

India-Japan Cooperation towards a Rule-Based Order in the Asia-Pacific:

Mapping Indian and Japanese Strategic Thinking

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Summary

The political leadership of the leading democracies in the Asia-Pacific has been arguing for the creation of a rule-based order in the region. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe put forth this idea in his speech at the 2014 Shangri-La Dialogue urging the international community to adhere to “international law” when making their claims and resolving their disputes. Similar statements have been made by leaders in the US, the G-7, and India. They have expressed concerns about China’s expansive behavior and claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. This research paper evaluates the statements and speeches of Japanese and Indian leaders. It also tries to assess how the strategic thinkers and the media that help shape public opinion view their calls for forging a new regional architecture. Analyses of their debates in India and Japan would be helpful in understanding the converging and diverging points toward creating a new rule-based order. Interestingly, though both Indian and Japanese leadership have sounded positive about forming a rule-based order to check China’s rise, they have not hesitated to embrace China wherever their national interests converged with Beijing’s. While Japan denounces China’s aggressive behavior, Tokyo has been amenable to the idea that Beijing should play an influential role in the Six-party Talks to restrain Pyongyang’s provocations. The need for a new architecture can be seen not only in the field of security but also in the economic realm. While Japan so far finds itself comfortable with the European- and US-led economic order, India is uncomfortable with this Western-led economic order as the existing order is based on the 1950s economic order and does not represent the changed economic realities of the present world. Though India allies with Japan on security issues, it has aligned with China to forge a new alternative economic order that includes the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This paper, while summarizing the Japanese and Indian strategic thinking, suggests India and Japan to bridge their perceptions over various global and regional issues and offers policy recommendations in order to forge a strongly-knit rule-based order in the Asia-Pacific.

1. Introduction

The leading democracies in the Asia-Pacific have been arguing for the creation of a rule-based order within which all countries can flourish “free from the arbitrary intention of any national government¹.” To achieve this objective, the democracies in the region are forging stronger strategic ties among themselves. The calls from the regional powers to achieve this goal are based on their assumption that, when a new power rises, it changes the status quo of the existing order. Moreover, the new power tries to dominate the region by undermining the existing internationally-accepted norms and laws. The new power that is being debated in strategic and political circles across the globe is none other than China². Concerns are being expressed about Beijing’s expansive behaviour and its claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. Of late, Russia’s expansionist behaviour has also drawn their attention, and similar concerns have been expressed by various leaders. At international forums such as East Asia Summit and G-7, various leaders and statesmen have expressed unease over these developments.

In Asia, Japan and India have been at the forefront in urging the democracies to come forward to create a rule-based regional order. This research paper identifies three key variables in this context— political leaders, strategic thinkers and the media— to assess the strategic thinking of India and Japan. This researcher believes that these three variables play an important role in formulating and influencing the strategic debate in the democracies. The paper attempts to evaluate the statements and speeches of Japanese and Indian leaders to assess how they envisage a rule-based order for the Asia-Pacific and beyond. The paper also analyses Indian and Japanese strategic thinking using the opinion pieces written by strategic experts and editorials that have appeared in newspapers. Since the popular debate generated by the media and strategic thinkers help influence the decision-making process of the states, analyses of their debates will be helpful in understanding the converging and diverging points of the different constituencies in both countries toward creating a new rule-based order that in turn will be helpful in assessing if this goal can be achieved.

The paper has been divided into various subthemes to understand the issues involved towards creating a new order in the Asia-Pacific. The first subtheme attempts to define the concept and it

analyses the statements and speeches of leaders in India and Japan regarding the concept of a rule-based order. Then the paper goes on to analyse and compare different shades of Indian and Japanese strategic thinking expressed through opinion articles and editorials in order to understand the convergences and divergences of their approaches vis-à-vis a rule-based order or a new security architecture.

2. Quest for a Rule-Based Order in the Asia-Pacific

2-(1) Defining the concept

While several interpretations of the term ‘rule-based order’ or ‘the new world order’ have been in use in strategic circles, it remains an ideological notion associated with the concept of global governance through collective efforts.³ At the core of the debate are the new developing relationships among various democracies, including India and Japan. Notably, India and Japan, the two Asian democracies, have developed a global and strategic partnership and have made commitments to work together on various regional and international issues.

Japan and India view themselves as complementary to each other in both economic and security matters. In their strategic and global partnership agreement signed in 2006, they identified a strong and prosperous India as being in the interest of Japan and vice versa. Both countries are networked internationally. Japan has used its different foreign policy tools, including its overseas financial aid and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), to remain engaged with the international community. India, since the end of Cold War, has signed a number of strategic partnerships with countries across the globe, which is reflective of the fact that India is much more engaged with the world than ever before. Because of their growing inter-dependence with the international community both politically and economically, it is quite natural that both India and Japan are cooperating for a rule-based order to safeguard the global commons. Of late, both India and Japan have argued for creating a global economic and security environment that could benefit all nations in the international community. Their demand that freedom of navigation and over-flights be safeguarded as global commons stems from their common understanding.

2-(2) Japanese and Indian leaders' quest for a rule-based order

Various statesmen have called for creating a rule-based order and have presented their views on the methods to achieve this goal. Japan's search to create a new architecture based on the "rule of law" can be traced to a 2006 speech by Taro Aso when he was the Foreign Minister of Japan. In 2006, Aso enunciated the idea of an "arc of freedom and prosperity." He argued that, in its diplomacy, Japan should lay emphasis on "universal values" such as "democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy."⁴ This statement was one of the rare "pro-active" foreign policy pronouncements by Japan, which is widely considered a "reactive state." Japan at that time wanted to "design" an "arc of freedom and prosperity" by forging stronger ties with "budding democracies." Presenting his views towards creating this arc, Aso included budding democracies that "line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent." Apart from the budding democracies, his value-oriented diplomacy also included the friendly nations sharing common views and interests. He argued:

I firmly believe that Japan must make its ties even firmer with friendly nations that share common views and interests, namely of course, the United States as well as Australia, India, and the member states of the EU and NATO, and at the same time work with these friends towards the expansion of this "arc of freedom and prosperity."⁵

It was clear from Aso's pronouncement that Japan wanted to create an exclusive global architecture where countries not espousing democracy and the rule of law had no place. Taking the idea forward, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during his first stint in office, mooted the idea of a "broader Asia" at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific oceans and urged that the democratic nations located at the opposite edges of these seas deepen the friendship among their citizens at every possible level. He highlighted that "this 'broader Asia' will evolve into an immense network spanning the entirety of the Pacific Ocean, incorporating the United States of America and Australia."⁶

These pronouncements and ideas from Japanese leaders were generally appreciated by other democracies, but they did not take concrete shape. By then, China had already started voicing concerns, terming these ideas an attempt to encircle China.

Abe gave yet another push to revive the idea of creating a regional security architecture consisting of democracies in 2012. Just before resuming office for his second term as Prime Minister of Japan, Abe mooted the idea of a “Democratic Security Diamond”. In his oft-quoted article published by Project Syndicate, he argued:

I envisage a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific. I am prepared to invest, to the greatest possible extent, Japan’s capabilities in this security diamond.⁷

Moreover, in his speech at the 13th Shangri-La Dialogue in 2014, Abe urged the international community to resolve disputes in light of “international law.” Clearly, Abe’s exhortations to the international community to uphold the “rule of law” were reiterations of statements made by previous Japanese administrations. At this Shangri-La Dialogue, he presented three principles of the “rule of law” at sea for “states” to resolve their disputes:

- a) states shall make and clarify their claims based on international law;
- b) states shall not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims; and
- c) states shall seek to settle disputes by peaceful means.⁸

These three principles of the “rule of law” at sea for the resolution of disputes were also reiterated by Abe during his maiden speech before the US Congress. Abe’s enunciation of these three principles for the resolution of disputes was in consonance with the Japanese government’s policy of creating a rule-based order. By renewing this pledge before the US Congress, Abe made it clear that he considers the US an important partner in achieving a rule-based order in the Asia-Pacific. Later, in an opinion article published in various newspapers, Abe presented this idea more emphatically:

We must make the vast seas stretching from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean a zone of peace and freedom, where all adhere to the rule of law. For this reason, too, it is our responsibility to fortify the US-Japan alliance⁹.

Indian leaders have not been as emphatic as their Japanese counter parts on the issue of a rule-based order. However, they have presented a vision somewhat similar to that of Japan toward creating a new world order in their speeches and statements. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh, while addressing a gathering of serving Indian diplomats, underscored the need for creating “a global economic and security environment”¹⁰ in the changing world order. He said that India is “prepared to work with the international community” to create this kind of global environment “beneficial to all nations.”¹¹ Notably, the seminar was entitled “India’s Place in the Changing World Order: Where Do We See Ourselves? What Do We Wish to Achieve?” The seminar attended by Singh was aimed at identifying the way forward for promoting India’s key foreign policy interests across the regions.

In the context of India-Japan relations, Indian leaders have also voiced their support for creating a stable regional order in Asia. Manmohan Singh argued:

India’s relations with Japan are important not only for our economic development, but also because we see Japan as a natural and indispensable partner in our quest for stability and peace in the vast region in Asia....¹²

He further emphasised that “there are strong synergies between our economies, which need an open, rule-based international trading system to prosper.”

Similarly, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s successor Narendra Modi voiced concerns about the “expansionist” tendencies of some Asian states. His reference to expansionist tendencies was taken as an apparent reference to China. While addressing business leaders in Tokyo, Modi stated that the world is divided into “two camps.” He stated:

“One camp believes in expansionist policies, while the other believes in development. We have to decide whether the world should get caught in the grip of expansionist policies or we should lead it on the path of development and create opportunities that take it to greater heights.”¹³

2-(3) The case of a “rule-based” global maritime order: understanding convergences and divergences

With the rise of China, successive turbulence is being witnessed at sea and in the air. Beijing’s expansive behaviour and its claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea have drawn concerns from various countries. India, Japan, the US and other democracies around the world argue that seas (especially the high seas) are part of the global commons and that all nations have the right to freely transit through the seas. The leaders of India and Japan have also time

and again reiterated their demand that China abide by the internationally-accepted laws and norms on the freedom of navigation. As mentioned in the previous section, Japanese leaders mooted the idea of an “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”, the “Confluence of Two Seas” and most recently a “Democratic Security Diamond” primarily aimed at establishing a rule-based maritime order. Nevertheless, India was a little circumspect about embracing this idea.

However, India has started raising the issue of a rule-based maritime order more emphatically since China objected to India’s hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation projects in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam in 2011. It was reported widely in the Indian media that a Chinese warship confronted the Indian Navy vessel INS *Airavat* shortly after it left a Vietnamese port in the South China Sea in late July 2011. While maintaining a studied silence over this issue, India stated that “it supports the freedom of navigation in international waters including the South China Sea, the right of passage and unimpeded commerce in accordance with accepted principles of international law, and peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. These principles should be respected by all.”¹⁴ Since this episode, India has been consistently making statements about developments in the South China Sea, maintaining that it is not a “party to the dispute” and that its interest in the South China Sea is “purely commercial.” However, whenever the situation in the South China Sea has escalated, India has made statements. Expressing concern over a stand-off between China and the Philippines in May 2014, India observed that the “maintenance of peace, stability, growth and prosperity in the region is of vital interest to the international community.” India’s Ministry of External Affairs also maintained that the “freedom of navigation in the South China Sea should not be impeded and calls for cooperation in ensuring the security of sea-lanes and the strengthening of maritime security.”¹⁵ Finally, the South China Sea issue also surfaced in India-Japan joint statement signed during Shinzo Abe’s Delhi visit in December 2015. The joint statement stated that “the two Prime Ministers noting the developments in the South China Sea called upon all States to avoid unilateral actions that could lead to tensions in the region.”¹⁶

India has been reiterating a similar stance on the freedom of navigation in its bilateral and multilateral engagements with Japan and the US. For example, in the first-ever trilateral meeting attended by the US Secretary of State and his Japanese and Indian counterparts, the

three democratic countries “underscored the importance of international law and peaceful settlement of disputes; freedom of navigation and over-flight; and unimpeded lawful commerce, including in the South China Sea.”¹⁷

It may be noted that China of late, after these concerns were raised by various states, has started acknowledging the concept of freedom of navigation. China’s stance on the freedom of navigation, however, differs with that of the US, Japan and India. The Chinese stance can be best understood by a recent statement by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs that argues “The Chinese side advocates the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, yet the freedom definitely does not mean that foreign military vessels and aircrafts can enter one country’s territorial waters and airspace at will.”¹⁸

Apparently, China is pushing for a new norm by asking that military vessels seek permission from the coastal state before innocent passage. Citing UNCLOS, which extends the sovereignty of coastal states on waters up to 12 nautical miles, China is building new man-made islands by reclaiming sea in the South China Sea. However, the international community at large has expressed concern over China’s reclamation activities and has argued that the 12 nautical mile stipulation of UNCLOS should not be applied to artificial islands to interfere with the innocent passage.

However, the reactions and responses by the US, Japan and India vary on this issue. The US, on 27th October 2015, responded to China’s reclamation activities with a Freedom of Navigation Program by sailing a US Navy guided missile destroyer right by those newly reclaimed islands, apparently to demonstrate that these waters remain international. Meanwhile, India has not made any public statement on this issue, and Japan is weighing its options in the disputed South China Sea. The dominant opinion within Japanese strategic thinking insists that Japan should not engage in such navigation within the 12-nautical-mile limit of the man-made island because Japan, unlike the US military, did not have a “next option” to deal with a possible military clash with China.¹⁹

3 . Analyzing Indian Strategic Thinking and Media

Reactions among the strategic thinkers, both from India and Japan, have been mixed. While the leaders of the two leading democracies of Asia in their speeches have presented broader outlines of cooperation, the strategic thinkers have been quick to suggest how the two democracies India and Japan should interact with each other as well as what their level of cooperation with another nations in the region should be to realise this goal. To maintain diplomatic niceties, the leaders of the two countries have omitted references to China when they envision a new order in Asia but the strategic thinkers have been quite explicit in naming the pillars upon which the new order or security architecture should be built.

3-(1) Assessing Indian strategic thinking on the new order/architecture

Some Indian strategic thinkers welcome closer partnership among the US, Japan, India and other nations to hedge China. This kind of argument has been put forward by leading Indian strategic thinkers such as Brahma Chellaney and C. Raja Mohan. Chellaney, who has written a number of articles on this issue in the last few years, sees the relationship between India and Japan as a significant milestone in building “Asian power equilibrium.” He opines that “concerned over China’s lengthening shadow, Japan and India are bracing for a strategic challenge in the Asian heartland.” However, he believes that the partnership between the two countries is not aimed at gaining preeminence but to “thwart preeminence.”²⁰

K.Shankar Bajpai, a strategic thinker and former Indian diplomat, in the context of burgeoning India-Japan relations states that “power-politics and balance-of-power calculations...are facts of life.” He further states that “in our totally changed world, we ourselves have evolved to cooperate strategically with the US. Doing so with Japan is no less important.” Bajpai clearly sees the relationship between Japan and India as a byproduct of an assertive China and opines that “we can both (India and Japan) honestly say we are not building relations in hostility against China; but it is right and proper for us to examine what to do if China acts in hostility against us.”²¹

Similarly, C. Raja Mohan sees India and Japan as important players in the evolving security architecture in the region. Raja Mohan has been critical of India’s slow approach towards

embracing Japan in the event of a rising China. In an opinion piece, he states that “don’t provoke China” has been the “mantra behind New Delhi’s recent ‘go slow’ strategy with Japan.” He asserts that “holding it back until now was the political fecklessness in Tokyo and Delhi.” Raja Mohan further opines that “at the very moment when many Asian countries are frightened by the prospect of China’s non-peaceful rise and are looking to Indian leadership in constructing a stable Asian balance of power, Delhi seems trapped in strategic hesitation.” He is of the view that “a genuine strategic partnership between India and Japan will be a game changer for Asian geopolitics.”²² On similar lines, Harsh V. Pant believes that “the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific and beyond has altered the strategic calculus of India and Japan, forcing them to rethink their attitudes toward each other.” As regards the emerging regional order, Pant opines that “India seems most willing to acknowledge Japan’s centrality in shaping the evolving Asia-Pacific security architecture.”²³

A number of Indian columnists have also seen India-Japan relations through the prism of ongoing power politics in the Asia-Pacific. An Indian observer commenting on the geopolitics of Asia stated that “Japanese seek greater cooperation in trade with India while India is attempting to forge a larger relationship so that Japan could act as a counterfoil to China once it rises to the pinnacle of its power.”²⁴ Similarly, another observer opined that China’s “peaceful rise” is unlikely to remain “peaceful” for much longer. He suggests that “in its own interest, and in the larger equation of maintaining the balance of power in Asia, Japan must take the lead in such a way that the Chinese behemoth does not swallow the world with its influence.”²⁵

A group of Indian academicians, including Rajesh Rajagopalan, views ongoing India-Japan relations purely from a realist paradigm. In the context of China’s rise Rajagopalan writes:

To paraphrase the Athenian historian, philosopher and general Thucydides, China’s rise and the fear this causes in Asia and elsewhere is at the root of India’s importance. China’s aggressiveness has frightened even the more powerful Asian powers such as Japan.²⁶

He is among those scholars who debunk the theory that economic interdependence between China and India will help moderate China’s aggressive behavior vis-à-vis India and the region. He opines that “a strong and welcome new theme in India’s foreign policy is a focus on the

economic side of diplomacy. But it would be a mistake to assume that closer economic relations will minimise strategic challenges.”²⁷

On the other hand, there is another strand of strategic thinking in India that believes in an inclusive regional security architecture for the Asian subcontinent. This group of strategic thinkers argues that India, Japan and China are key players in the Asia-Pacific region and that, without China, forming a regional architecture would not be possible. They consider that, since the US is an outside power, it does not fit into the inclusive security architecture of the Asia-Pacific. More importantly, they believe that both Japan and China are equally important for India.

Siddharth Varadarajan, a well-known journalist and strategic thinker, argues that “India, Japan, South Korea and China, which have emerged as principal powers in Asia, should have multilateral and bilateral interactions with each other.”²⁸ Varadarajan adds that “without these four countries and Russia establishing a relationship of comfort among and between themselves, it will not be possible to develop the security architecture of Asia.”²⁹

How should India interact with Japan in forging the new security architecture? Varadarajan is of the view that “in its interaction with Japan, the Indian side needs to encourage a constructive approach to Asian security based on addressing current concerns as well as the lingering burdens of history.”³⁰

While others argue that the US should be an inalienable partner of the emerging Asian security architecture, Varadarajan is apprehensive of a “trilateral element” (read the US) creeping into the bilateral arrangement between India and Japan. He has reasons for this apprehension:

The trilateral idea has two dimensions. At the military level, the United States would like to enhance the inter-operability of Asian forces loosely aligned with Washington. And at the political and strategic level, it would like to demonstrate that India, Japan, and the US will provide the nucleus around which any emerging security architecture in Asia must be built.³¹

Varadarajan critically suggests that the government maintain a balance in its policy towards Japan and China:

Modi might represent a party that has traditionally favoured a more muscular Indian approach towards China and that is not averse to the neo-containment talk currently fashionable in Tokyo, but the last thing India wants is to be forced to choose between Japan and China.³²

Similarly, “Non-Alignment 2.0”, a policy paper compiled by a group of Indian strategic thinkers including one former Indian diplomat, also suggests India to maintain a balanced approach in its foreign policy in the changing world order. This semi-official policy paper offers various alternative proposals to the government of India for crafting its foreign policy. It argues that:

Alongside the US and China, there will be several other centers and hubs of power that will be relevant, particularly in regional contexts. This means that Non-Alignment will no longer be limited to avoiding becoming a frontline state in a conflict between two powers.³³

As mentioned previously, various Indian strategic thinkers have seen the blossoming India-Japan ties as a response to a rising and aggressive China. In opposition to this, Srinath Raghavan, who is among the co-authors of “Non-Alignment 2.0”, opines that “from a strategic standpoint, it would be unwise to convey an impression to China that our relationship with Japan is primarily directed against it.”³⁴

Raghavan has suggested that India should not bandwagon with any country to balance another. He opines that “it is certainly not in India’s interest to convey an impression that its security partnerships are subordinate parts of the US ‘pivot’ to Asia.”³⁵ Notably, he suggests that India “avoid making sharp choices or premature commitments” in its dealings with Japan and China.³⁶

Yet another Indian strategic thinker suggests India adopt a cooperative foreign policy approach to the regional order. Ramesh Thakur opines that “China, India, and Japan should join forces to construct an architecture of regional order that fosters peace and promotes prosperity across Asia and the world without cutting across existing bilateral relations of any of the three.”³⁷

Thakur warns that rivalry among them will have an adverse impact on the world. “The destiny of Asia in this century will be shaped by the triangular relationship between China, India, and Japan.

The ‘strategic footprint’ of that triangle will cover the world. Cooperation between them will help to anchor peace and prosperity in Asia. Rivalry and conflict will roil the world.”³⁸

Atul Aneja, a Beijing-based correspondent for *The Hindu*, an influential Indian newspaper, while writing his opinion piece on Prime Minister Modi’s visit to China opined that “in redefining India’s geopolitical relationship, Mr. Modi would have to take a call on balance of power in the Asia-Pacific.”³⁹ Within the context of an emerging balance of power in the region, Aneja observed that “While it is tempting to enmesh in security arrangements that have Japan, Australia and the United States as the major players, a more prudent and bolder course that the Prime Minister can pursue is to propose and push for an integrated dialogue that involves all the major players in the region on a single dialogue platform.”⁴⁰

3-(2) Towards a rule-based order in Asia: mapping the views of the Indian press

In the Indian press, including the vernacular Hindi press, various articles and editorials have come to the fore highlighting the level of interactions between India and the world. Like the country’s strategic thinkers, the media in India are also divided over the issue of forging a new security architecture. Some are favouring a hedging of China with the help of Japan and the US as well as other like-minded countries while others are arguing against stoking insecurity in China by forging a partnership with other countries.

The Hindu in its editorials has been urging caution on not letting India-Japan ties affect India’s relationship with China. In one of its editorials, *The Hindu* argues that “New Delhi needs to guard against allowing ties with Japan to get underpinned by the shared wariness of Beijing. There is nothing to be gained for India, Japan and China in a polarised Asia.”⁴¹ Following Prime Minister Abe’s India visit, the Hindu reminds that “India should be wary of the great game going on in Asia.”⁴² It argues that rather than joining any geopolitical alliance “India should build strong ties with each power, instead of aligning with any particular bloc.”⁴³

By contrast, *Business Standard* opines that “fear of China’s reaction cannot be allowed to stand in the way of natural cooperation with Japan.” The daily suggests that India forging closer ties with other regional powers to check an assertive China is the “only option”. It adds that “India so

far has had a distressing habit of refusing to commit itself all the way, although realpolitik in this case clearly suggests that closer alliances with other regional powers concerned about an assertive China is the only option.”⁴⁴ The Indian Express, yet another leading Indian daily, states that the “India-Japan partnership cannot, however, be explored without reference to the China factor” adding that “...it is undeniable that China’s rise is reordering the Asian balance of power. Japan and India are both adapting to that fact and trying to improve their individual prospects through a deeper strategic collaboration.”⁴⁵

In the context of an emerging regional order in the Asia-Pacific, *The Asian Age* in its editorial opines that “the build-up (between India and Japan) has been gradual but focussed. But it is exaggerated to see in this a threat to China, with which India as well as Japan actually desires the bettering of ties.”⁴⁶ On the similar lines, The Hindustan Times opines that “symbolically closer ties would help put China on warning that its increasingly imperialist actions will inevitably lead to bandwagoning against it in the Asia-Pacific area.” It further argues that “at a time when the US cannot seem to make up its mind whether it is prepared to stand up to China and the Southeast Asian countries are selling out to Beijing’s money power, the India-Japan relationship should be seen as being ultimately about ensuring the stability of Asia as a whole.”⁴⁷

The vernacular press also has shown keen interest in India-Japan ties and their possible impact on relations with China. The *Navbharat Times*, in this context, states that “a stronger relationship with Japan should not be forged at the cost of China as momentary benefits may later result into loss.”⁴⁸ The daily *Hindustan Hindi* in an editorial views India-Japan relations in the context of Chinese claims in the Asia-Pacific. It opines that one of the reasons for the growing ties between India and Japan is to “counter China’s growing preeminence in the Asia-Pacific region.” The *Hindustan Hindi* further states that “in this region India is the only country which can confront China and for this, Japan needs India’s cooperation.”⁴⁹

4 Analyzing Japanese Strategic Thinking and Media

4-(1) Towards a rule-based order in Asia: assessing Japanese strategic thinking

Like Indian strategic thinking, Japanese strategic thinking is also divided on the question of whether the new security architecture should include or exclude China. Yoriko Koike, a former

defence minister of Japan and presently a member of the Japanese Diet, has been one of the leading voices in Japan who argue the need to construct security architecture *sans* China. She argues that “America alone cannot construct a viable security structure for the region. From India to Japan, every Asian country must play its part.” Koike is aware that various countries in the region face a dilemma over how to deal with China. She suggests that “... fear of provoking China should not stop Asia’s leaders from seeking a regional security consensus, such as the proposed code of conduct for disputes in the South China Sea.”⁵⁰

Similarly, Takashi Shiraishi and others argue for a strong partnership among democracies in the Asia-Pacific region to check China’s dominating tendencies. In an article in *Japan Echo*, Shiraishi considers India as one of the important elements in forging a regional balance. He argues that “Japan’s relations with India should remain grounded in the Japan-US alliance. Engaging with India within the framework of the Japan-US alliance is a balancing act in some aspects....”⁵¹ Pointing to the quadrilateral partnership among Australia, India, Japan and the US, he states that “whatever the actual intentions were, the scheme was quite naturally regarded as a strategy for containing or encircling China.” As regards India’s role as a balancer to China, Shiraishi opined that “while using India to counterbalance China may appear sound in theory, it will not work in practice because India is unlikely to allow itself to be used in that manner.”⁵²

Tomohiko Taniguchi, Prime Minister Abe’s political adviser, believes that containing China is not feasible as China is economically interlinked with the region. However, India and Japan must engage with each other wherever their interests converge.⁵³

Quite contrary to these views, there are views within Japan who caution the government to use relationship with India to counter China. Yoichi Funabashi is one of the strong advocates who argue that the bilateral relationship between India and Japan should not be aimed at counterbalancing China. He opines that “in both Tokyo and New Delhi, there are people seeking to elevate Indo-Japanese relations to the status of a *de facto* alliance and to pursue a strategy of encircling China.”⁵⁴ Funabashi adds that “it is not necessary, however, to look for the China factor in every new initiative in Indo-Japanese relations.”⁵⁵ He suggests that both Asian democracies “should exercise restraint and take a stance of “quiet deterrence” to avoid provoking China.”⁵⁶

In a recent opinion piece, Yoichi Funabashi argues, “Japan’s long-term strategic aim must be the formation of a world and regional order based upon the model of a “liberal international order” and “rooted in the rule of law.” More importantly, he suggests that Japan “hone” its geo-political skills and that it avoid becoming a strategic pawn “in someone else’s game.”⁵⁷ Norio Kondo, Takenori Horimoto and some young scholars such as Ryohei Kasai and Kazutoshi Tamari have views similar to that of Yoichi Funabashi. Japanese Indologists believe that India and Japan should not pursue a strategy of encircling China. Their arguments are in favour of accommodating China in the regional architecture wherever possible. Norio Kondo on the issue of growing trilateral engagement among the US, India and Japan believes that “such a trilateral arrangement will probably work against alleviating tension between China and neighbouring countries.”⁵⁸

4-(2) A rule-based order in Asia: mapping the views of the Japanese press

Similarly, the Japanese media is also divided into two opposing camps. Analyses of editorials in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Asahi Shimbun* show that, while both favour a closer partnership between India and Japan, the former recommends a strong partnership with India to counterbalance China while the latter has maintained ambivalence over this issue.

The Japanese press has mostly highlighted the economic benefits of stronger Japan-India relations in its editorials and analysis. At times, though, they have seen this relationship in the context of China. For example the *Japan Times* in one of its editorials opines that “by deepening ties with India, Japan can counter China, which is trying to increase its maritime influence, and can reduce the risk of excessive economic reliance on China.” However, the leading Japanese daily asks the government not to antagonise China. It adds that “Japan must act carefully to avoid antagonising China.”⁵⁹ *The Asahi Shimbun* is of the view that “India has been expanding military exchanges with the United States, Australia and Southeast Asian countries. They all have a common objective to keep China in check.” Against this context *The Asahi Shimbun* opined that “intensifying bilateral relations to counter China is risky.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* asserts that “India is an important partner for Japan in the regional cooperative framework centered on the East Asia Summit.” Given this context, it asks Japan to “call on India to play constructive roles that fit its new status as a major power.”⁶¹ *The Yomiuri Shimbun* states

that “Japan faces a direct threat from China’s maritime expansion in the East China Sea, while India is exposed to a similar threat in the Indian Ocean.” The editorial asks Japan and India “to actively utilise vice-ministerial talks between their foreign and defence ministries, to discuss common strategy regarding China, such as measures to ensure the safety of sea lanes.” *The Yomiuri Shimbun* calls on India and Japan to widen their cooperation to achieve this goal:

“The two countries also need to seek partnerships with the United States, and then with the Southeast Asian countries that stand at the forefront of friction with China. To realise this goal, Japan and India, regional powers in Asia, must further deepen bilateral relations.”⁶²

5. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The analyses in this research suggest that, though the leaders of the Asian democracies espouse the idealism of the so-called value-based order, a significant gap remains among them over how to forge this order. Notably, this paper finds that both Indian and Japanese leaders have sounded positive on forming a rule-based order to check China’s assertive behaviour; however, they have not hesitated to embrace China wherever their national interests converged with those of Beijing. For example, Tokyo denounces China’s aggressive behaviour but, when it comes to restraining Pyongyang, it has been amenable to the idea that Beijing should play an influential role in the Six-party Talks.⁶³ Japan has also opened up negotiations with North Korea and eased sanctions on the country, despite the US and South Korea urging Japan not to do so. These tendencies have weakened Japan’s campaign for a “rule based” and “value based” order in the region.⁶⁴

Secondly, the talks on forming a new architecture/order remain heavily focussed on security, especially maritime security. A number of other factors and fields, including the economic order, the global nuclear order, and climate change have not been taking into account.⁶⁵ These are the factors that act as intervening variables and hinder India and Japan’s goals in forging a rule based order. These are issues on which states, especially India and Japan, are not necessarily in accord with each other. While Japan finds itself comfortable with the European- and US-led economic order, India is uncomfortable with this order. India argues that Western-led financial institutions based on the Breton Woods system do not represent the changing realities of the present economic system. India wants more say in these financial institutions commensurate with its present economic status. China, more or less, has similar grievances with the international

financial systems and wants more say in the decision-making process. China has been taking various steps to challenge the existing financial order by mooted the idea of establishing a BRICS bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Apparently, this is the reason that, rather than allying with Japan on the issue of the AIIB, New Delhi has gone with Beijing to forge a new alternative economic order. India has joined the China-led AIIB as a founding member but Japan has gone with the US and opted not to join the bank. Japan argues that the AIIB's loan disbursement mechanism is opaque while that of the ADB is very transparent, and that the AIIB may be "nothing more than a policy instrument of the Communist regime." Moreover, a number of Japanese strategic thinkers consider the AIIB to be an institution that will help establish "China's regional hegemony."⁶⁶

Furthermore, Japan is of the view that the AIIB is competing with existing lending banks, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Japan. On the other hand, India thinks that the AIIB is not necessarily a rival to the Japan-led ADB and that in fact it can complement the ADB. It seems that India has accepted China's invitation to join the AIIB as a founding member to gain more say in forging a new financial order in the region as well as acknowledgement of its growing economic stature.

While India and Japan talk about democratic ideals to achieve a rule-based order in Asia, their differing national interests sometimes compel them to take different steps and they thus have to compromise their own ideals with their own national interests. Though India and Japan take an identical position on United Nations Security Council reform and the freedom of navigation and over-flight bind them together, their national interests differ on various key issues and fields, including the nuclear order, climate change and the emerging economic architecture. Therefore, the two Asian democracies should bridge their perceptions over various global and regional issues in order to forge a strongly-knit rule-based order.

It may be noted that at present Japan and India are at different levels in their economic development. While Japan is a developed country, India is still a developing economy. The gap between them over different global issues will persist until they reach the same level of economic development. Japan should help India, by way of sharing key technologies and

providing economic and infrastructure aid, to achieve parity with the developed world. Undoubtedly India is aligning with major powers, and its global outlook has substantially changed in the post-Cold War period. It is willing to embrace and respond to the changing global order but, at the same time, it is seeking greater participation and say in shaping the emerging global order. It is seeking membership in various forums, including the Asia Pacific Economic Community, the Nuclear Supplier Group, the Wassenaar Group, etc. It is also asking for a greater voice in various global financial institutions commensurate with its economic power. Japan has made commitments to bring India on the table in these bodies in its joint statements issued after summit level meeting at Prime Ministerial levels and it must be welcomed. However, it should move beyond commitment should take a leading and supporting role to facilitate India's entry into these bodies and organisations. India's participation in these institutions will help India gain greater participation and say in shaping the emerging global order, paving the way for a greater partnership between Japan and India on various global and regional issues.

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¹Shinzo Abe, “Towards an Alliance of Hope”, *Project Syndicate/The Japan Times*, May 12, 2015

²John J. Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, argues that message, i.e., China is a benign power, will be drowned out by China’s behaviour, which will be much more oriented towards altering the status quo, by military force if necessary. Full interview of Mearsheimer by *Nikkei Asia Review* is available at <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/US-China-heading-toward-face-off-says-Mearsheimer> (accessed August 10, 2015)

³This definition was adopted by the concept note of a seminar held in November 2014 organised by the School Of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on the theme of “India in the Emerging Global Order: Political, Strategic and Economic Dynamics.”

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⁵ Ibid.

⁶“Confluence of Two Seas,” Speech by Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, August 22, 2007.

⁷Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012.

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