



India-Japan Relations

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This article is based on **“Making social welfare universal”** which was published in The Hindu on 29/04/2021. It talks about the evolving nature of India-japan relationship.

Recently, the new Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga met with the new United States President. Both the leaders have set the agenda for the wider Indo-Pacific engagement.

The backdrop of this meeting is the need to address China’s aggressive outlook in territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas as well as in the Taiwan Strait.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the successful Quad Summit, both parties expressed their continued support for the four-nation grouping of the United States, India, Australia and Japan.

Given that the Japanese Prime Minister plans to visit India as soon as the situation permits following the Covid-19 pandemic, his dealings with the U.S. are a preview of what India can expect from Japan.

Highlight of the US-Japan Meet

- In the summit level meeting, both sides affirmed the centrality of their treaty alliance, for long a source of stability in East Asia, and pledged to stand up to China in key regional flashpoints such as the disputed Senkaku Islands and Taiwan.
- Further, reflecting on the changed nature of conflict, both sides acknowledged the importance of extended deterrence vis-à-vis China through cooperation on cybersecurity and space technology.
 - Discussions also touched upon Chinese ambitions to dominate the development of new age technologies such as 5G and quantum computing.
 - Given China’s recent pledge to invest a mammoth \$1.4 trillion in emerging technologies, both sides pledged to close the gap by announcing a Competitiveness and Resilience Partnership, or CoRe.

- Both sides have also signalled their intent to continue the Trump-era policy of pressure on China to reform economic practices such as “violations of intellectual property rights, forced technology transfer, excess capacity issues, and the use of trade distorting industrial subsidies”
- Both powers also reiterated their vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific that respects the rule of law, freedom of navigation, democratic norms and the use of peaceful means to settle disputes.

What can Be expected in Upcoming India-Japan Meet

- **Balancing China:** A continuation of the balancing security policy against China that began with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shinzo Abe in 2014, can be expected as a major priority.
- **Collaboration in Frontier Technologies:** During the Shinzo Abe years, India and Japan put together a digital research and innovation partnership that ran the gamut of technologies from AI and 5G to the Internet of Things and space research.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Economic ties and infrastructure development are likely to be top drawer items on the agendas of New Delhi and Tokyo.
 - Japan is likely to reaffirm support for key manufacturing initiatives such as ‘Make in India’.
 - Further, India will be keen to secure continued infrastructure investments in the strategically vital connectivity projects currently under way in the Northeast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- **Evolving Multilateralism:** The Suga-Modi Summit would undoubtedly devote much attention to evolving a joint strategy towards key third countries and multilateral bodies.

In years past, New Delhi and Tokyo have collaborated to build infrastructure in Iran and Africa, provide vital aid to Myanmar & Sri Lanka and hammer out a common Association of Southeast Asian Nations outreach policy in an attempt to counter China’s growing influence in these corners of the globe.
- **Prompting Free and Open Indo-Pacific:** Further, no meeting would be complete without an affirmation of India and Japan’s support for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and continued willingness to work with the Quad, which is fast emerging as a central pillar of the security strategies of both nations

Way Forward

- **Resolving Data Localisation Issues:** India and Japan should attempt to resolve disagreements over India’s insistence on data localisation and continued reluctance to accede to global cybersecurity agreements such as the Budapest Convention

- **Expediating Economic Convergence:** While Japan has poured in around \$34 billion in investments into the Indian economy over the course of the last two decades.
 - Japan is only India's 12th largest trading partner, and trade volumes between the two stand at just a fifth of the value of India-China bilateral trade.
 - Thus both sides should envisage expediting the economic convergence.

Conclusion

Shinzo Abe, in his book, *Utsukushii Kuni E (Toward a Beautiful Country)*, expressed his hope that it would not be a surprise if in another 10 years, Japan-India relations overtake Japan-U.S. and Japan-China relations.

Thus far, New India has every reason to believe that Japan's Yoshihide Suga is willing to make that dream a reality.

Drishti Mains Question

It would not be a surprise if in another 10 years, Japan-India relations overtake Japan-U.S. and Japan-China relations. Comment.
