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Quads and Triangles

Locating Japan in India's Act East Policy

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Abstract

Following India's growing proximity with the United States, Japan has emerged as India's most reliable regional ally. The hope for the efficacy of their partnership flows from their use of "minilateral" format in addressing their shared regional and global development and security concerns. India and Japan have been participating in several forums such as the Quad of Democracies (US, Japan, Australia, India), Triangular Ministerial Dialogue (US, Japan, India), and the quad of the G4 (Germany, Japan, Brazil, India) which seeks UN reforms and permanent seats for them in the UN Security Council. The present article seeks to examine the role of Japan in India's foreign policy as it undergoes a paradigm shift from "Look" to "Act" East, where India seeks to go beyond ASEAN and explore what place Japan occupies in the India's Act East policy.

Japan has come to be a major friend and partner of India's engagement with East Asia. At the face of it, their growing proximity seems to be driven primarily by their shared concerns about rising and assertive China yet it has also been reinforced by last decade of India's growing closeness to the United States and its other friends and allies as also by several other factors and forces. The celebrated example of Japan having played a critical role in ensuring India becomes the founding member of the East Asian Summit in 2005 has since witnessed their bilateral and regional cooperation emerging as a major catalyst in India's growing acceptance across East Asian countries. It is in this backdrop that experts see India's shift from 'Look' to 'Act' East policy as if in conjunction with United States' 'Pivot' to Asia. And, it is in this specific context that this paper examines the evolving contours of India's Act East policy as also what makes Japan increasingly central and critical for the success of this proactive paradigm shift in India's foreign policy. It does so in four sections: first examining the contours of this paradigm shift from 'Look' to 'Act' East; then second section plots India's decade long efforts to move its 'Look

East' policy beyond ASEAN. From here, the third section seeks to locate Japan in India's Act East policy in the framework of "minilateralism" of quads and triangles followed by closing section making a brief assessment of future trajectories.

To begin with, there is no denying that India-Japan relations have witnessed transformation since the beginning of this millennium. Both have not only been enhancing their much agreeable economic and diplomatic engagements but also their discreet defense and strategic partnership which includes finding common strategic vision on the evolving Asian geopolitics that goes much beyond their immediate concerns about China's aggressive policies with regard to islands across East and South China Sea area. Though more recent U.S. proactive interventions are making these waters regular at headlines yet Japan-India rapprochement remains much wider and older to say the least. It begin from year 2000, when the two had launched their Global Partnership to identify possible convergent strategies and their interactions have never looked back ever since.¹ What is most promising is that their relations are no longer confined only to bilateral agreements but extend their cooperation in various regional and global forums where they coordinate and evolve joint strategies and common policy positions on various security and development challenges and initiatives.

¹ Ministry of External Affairs of India. "India-Japan relations". July 2014. (http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Japan_-_July_2014_.pdf, p.2).

No doubt in this larger picture the U.S. plays a pivotal role in the creation of facilitating environment that has cemented India-Japan cooperation. But it has also contributed to how Japan-India rapprochement is more often than not projected to be an important counterweight to China's ambitions especially in South China Sea. These insinuations about their being the counterweight have surely been, at least partly, triggered by the aggressive Chinese maritime moves such its muscle flexing on Senkaku issue and its construction of artificial islands and this brinkmanship have triggered concerns from the international community potentially threatening to spark even an armed conflict (Singh and Yamamoto 2015: 78). But it will be unfair to restrict India-Japan engagement to these narrow and immediate security challenges. To quote from India's Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj, from her September 2015 meeting with her counterparts from US and Japan, which was their first trilateral meeting in that format, held in New York, the trilateral partnership of India, Japan and the US "has a strong connect to the Indian's Act East Policy".² And, given that U.S. will always have a rather diffused global focus, it makes Japan a major partner for India's growing engagement with East Asian countries.

This paper, accordingly, locates Japan partnership with India in this emerging

² U.S. Department of State. "Remarks with Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida" (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/09/247485.htm>).

Asian geopolitics where Japan has not just been target of China's aggressive policies but Prime Minister Abe has been a major proponent of Asia-Pacific Community and has repeatedly articulated his vision on Japan's long-term future role in the Asia-Pacific. It is from that larger perspective that Japan's close cooperation with India is expected to become an autonomous stand-alone catalyst for India's "Act East Policy" and it has already begun to accelerate India's economic and security engagement across East Asian countries. This must also be read in the larger context of India's own hyperactive foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi who formally enunciated this paradigm shift from "Look" to "Act" East Asia policy (Rossow et al. 2014). It surely does not underestimate the fact that India's partnership will be equally beneficial for Japan's continuing engagement with East Asia though that is not the focus of this article.

From 'Look' to 'Act' East Policy

Look East policy had originally begun under Narasimha Rao government in the early 1990s. This occurred in the backdrop of economic recession in India which had pushed India to open up its markets and undertake structural reforms that pushed India in search for economic opportunities with newly emerged tiger economies of ASEAN. Historically speaking, S. D. Muni calls it "fourth wave" of India's Look East that was formally launched by Prime Minister Narasimha

Rao in his famous September 1994 lecture in Singapore though it owed a lot to his predecessor's (Rajiv Gandhi) efforts from mid-1980s especially latter's official visits to Indonesia and Thailand during October 1986 (Muni 2011). In the latter half of 1990s, ASEAN itself expanded to include Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar which brought ASEAN to India's land borders and in 2003, the agenda of India's "Look East" expanded further east to include Australia and rest of East Asia, and it also become a strategy to seek access to various multilateral and bilateral channels of economic and defense cooperation (Rajendram 2014: 3). Indeed, over years, India's Look East had come to be the most proactive and celebrated component of India's foreign policy.

Last year, soon after taking over as India's Foreign Minister, during her first visit to Vietnam in August 2014, Sushma Swaraj was to enunciate this policy as she outlined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to give boost to India's Look East policy, turning it into "an Acting East Policy" of India.³ This is not a simple upgrading of the Look East policy as India seems to clearly indicate its readiness to play a far more active and prominent role in the region and this has since translated into India's enhanced diplomatic footwork across East and Southeast Asia (Rajendram 2014: 4). In the following month, Prime Minister Modi visited Washington DC where

³ Press Trust of India, "Time for 'Act East Policy' and not just 'Look East': Swaraj," *Business Standard* (New Delhi), 25 August 2014.

India-U.S. Joint Statement further elaborated this policy by underlining this paradigm shift in following words: "Noting that India's 'Act East' policy and the United States' rebalance to Asia, the leaders, committed to work more closely with other Asia Pacific countries through consultations, dialogues, and joint exercises. They *underlined the importance of their trilateral dialogue with Japan* and decided to explore holding this dialogue among their Foreign Ministers" (emphasis added).⁴ Later in November 2014 again, addressing world leaders at the East Asia Summit in Myanmar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined his vision saying "Since entering office six months ago, my government has moved with a great sense of priority and speed to turn our "Look East Policy" into "Act East policy...The East Asia Summit is an important pillar of this policy."⁵ Understandably, media has since been debating this "Act" East *ad nauseam* calling for serious analysis on its emerging contours and categories.

This official articulation of new vision on "Act East" has also been accompanied and encouraged by Prime Minister Modi's high-profile and well-publicized visits to Japan, Australia, Fiji, Myanmar, China, South Korea, while President of

India, Pranab Mukherjee visited Vietnam and Sushma Swaraj visited Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore. When India's Vice-President, Mohd. Hamid Ansari undertook a four-day visit to Laos and Cambodia in September 2015, Secretary (East) of Ministry of External Affairs accompanying him told media how it was "part of our Act East policy" which says a lot about official preoccupation with "Act" East formulations. Expectedly, these visits have been preceded and followed by a whole lot of accelerated diplomatic exchanges in engaging East Asia thus giving momentum to what has come to be called as a major paradigm shift in India's foreign policy. India's East Asia policy is now being seen clearly in two phases: first "Look" East since 1992; and now, from 2014, in its reincarnation as India's "Act" East policy seeking deeper engagement in connectivity, culture and commerce. Given that most political parties in India share a consensus on most issues of foreign policy, most of them have been support of Prime Minister Modi accelerating some of these visions and initiatives of his predecessors. But as the old Chinese saying goes, quantity has quality of its own, which explains why Modi's hyperactive pace is being projected as a watershed of sorts.

India: Moving Beyond ASEAN

As its most visible evolution, "Act East" policy seeks to move beyond its traditional limited focus on ASEAN and ASEAN-centric forums, which is also not unprecedented. Some of this had

⁴ Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to USA, September 30, 2014", Ministry of External Affairs, Documents (<http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24051/Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+USA>).

⁵ Press Trust of India, "'Look East' policy now turned into 'Act East' Policy: Modi," *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 15 November 2014, p. 1.

been sporadically tried by various former prime ministers of India since Rajiv Gandhi if not before. Given that founding father of India's foreign policy, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his immediate successors, had largely neglected Southeast Asia, experts believe it was bound to take "few decades to transform India's ASEAN-centric 'Look East' policy into an 'Act East' policy that seeks to assert India's presence in various parts of Asia from Myanmar to Japan and Australia and the two Oceans." (Kapur 2015: 232). In this transformation of sorts, while rise of China has negatively triggered India's rising pan-Asian consciousness and interest, its evolving closer relations with United States and Japan have been the most critical positive force in India's deepening and widening engagement with East Asian countries. While growing closeness of India to U.S. has critical implications, Japan shows the potential to become the fulcrum of these evolving trajectories. The U.S. for instance, often does not fully share India's anxieties about China's forays into Indian Ocean though it supports India's leadership in the Indian Ocean region. But that's it. India's close relations with Japan underline their shared Asia-centric concerns including China's increasing assertive policies. This clearly makes Japan a far more reliable partner for India's Act East initiatives.

Japan, along with Singapore, had played most critical role in ensuring that India became the founding member of the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005 (Acharya 2014: 186). What made it especially noticeable is that China was not interested

in expanding EAS beyond ASEAN-plus-Three (APT) i. e. ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea; and it was indeed desirous of holding the inaugural summit in Beijing (Men 2008: 76). This would have made EAS a far more Sino-centric. There was a strong possibility that given the backdrop of China's game-changing role in East Asian financial crisis of 1997 this Sino-centric EAS would have carried deeper connotations of making Tokyo and New Delhi feel far more alienated in their own periphery. This was also being read in the backdrop of how, in 2003, China had become Convener of Six Party Talk (SPT) to address nuclear proliferation of North Korea that reflected growing U.S. endorsement of China's centrality in Asian Affairs. Especially for India, the June 2000 U.S.-China joint Statement when Bill Clinton visited Beijing post India's nuclear tests, had alluded to their joint management of South Asian nuclear competition pressing panic buttons in New Delhi. Unlike U.S., Japan could never be expected to endorse China's leadership at cost of India. India's expanding relations with Japan therefore bear a far more direct co-relation to last decade of Look East culminating into Act East policy exuding promise and potential of making India integral to much of pan-Asian partnerships.

One could even go back to Japan's growing centrality to India's "Look East" policy being accelerated following the collapse of former Soviet Union. End of easy loans and friendship prices from former Soviet Union was aptly responded to by Japanese; first extending and

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expanding Japanese ODA to India, followed by their economic cooperation and creating of an FTA and finally an India-Japan CEPA leading to increase in Japanese investments into India. A fresh promise of \$34 billion of Japanese investment was made during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan during September 2014. As a result, New Delhi views any formation of Asian economic community increasingly "as the culmination of India's 'Look East' policy" (Bhattacharya and Mukhopadhyay 2015: 102). Though this period has also witnessed India reiterating its commitment to "strategic autonomy" as critical element of its non-alignment, New Delhi has taken substantial steps towards the United States and its Asian allies which have "transformed India's relationship with Japan into a robust strategic partnership with substantial efforts in maritime cooperation" (Harsh and Super 2015: 758-759). In making India welcome in East Asia, Japan has also not only been a friendly voice in all the multilateral forums where both these are members but India and Japan have worked closely in several "minilateral" forums like the Quad of Democracies (U.S., Japan, Australia, India) and Triangular Ministerial Dialogue (of U.S., Japan, India) as also as their recently revived quad of the G4 (of Germany, Japan, Brazil, India) which seeks UN reforms and permanent seats for them in the UN Security Council. Ever since 2005, when UN Secretary General had proposed various methods for reforming the Security Council, prospects of India and Japan working together at UNSC have also inspired positive vibes.

India-Japan: Quads and Triangles

Aforementioned method of working through quads and triangles has been seen as particularly effective mechanism in literature on global governance which calls it "minilateralism" that was originally popularized by Miles Kahler in early 1990s and revived in 2009 by Moises Naim and Thomas Wright in their highly debated article respectively in *Foreign Policy* and *Washington Quarterly* (Kahler 1993; Wright 2009; Naim 2009). Naim, in particular, points out that minilateralism is a smarter approach because is more targeted and has the largest possible impact on solving a specific problem. Using this potent mechanism, India and Japan have not only been in spotlight for their expanding cooperation but also how these have contributed to New Delhi's visualization of "Act" East policy that seeks to add vigor and substance to India's extant engagement with East Asian countries. At the most visible love, India and Japan have been demonstrating their growing mutual coordination at various bilateral and regional forums. At the bilateral level, security arrangements such as "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between India and Japan (2008) and the Tokyo Declaration for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership (2014) are major milestones. India was amongst the first receivers of the Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁶

⁶ Mofa, Overview of Japan's ODA to India (http://www.in.emb-japan.go.jp/Japan-India-Relations/ODA_Eng_Jun2011.pdf).

and is now one of the top recipients of that. At the regional and multilateral level, India and Japan support each other in the claim for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Other areas, such as energy security, joint naval exercises, anti-piracy patrolling, and environmental issues remain important factors in their mutual cooperation (Mathur 2013: 39).

This efficacy of India's engagement with Japan indeed has also created expectations in the United States and amongst its friends and allies who see India as their would-be counterweight to China's rising influence. It is partly in "channeling their frustrations" and expectations that Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, during her visit to India during was back in 2011 had said: "We encourage India not just to look east, but to engage East and to act East as well" (Racine 2015: 148; see also Sarin 2015: 16). Recognizing the important role that India and the United States can play in promoting peace, prosperity, stability and security in East Asia and the Indian Ocean region, leaders of both countries have repeatedly underlined that India's "Act East Policy" and the United States' rebalance to Asia provide opportunities for both and other East Asian countries to work closely to strengthen regional cooperation (Chaturvedy 2015: 371). But, at core of this transformation for India lies its bilateral relations with Japan that underwrite their mutual coordination in multilateral forums.

For much of cold war period, relations between India and Japan were as "cordial, as might be expected from two democracies" (Laurence 2007: 195). After

the Cold war, the Japanese diplomacy in Asia developed mainly in the Pacific region, and emphasized the U.S. and Japan security alliance. However, Japanese foreign policy was mainly based on aid, trade and foreign investment and China was also one of the major recipients of ODA and has since become their largest trading partner of Japan (Mathur 2012: 43). Japan has invested over \$300 billion in China and has over 80,000 companies operating from Chinese soil. If in the trading they continue to be great partners, the same cannot be stated when it comes to issues of territorial sovereignty. Their intensifying dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and the fast paced increase of their maritime presence in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, and China's questioning of the Japanese legitimacy over the Exclusive Economic Zone of Okinotori reef⁷ are among the reasons that may have triggered Japan's interest to develop a strong security policy with New Delhi (Kamiya 2014: 51). Furthermore, oscillations of the U.S. policies towards China also push Japan to find other possible partners and alliances.

At the trilateral level, the cooperation between the U.S., India and Japan was established primarily to maintain maritime security, and until this year it was maintained at a low profile. The challenges for developing this trilateral dialogue further included the burden of public opinion

⁷ The Chinese government states that these are rocks which cannot sustain economic and human life and therefore, Japan cannot obtain an Exclusive Economic Zone around the Reef.

with regard to history of Japanese militarism, while Indian politicians believed there was “mileage to be gained from anti-American posturing.” The U.S., in addition had also been reticent about Japan’s emergence as military power (Jaishankar 2014). Spite of these challenges, the last trilateral dialogue held in June 2015 discussed the U.S. rebalance to Asia, India’s Act East Policy and Japan’s more active security role. This momentum of increased convergent interests has since enabled then to upgrade this dialogue to the ministerial level in September 2015, which was followed in the 5-day joint naval exercise in October in the off coast of the Bay of Bengal. The exercise Malabar included one of the world’s largest carriers, the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* as well as the U.S. missile cruiser and a nuclear-powered submarine (Rajagopalan 2015) and included Japan as permanent member of these exercises.

Furthermore, Indian Navy also made a joint maritime exercise with the Royal Australian Navy in the Bay of Bengal in September 2015. The Australian Defense Minister Kevin Andrews stated that the Australian government would be willing to be part of a quadrilateral initiative with the U.S., Japan and India (Singh 2015). It would not be the first time that these four countries (quad) would unify their efforts in terms of maritime security. A first attempt was made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s first term that had witnessed launching of their Quadrilateral Partnership of four democracies. Originally launched as a ministerial level quad at the sidelines of ASEAN

Regional Forum meeting at Manila in 2007, even then had a component of developing a more meaningful strategic and military cooperation (Lee 2016: 37). However, after the changes of Australian and Japanese leadership soon after that, military exercises were suspended. Kevin Rudd, the new prime minister of Australia by that time, sought to enhance its relations with China and Australia was the first to withdraw from the dialogue and eventually, the first attempt of the Quad demised unceremoniously (Kliman and Twining 2014: 16).

Recently, its initiatives towards its reconstitution have been triggered by the fact that in the changed circumstances, new assessment shows how their advantages seem to have increased while their disadvantages reduced. China’s rise has brought increased risks to East Asian peace and stability making an urgent diplomatic engagement necessary. Thus, the Quad could use their meetings and joint defense exercises to negotiate with China from position of strength and expect positive diplomatic outcomes from such posturing. The changed domestic political environment in all four countries has also contributed to the reconstruction of this quad. Australian prime minister Tony Abbott’s has been interested in nuclear cooperation with India, China’s demand for Australian commodities is decreasing, and Prime Minister Abe has re-interpreted the constitution to be able to participate in military exercises (Poff-Webster and Chotani 2015). But at the same time China has also been building bridges with these four and other East Asian coun-

tries. Indeed, China does not just have enormous economic engagement with the quad but has also sought to re-define Asian geopolitics using its economic prowess through new initiatives like One Belt One Road, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and so on.

Evolving Asian Geopolitics

In fact, the post-2011 U.S. discourses on rebalance and “pivot” to Asia, accompanied by U.S. and Australia propping the new Indo-Pacific geopolitical framework, been accompanied by post-2013 Chinese discourses on One Belt One Road that seeks to connect western Pacific to Baltic Sea through building infrastructure projects for connectivity and commerce. This has left the Japanese often far too uncertain on whether they still are on the same page with regards to U.S. visions on how to develop their shared security strategies for East Asia. In 2012 *U.S. National Defense Strategic Guidance*, had stated that:

U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities (U.S. Department of Defense 2012: 2).

Japanese were perfectly at home with U.S. seeking to ensure their leadership in promoting stability in Asia through their conventional hub-and-spokes alli-

ance systems. But gradually, fluctuations in the U.S. policies have begun to trigger shades of difference between Japanese and American perceptions. The speech of the Defense Secretary Chuck Hegel, at the 19th Japanese-American Security Seminar held in March 2013, for instance, argued that in order to make a peaceful and prosperous future in the region “[T]he U.S. and other countries should maintain and strengthen the existent alliance, and *make new partnerships based on mutual profit*”, and “in order to support this aim, the U.S. is executing the rebalance, which is mainly a diplomatic, economic and cultural policy” (Kamiya 2014: 53). Such allusions at the highest level have often left Japanese perplexed about U.S. commitments which have already been cast with questions in view of increasing gap between their word and deeds from mid-1995 Taiwan Strait crisis with China.

It in this backdrop that, in view of India-U.S. *rapprochement* following India’s nuclear tests of May 1998, India-Japan had established a “Global Partnership” from year 2000 and the two began to talk about “institutionalizing a dialogue between the ministries of defense and foreign affairs for coordinated actions on security and foreign policy related issues, such as the security of sea-lanes, joint naval exercises to combat piracy and disaster management” (Baruah 2010). Abe’s government which is known for being favorably inclined towards India and is also known to have noble security strategies at the domestic level. So in spite of widespread opposition, Abe got the bill

that seeks to reinterpret the pacifist article 9 of Japanese Constitution, passed in September 2015. This opens up chances for Japan deepening its cooperation with the U.S. but also engage with new formulations like the Indo-Pacific framework (Ford 2015). The new interpretation of article 9 allows the Japanese Self-Defense Forces to send military aid to the U.S. and friendly countries under attack. In addition, as it was announced in the “2+2” meeting of foreign and defense ministers of Japan and the U.S., the Defense guidelines have eliminated geographic restrictions on their military cooperation; these were previously restricted to surrounding areas of Japan (Horimoto 2015). This clearly opens new avenues for expanding defense and strategic cooperation between Tokyo and New Delhi as well.

As regards Japan building military cooperation with India, it remains rooted in various factors including assessments that the U.S. may not be able to offer it any military support if it were already involved with other parallel conflicts. It would be important, therefore, that other friendly countries, such as India, are engaged, leaving the U.S. with room to maneuver their full support (Nagao 2013: 109-110). Since 2013, high level mutual official visits demonstrate that such partnership is seen as high priority and this is reflected in frequent high level visits. Emperor Akihito visited India in December 2013 followed by Prime Minister Abe holding a summit level meeting in New Delhi January 2014 and his presence as the chief guest of India's Republic Day parade demonstrated that

both countries were confidently showcasing strengthening of their relationship. This was followed by Modi's visit to Japan in September 2014 that resulted in the Tokyo Declaration for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership providing detailed directions on future of their relations. In the security field as well, it underlined Japanese policy on technology transfers and defense exports as both Abe and Modi underlined their shared interests in security of maritime and cyber domains.⁸ Japanese defense firms are to participate in the weapons market of India and Japan also committed to invest around \$34 billion in infrastructure projects in the next 5 years (Gokhale 2014). Aware of the U.S. oscillations regarding their policy towards China, their recently upgraded trilateral dialogue was held at the end of September 2015 expressed their continued support for ASEAN and East Asia Summit (Parameswaran 2015). This again shows their focus on larger canvass where both Japan and India see them cooperating in influencing the future evolution of East Asia.

Conclusion

To sum up, experts increasingly are reading India's “Act East” policy and U.S. “pivot to Asia” as being largely reciprocal and focused on their shared concerns about China rise (Bergsten 2015: 13; see also Bahl 2015: 32). What makes U.S. support

⁸ Tokyo Declaration for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership, paragraph 10.

to India's Act East policy promising is the bipartisan support (indeed enthusiasm) for it in the U.S. and both sides see this in conjunction with their own policy objectives (Blackwill and Tellis 2015: 30). But most such headlines driven commentaries often miss the point that though such inflections of the U.S. global leadership are precious these are relatively symbolic compared to solid cooperation amongst those sitting on China's periphery and especially those who feel directly threatened by China's rise and even see possibilities of existential threats from it. This makes Japan a natural partner for India's Act East policy in not just dealing with China's rise but also in seeking to together mold larger Asian decision-making through norm-entrepreneurship and consensus building as basis for regional good governance. India's Act East policy aims to achieve precisely this and Japan has not only been India's strongest pillar of seeking this expanded engagement but promises to remain a critical interlocutor in India's increasing acceptance and participation in building peace and stability across East Asia.

And finally, other than the promising pictures of their likely growth trajectories for their bilateral relations, U.S. support to India's Act East policy also presents the potential for allowing the desired broad-basing Japan's role as India's most important partner as it seeks to expand beyond South Asia and engage its extended neighborhood even beyond ASEAN. U.S. indulgences will likewise facilitate Japan's expanding role and its rise as a normal state with region-

al and global responsibilities. With this shared stakes in creating common goods for East Asia, Japan's commitments and collaborations can strengthen India's Act East vision especially by closely monitoring and appreciating India's strengths and limitations. In this, Prime Minister Abe's passing the bill that seeks to reinterpret article 9 of the Constitution will be seen as an important milestone in enabling Japan to diversify its security partnerships with new stakeholders like India which aims to expand its participation in reformulation of this region's geopolitical framework and to move away from its limited colonial South Asian framework to the larger 21st century canvass of the larger Indo-Pacific region.

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