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How Alliances Survive

The Case Against Pessimism and the Path to a New Allied Order

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AND RUSH DOSHI

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ROB DOBI

Context The expectation of an American alliance collapse is overstated ; they have survived worse shocks and are held together by hard material interests rather than sentiment.

Facts

- Chicago council: From 32% to 55% between 2016 & today alliances are "very effective"
- European procurement from US firms : rose from 28% in 2019-21 to 51% in 2022-24.
- More than 80% of Europe's \$860 billion rearmament effort is open to American companies.
- October 2025 : 10 year India-US defence framework, signed during tariff dispute.

Analytical Crux

It is not that Trump has done no damage ; it is that allied grievance is a poor predictor of allied behaviour. The alliances rest on interest rather than affection, and the interests have hardened rather than dissolved. For the first time since the Cold war, Europe & Asia view China & Russia the same way, so the Atlantic and the Pacific stop functioning as separate strategic spaces. The current pessimism juxtaposes today's challenges against an alliance golden age that never existed. The real history of U.S. alliances is one of recurring crises. For the allies hedging is reinvestment in the network rather than departure from it. This is what New Delhi wants.

Verbatim Quotes

"The West as we knew it no longer exists. Allowed to harden into conventional wisdom, pessimism risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy."

— Campbell and Doshi

A changing Asia demands more from Delhi & Tokyo, together

A changing Asia demands more from Delhi and Tokyo, together



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

JAPANESE DEFENCE Minister Shinjiro Koizumi's visit to India this week comes amid the unfolding transformation of Tokyo's defence and regional security policies. Japan, long reined in by self-imposed military restraint, is adopting a more vigorous national defence policy and an active regional military diplomacy. That Koizumi is coming to Delhi after consultations in Canberra with his counterparts from Australia and New Zealand indicates new directions in security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Koizumi's talks in Delhi should help end the current slow and incremental approaches to defence cooperation and outline more ambitious goals for the security partnership.

Driving Japan's new defence policies is the rise of China as a great military power and Beijing's growing political will to translate that power into concrete outcomes. This is a challenge Delhi and Tokyo share as they confront assertive Chinese military policies — on Japan's maritime frontier with China and India's contested land border across the Himalayas. The geography is different, but the PLA's methods are the same: Persistent probing and the slow but definitive alteration of the territorial status quo.

For both Tokyo and Delhi, the challenge from China is magnified by the volatility of American policies. Neither seeks an Asia without America. Japan remains deeply in-

vested in its alliance with Washington, while India sees a continuing American military presence as essential to a stable Asian balance. But Donald Trump's second presidency has reinforced questions about the predictability of American policy and the nature of its regional commitments.

Part of the answer for Delhi and Tokyo lies in strengthening their own national capabilities and deepening partnerships with each other and other Asian powers. Koizumi's itinerary captures the possibilities. Japan's defence partnership with Australia has advanced rapidly. Canberra and Tokyo have expanded military exercises, reciprocal access, logistics and defence industrial cooperation. Australia's decision to acquire Japanese-designed *Mogami*-class frigates marks an important breakthrough for a country that, until recently, imposed extraordinary restrictions on exporting weapons.

India-Japan defence cooperation has also expanded, but remains well behind the political rhetoric about their "Special Strategic and Global Partnership". Koizumi's visit should therefore be an occasion not merely to review bilateral exercises and exchanges, but to ask how Delhi and Tokyo can give their defence partnership much greater operational and technological weight.

The opportunity arises from the extraordinary changes underway in Japan itself.

For much of the post-war era, Japanese strategy rested on a simple bargain. Tokyo concentrated on economic reconstruction while relying on the United States for security. Defence expenditure remained around 1 per cent of GDP; arms exports were tightly restricted, and the Self-Defence Forces operated within narrow political constraints. Those conditions began to change as the China

challenge unfolded. In 2010, China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy. Its growing economic resources supported a massive expansion of military capabilities, the consequences of which for Japan soon became evident.

After returning as prime minister in 2012, Shinzo Abe accelerated the effort to adapt Japanese security policy to the new circumstances. As the scale of the China challenge deepened and concerns about American reliability grew, Japan outlined a sweeping set of defence reforms in 2012. One element was a rapid increase in defence expenditure. Tokyo set itself the goal of raising defence-related spending to around 2 per cent of GDP by 2027, but brought forward that target through additional spending last year.

More important has been the change in doctrine. Japan is acquiring long-range "counterstrike" capabilities, including American Tomahawk missiles, while developing longer-range indigenous weapons. It is strengthening air and missile defence, cyber and space capabilities, unmanned systems and its capacity to operate farther from the Japanese islands. A parallel revolution is unfolding in defence production. Tokyo is revitalising its defence industrial base, easing restrictions on arms exports and breaking down the old barriers between civilian technology and national security. Japan has also begun providing military equipment to friendly countries through its new Official Security Assistance programme.

Taken together, these changes represent something much larger than a Japanese "rearmament". Tokyo is finally turning to military power, defence technology, arms exports and security assistance as normal instruments of statecraft. Tokyo is also reaching out to South

Korea and other regional neighbours, deepening defence ties with Australia and New Zealand, and strengthening security engagement with Europe. Upgrading defence ties with India is a natural part of this wider strategy. Delhi and Tokyo already have much of the institutional architecture they need: A 2+2 dialogue, a logistics agreement and regular exercises across the three services. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to Delhi last month called for more sophisticated exercises, stronger maritime domain awareness and deeper defence industrial cooperation. It also announced the first bilateral defence co-development project, involving the UNICORN naval communications antenna.

But here is the reality check. Defence industrial cooperation has been painfully slow. Delhi and Tokyo need much greater ambition in joint research, development and co-production of weapons and military technologies. Their armed forces must also move beyond exercising together towards greater operational coordination in anti-submarine warfare, maritime surveillance, air defence and logistics. The unfolding transformation of the Asian security environment demands that Delhi and Tokyo do much more together in defence. Japan is demonstrating greater purpose and urgency as it responds to the changing balance of power in Asia. Unlike China, India has long welcomed the prospect of a stronger Japan. It is now time for Delhi to match Tokyo's commitment and enthusiasm in building a consequential Asian defence partnership.

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Context

Japan has abandoned its post-war military restraint faster than India and the two must move from exercises & dialogues to joint development, co-production & operational coordination.

Facts

■ Tokyo's official security assistance programme: easing restrictions on arms exports & begun supplying military equipment to friendly nations.

■ Japan acquiring: long-range counterstrike capabilities & strengthening air & missile defence, cyber, space and unmanned spaces.

■ India and Japan hold 2+2 dialogue, a logistics agreement & regular exercises across the 3 services.

Analytical Crux

Tokyo has crossed a threshold from restraint to ordinary statecraft i.e. spending, doctrine, exports, security assistance. India can adopt probing and the incremental alteration of the status quo, applied on two different geographies, a maritime frontier for Japan and a contested land border for India. US volatility is a common variable rather than a wedge, because neither capital wants an Asia without US. Both countries should develop ties with each other and with Australia. Tokyo is finally turning to military power, defence technology, arms exports and security assistance as normal instruments of statecraft. It is now time for Delhi to match Tokyo's commitment and enthusiasm in building a consequential Asian defence partnership.

Verbatim Quotes

"India - Japan defence cooperation has also expanded, but remains well behind the political rhetoric about their 'Special Strategic & Global Partnership.'"

Why Mecca pact risks turning regional wars into wider conflicts

Firstpost.



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The new Sarajevo: Why the Mecca Pact risks turning regional wars into wider conflicts

The Mecca agreement is meant to deter conflict, but like the alliances of pre-1914 Europe, it could turn a regional spark into a wider war



Context The trilateral defence pact is not as Islamic solidarity and the return of interlocking mutual-defence commitments recreates the structure that turned a Balkan assassination into a continental war in 1914.

Facts

■ The trilateral defence pact : armed attack on any one of the three states shall be regarded as an attack on all.

■ India's indirect response : axis with the UAE & Israel through intelligence sharing, defence-industrial co-operation, maritime security in the western Indian ocean and technology partnerships.

Analytical Crux

The pact matters for its structure, not its capability. There is no command structure, no automatic response, no integrated logistics and two of the three signatories without nuclear weapons. It converts an ambiguous understanding into a declared commitment and forces every other regional state to decide whether to join, balance or free-ride. The 1914 comparison is doing analytical work rather than decorating the argument. The alliances of that system were designed to stabilise by making commitments credible and transmitted local crisis outward. Indian planners will treat the pact as a complicating factor rather than an existential one & focus on capability rather than treaty.

Verbatim Quotes

"Turkey wants the best of both arrangements : the security of article 5 and the diplomatic & commercial advantages of a separate Islamic security network."

- Nivad D Sheth

- **PSIR 2025, Paper II:** "Historical ties between India and Japan grew into a 'special strategic and global partnership'. Comment."
- **GS 2025, Paper II:** "Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India's foreign policy, and is linked with India's overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries." How would you integrate energy security with India's foreign policy trajectories in the coming years?
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