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Japan's Indo-Pacific Policy:  
Changing Strategic and Global Relationship  
between Japan and India

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## **Abstract**

Japan's growing ties with India over the last few years have generated significant interest as they underline the rapidly changing strategic realities in Asia. The research argues that a convergence of structure, domestic and individual leadership factors has transformed the Japan-India relationship in recent years. At the structure level, the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific and beyond has fundamentally altered the strategic calculus of Japan and India. At the domestic level, India's booming economy is making it an attractive trading and business partner for Japan as the latter tries to get itself out of its long years of economic stagnation. Japan is also reassessing its role as a security provider in the region and beyond, and of all its neighbors India seems most willing to acknowledge Japan's centrality in shaping the evolving Asia-Pacific security architecture. Especially, at the individual factor, the two leaders Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi are viewing each other differently from past policies.

Hence, this research paper describes the background of the relationship between India and Japan in recent years, and tries to point out that the deepening of India-Japan relations is an important strategic move in the Indo-Pacific region and the most noteworthy trend in the contemporary Asia-Pacific region. The geographical term "Indo-Pacific" is now increasingly used to replace "Asia-Pacific" and also the geopolitical counterbalance for the growing Chinese influence. Moreover, the paper attempts to explore the reasons for this shift, especially by looking at the motivations on both sides.

Finally, the paper sketches out that Japan plays an active leadership role across an abroad range of issues from Japan's foreign policy to the Indo-Pacific strategy. The author considers that Japan's foreign policy now is changing to more dynamic and doughty by implementing Indo-Pacific strategy. It is undeniable that Indo-Pacific

strategy offers Japan a hard power play to operate in coordination with U.S.'s grand strategy. This evolving security system is accelerating the dilution of Japan's pacifist norms.

**Keywords:** Japan's Foreign Policy, Indo-Pacific Policy, India, China, PM Shinzo Abe, and PM Narendra Modi

## I. Introduction

Over the past 70 years, the Japan has sought to maintain and create an open, democratic Asian society, although in entirely different ways under different leaderships. The Tokyo administration first thought the best approach was to co-opt China into the Asian society, since it was believed that a rising China could share core Japan interests and responsibility for regional stability. However, China passed Japan in 2010 to become the world's second-largest economy after the US, a historic change complicates the emotions of two Asian powers. Facing a rising China, Japan is still the only one of the largest recipients of US military equipment that has the US-Japan alliance. Nevertheless, China's rise will inevitably bring economic rise and a growing network of military and diplomacy. China has become more active in multilateral security and economic issues with the US; on the contrary, Japan has not been able to attract more international attention regarding its non-normalization status, and the Sino-Japanese issue is one of the most serious challenges facing China as it rises to power.

In international politics, there is a saying that the enemy of the enemy is a friend and the friend of my enemy is my enemy.<sup>1</sup> At this moment, the combination of India and Japan may be a structural necessity. The significant development is to deepen foreign ties with the US and enhance the quality of their defense dialogue and strengthen the defense engagement between the US and India. For instance, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the India is part of a hectic foreign policy schedule. In early January 2014, Abe made a successful visit to India, where he and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to elevate their dialogue to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership."<sup>2</sup> The most striking part of the visit was the two leaders' enthusiastic embrace upon greeting each other in Kyoto, demonstrating strong bonds of mutual respect and friendship. The India-Japan Joint Statement referred to the new term of "Indo-Pacific", officially bringing this strategic phrase into the China containment policy of lexicon.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. N. Rangarajan, *The Arthashastra* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1992), p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> "Tokyo Declaration for India - Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership," *The Times of India*, Sep. 1, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Tokyo-Declaration-for-India-Japan-Special-Strategic-and-Global-Partnership/articleshow/41433328.cms> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Arun Mohan Sukumar, "A Shift From Style to Substance," *The Hindu*, December 16, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/modis-foreign-policy-a-shift-from-style-to-substance/article7987958.ece> [accessed 25 October 2018].

Hence, this research paper describes the background of the relationship between India and Japan in recent years, and tries to point out that the deepening of India-Japan relations is an important strategic move in the Indo-Pacific region and the most noteworthy trend in the contemporary Asia-Pacific region. The geographical term “Indo-Pacific” is now increasingly used to replace “Asia-Pacific” and also the geopolitical counterbalance for the growing Chinese influence. In August 2016, Abe unveiled his regional vision called the “free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.” The US President Donald Trump echoed the phrase “free and open Indo-Pacific” during his first Asia tour in November and in his administration’s national security strategy released in December.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the paper attempts to explore the reasons for this shift, especially by looking at the motivations on both sides. Finally, the task involves answering five questions:

- (1) To explain what is the context of “free and open Indo-Pacific”?
- (2) Which is the most causal logic that explains Japan’s new foreign policy strategy?
- (3) How does the rise of China to cause and effect on Japan’s foreign relations with India?
- (4) Without China factor, what are the motivations for the strategy cooperation between Japan and India?
- (5) How does India’s “Act East” converge on Japan’s “free and open Indo-Pacific” Strategies? What role is the US played in a dynamic Asia?

## **II. Japan’s New Foreign Strategic under the Abe Government**

In addition to Japan’s traditional alliance relationship with the United States, one of the distinctive characteristics of Abe’s national security policy in recent years is the strengthening of its security relationships with Asia-Pacific countries such as the Republic of Korea, Australia, India, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In December 2013, The Abe administration released Japan’s first National Security Strategy. Also defined as national interests are “the maintenance and protection of international order based on rules and universal values such as freedom, democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law.” Among the

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<sup>4</sup> Tetsuo Kotani, “Can the ‘Indo-Pacific’ Compete with China?” *The Japan Times*, January 10, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/01/10/commentary/japan-commentary/can-indo-pacific-compete-china/#.W9UPjtczZD4> [accessed 25 October 2018].

challenges to international security—a shifting balance of power, the rise of China and India, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, and international terrorism.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, the Abe government has strengthened Japan’s engagement in the regions from the Western Pacific to Southeast Asia, and beyond the Indian Ocean as far as Africa. Japan has broadened its sphere of geopolitical engagement from mainly Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region to an area referred to as the “Indo-Pacific” region.

### **1. The Abe Government’s Indo-Pacific Focus: the Contents of “Indo-Pacific”**

The idea of “Indo-Pacific” strategic framework was first proposed in 2007 by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.<sup>6</sup> PM Abe delivered a speech in the Indian Parliament titled Confluence of the Two Seas and laid out a bold vision of the “arc of freedom and prosperity” of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. When Abe returned to power in 2012, authored an article calling for the development of “Asia’s democratic security diamond,” which would involve Japan, India, the US and Australia. Last November, during the US president Trump visited Japan, PM Abe reprised his vision of a “free and open Indo-Pacific” predicated on the involvement of these four countries.<sup>7</sup>

This Japan’s new foreign policy strategy aims to improve “connectivity” between Asia and Africa through “free and open Indo-Pacific,” and promotes stability and prosperity of the region as a whole.<sup>8</sup> To make the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” into shape, Japan will strengthen strategic collaboration with India, which has a historical relationship with East Africa, as well as the US and Australia. Under the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”, Japan will enhance “connectivity”

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<sup>5</sup> James Przystup and Tatsumi Yuki, “The Foreign Policy of Abe Shinzo: Strategic Vision and Policy Implementation,” *The Asan Forum*, February 05, 2015, <http://www.theasanforum.org/the-foreign-policy-of-abe-shinzo-strategic-vision-and-policy-implementation/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>6</sup> The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian Parliament, speaking of the “Confluence of the Two Seas,” August 22, 2007, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>7</sup> Rohan Mukherjee, “Commentary: The Indo Pacific, a security diamond, a 10-year Quad?” *Channel News Asia*, Nov. 10, 2017, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/commentary-the-indo-pacific-a-security-diamond-a-10-year-quad-9391268> <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/commentary-the-indo-pacific-a-security-diamond-a-10-year-quad-9391268> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>8</sup> A New Foreign Policy Strategy: “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy,” April 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000259285.pdf> [accessed 25 October 2018].

between Asia and Africa to promote stability and prosperity across the regions. Japan will secure the safety of Japanese nationals playing active roles overseas, through cooperation with developing countries in improving their anti-terrorism measures and security situation.<sup>9</sup> The strategy is also a geopolitical confrontation vis-a-vis the growing influence of China and presence in Eurasia and Africa under President Xi Jinping's strategy of One Belt, One Road initiative.<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Approach to the Indo-Pacific Region**

Japan has three aspects for its security approach in the Indo-Pacific region:<sup>11</sup> (1) Strengthening of Maritime Presence and Partnerships: The most important aspect of the Abe administration's approach to the Indo-Pacific region is to strengthen Japan's existence and partnership in the field of maritime security through bilateral and multilateral coordination.<sup>12</sup> (2) Enhancing the Capabilities of Partner Countries. The second approach for Abe's government to expand its strategic vision is to increase the capacity of partner countries through the Ministry of Defense. (3) Sharing of Norms and Principles. The third way of the Abe government toward the countries of the Indo-Pacific region is sharing the norms and principles of the freedom of navigation, peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the rule of law.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Japan's new foreign policy aims to promote international cooperation. From the perspective idea of "proactive contribution to world peace" based on the principle of international cooperation, Japan will contribute more proactively to safeguarding the peace, stability and prosperity of the international society. By doing so, Japan will promote strategic and effective development cooperation to advance its foreign policy, including the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy."<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, the core component of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy is the Quad of nations- the US

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Supra Note 4.*

<sup>11</sup> The National Institute for Defense Studies, "Japan: Expanding Strategic Horizons," in *East Asian Strategic Review 2017*, [http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2017/east-asian\\_e2017\\_08.pdf](http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/pdf/2017/east-asian_e2017_08.pdf) [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Priority Policy for Development Cooperation FY 2017*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000259285.pdf> [accessed 25 October 2018].



and its major allies in Asia -Japan, India, and Australia.<sup>15</sup> The Quad shares the common political, economic and social values of the free and open world, such as the rule of law, democracy, free markets, human rights and voluntary participation in multilateral institutions.<sup>16</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, Japan should keep on advocating and advancing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. Also, Japan can play a leadership role in the region, much like it did when it concluded the TPP 11 after Trump pulled the US out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. Besides, Japan should make maximum possibilities to enhance the connection among the ASEAN nations with the Quad under the framework of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Finally, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy must be based on shared values to respond effectively to the challenges of China. To be successful, it must not be a clear and sharp hostile strategy aimed at containing China.<sup>17</sup>

### **III. The Engagement of Japan and India**

Japan has sought to participate more strongly with India since the end of the Cold War. The Japan-India Global Partnership was established under the signature of Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori in August 2000, and Mori recognized the role that India might play in enhancing Japan's capacity to anti-balance China in conjunction with the still central US-Japanese alliance. Since then, India has become Japan's best alliance partner to closer political or economic union.<sup>18</sup>

Among all the Japanese leaders, PM Abe was the most willing about the future of Japan-India relationship and gave it an entirely new dimension. In 2007, PM Abe talked about a "broader Asia" consisting of Pacific and Indian Ocean countries such as Japan, India, Australia and the US that share common values of democracy, rule of law, freedom, and human rights.<sup>19</sup> PM Abe makes the case about Japan advancing its national interests by strengthening its ties with India. PM Abe made known his desire

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<sup>15</sup> Satohiro Akimoto, "How Japan Can Save the Indo-Pacific Strategy," *The Japan Times*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/07/24/commentary/japan-commentary/japan-can-save-indo-pacific-strategy/#.W9XQI9czZD4> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> H. D. P. Envall, "Japan's India Engagement: From Different Worlds to Strategic Partners," in Ian Hall ed., *The Engagement of India: Strategies and Responses* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> *Supra Note 6.*

to create a four-way strategic dialogue with the US, Australia and India.<sup>20</sup> This has allowed India to emerge as a major foreign policy priority for Japan. India's strategic partner also understands the geostrategic importance of the Indo-Pacific to their strategic environment.<sup>21</sup>

In a lecture to the Indian Council of World Affairs in September 2011, Abe, then out of office, argued, "a strong India is in the best interest of Japan and a strong Japan is in the best interest of India." Returning to office, Abe picked up the threads of Japan's relations with India. They had in 2011 concluded an Economic Partnership Agreement, in 2012 celebrated the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and in late 2013 Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko had visited India. The Times of India headlined the visit as showing a "Shift in India-Japan Relations," and it cast the visit as Abe signaling his intent to forge a strong strategic relationship with India.<sup>22</sup> India's Foreign Ministry saw it as the "pinnacle of India-Japan bilateral relations."<sup>23</sup>

In early January 2014, Abe made a successful visit to India, where he and India's PM Modi agreed to elevate their dialogue to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership."<sup>24</sup> The most striking part of the visit was the two leaders' enthusiastic embrace upon greeting each other in Kyoto, demonstrating strong bonds of mutual respect and friendship. The India-Japan Joint Statement referred to the "Indo-Pacific", officially bringing this strategic phrase into the China containment policy of lexicon.<sup>25</sup>

## 1. Complex Strategic Environment in the Indian Ocean Region

One of the factors that led to the engagement of Japan and India is the complex strategic environment in the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean region refers to the coastal states and islands lying in contact with the Indian Ocean, which occupies one-fifth of the world's total ocean area.<sup>26</sup> On the west, it extends from the eastern

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<sup>20</sup> Suzuki Yoshikatsu, "Abe's Indo-Pacific 'Security Diamond' Begins to Shine," *Nippon*, August 02, 2016, <http://www.nippon.com/en/column/g00339/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Archis Mohan, "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Visit: Pinnacle of India-Japan Relations," Jan. 22, 2014,

<https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?22762/Prime+Minister+Shinzo+Abes+visit+pinnacle+of+IndiaJapan+relations> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Supra Note 2.*

<sup>25</sup> *Supra Note 3.*

<sup>26</sup> Mari Izuyama and Masahiro Kurita, "Security in the Indian Ocean Region: Regional Responses to China's Growing Influence," *East Asian Strategic Review 2017* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017), p. 40.

African coast to the Gulf countries, while in the center it includes the Indian subcontinent, and on the east comprises the Southeast Asian archipelago down to Australia. With the increasing number of entities depending on the Indian Ocean region as a transportation route for energy and goods, and given the changes in the relative strength of the US and China, questions have been raised about how to maintain order, and whether the order itself will change completely.<sup>27</sup>

China is currently expanding its activities in this region, including the use of port facilities and the occupation of military bases. Obviously, China is striving for energy resources and reducing its dependence on the Straits of Malacca, and has formulated the “One Belt and One Road” (OBOR) initiative. China has expanded its presence in the Indian Ocean. China developed Gwadar Port in Pakistan and started operations around 2004 as a petroleum and transportation route for the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. India’s concerns were heightened by China’s plan to develop Hambantota in Sri Lanka, which had been agreed upon at a summit in 2007, and Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, in line with China’s so-called “String of Pearls” strategy.<sup>28</sup> China, which has become more self-confident with its achievements in infrastructure investment, proposed the “Maritime Silk Road” initiative in Indonesia, where the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit was held in 2013. Afterwards, it held the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership at the same time as the APEC Beijing Summit of November 2014, getting support from seven non-APEC member countries, including Bangladesh and Myanmar, for its OBOR initiative, consisting of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road. As Yoshinobu Yamamoto has pointed out, although OBOR has such generous aspects as strengthen land and sea infrastructure and supplying international public goods, it also allows China to strategically utilize the infrastructure network and exclude other countries. It is necessary to understand whether the conduct of enhancing the “connectivity” of the Indian Ocean region is compatible with China’s national interests of securing energy, effectively solving the Malacca Dilemma, and securing destinations for its capital investment and, more seriously, to analyze if the building of a regional order advantageous to China would affect this regional order.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2. India-Japan Relations: Special Strategic and Global Partnership

From the end of 2013 to 2014, frequent high-level meetings were mutually made between India and Japan, demonstrating the high importance placed on the partnership by both sides. In December 2013, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko paid a visit to India, which was the first ever visited by a Japanese Emperor to India.<sup>30</sup> On January 26, 2014, PM Abe visited India as the first-ever chief guest to the Republic Day celebrations from Japan.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, PM Modi, who assumed office at the end of May 2014, chose Japan as the destination for his first bilateral visit outside of the South Asian region. On September 1, the two prime ministers released the “Tokyo Declaration” for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership, which elevated the relationship to the level of a “special strategic and global partnership.”<sup>32</sup>

For Japan, the “Tokyo Declaration” is not only a list of cooperation projects, but also clearly shows the strategic direction. In terms of national defense and security, cooperation in defense equipment and technology is addressed this time in addition to maritime security, which these two countries have been working hard for the past decade. The Declaration welcomed the progress made in discussions in the Joint Working Group (JWG) on cooperation in the US-2 amphibian aircraft and directed it to expedite the discussion. In May 2013, at the summit of India’s Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and PM Abe, who was visiting Japan, the joint statement confirmed the establishment of the joint working group.<sup>33</sup>

The JWG has met several times. Since this is the first experiment in India and Japan, it is highly meaning that public and private sectors from both sides are working together toward finalization. As India had joined maritime search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 in March 2014, dispatching the P-8I and Dornier, the US-2, if added to the Indian Navy, should be able to contribute to such search and rescue operations in the Indian Ocean. In the field of the investment, Japan showed its willing to make 3.5 trillion yen (around \$30 billion) worth of public and private

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<sup>30</sup> “State Visit of Emperor and Empress of Japan,” *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*, November 21, 2013, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/22514/State+Visit+of+Emperor+and+Empress+of+Japan> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>31</sup> “Shinzo Abe First Japanese Premier at Republic Day Celebrations,” *The Times of India*, Jan 26, 2014, [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/29401937.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/29401937.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst) [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>32</sup> *Supra Note 2.*

<sup>33</sup> Mari Izuyama, “India: The Foreign and Security Policy under the Modi Government,” *East Asian Strategic Review 2015* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2017), pp. 196- 197.

investment and financing to India over five years to finance plans in the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors.<sup>34</sup>

Besides, the visions of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)—both flagship projects for connectivity and the transport system—the latest declaration adds “Japan’s cooperation for enhanced connectivity and development in the Northeast India.”<sup>35</sup> Through connectivity in the Northeast, along with connecting India with Southeast Asia over a sea route exiting from Chennai and a land route exiting through the North Eastern Region via Myanmar. From the perspective of geo-economics, it can be said that Japan and India have participated in the new Indio-Pacific regional vision.<sup>36</sup>

#### **IV. India’s Great Power Policy**

The emergence of India as a potential regional power is forcing us to rethink the geo-political landscape of the Asia Pacific. The Asia Pacific is the most economically vibrant region in the world since the end of the Cold War and has become the major competition between the world’s major economic and military powers. The ‘Look East’ policy has been a major part of India’s international engagement since its economic opening in 1991. In 2003, the second phase of “Look East” policy means India’s further outreach into East Asia, which involves economic-security links with the US and Japan.<sup>37</sup>

The biggest strategic challenge for India remains managing China’s rise. Over the past year the Modi’s Government has raised India’s international prestige and profile to new heights. Modi provides the chance to build a greater strategic role for India in the Asia-Pacific. In recent years, the rise of India catches all the eyes from the world with its economic performance and military development. As a new rising power, India holds large landmass, a sixth of the world’s population, and an extensive

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>35</sup> Rupakjyoti Borah, “Japan’s Infrastructure Push in Northeast India Builds on Trust Factor,” *Japan Forward*, July 25, 2018, <https://japan-forward.com/japans-infrastructure-push-in-northeast-india-builds-on-trust-factor/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>36</sup> *Supra Note 33*, p. 197.

<sup>37</sup> Thongkhohal Haokip, “India’s Look East Policy: Its Evolution and Approach,” *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2014, pp. 239-257; Anindya Batabyal, “Looking East 1: South-East Asia and ASEAN,” in David Scott ed., *Handbook of India’s International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2011); Danielle Rajendram, *India’s New Asia-Pacific Strategy: Modi acts East*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Dec. 1, 2014, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/186677/indias-new-asia-pacific-strategy-modi-acts-east.pdf> [accessed 25 October 2018].

and diverse civilization heritage. The Asia Pacific is the most economically vibrant region in the world since the end of the Cold War and has become the major competition between the world's major economic and military powers.

In the late 1980s, the Cold War came to a dramatic end and India was forced to reorient its economic and foreign policies to the changing global realities. More specifically speaking, the Soviet collapsed and the transformation of the global order forced India's policymakers to make drastic changes in India's foreign policy at several levels. At a global level, it seems that non-alignment ceased to have much meaning. Such as Inder Kumar Gujral, a former Indian foreign prime minister, stated "It is a mantra that we have to keep repeating, but who are you going to be non-aligned against?" With the end of non-alignment for all practical purposes, India's foreign policy was suddenly bereft of a grand strategic vision.<sup>38</sup>

Nowadays, the major objective of India's foreign policy has been to secure for itself strategic autonomy so that it can pursue national interest. India's critical security concern is external security. This strategic autonomy is related to the international system, and for India one non-polarized and non-hegemonic international system would be beneficial to it and would maximize Indian autonomy.<sup>39</sup>

In 2014, since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won India's 2014 parliamentary elections in a landslide, debates have intensified over the likely direction of the country's foreign policy. The BJP and the new Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, have received the strongest mandate ever for an Indian political party other than the dominant Indian National Congress(INC). Given that, there are unprecedented expectations that the new government will finally unburden the country's foreign policy from the ideological fixation of the Nehruvian era, reorienting to meet the demands of new geopolitical realities. Modi's foreign policy is likely to be a mix of nationalist-led geopolitics and expedient geo-economics. Furthermore, the nationalist in Modi would like to revive India's "civilizational role" and restore its ancient glory. To that end, India must assume a larger role in the shift of global power toward Asia.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy," *India Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2009), p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Ummu Salma Bava, "New Powers for Global Change? India's Role in the Emerging World Order," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Briefing Paper* (2007), pp. 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> Niranjana Sahoo, "Decoding Modi's Foreign Policy," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 23, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/09/23/decoding-modi-s-foreign-policy-pub-56711> [accessed 25 October 2018].

Over the past four years, Modi is focused on building relations with India's neighbors. India's foreign policy paid attention to join the Asia-Pacific as Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj has asserted that India must not just "look east," but also "act east." Modi Government has deliberately moved to step up engagement with its Asian partners and India's Asia Pacific strategy can be viewed as part of an enhanced global presence. Undeniable, one of the primary motivations of India's engagement with the Asia Pacific has been the concerns about China. Especially, China's assertiveness along the disputed territories with India, and increasing influence among India's Indian Ocean neighbors, has driven India to pursue a strategy of external balancing against China in this region. At the core of India's Asia Pacific strategy are practical partnerships with key states, such as Japan, Vietnam and Australia and India has considerably stepped up engagement under Modi's term of office.<sup>41</sup>

The altering of India's foreign policy involves external factors and internal factors. The Indian political elites regarded India as a past and future great power and destined to play a major role not only on the subcontinent but ultimately in the Indian Ocean and on the world stage as well.

### **1. Internal Factors: Great Power Status aspiration**

In the political arena, India's commitment to non-alignment had already eroded in practice in the post-Nehru era. Now its policymakers sought to forge a new vision for the country. The effort to alter the country's foreign policy orientation toward the emergent, sole superpower, the US, ran into important hurdles.<sup>42</sup> The notion of an emerging power implies movement upward in a hierarchical or class system. Being a great power also implies certain attitudes and policies in keeping with a particular position in an international politics.

Another major factor to consider is the legacy of colonial rule by the British. The British were the first to think explicitly about the strategic defense of South Asia as a whole. Most Indians were quite aware of a feeling that they had inherited the mantle of the British strategic design, with the responsibility not only for the defense of the subcontinent but also, perhaps, for inserting an even more ambitious role in the Indian

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<sup>41</sup> Danielle Rajendram, "India's New Asia-Pacific Strategy: Act East," *The Interpreter*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2014/12/18/Indias-new-Asia-Pacific-strategy-Act-East.aspx> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>42</sup> *Supra Note* 38, p. 12.

Ocean and abroad.<sup>43</sup>

In general, India's urge to become a major power in the world is as old as Indian state itself.<sup>44</sup> The implementing of India's aspirations to become a great power in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond can be traced to the period of Jawaharlal Nehru. At that time, India's hopes of great power status were based on the world view of constructing a new global order and an end to balance of power politics. This worldview was based both on expediency and a moral component.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the roots of India's great power aspiration has become normalized and conditioned by events in India's foreign and domestic relations, becoming part of India's self-perception and global self-image. For India, these aspirations have been based on a consensus of ensuring India's Great Power status that is fully autonomous, influential and respected in the global comity of nations. Most commonly, such aspirations are based on gaining parity with other great powers such as China, Russia and US, and most typically include gaining a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.<sup>46</sup>

## **2. External Factors: China's rise**

The rise of China is another vital challenge for India. However, it's satire to describe the characteristic of India-China relationship. Those two countries are the existence of asymmetric perceptions of mutual threat. India tends to be deeply worried regarding China. On the contrary, China tends not to perceive a serious threat from India but difficult to understand why India might find China and its actions threatening.<sup>47</sup> The biggest strategic challenge for India remains managing China's rise. India's "Look East" policy is operating towards Asia Pacific, in which economics ties, institutional linkages with ASEAN, US, and Japan, developing a degree of competition with China are apparent.

In other words, India has almost always been a normative actor; Indian foreign

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<sup>43</sup> A. Z. Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking and Its National Security Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 5 (September/October 2001), p. 743.

<sup>44</sup> Mussarat Jabeen, "Indian Aspiration of Permanent Membership in the UN Security Council and American Stance," *South Asia Studies*, Vol.25, No.2 (July-December 2010), p. 237.

<sup>45</sup> Sumit Ganguly, "Can India be Great?" *The Diplomat*, Jan. 8, 2010, <http://apac2020.thediplomat.com/feature/can-india-be-great/3/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>46</sup> Chris Ogden, "International 'Aspirations' of a Rising Power," in David Scott ed., *Hand book of India's International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> John W. Garver, "Asymmetrical Indian and Chinese Threat Perceptions," in Sumit Ganguly ed., *India As An Emerging Power* (London: Frank Cass Publisher, 2003), p. 109.



policy is today transiting from abstract, and frequently ‘un-realpolitik,’ views of what constitutes normative behavior. India’s ‘Look East’ policy has been the cornerstone of this transition, indicating that economic growth, maritime capability and peace and stability in its neighborhood are key goals of India’s present behaviour as a normative foreign policy actor.<sup>48</sup> China’s rise has led to foreign policy changes in a number of major countries, including India. Nonalignment has been gradual shift to multi alignment in the post-Cold War period as India seeks to cope with China’s growing might.<sup>49</sup>

In the past year, the Modi Government has raised India’s international prestige and profile to new heights. Modi provides the chance to build a greater strategic role for India in the Asia-Pacific. The significant development is to deepen foreign ties with the US and enhance the quality of their defense dialogue and strengthen the defense engagement between the two countries. On the other hand, India tries to reaffirming ties with Japan. Here we view China issue as critical to the formulation of India’s Asia-Pacific strategy. In order to enhance external security, policy focus is also being given to defense modernization and upgrading of weapons systems.

### **3. Examining Modi’s Asia Pacific Foreign Policy**

The fact is that the scale, scope and intensity of its connectivity with Asia varied over the millennia. There have been periods of expansive engagement with its neighboring regions, interspersed by centuries of isolationism. Today, integrating with Asia has once again become a major theme of India’s economic and foreign policies.<sup>50</sup>

The style and substance of Modi’s foreign policies have been very different from those of his predecessors.<sup>51</sup> Unlike the predecessors, Modi has underscored foreign policy as a priority from the beginning alongside a strong mandate to put India’s economy in order. Modi aspires to re-invigorate India’s emerging power status, which

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<sup>48</sup> Radha Kumar, “India as a Foreign Policy Actor-Normative Redux,” *Centre For European Policy Studies (CEPS)*, No. 285 (2008), p. 1

<sup>49</sup> Raj Kumar Sharma, “India Shedding the Ghost of Nehru and Nonalignment,” *Asian Review*, January 28, 2016, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Viewpoints/India-shedding-the-ghost-of-Nehru-and-nonalignment> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>50</sup> C. Raja Mohan, “Raisina Files: C. Raja Mohan on How India can and must Shape Asia’s Future Political Order,” *Firstpost*, Mar 1, 2016, [http://www.firstpost.com/india/raisina-files-c-raja-mohan-on-how-india-can-and-must-shape-asias-future-political-order-2647326.html?utm\\_source=FP\\_CAT\\_LATEST\\_NEWS](http://www.firstpost.com/india/raisina-files-c-raja-mohan-on-how-india-can-and-must-shape-asias-future-political-order-2647326.html?utm_source=FP_CAT_LATEST_NEWS) [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>51</sup> Neelam Deo, “India’s Foreign Policy Reimagined,” *The Diplomat*, January 03, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/indias-foreign-policy-reimagined/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

suffered in recent years due to poor economic growth. He has not only injected focus and ambition into India's foreign policy, but also linked it directly to his plan to transform India's economy.<sup>52</sup>

At domestic level, Modi has shaken up the reactive and diffident foreign policy establishment with his proactive approach and readiness to break with conventional methods and shibboleths. His policy appears geared to move India from its long-held nonalignment to a contemporary, globalized practicality. In essence, this means that India is likely to build close partnerships with major powers to pursue a variety of interests in diverse settings will not only enable India to advance its core interests but also help it to preserve strategic autonomy. India will continue to chart its own independent course.<sup>53</sup>

Modi is busy engaging confidently with all major global powers without inhibitions. The foreign policies of nations do not alter radically with changes in governments, but Modi today has an opportunity to bring about a realignment of Indian foreign policy priorities and goals. Most significantly, Modi is giving every indication that he has no time for the meaningless rhetoric of "non-alignment." He will work with anyone and everyone to secure Indian interests, the most important of which for him is to take India on the path of rapid economic growth. Foreign policy, in his worldview, is another instrument to serve Indian domestic priorities.<sup>54</sup>

## **V. Japan's View: India as a "Net Security Provider"**

India is now playing an important strategic role in the region and benefits from the global economic and strategic shift to Asia. Japan's growing ties with India over the last few years have generated significant interest as they underline the rapidly changing strategic realities in Asia. One reason the two countries are coming together is a common strategic anxiety about China's rise, particularly its foreign policy ambitions in Asia. The two countries are among the most concerned about security in

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<sup>52</sup> Gauri Khandekar, "Modi's Foreign Policy Mantra: Geoeconomics, Regional Hegemony, Global Aspirations," *Eurasia Review*, November 19, 2014, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/19112014-modis-foreign-policy-mantra-geoeconomics-regional-hegemony-global-aspirations-analysis/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>53</sup> Brahma Chellaney, "Opinion: Modi Reshapes India's Foreign Policy," *Deutsche Welle*, December 30, 2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/opinion-modi-reshapes-indias-foreign-policy/a-18159829> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>54</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "Out With Non-Alignment, In With a 'Modi Doctrine'," *The Diplomat*, November 13, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/out-with-non-alignment-in-with-a-modi-doctrine/> [accessed 25 October 2018].

the region and are also increasingly ready to work with each other on it. The relationship between Japan and India has grown increasingly robust under the stewardship of PM Abe and PM Modi, with regular high-level summitry combined with increasingly frequent and deepening exchanges at the diplomatic, defense, and business levels.

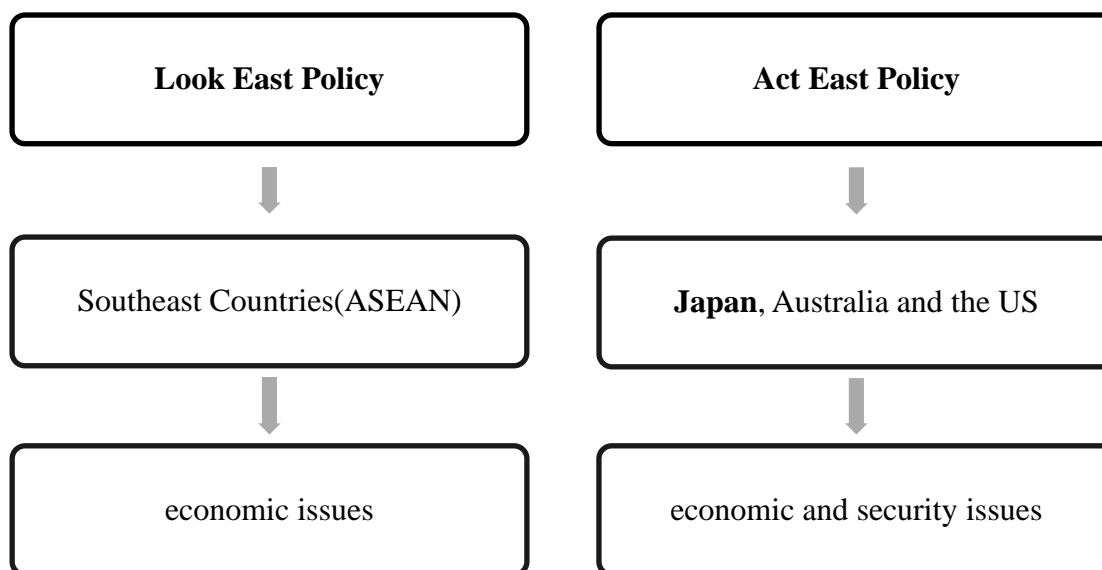
PM Abe mentioned India is a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific, “a strong India is in the best interest of Japan, and a strong Japan is in the best interest of India.”<sup>55</sup> The rise of China is a major factor in the evolution of Japan-India ties as is the US attempt to build India into a major balancer in the region. On the other hand, India’s “Look East” policy of active engagement with ASEAN and East Asia remains largely predicated upon Japanese support. Now India has moved from its “Look East” policy to “Act East,” particularly with regard to forging the foundations of a potentially far-reaching economic and strategic partnership with Japan (Chart 1). Modi also expressed a willingness to partner up on Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy. Furthermore, India’s participant in the East Asia Summit was facilitated by Japan. Both also work together towards permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Modi Visits Japan: What’s on the Security Agenda?” *The Diplomat*, October 26, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/modi-visits-japan-whats-on-the-security-agenda/> [accessed 25 October 2018]; The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian Parliament, speaking of the “Confluence of the Two Seas,” August 22, 2007, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>56</sup> Masatsune Katsuno, “Japan’s Quest for a Permanent Seat on the United Nations Security Council,” *International Policy Analysis*, January 2012, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/09024.pdf> [accessed 25 October 2018].

**Chart 1 The Evolution of India's "Look East" Policy**



On the other hand, although bilateral relations appear to be extremely promising at the moment, a number of issues could slow continued progress. However, the strategic ties between Japan and India remain nascent, their course partly dependent on the nature of Asian geopolitics in the coming years and the future economic trajectory of both Japan and India. The economic relationship is gathering steam and much is expected from the pro-business Prime Minister Modi. But the relations of two countries continue to face many hurdles.

Furthermore, the early strategic signals of Modi's foreign policy are a willingness to more openly align with Japan and the US on mutual concerns regarding China. Japan and India do share concerns about China's growing diplomatic weight, but neither wishes to downgrade its own relations with China and neither would be too eager to form an open alliance against China. Otherwise, the US plays a crucial role in bringing Japan and India closer in recent years. While Indian strategic elites crave for strategic autonomy, the reflexive anti-Americanism can still hamper India's ties with Japan.

To sum up, the concept of "free and open Indo-Pacific" involve three priority policies: the first one is developing an environment for international peace, stability

and prosperity and sharing universal values; secondly, addressing global issues and thirdly, economic diplomacy that aims at “quality growth” together with developing countries and contribute to regional revitalization.<sup>57</sup>

## **VI. How does India’s “Act East” Converge on Japan’s “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” Strategies?**

Japan’s growing ties with India over the last few years have generated significant interest as they underline the rapidly changing strategic realities in Asia. The research argues that a convergence of structure, domestic and individual leadership factors have transformed the Japan-India relationship in recent years. At the structure level, the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific and beyond has fundamentally altered the strategic calculus of Japan and India. At the domestic level, India’s booming economy is making it an attractive trading and business partner for Japan as the latter tries to get itself out of its long years of economic stagnation. Japan is also reassessing its role as a security provider in the region and beyond, and of all its neighbors India seems most willing to acknowledge Japan’s centrality in shaping the evolving Asia-Pacific security architecture. Especially, at the individual factor, the two leaders Abe and Modi are viewing each other differently from past policies.

Relations between India and Japan have gathered momentum, with the two countries making a concerted attempt to interact at various levels-economic, political, and strategic. Abe’s “free and open Indo-Pacific Strategy” provides Tokyo’s Geo-economic vision in the region. The strategy targets at combining the dynamism of Asia and Africa, and to envision greater regional integration along the coastlines of the Indian Ocean/Pacific Ocean by promoting high-standard infrastructure building and enhanced Integration.<sup>58</sup> Under President Xi Jinping’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative, this strategy is also a growing geopolitical balance of China’s influence and presence in Eurasia and Africa.

The core of Abe’s strategy is a quad among Japan, India, Australia and the US, or the so-called “democratic security diamond.” Abe and Modi have supported to seek interaction between Japan’s Indo-Pacific strategy and India’s “Act East” policy. The main focus of New Delhi is about the proposed China-Pakistan economic corridor project and China’s port development in countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and

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<sup>57</sup> *Supra Note 14.*

<sup>58</sup> *Supra Note 4.*

Myanmar. The Malabar naval exercise among India, the U.S. and Japan in the Bay of Bengal demonstrated the participants' determined to defend the free and open Indo-Pacific.<sup>59</sup>

From the analysis framework of Geopolitics, the concept of the "Indo-Pacific" was reflected the current flux in great-power relations and a historic power shift in Asia is compelling states to rethink their strategic geography, reimagining their national policies, strengthen regional institutions, and reinforce a rules-based order in Asia. It is no doubted that the important roles played by India and Japan in shaping the Indo-Pacific region. This research paper aims to how the convergence between India's "Act East" policy and Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategies has helped both nations align their policies on security cooperation, connectivity, and promoting dialogues between experts from both nations.

From the perspectives of Geo-economics, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" means enhancing regional connectivity and integration. The connectivity in the region is an impetus tool for spreading prosperity in South Asia, and that Japan and India are core partners in promoting infrastructure development. Both countries are involved in several projects aimed at establishing corridors through India and ASEAN.<sup>60</sup> Japan and India are hubs of technology and can greatly benefit from shared collaborations with both nations. Most of all opinions agreed that there was great scope for these two nations to work together to expand digital connectivity in the region.

On the other hand, maritime security cooperation is a key area for collaboration between Japan and India. India and Japan both view themselves as maritime nations and participate in a series of joint exercises and are also focused on strengthening their maritime capabilities.<sup>61</sup> Hence, this paper will also emphasize the need for more maritime information sharing and maritime domain awareness. Further explanation, Japan and India recommended deeper collaboration to challenge the issues of nontraditional security such as terrorism, climate change, piracy, and smuggling.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Preeti Saran *et. al.*, "India, Japan, and ASEAN: Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," *Carnegie India*, February 22, 2018, <https://carnegieindia.org/2018/02/22/india-japan-and-asean-cooperation-in-indo-pacific-event-6816> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

## VII. Conclusion and Future Research

China is becoming a superpower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What does this mean for US-China relations, and what does it mean for Japan? The politics, geography, resources, economics, and history of the Japan issue all play a role in shaping the policy decision of Beijing and Washington toward each other. The relationship is very complex with numerous variables outside the control of either nation.

Since 2000, Japan's policy toward India has evolved to fully comply with the US policy toward the Indian Pacific region. The vast shift in Tokyo's policy toward India came in spring 2005 when Japanese political leaders and policy elites came to recognize India as an important balancer against China as a result of the violent anti-Japanese demonstrations around the major cities in China. At that time, Japan decided to support including India into the East Asian Summit and incorporated India into their new values diplomacy. This shift in Japan's policy toward India, along with efforts to increase interoperability between Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces and Indian Navy, coincides with the US strategy to bring India into the US-led coalition to balance against China.<sup>62</sup>

Hence, with a growing congruence of interests with Japan, the foreign relations between India and Japan is crucial in the future international situation. Moreover, Japan's recent security partnership with India is part of Japan's long-term effort to support the US-led liberal political and economic order in East Asia. Indeed, a new Indo-Pacific relation now has been a fixed goal for Washington's pivot to Asia policy. The US-Japan relationship can be regarded as two prisms: policy and politics.<sup>63</sup> In policy side, Washington wants a stronger ally, who can handle the vast majority. Also, Washington wants an ally who is flexible and willing to cooperate with it more; who has the tools and experience; and who shares the US values in order to provide a model for other nations to help confirm security and stability in the Asia Pacific. Finally; therefore, an Indo-Pacific strategy is in the interest of the US. Japan ultimately can play a larger role in the international political arena.<sup>64</sup>

In the political side, the Washington administration and Abe's government are

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<sup>62</sup> Natsuyo Ishibashi, "Japan's Policy Toward India Since 2000: For the Sake of Maintaining US Leadership in East Asia," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 31(Nov. 2017), pp. 515-532.

<sup>63</sup> Eleanor Albert, "Japan's Hard Power Play/ Interviewee: Michael Auslin," *Council on Foreign Affairs*, February 16, 2015, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/content/japans-hard-power-play> [accessed 25 October 2018].

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

concerned about what role a more independent Japan might put on the stage in the region.<sup>65</sup> In other words, more than ever, it's a good time for Japan to promote international peace and seize this opportunity. This paper sketches out that Japan plays an active leadership role across an abroad range of issues from Japan's foreign policy to the Indo-Pacific strategy. Besides, the paper considers that Japan's foreign policy now is changing to more dynamic and doughty by implementing the Indo-Pacific strategy. It is undeniable that the Indo-Pacific strategy offers Japan a hard power play to operate in coordination with the US's grand strategy. PM Abe has pledged to "take Japan back" from its constraining postwar regime. This evolving security system is accelerating the dilution of Japan's pacifist norms.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Sebastian Maslow, "A Blueprint for a Strong Japan? Abe Shinzō and Japan's Evolving Security System," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (2015), pp. 739-765.



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