

4. India-Japan Ties & QUAD – I R

The newly elected Prime Minister of Japan has pledged to increase defence spending and deepen strategic ties with India and fellow members of the QUAD alliance – the United States, Australia, and India

Japan's Strategic Vision under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi

1. Leadership and Policy Orientation

Sanae Takaichi became Japan's first woman Prime Minister, known for her assertive national security stance. Her administration signals a departure from Japan's traditional pacifist posture under Article 9 of the Constitution, which limits military engagement. Key objectives include –

1. Raising defense expenditure beyond the current 2% of GDP;
2. Modernizing the Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) with advanced capabilities;
3. Revisiting constitutional restrictions to allow greater flexibility in military operations.

2. Commitment to Security Alliances

Takaichi emphasizes Japan's role in multilateral security frameworks, particularly –

QUAD – Japan, India, US, Australia;

Partnerships with the She cited rising geopolitical competition and power shifts, identifying China, North Korea, and Russia as major security concerns. The aim is to maintain a free, open, and stable international order aligned with Japan's strategic interests. US, South Korea, Philippines, and ASEAN nations.

India-Japan Bilateral Ties

1. Historical and Cultural Foundations – India and Japan share civilizational and Buddhist cultural linkages, fostering mutual understanding and long-term diplomatic goodwill. Modern strategic engagement began with PM Shinzo Abe's 2007 visit, where he articulated the 'Confluence of the Two Seas' vision – a conceptual precursor to the QUAD framework.

2. Strategic Partnership – Elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014, encompassing–

1. Defense and security cooperation;
2. Technology and infrastructure collaboration;
3. Maritime security and joint exercises.

Institutional mechanisms include –

4. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (Foreign and Defence Ministers);
5. Annual Summits between the two Prime Ministers;
6. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) for trade and investment.

3. Key Areas of Cooperation

Infrastructure – Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail, industrial corridors, and smart cities.

Technology – Semiconductors, AI, 5G, cybersecurity, and digital governance.

Workforce Development – Action Plan to facilitate 500,000 workforce exchanges, including 50,000 skilled Indian professionals over five years.

Defense and Security Cooperation

Joint Exercises – Dharma Guardian, Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), and Malabar (with US and Australia).

Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA, 2020) – Enables reciprocal logistics support, enhancing interoperability in the Indo-Pacific. Emphasis on maritime domain awareness, intelligence sharing, and defense technology co-development.

Economic and Technological Collaboration

Investment – Japan is India's fifth-largest investor, with commitments exceeding \$40 billion under the 2014 investment partnership.

Supply Chain Resilience – Focus on critical minerals, green technologies, and diversification away from China under SCRI and ARSCI initiatives.

Digital Partnership – Joint projects in cybersecurity, 5G/6G networks, AI, and smart cities.

Industrial Corridors – Delhi–Mumbai, Chennai–Bengaluru corridors to boost manufacturing and innovation.

Maritime and Regional Significance

Both nations view the Indo-Pacific as a strategic continuum, linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Japan's FOIP (Free and Open Indo-Pacific) aligns with India's SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

QUAD Leadership –

1. Uphold UNCLOS-based maritime order;
2. Ensure freedom of navigation;
3. Promote regional capacity-building in ASEAN, Pacific Islands, and Africa.

Challenges and Concerns

1. Strategic Asymmetry

Japan is a close US ally, while India pursues strategic autonomy, leading to potential divergence in –

1. Policy on China,
2. Regional security priorities,
3. QUAD decision-making.

2. Economic Imbalances – Bilateral trade remains modest despite strong investment. India's exports to Japan lag, though Japanese investment in India is significant.

3. Infrastructure Bottlenecks – Projects like the Mumbai–Ahmedabad bullet train face land acquisition delays and regulatory hurdles, which could slow investor confidence.

4. Cultural and Business Gaps – Differences in language, work culture, and regulatory processes pose challenges. Initiatives like the Japan–India Startup Hub aim to mitigate these gaps.

5. Regional Security Divergence – Threat perceptions regarding **China** differ, requiring careful coordination within the QUAD.

6. Technology and Innovation Divide – Japan leads in robotics and advanced manufacturing, India in IT and digital services. Joint R&D requires better policy alignment and innovation ecosystems.

Way Forward – India–Japan Joint Vision for the Next Decade

1. Economic Security and Resilient Supply Chains – Strengthen trusted supply chains for critical minerals, semiconductors, and green technologies. Promote Japanese manufacturing and digital investment in India. Cooperate under Asia Resilient Supply Chain Initiative (ARSCI).

2. Connectivity and Infrastructure – Expand ODA and private investment in high-speed rail, industrial corridors, and smart cities. Collaborate on third-country infrastructure projects in South Asia, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific.

3. Defense and Security Cooperation – Enhance maritime domain awareness, joint exercises, and defense technology co-development. Align defense partnerships with India's Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat programs.

4. Digital and Technological Collaboration – Develop 5G/6G, AI, quantum computing, and cybersecurity initiatives. Establish India–Japan Digital Partnership 2.0 and joint research on trusted networks and digital governance.

5. Energy Transition and Climate Action – Cooperate in green hydrogen, ammonia, offshore wind, and nuclear safety. Promote energy efficiency, electric mobility, and carbon capture initiatives. Reinforce the Japan–India Clean Energy Partnership (CEP).

6. People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges – Expand educational, youth, and tourism exchanges. Skill development through Japan–India Institutes for Manufacturing (JIM) and Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC).

7. Global Cooperation and Sustainability – Collaborate on humanitarian assistance, disaster relief

(HADR), and global health initiatives. Promote sustainable development and democracy-centric, human-focused technology in the Global South.

Conclusion

India–Japan relations are underpinned by historical, cultural, and strategic ties, with an expanding partnership across defense, economy, technology, and people-to-people linkages. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's vision reflects Japan's more proactive security stance in response to regional threats. The joint India–Japan vision for the next decade emphasizes –

1. Resilient supply chains,
2. Advanced technology collaboration,
3. Maritime security,
4. Energy transition, and
5. Global development leadership.

Together, they aim to strengthen the Indo-Pacific order, uphold freedom of navigation, and foster a peaceful, sustainable, and democratic regional architecture.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/japans-new-pm-commits-to-higher-defence-spend-ties-with-india-quad/article70198094.ece>

