

INDAS South Asia Working Paper No.28
March 2019

Does India Matter? : The View from Japan

Satoru Nagao*

人間文化研究機構プロジェクト地域研究推進事業「南アジア地域研究」
NIHU Project Integrated Area Studies on South Asia

* Visiting Fellow, Hudson Institute (Washington D.C., USA)

When we think about Japan-India security relations as they stand today, it must not be forgotten that Japan is located far from India. It takes about 10 hours to fly from Tokyo to New Delhi. The database of Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that about 9,000 Japanese lived in India in 2016 while about 422,000 Japanese lived in US; about 128,000 Japanese lived in China and about 19,000 Japanese lived in Indonesia¹.

However, since 2000s, furthering cooperation in security between Japan and India has been more and more plausible. For example, Japan and India began the Japan-India-US Foreign minister level trilateral dialogue, Japan-India-Australia vice-ministerial level trilateral dialogue and Japan-India vice-ministerial level foreign and defence 2 + 2 bilateral dialogue. Since 2012, Japan has participated in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). The two countries began joint naval exercises as an annual bilateral exercise, called Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) in 2012. The India-US Malabar exercises decided to include Japan as a regular member since 2016. In 2017, the largest warship of Japan, *Izumo* will join Malabar exercises in the Indian Ocean. It is the first occasion for Japan to dispatch such a huge helicopter carrier to the Indian Ocean. An important point is infrastructure projects. For example, Japan is building roads in Northeast India, Andaman–Nicobar Islands in India, Trincomalee in Sri Lanka, Chabahar port in Iran and The Asia–Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) in Africa.

Recently, Indian Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar told that “as a country that shares similar values and principles, Japan is comfortable partnering India as it assumes greater security responsibilities. We also see the enhanced synergy between India and Japan on connectivity and maritime security” in Singapore on 11 July 2017. After that, Japanese ambassador to India Kenji Hiramatsu conveyed “all parties involved should not resort to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force” which is critical of the Chinese attempt to “change the status quo.” in Indo-China, Bhutan-China border area on 18 Aug 2017. These examples make the security ties between Japan and India quite remarkable.

Why Japan has sought security cooperation with India? This paper will analyse three following questions: (1) What security activities has Japan done? (2) Why has Japan tried to share more security burden? (3) What can Japan-India cooperation do?

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, “Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas”, 1 October 2016 (Japanese).

Web source: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000260884.pdf> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

1. What security activities has Japan done?

Currently, Japan has done two things. Firstly, it is important for Japan to enhance security cooperation with other US allies and friendly countries. Australia, UK, France have a long record as a US ally. Japan cooperate actively with these countries by sharing information, holding joint exercises, and by developing and producing defense equipment jointly. For example, during prime minister Shinzo Abe's visit in January, Japan and Australia signed a new Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, which will facilitate mutual logistical support including materials and ammunition for joint exercises, UNPKO, etc. Japan is planning to export P-1 indigenous patrol planes to New Zealand, too. In 2014, Japan has started to ask Joint New Air to Air Missile development project with UK. On October 2016, it was the first time for Japan and UK hold joint air combat exercises. Japan and France are also negotiating to start joint arms development project.

Secondly, Japan is building the capacities of defense forces in Southeast Asia. For instance, when a Malaysian airplane was lost in 2014, coastal countries were unaware of the plane's whereabouts because they had insufficient radar systems to detect it. To resolve that situation, they needed radar and sensor systems to be aware of events there and to address such situations by dispatching planes and ships. During Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Vietnam in January, Japan decided to donate six new built patrol vessels. Japan has donated patrol vessels to Vietnam, Philippine, Indonesia and Malaysia. Japan is also planning to donate used P-3C patrol planes to Malaysia, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. Japan is planning to export radar to Thailand, too. Donating and exporting equipment are effective methods to promote long-term relations because the recipients need training and maintenance of suppliers.

2. Why has Japan tried to share more security burden?

Changing security situation has pushed Japan to do so. For a long time, bilateral alliances led by the US, such as those of Japan-US, US-Australia, US-Philippines, and US - South Korea have maintained order in the Indo-Pacific as an "old" security framework resembling a "Hub and Spoke system." In the system, a deep defense relation is lacking among the allies. For example, both Japan and Australia are US allies, but they share no close security relations. Under this system, US allies and friendly countries are heavily dependent on US military power.

But a salient feature of the recent security situation is changing US–China military balance. For example, during 2000-2016, the US commissioned 14 new submarines. During the same period, China commissioned at least 43 submarines². Although it is expected that the US would prevail if war should break out, it is also true that US military influence has been declining gradually. And if US influence is declining, the reliability of the entire “old” security framework is declining.

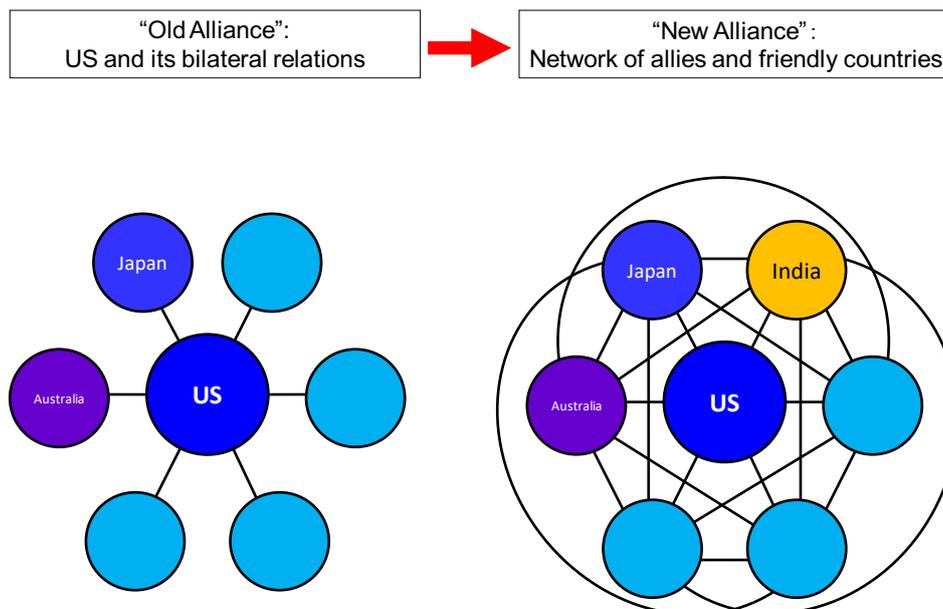
In addition, from the second term of Barack Obama administration to the new Trump administration, the relative influence of US military power has continued to decline. Despite US failure to deter Russian actions in the Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, it is expected that the President Donald Trump government will seek cooperation with Russia. From the perspective of countries such as Ukraine and Moldova, which rely on the US, the US will abandon them. For that reason, Moldova is seeking negotiations with Russia.

As a result of this US foreign policy, US allies and friendly countries in the Indo-Pacific also view the future with anxiety. The US has not dissuaded China from building artificial islands in the South China Sea. US allies and friendly countries including the Philippines and Vietnam are concerned about the possibility that the US will strike some deal with China and abandon their interests. Philippine has already changed their stance a little under the new president Rodrigo Duterte.

Consequently, a new security framework has emerged since the Obama administration. This framework is a security network of numerous bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral, other multilateral cooperative relationships among US allies and friendly countries. This cooperation includes not only US-led cooperation such as Japan-US-Australia, Japan-India-US, and Japan-India-US-Australia, but also Japan-India-Australia and India-Australia-Indonesia, which do not include the US (Figure 1).

² Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*

Figure1: “Old” and “New” security frameworks



Source: Satoru Nagao, “The Japan–India–Australia ‘Alliance’ as Key Agreement in the Indo-Pacific”, *ISPSW Publication* September 2015, Issue No. 375, (Berlin, The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW))
<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?en&id=193713> (accessed September 23 2015)

This new security framework presents several strong points of marked benefit. First, because this system is not heavily dependent on US influence, the adverse impact of declining US influence will be minimal. Secondly, because this system includes India and Southeast Asian countries that have rising influence, the security framework can maintain sufficient power for a long time. Furthermore, a multilateral system demands that countries adopt a rule-based approach. For that reason, if China and Russia act responsibly under the agreed set of rules, they might be allowed to join. Therefore, the new security framework offers the important possibility of reducing tensions in this region.

3. What can Japan-India cooperation do?

What could be the role of Japan-India strategic cooperation in this regard? There are

three areas especially where Japan-India security cooperation can help maintain the military balance with China and support new security framework.

(1) The linkage of Indo-China border area and East China Sea

In Indo-China border area, the military balance is changing because Chinese military infrastructural modernization is very fast. Within two days, Chinese armed forces can be ready for battle in the border area whereas India needs one week for preparation as there are not enough roads on the Indian side³. This means that India could land in a dangerous situation in facing more than three times bigger Chinese forces in the border area⁴.

Along with such rapid military modernization, the area of Chinese military activities too has been widening. As a background of Doklam incident in 2017, India recorded more than 300-500 incursions per year, since 2011. In addition, China is deploying troops in Pakistan administered Kashmir as well as a part of “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor”.

However, because of geographical location where they are just located at opposite sides of China, Japan-India cooperation can rectify their respective numerical inferiority. For example, if India cooperates with Japan, India will not need to deal with all the Chinese fighters at once because China is likely to keep some of their fighters in their east side against Japan and vice versa.

In addition, under the Japan-India strategic cooperation, by using know-how of high-end military infrastructural development, Japan is willing to support India’s efforts to modernize India’s defence in the Indo-China border area. For example, Japan can export radar system to strengthen India’s for air defence and air control capabilities in

³ Deeptiman Tiwary, “Chinese clearing forest cover to grab border land” *The Times of India*, August 26, 2013

Web source:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-26/india/41453967_1_chinese-troops-incursion-sino-indian-border (accessed on 8 October 2017).

⁴ Rajat Pandit, “India boring border tunnels to take on China, Pakistan” *The Times of India*, 16 August, 2012

Web source:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-08-16/india/33232484_1_tunnels-rangpo-sikkim (accessed on 8 October 2017).

Raful Singh, “India far behind China’s combat power” *Hindustan Times*, 12 December 2013

Web source:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-far-behind-china-s-combat-power/article1-1161711.aspx> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

the Indo-China border area.

Since 2014, Japan has invested in India's strategic road project in the Northeast region of India. The main purpose of this project is the promotion of economic development in Northeastern India. However, by using this road, the Indian army can deploy more forces and supply to the border area. This road building project is just a beginning. Because the Japanese government will ease regulations that restrict Japan's Official Development Assistance to support security related infrastructural projects, further substantial support from Japan's side may be expected in India's strategic projects like construction of roads, tunnels, airports and helipads of strategic importance.

(2) India's rise helps lower the heavy burden of Japan and US in the Indian Ocean

a. China has started to increase their military activities in the Indian Ocean

Secondly, in the Indian Ocean, China has started to increase their military activities in the Indian Ocean. Because China is concerned about their total dependence on Sea Line of communications (SLOCs) from Middle East to China through the Strait of Malacca, they have tried to make an alternative route via Middle East-Pakistan-China and/or Middle East-Myanmar-China etc. through the Indian Ocean, as a part of "One Belt One Road" initiative.

Since the middle of 2000s, China's military activities in the Indian Ocean have been expanding. At least seven deployments were recorded with Chinese submarines patrolling in the Indian Ocean since 2013⁵. In addition, China also exports submarines to countries around India. Bangladesh received two submarines from China in 2016 and Pakistan decided to import eight Chinese submarines for their navy. And Pakistan, may also be willing to possess nuclear submarines must not be overlooked. Because Pakistan does not have the technology, there is again reasonable possibility that China will support such "indigenous" nuclear submarines to counter India.

The activities of these submarines indicate that the area of influence of China in the Indian Ocean is going to expand. The Indian Navy will need to have enough ships to keep a regular watch over the location and purpose of other countries' submarines, because these "Chinese" submarines can potentially attack India's nuclear ballistic

⁵ "Six cases of Chinese submarine deployment in Indian Ocean in four years: Navy chief Sunil Lanba" *Indian Express*, 30th March 2017)

Web source:

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2017/mar/30/six-cases-of-chinese-submarine-deployment-in-indian-ocean-in-four-years-navy-chief-sunil-lanba-1587558.html> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

missile submarines and SLOCs. This means that these submarines will, to a great deal, regulate India's naval activities.

China's strategic weakness is, however, that it does not have a naval port in the region. Therefore, China is setting up their base in Djibouti. In addition, under the "String of Pearl Strategy", China is investing to develop many ports such as Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar in the Indian Ocean. If the Chinese navy uses civil-purpose ports as naval supply bases, China could successfully tackle their weakness of not having a naval port in the region. Currently, China is planning to deploy two marine brigades to defend base in Djibouti and Gwadar⁶.

b. India set to key role in the Indian Ocean

Why has China's assertiveness heightened the Indian Ocean lately? The changing US-China military balance could have affected the situation. The US influence in the India Ocean region increased in the 1970s. The US dispatched aircraft carrier battle groups several times in order to respond to conflicts within the region, such as the Indo-China war of 1962, Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, the Gulf War of 1991, *Operation Enduring Freedom* after 9/11 in 2001, and the Iraq War of 2003. The US used the island of Diego Garcia as a hub to deploy military power. However, because US naval power has been declining, China has been increasing naval activities in the Indian Ocean like in the East China Sea and South China Sea. Thus, we need to find alternative country to fill a potential power vacuum in this region.

There is a high possibility that, in the near future, India will be the most influential sea power to fill the power vacuum in the Indian Ocean Region. There are six reasons which Alfred Thayer Mahan, who analysed why Britain had been a sea power (in his famous *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, published in 1890), pointed out. He listed six core factors i.e. 1) "Geographical Position", 2) "Physical Conformation (especially, the length of coast lines)", 3) "Extent of Territory (especially the balance between the extent of coastal line and military defence resources)", 4) "Size of Population (for working at sea)", 5) "Character of the People", and 6) "Character of the Government".

Taking these factor into account, first of all, India has advantageous "Geographical Position" because the Indian subcontinent is separated from the Eurasian

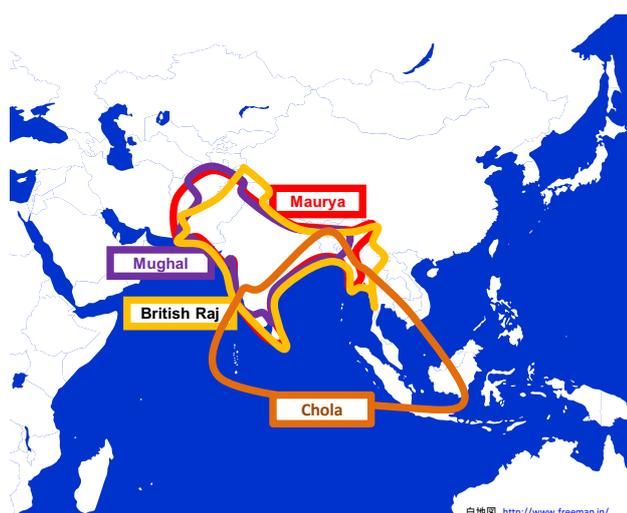
⁶ "China may station Marines in Gwadar, say PLA insiders", *Indian Express*, 13rh, March 13, 2017

Web source:

(accessed on 8 October 2017).

continent by high mountains. This advantage has historically to be proven significant. There were only three empires which dominated most of the sub-continent in Indian history: the Maurya Empire, the Mughal Empire and the British Raj. The territories of these three empires were very similar and all their territories are based on the mountain range (Figure 2). Thus, the Indian sub-continent is one kind of island. And India can concentrate on its naval forces only if it possesses the necessary will.

Figure 2: Influential area of empires in the sub-continent



Source: Satoru Nagao, “The emerging India is not a threat. Why? An assessment from Japan” Asia Pacific Journal of Social Science, Vol. III, Jul.-Dec. 2012, pp.99-109.

In addition, the history of Cholas indicates another geographical advantage for India. Representatives of the Chola Empire, which was located in Southern India, made an expedition to Southeast Asia in the 11th century. The sphere of its influence had expanded along the entire coastal area off the Bay of Bengal. This historical fact is another prominent example of India’s geographical advantage. Since India is located at the northern centre of the Indian Ocean, it is not only able to access Southeast Asia, but also all sides of the Indian Ocean, including the Middle East and East Africa.

India has “Physical Conformation” because it has 7517 (only mainland 6100) km of coastline. And the Indian Navy is the only strong power as a coastal country of the Indian Ocean Region means that India has enough “Extent of Territory”. Presently, India is acquiring more than 100 warships. Presently, India is acquiring more than 100

warships. And by 2030, India is planning to increase the warships from 139 to 212⁷. There is a possibility that India will possess three aircraft carrier battle groups and nine nuclear submarines by 2030.

India has the fifth or sixth largest number of seafarers, about 55,000 sailors employed around the world. Thus, India also satisfies the condition of “Number of Population” working at sea. Based on the history of the Chola Empire, there is also a possibility that the “Character of the People” in India could be sea-power oriented. And finally, taking these two characteristics and the “Character of Government” into account, the Indian government is interested in expanding its sea power.

The 2012 “Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century” report, based on the discussions of many former National Security Advisors of India states that “presently, Indian military power has a continental orientation. Emerging as a maritime power should thus be India’s strategic objective.⁸” And India’s defence budget has increased the share of its navy from 12.7% in 1990 to 14.6% in 2017⁹.

Thus, according to Mahan’s theory, India has sufficient potential to become a sea power and thereby an influential country in the Indian Ocean Region. If India has the required will and develops sufficient capabilities, the cooperation with India could contribute a lot for Japan. This is because Japan and its ally US will be able to release themselves from the heavy burden to safeguard security in the Indian Ocean and can deploy more military force in the East China Sea and West China Sea to maintain the military balance in Asia.

⁷ KS Subramanian, “Bridge the Gap Between Plan and Execution What Ails Warship Building in India”, *Indian Military Review*, Volume 7, December 2016, pp.10-12.

“Indian Navy to have 200 warships in next 10 years”, *The Times of India*, 13 November 2013

Web source:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-11-13/india/44028232_1_ins-vikramaditya-navy-day-ins-khukri (accessed on 8 October 2017).

⁸ Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Lt.Gen (Retd.) Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, Srinath Raghavan, Shyam Saran, Siddharth Baradarajan, *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty-first Century*, (2012), P.38.

Web source: http://www.cprindia.org/sites/default/files/NonAlignment%202.0_1.pdf (accessed on 8 October 2017).

⁹ Ministry of Defence (Government of India), “Annual Report 2016-2017” , p.12.

Web source:

<http://mod.nic.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport1617.pdf> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

c. What could be the contribution of Japan-India defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean?

If India becomes a sea power, what could be the contribution of Japan-India defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean? Firstly, India can use Japan's technology to strengthen India's naval power. For example, like in the Indo-China border area, Japan is also planning to assist India's airport project in the Andaman Nicobar Islands. If India could strengthen these bases, it would be relatively easy to project power in the Malacca Strait.

Japan will also contribute to India's shipbuilding capabilities to build warships including aircraft carriers and submarines. Japan already possesses sophisticated helicopter carriers, cruisers, destroyers, frigates and conventional submarines etc. At present, India wants to not only get arms, but also the capacity to build under "Make in India" policy. If so, Japan and India shipbuilding cooperation would be an important initiative.

Beyond shipbuilding, arms trade will be another important part of Japan-India strategic cooperation. Currently, Japan and India are under-negotiation of trading US-2 rescue planes. This rescue plane can land on the sea and take off on sea. Despite rescuing being the main purpose of the plane, it can also be used for marking the country's presence. For example, if India deploys this plane for rescuing people or for disaster management in other countries, it will be perceived as a marker of India's will to extend tangible support to those in need and thus mark India's presence. Their image of India will improve and India can expand its influence in these countries. From Japan's perspective, this plane could be a very useful political tool for India.

And, US-2 is just a beginning to trade arms between the two countries. Japan has considerably many such sophisticated technologies and know-how. In the "Joint Press Statement on the India-Japan Annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue" in September 2017, "They welcomed the constructive engagement between Acquisition, Technology and Logistic Agency (ATLA) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and agreed to commence the technical discussions for research collaboration in the areas of Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics." "The Ministers commended the conduct of the first-ever meeting on defence industry cooperation held by ATLA and Department of Defence Production (DDP) in Tokyo¹⁰". In the same month, Joint Statement of two prime minister meeting "The two Prime Ministers underlined that

¹⁰ Ministry of Defense, Government of Japan, "Joint Press Statement on the India-Japan Annual Defence Ministerial Dialogue", 5 September 2017

Web source: http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2017/09/05_jpr_e.html (accessed on 8 October 2017).

India and Japan could play a central role in safeguarding and strengthening such a rules-based order. To this end, they pledged to reinforce their efforts to: "...enhance defence and security cooperation and dialogues, including the MALABAR and other joint exercises, defence equipment and technology cooperation in such areas as surveillance and unmanned system technologies, and defence industry cooperation", "They noted the ongoing close cooperation between the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) and the Indian Navy in various specialised areas of mutual interest, including anti-submarine aspects."¹¹

If Japan and India collaborate with each other, two countries can make these cooperation higher level. For example, to protect India's aircraft carriers, India needs to deal with China's anti-ship ballistic missiles which can attack India's aircraft carrier. This means that India needs sea-based missile defence system. Now, under Japan-US joint development of sea based missile defence system, Japan is developing some of the most important parts of this system. If so, Japan and India along with US can cooperate in the missile defence sector. And because missile defence system is closely related with space technologies, there is a possibility that Japan-India-US cooperation in missile defence sector will develop to space defence cooperation as well.

Mine sweeping is also an important tool for India to deal with Chinese submarines because submarines can set up sea mines. Japan has good know-how and equipment to deal with sea mines. Because of World War II, Japan needs to sweep these sea mines more than 65 years after the war. In 1950, Japan joined the Korean War to sweep sea mines (Japan was not independent in 1950). And after the first Gulf War in 1991, Japan deployed mine sweepers to deal with mines after the Gulf War. As a result, under the Japan-US alliance, US holds up a hope to these Japan's sea mine sweepers. Japan is proud of their world class know-how and equipment to deal with sea mines. If India needs to deal with sea mines set up by China's submarines, Japan and India can share this skill and equipment under the Japan-India strategic cooperation.

Therefore, to deal with China's naval activities in the Indian Ocean, Japan-India strategic cooperation could be very effective and useful.

d. Japan-India collaborate to support coastal countries in the Indian Ocean

When we think about developing infrastructure in coastal countries in the Indian Ocean, Japan-India cooperation is useful there too. In the coastal countries in the Indian

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, "Japan-India Joint Statement: Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific", 14 September 2017, Web source: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000289999.pdf> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

Ocean, China has invested heavily to build infrastructure and expanded their influence. If India does not possess enough budget and technology, China will increase their influence in the Indian Ocean Region and harm the 'great power image' of India. For example, Sri Lanka has an important location safeguarding sea lines of communications in the Indian Ocean. For that reason, China has been very active in the immediate area. In fact, China is building ports in Colombo and Hambantota. Coming along with economic support, Chinese submarines have visited Sri Lanka. If China supports Sri Lankan development, then little motivation exists for Sri Lanka to refuse economic support from China.

Thus, Japan-India cooperation is a useful method to rectify India's individual numerical inferiority. Currently, Japan and India can cooperate to develop Trincomalee Port. The Trincomalee port project has effects of neutralizing China's influence.

Compared with Hambantota port, the Japan-India Trincomalee port project could be better situation. Trincomalee Port is a former naval base of the British Empire. Therefore, British officials had already checked how to build facilities. This port is surrounded by natural "walls" to protect ships from natural disasters such as tsunami or cyclone waves and surges, including a strong tsunami in 2004. Furthermore, the sea depth is greater than 25 meters, which is sufficient for all conventional and naval ship including US nuclear aircraft carrier

Like Hambantota port, Trincomalee has no connection with Colombo. Commercial ships do not use Hambantota port because no large city is near Hambantota port. If there were a big city near the port, ships could use the port to unload carrying cargo to a consuming area. If there were a city, ship crews could rest before proceeding to another destination. However, no facilities exist in Hambantota. Instead of Hambantota port, most ships use Colombo port. However, Japan has the Trincomalee-Colombo Economic Corridor project. Japan is planning to connect the two cities. Consequently, a ship can use Trincomalee as a hub port and unload the cargo at the port and reload to the ship to go to other coastal countries in the Bay of Bengal.

In addition, the Trincomalee project promotes the economy of the east side, which was destroyed during the civil war of 1983-2009. From the view of internal stability of Sri Lanka, the project is beneficial.

For the reasons described above, Trincomalee port project is more beneficial than the Hambantota port project for Sri Lanka. If the Trincomalee port project succeeds, then the importance of Hambantota port for Sri Lanka will decline. In April 2017, when the prime minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe visited Japan, Japan granted aid of nine million US dollars aimed at providing facilities for the improved management of

the Port of Trincomalee¹². Furthermore, in May 2017, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sri Lanka, the two countries agreed that at least 73 of the 99 oil storage tanks in Trincomalee are managed jointly¹³. Because oil storage management identifies how the port is used, this agreement is an important step.

In addition, Japan and India also collaborated to modernize the Chabahar port project in Iran. The possibility exists that the Chabahar port project can mitigate the importance of the Chinese Gwadar port in Pakistan because the two ports have competitive locations. When Central Asian countries need to find a route to export their energy resources through the Indian Ocean, the Afghanistan–Pakistan route is an option. As a core project of OBOR, China has started the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project connecting Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean. Currently, this route is the most important route. Increasingly, Central Asian countries and Afghanistan depend on CPEC. Increasingly, Chinese influence is growing in this region. However, Chabahar project can change the situation. Chabahar is located about 100 km west from Gwadar. The city is connected with Mashhad, the second largest city of Iran, by a well-prepared road. The road connects Mashhad to Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Furthermore, a train is also under construction along the same route. This Turkmenistan–Iran, Afghanistan–Iran route will be good choice for Central Asian countries. Once the Chabahar port project is functioning, Central Asian countries and Afghanistan need not depend on the Pakistan route. When Indian PM Modi visited Iran in May 2016, India promised 20 thousand US dollars for port facility construction¹⁴. Furthermore, Japan is planning to invest in India’s project in the port and other infrastructure to connect ports to cities¹⁵.

In May 2017, Indian PM Modi published a new concept: the Asia–Africa

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, “Japan-Sri Lanka Summit Meeting Joint Statement -Deepening and Expansion of the Comprehensive Partnership between Japan and Sri Lanka-”, 12 April 2017

Web source: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000249616.pdf> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

¹³ “PM Narendra Modi’s visit a grand success, says Sri Lanka minister”, *Hindustan Times*, 17 May 2017.

Web source:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-narendra-modi-s-visit-a-grand-success-says-sri-lanka-minister/story-4rair1RfTsAkocLVPeAG8N.html> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

¹⁴ “India To Invest \$20 Billion In Iran's Chabahar Port Development”, NDTV, 11 April 2016,

Web source:

<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-to-invest-20-billion-in-irans-chabahar-port-development-1381864> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

¹⁵ “Japan eyes Iran infrastructure development”, *Nikkei Asia Review*, 8 May 2017

Web source:

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Japan-eyes-Iran-infrastructure-development> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

Growth Corridor (AAGC) ¹⁶. This collaboration between Japan and India affects China's growing influence in Africa. In the coastal countries of the Indian Ocean in Africa, China's infrastructure projects can facilitate China's deployment of troops. Currently, China deploys troops in Africa for anti-piracy missions, UN Peace Keeping Operations, and weapons exports. China has already set up naval bases in Djibouti.

Therefore, during 2010–2016, the *Japan–India Dialogue on Africa* has been held five times. India also negotiates African policy with the US. In Africa, Japan has no human connection, but India has. Nevertheless, India has insufficient funding to counter China. Japan can cooperate with India in this case. To address military aspects, the US role is vital. The US military has already established the Africa Command as well. As a result, Japan, India, and the US have started to cooperate.

(3) Japan and India can collaborate to support countries around South China Sea

In the South China Sea, because China's military power is far bigger than other countries, the countries around South China Sea need to amalgamate their leadership as one integrated power and beef up their military power with a trustworthy partner to provide coastal countries with military support. In this case, Japan-India strategic cooperation will be useful.

“With increasing Chinese assertion in the South China Sea since 2001, many countries like Vietnam, Philippines and Singapore want India's increased presence in the Southeast Asia¹⁷.” And by now, India has already started to support armed forces in Southeast Asia as a part of “Look East Policy” and its updated version “Act East policy”. India has trained the crew of aircraft carrier of Thailand, pilots and the land crew of fighter airplanes in Malaysia. Further, India has agreed to train the pilots and provide maintenance to the fighter airplanes in the Indonesian Air Force. Singapore is using India's land and air base for their training. Especially, India-Vietnam security cooperation has developed. India is training crew of submarine and fighter pilots of Vietnam, planning to export BrahMos cruise missile and Akash surface to air missile to

¹⁶ Dipanjan Chaudhury “India, Japan-come-up-with-AAGC-to-counter-China's-OBOR”, *Economic Times*, 26th May 2017

Web source:

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/india-japan-come-up-with-aagc-to-counter-chinas-obor/articleshow/58846673.cms?utm_source=WAPusers&utm_medium=twittershare&utm_campaign=socialsharebutton&from=mdr (accessed on 8 October 2017).

¹⁷ Pankaj K Jha, *India and China in Southeast Asia: Competition or Cooperation?*, Manas Publications, 2013, p.132.

Vietnam, planning to donate four patrol vessels to Vietnam.

Although Japan has not supported armed force in Southeast Asia since long, but has supported many systems including anti-piracy system, Tsunami warning system, cyber defence system and building infrastructure like air and sea ports etc. These systems are indirectly related with maritime security in South China Sea. In addition, under the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan has also started arms donation to these countries.

Thus, if Japan and India collaborate with each other, we can support countries around South China Sea more effectively. For example, if Japan built the airport in Vietnam and the Indian Air Force trained Vietnam's fighter pilots, Vietnam can get both an airport and fighter pilots. Furthermore, if accepted by Vietnam, both Japan and India can share the airbase for refueling and thus support Vietnam by showing their presence in this region. Hence, under the Japan-India -Vietnam cooperation, we can create a win-win-win situation.

In addition, Japan has invested in India's strategic road project in the Northeast region of India since 2014. If road connections were made to increase India – Southeast Asia trade, the possibility exists that growing India – Southeast Asian trade could mitigate China's influence in Southeast Asia. Although China's attitudes related to the South China Sea have harmed claims of Southeast Asian countries, some Southeast Asian countries have not shown a sufficiently strong stance to stop China's activities. One reason some Southeast Asian countries cannot adhere to their claims so strongly is that their economy depends too much on trade with China. To neutralize China's influence, Southeast Asia needs other trade partners. Consequently, road connections between India and Southeast Asia have such effects. Currently, Japan is building an East–West Economic Corridor from Vietnam to Myanmar. This Japan road network project can connect road projects in Northeastern India. The main target is increasing India – Southeast Asian trade¹⁸. In the “Japan-India Joint Statement: Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific” on September 2017 mentioned that “The two Prime Ministers welcomed the Japan-India cooperation on development of India's North Eastern Region (NER) as a concrete symbol of developing synergies between India's Act East policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific Strategy¹⁹”

¹⁸ Rupakjyoti Borah, “ India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway: A Promise to Transform the Region's Economic Landscape”, *Japan Forward*, 12 July 2017

Web source:

<http://japan-forward.com/india-myanmar-thailand-trilateral-highway-a-promise-to-transform-the-regions-economic-landscape/> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, “Japan-India Joint Statement: Toward a Free, Open

Furthermore, in the Andaman–Nicobar Islands in India, Japan is planning to support infrastructure projects. The Andaman–Nicobar Islands in India are strategically important. These islands are near the Malacca Strait and SLOCs. In 2001, India set up the Andaman–Nicobar Command, with Army, Navy, and Air Force integrated headquarters. Furthermore, India is modernizing infrastructure to deploy larger warships, patrol planes, transport planes. When contact was lost with a Malaysian airplane in the Indian Ocean, India dispatched warships to search for the plane from the islands.

No detailed official report has been published, but some media reports indicate that Japan has decided to support radar facilities and power plants in the Andaman–Nicobar Islands. Japan is also planning to build a fibre cable connection between mainland India and the Andaman–Nicobar Islands. Although these are civil projects to resolve electric power shortage difficulties, a high probability exists that the project will have strategic effects related to China.

As described above, China’s submarines venture into the Indian Ocean. These submarines sail from Hainan Island of China through South China Sea and Malacca Strait. Therefore, to track China’s submarine activities, the Andaman–Nicobar Islands are an excellent location. Since 1993, India has engaged in joint exercises with Singapore. Since 2002, India has started coordinated patrol with Indonesia. In 2005, the India–Thailand joint patrol has started. Now, India is set to join the Malacca Strait Patrol Group, which comprises forces from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia²⁰.

Recent media reports have described that the Japan, India, and the US are planning to install a submarine detecting sensor system along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal²¹. Furthermore, the India and the US are negotiating to share information when Chinese submarines leave from Hainan. If Japan invests infrastructure projects in the Andaman–Nicobar Islands, these infrastructure projects enhance India’s naval capability to detect Chinese submarine activities.

and Prosperous Indo-Pacific”, 14 September 2017,

Web source: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000289999.pdf> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

²⁰ Ajay Banerjee, “India set to join Malacca patrol group: Three of the 4 nations okay with Delhi joining Malacca Straits Patrol”, *The Tribune*, 9 April 2017.

Web source:

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/india-set-to-join-malacca-patrol-group/389602.html>
(accessed on 8 October 2017).

²¹ Abhijit Singh, “India’s ‘Undersea Wall’ in the Eastern Indian Ocean,” *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, June 14, 2016,

Web source: <http://amti.csis.org/indias-undersea-wall-eastern-indian-ocean/> (accessed on 8 October 2017).

To achieve these goal, what kind of systems ought to be established? In March 2017, the Japan-India Dialogue on ASEAN has launched. It will be useful if such dialogue will promote a more practical trilateral strategic dialogue. For example, Japan-India-Vietnam, Japan-India-Philippine, Japan-India-Singapore, Japan-India-Indonesia, Japan-India-Malaysia etc. Through such dialogue, both Japan and India can share the information, better identify the needs of these Southeast Asian countries and decide how to cooperate or support these countries.

Conclusion: Japan-India-Sri Lanka cooperation will be vitally important

When we think about Japan-India security relations as they stand today, it must not be forgotten that Japan is located far from India. However, furthering cooperation in security between Japan and India has been more and more plausible. The reason is related with US-China power balance. From the second term of the Obama administration and into the new Trump administration, US influence has been declining. US allies and friendly countries now require a new security framework to adjust to the situation. Since the Obama administration, a new security framework has emerged. Under this new system, Japan-India cooperation has an important role. To maintain military balance and support new security framework, Japan and India can cooperate by using the linkage of East China Sea and Indo-China Border, share the burden in the Indian Ocean and collaborate to support countries around China in the South China Sea. Collectively speaking then, these are the reasons why Japan is seeking more cooperation with India lately. Does India matter? Yes, of course. The time has come to proactively further this cooperation to ensure prosperous stability in the whole of Indo-Pacific.