" was signed a year later in 2006 during the Tokyo visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Which has been further upgraded to "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" in 2014. Prime ministers of both the country in 2015 agreed to "Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo- Pacific Region and the World" (Joint Statement on India and Japan Vision 2025, 2015).

The strategic partnership between the two countries has not been affected by any regime and policy change in both Japan and India, namely the power change of 2009 in Japan and in India in 2014. In fact it has been taken major leap during Modi- Abe Era. This shows the commitment and confidence of both the countries in working together in the targeted goals.

II. INDIA JAPAN STRATEGIC MARITIME SECURITY COOPERATION

Maritime Security becomes a common concern for both Japan and India, not only because of its underlying security concerns but also the key issue of energy security and economic concern. Maritime safety has been always remain an integral part of Japan's Security Strategy since being an Island country and more importantly, one of the biggest consumer superpowers of the world Japan depend directly on the sea routes for transaction of goods and energy supplies. Threats from petty pirate activities, the ever increasing expansion of Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, unhealthy reaction from the neighboring North Korea, withdrawal of American forces and Japan's huge dependence on the Sea Lane of communication binds Japan to seek for alternative for its security of the Sea Lane. The strategic location of India in the Indian Ocean and the presence of huge navy becomes an attractive option for Japan to tie up with India in securing Sea Lane of Communication. The incident of Alondra Rainbow a Japanese Vessel hijack by pirates in the Indian Ocean which was then rescued by the Indian Coast guards in 1999 activates the India Japan Maritime Cooperation. According to Prabhakaran Paleri, the incident of Alondra Rainbow "opened a new chapter in Indo-Japan relation" (Paleri, 2008).

In 2000 after a year of the incident, Indian defence Minister George Fernandes Tokyo visit discussed about the hijack and need for prevention of terrorism among other things and stated the willingness of India to cooperate with Japan in the maritime security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.). Further in 2003 Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi stated "cooperative maintenance of maritime traffic in the sea-lanes that stretch across the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca are among the security and defence issues which deserves our increase attention" (Towards a Brighter Future: Advancing our Global Partnership, 2003). The 2005, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi India visit also focus on the importance of "Maritime security" and the Indian Navy and the Self-Defence Force of Japan have been "instructed to enhance their cooperation" (Cherain, 2005). Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh visit to Japan, 2006, which brings about Strategic and Global Partnership, urged the defence agencies, "to develop an annual calendar of cooperation and exchanges and also set a timeline for joint naval exercise in 2007" (Joint Statement Towards India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership, 2006).

All these official dialogues and agreements between India and Japan for maritime security suggested that both the countries are willing to extend their cooperation in the field of security engagement. India-US bilateral Malabar Exercise has been joined by Japan in 2007 for the first time. The trilateral naval exercise of Japan, India and USA is named as 'Trioex 07' which drilled in the Pacific of Japan's East Coast in April 2007 (Srilatha, 2012). This was followed by Malabar 2007-2, involving Navies of United States, Japan, India, Australia and Singapore 'stretched from Visakhapatnam on the eastern starboard to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands that guard the approaches to the Strait of Malacca' (Exercise Malabar 07-02 Kicks Off, 2007). Further the Defence Minister of India, AK Antony visited Japan in November 2011 which updated India-Japan Defence Cooperation. It was agreed by both the countries that a bilateral naval exercise consisting only the two countries should be conducted to further secure the Sea Lanes of Communication (Prasad, 2011). India and Japan thus started bilateral naval exercise known as Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) 2012.

In January 2013, the 1st ever meeting of the Japan-India Maritime Affairs Dialogue takes the Maritime cooperation of the two country into new height. It discussed about 'bilateral maritime cooperation as well as international and regional maritime issues' (The 1st meeting of the Japan-India Maritime Affairs Dialogue, 2013). It also discussed maritime security including traditional and non-traditional threats, cooperation in shipping, marine science and technology, marine biodiversity and cooperation at various multi-lateral forums' (Menemura, 2010).

Japan has been welcomed to participate in India- US Malabar exercise on regular basis in the joint statement of December 2015 (Joint Statement on India and Japan Vision 2025). The recent naval exercise was conducted in January 2018 with observers from 17 countries (Economic Times, 2018).

The Japan India Maritime cooperation started off with the hope of providing security with mutual cooperation in smooth functioning of Sea Lanes of Communication by peaceful means. In the present context the cooperation has evolved gradually and provide a multi-dimensional platform including sustainable development of marine environment, marine biodiversity, extraction of Rare Earth Elements, etc. The India Japan Maritime cooperation is expected to deepen more in future days to come.

III. INDIA JAPAN COOPERATION IN COUNTERING TERRORISM

Terrorism and its activities is a global phenomenon and it requires global hand to counter terrorist outfits and activities. In today's globalizing world no country is immune to terrorism and its wrath whether how big or small, or how advanced or primitive the country is. As the world develops the modern warfare becomes more dangerous and powerful. In the present context, cyberterrorism has also become something which is to be feared. The term 'Terrorism' in itself has a confusing and an overlapping meaning. The absence of worldwide accepted definition of the term terrorism has made it more confusing. According to UN General Assembly's Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, 1994, terrorism includes "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes" and that such acts "are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them," (Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter Terrorism OHCR).

Both India and Japan are aware of the danger of terrorist activity as both have been victims of terrorist outfits. Mumbai serial blast of 1993, Parliament attack of 2001, Delhi serial bomb blast 2005, Samjhauta Express bombings of 2007, 26/11 Mumbai attacks, 2008 are a very few examples of deadly terrorist attacks in India in the past years. The geographical location of India, being surrounded by neighbors with unsettled border issues, and brutal separation of states in the course of Indian history contribute vastly in making an easy target for terror activities. Japan also, on the other side experienced the danger of terror attack time and again, specifically hijack and bombing of 1970 and Sarin gas attacks in Tokyo subway in 1995. Further, Japan also experience undying threats from the neighboring nuclear country North Korea. Acknowledging the fact that terrorism as a common concern, the two countries formed 'a joint working group on counter terrorism, and also established an information exchange network between the two financial intelligence units. Both the country also called upon the United Nations members to work together towards countering

international terrorism' (Mathur, 2012). India and Japan together with the US also hunted petty pirate activities in the Indo Pacific region. In 2017 Japanese PM Abe's India visit, both the leaders sought for "Zero Tolerance" towards terrorist activities, and condemned in the strongest terms the growing menace of terrorism and violent extremism. They also 'shared the intention to expand joint exercises and cooperation in such areas as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), peacekeeping operations (PKOs), counter-terrorism including the possibility of joint field exercises between Indian Army and Japan's Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF) in 2018, and reciprocal visits by air assets to each other's country (Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific, 2017).

To bring about peaceful environment free from terror of any form and construction of open, free and prosperous Indo-Pacific is one of the biggest agenda of India-Japan strategic partnership. Both the countries show similar notion of intolerance of terrorism and aim at preventing of all forms of terrorism in the region.

IV. INDIA-JAPAN AND THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

India, Japan and other countries have been struggling to get a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. Securing a permanent membership in the UNSC is a great deal for any member country as it is loaded with great deal of power in term of making top decisions related to the maintenance of International Peace and Security, verdicts related to Peacekeeping Operations, sanctions, and other military actions. India and Japan have similar views regarding reformation of the UNSC and it has been in the agenda of their bilateral relation. 'Partnering with India to seek for UN reform and expansion of Security Council was part of the Japan-India Global Partnership' (Khan, 2017).

Both India and Japan have gratefully responded to the call for UN peacekeeping operation time to time, whenever it requires. As one of the founding members of United Nations, India has always been closely associated with the peacekeeping mission and completed 70 years in serving for UN peacekeeping mission. 'More than 200,000 Indians have served in 49 of the 71 peacekeeping missions established around the world since 1948. Currently, there are around 6,700 uniformed peacekeepers from India, the vast majority of them in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in South Sudan,' (IndianExpress, 2018). As of Japan, the involvement in the UN peacekeeping joint much later in 1989. However Japan engrossment in UN budgetary contribution remain high. 'Japan contributes approximately 11% of the UN budget, inclusive of the regular budget', which remain second largest donor, next to the United States (Japan's Contribution to the International Community at the UN). Moreover Japan remain a record of 11 times in the panel of the non-permanent member of the Security Council.

India, Japan along with Germany and Brazil, together known as the Group 4 (G4), work effortlessly to bring reform in the United Nations. In 2005 the G4 draft a resolution for expanding the members in the UNSC. They demanded 'that the membership of the Security Council shall be increased from fifteen to twenty-five by adding six permanent and four non-permanent members,... the six new permanent members of the Security Council shall be elected, ...two from African States; Two from Asian States; One from Latin American and Caribbean States; One from Western European and Other States' (G4 Draft Resolution, 2005). No single African Nation is in the Permanent cell of the UNSC. The G4 are of the opinion that the UNSC membership should be expanded, in a democratic basis, considering the present world's scenario, and not Post War set-up 60 years back.

The efforts of the G4 could bear no positive outcome in near future. The support from the world community has been a mix one, as well as that of the already existing five members of the UNSC. There is another group known as 'Coffee Club' who oppose to the demand for the expansion of the UNSC (Mathur, India-Japan Relations Drivers, Trends and Prospects, 2012). China's opposition of Japan's membership has been an open one. "China may be determined to veto any reform push that would enable Japan to gain a permanent seat on the UNSC no matter how much support Japan has in the General Assembly given the tense relations between the two countries." (Toshitaka Takeuchi, 2016). However, the attempt for the reform of UNSC is a never ending process which could succeeded in near future.

V. CONSLUSION

India Japan Strategic Partnership has truly transformed into a rigid one which both the countries prefer to further strengthen in various other fields. The common outlook of both the countries in several affairs act as a backbone to the relationship. Both the countries also bear same belief in Free and Open Indo-Pacific, disarmament and sustainable development in the region. Reaching out to Japan has been always in the agenda of India. Japan also stated that 'Japan will enhance cooperation with India and other countries that share common interests in ensuring the security of maritime navigation from Africa and the Middle East to East Asia,' (National Defence Program Guideline, 2011).

In May 2017, India and Japan joined hands with Africa, which will be focusing on building 'Development and Cooperation Projects, Quality Infrastructure and Institutional Connectivity, Enhancing Capacities and Skills and People-to-People Partnership' (Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Partnership for Sustainable and Innovative Development, 2017). The project is expected to bring Asia and Africa closer and connected. India Japan relation is regarded as one of the most vibrant and promising one and has been preferred more, comparative to China, by various strategists and observers. The shared interest of respecting democratic views and rule of law will sure take the relationship of India and Japan ahead in future.

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