

## EMERGING MARITIME SECURITY IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION: A CASE STUDY OF INDIA, JAPAN AND VIETNAM TRILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

The trilateral relationship or strategic partnership among India, Japan and Vietnam is mostly important relationship in indo-pacific region. This relationship efficiently and effectively fulfills their mutual goals and share common interests (co existence, co prosperity and co value) against present increasing Chinese power. These three countries create a geographical arc in world map and geopolitically significant subset of the Indo-pacific.

The maritime linkage of Japan, India and Vietnam come together from East Asia, South Asia and South East Asia respectively. These countries enjoy bilateral relationship between India- Vietnam and Vietnam –Japan over the last decade. Then India and Japan strategically engage with Vietnam among the south east countries for their strategic location, strong will and sharing common interest. Three countries also shares similar democratic political economics and military power from parallel colonial histories. But geo-strategically these states engaged for the maritime security due to expanding present economic and military power of china.

In indo-pacific region maritime security refers that the use of marine resource (fisheries and ocean bottom resources), maritime transportation etc. In this perspective, shenkaku island is the major dispute between Japan and china and Sparty dispute between china and Vietnam is the major concern because these islands is mostly famous because of key shipping lanes, rich fishing grounds, oil reservoirs as well as other marine resources.

This islands located in east and South China Sea respectively. For this reason Japan and Vietnam trying to build security cooperation with India and resolve dispute issue in indo-pacific region. Except maritime security this engagement of Japan and Vietnam with India can cultural and educational exchanges, defense cooperation, increase trading and port services. Effectively India arrived in most advance situation. In 2003-2009 increase the trade of India from 26.70% to 30.19% through the indo pacific region for their secure transportation facility after trilateral coalition.

**KEYWORDS:** Maritime Security, Maritime Coalition, Trilateral Relationship, Strategic Partnership, Common Interest, Maritime Dispute, Marine Transportation, Strategic Role, Military Power

### INTRODUCTION

Indo-pacific region is now one of the most significant drivers of global economic growth and now converted to the centre of gravity of world political economy that has been shifting from west to eastern hemisphere. This region is also the common interest of Asia-pacific countries to use the sea lanes, free and secure navigation as well as trade and energy supplies. Countries of this region, specially Japan and china have become increasing demand of oil imports from the Middle East. In this accounts one estimate suggests that this region will consume 88 million barrels per day of oil by 2020 therein 80 % will be imported from Persian Gulf.

The oil supplies of this region are totally dependent on sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) over Indian Ocean. After that, china wants to control over South China Sea but not Pacific Ocean because this ocean controlled and dominated by USA. So china will not venture to Pacific Ocean for the domination of USA.

Their interest will be to establish and entry into the Indian Ocean as well as south and East China Sea. China also started to take aggressive action in the South China Sea from 1988 that focuses the conflict over territorial issues such as between china and Japan over Shenkaku islands in East China Sea and Vietnam- china over Paracel and Spartly islands in East China Sea in 1988. In this regard, we can say that this island is more significant because of having open sea lanes, rich fishing grounds as well as significant oil and gas reservoirs.

In the view of economic and strategic perspective, India and Vietnam traditionally have a good relationship. Japan tries to make cooperation with India as well as cooperation between South East Asian countries in 1990s. After the enjoying of bilateral relationship these three countries come together and form trilateral strategic partnership for the control of emerging power of china in the indo-pacific region.

Japanese government is also trying to extend and diversity cooperation with other countries and share common interest with India in sharing of maritime navigation from Africa and the middle-east to East Asia. This co-operation also significant for defense, coast guard operation and protect maritime resource in the indo-pacific region.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To find out the strategic role of china to maritime disputes along the Asia-pacific region as well as multilateral security cooperation between south East Asian countries.
- Also find out what is the strategy taken for the maritime security by trilateral relationship among India, Japan and Vietnam over indo-pacific region?
- Analyze the effects of India for the engagements with Japan and Vietnam in the indo-pacific region, as a strategic partner of trilateral relationship.

## **MARITIME CLAIM AND DISPUTES IN THE INDO PACIFIC REGION**

Although now the trilateral boundary issues have been resolved but in the case of maritime boundary there exist complicated characteristics due to disagreements and disputes. This dispute formed in the light of rich offshore resources and the extension of land masses for demarcating of exclusive economic zone because (EEZ) of this maritime boundary claims by multiple countries. For example of the EEZ boundary demarcation, here we can refer about republic of Kiribati consisting three islands groups in the south pacific.

There is a landmass is just over 717 sq km (compare with India's landmass of about 32, 87,590 sq km) lays claimed that an EEZ of the size like India that has been resolved through the flexible and cooperative approach (Figure 1).

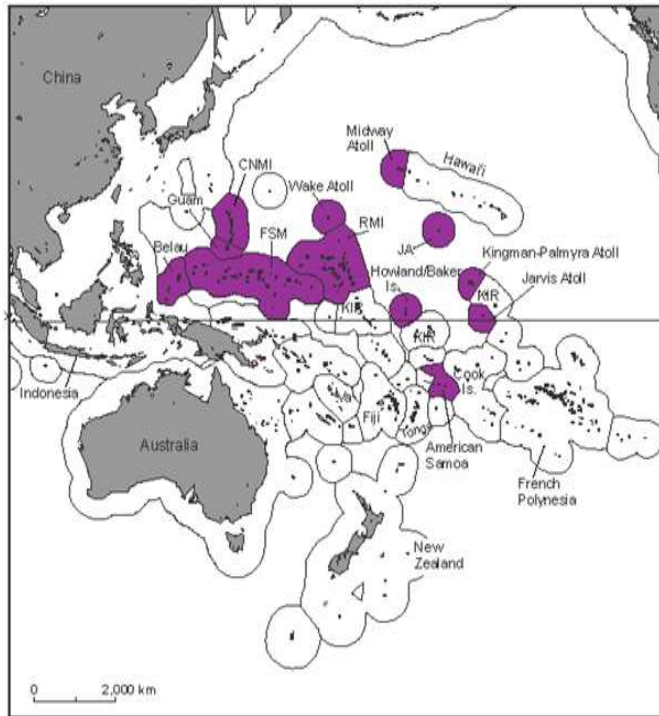


Figure 1: Complexities of Eezs in Asia-Pacific

In the case of marine resource china, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Brunei and Philippines claimed spartly islands in the South China Sea for the richness of hydrocarbon. Also Vietnam has claim parcel island which are occupied by china after mid – seventies. After that Vietnam and china engage another disputes to claims of Vung May, Song Hong, Phu Khanh basins. China wants to increase the demand level when India gets permit for the extension of 2 years oil and gas exploration in blocks 127 and 128 in the EEZ of Vietnam.



Figure 2: Disputed Islands Source: US Energy Information Administration

**Table 1**

	South China Sea Territorial Claims			
Country	South China Sea	Spartly islands	Paracel Islands	Gulf of Thailand
<b>Brunei</b>	UNCLOS	no formal claim		
<b>China</b>	all*	all	all	UNCLOS
<b>Indonesia</b>	UNCLOS	no	no	
<b>Malaysia</b>	UNCLOS	3 islands	no	UNCLOS
<b>Philippines</b>	significant portions	8 islands	no	
<b>Taiwan</b>	all*	all	all	
<b>Thailand</b>				UNCLOS
<b>Vietnam</b>	all*	all	all	UNCLOS
<b>Comodia</b>			no	UNCLOS

\*- excluding buffer zone along littoral states (calculations for buffer unknown)

**Source:** US Energy Information Administration

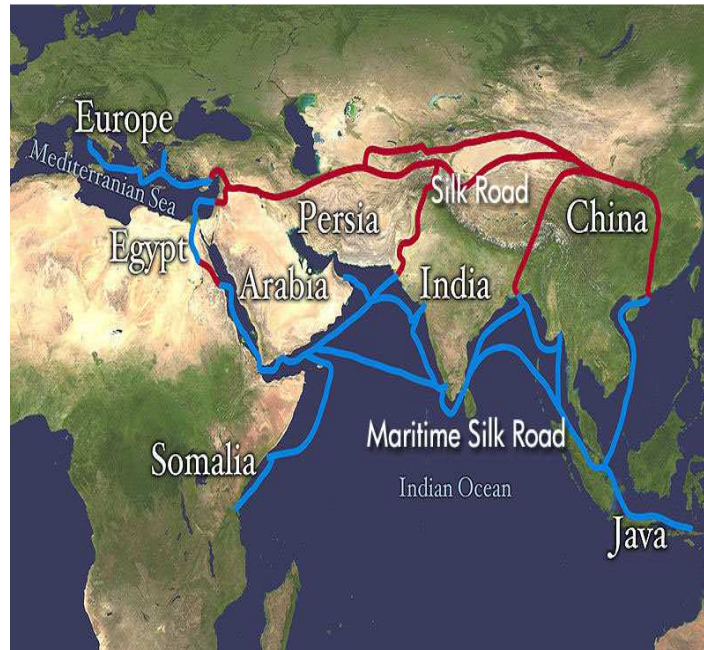
After the disputes of china- Vietnam, china continue engage to dispute with Japan. China and Japan have two disputes, therein one is related to ownership of islands and another is related to the demarcation of the sea boundary (Figure 3) between these two countries. The ownership of Daioyu/Shenkakuislands is the main issue between Japan and china because of rich fishing grounds and significant reserve of oil and gas fields.



**Figure 3: Disputed Sea Boundary and Islands-Japan**

**IMPORTANCE OF MARITIME SECURITY COALITION AMONG INDIA, JAPAN AND VIETNAM AS A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

Maritime security over indo-pacific region stated that use of sea lanes and protection of marine resource. Hare sea lanes refer to the maritime Silk Road that weaved its way from china, India, Persian Gulf and red sea to the ports in the Mediterranean (Figure 4). This road linked theirneighboring countries and also significant for trade and cultural changes betweenFar East and the west through the transit ports. This road also gain more important for improved skills in navigation and opening other sea routes in south Asia that continue holds the regional maritime transportation. So in this regard we emphasized to formulate maritime security coalition.



**Figure 4: Ancient Maritime Silk Road**

Maritime security coalition refers broader regional nation to nation coalition to maintain, secure and free use of oceans. In indo-pacific region, this coalition formed for the threatening of emerging Chinese power. So, India, Japan and Vietnam after the bilateral ties engage to the trilateral strategic partnership. These three countries connect a geographical arc which is geographically significant subset of the indo-pacific region where south East Asia derived from Vietnam, south Asia stemming from India and East Asia traced from Japan. This trilateral security cooperation doesn't have to build permanently but emphasize to build the bilateral cooperation each other. This cooperation can support against the mutual problems as well as they can share the common objectives. Each member country takes responsibility in proportionately of this region. This responsibility differed from each country to country that depends on their intention and capabilities. This coalition shares three prime maritime interests with other countries. Those are...

- Co existence –To cooperate for maintaining of security an entering region from peace time to crisis phase.
- Co prosperity – To cooperate for the prosperity of commerce and trades as well as marine resource development.
- Co value – To promote the conservation and development activity of various benefits. In which way seas can provide the protecting ability to marine environment and also control the marine resource.

In consideration of the above, these three countries shared three prime indicators of co existence; co prosperity and co value and then needed inviting regional sensible maritime powers. Under this cooperation Japan, India and Vietnam to ensure the security of lengthy sea lane of communication (SLOCs) along the east west expanded Asia that extend from the south of Suez canal (east cape of hope) to South East and North East Asia. This communication (SLOCs) create unify and develop more region wide “web of maritime security coalition” in the future.

### **INDIA’S MARITIME ENGAGEMENTS WITH VIETNAM AND JAPAN**

The Asia-pacific region is characterized by different threat perception because of the disputants between the neighboring countries. So cooperation is the most preferable process for the resolution of conflict and dispute. This dispute resolution process takes by bilateral way or through discussion between the directly involved countries but there have more than two parties. They look upon multilateral agreements to resolve the European military alliances because European

military power could lead to military intervention by powers outside the region. The end of cold war, Indo-Pacific region have less maritime security because of the reduction in deployment of forces by the US. In the perspective of broad security preferences of this region with respect to outside intervention, summarized words of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, “When there is vacuum in ASEAN maritime security, Japan surely will involve in it... so will china, what if India also sends two aircraft carriers to our ocean? If all these happen, the consequence will be turbulence and disaster”. Both economic and defense fronts, this region prefers cooperative engagement but multilateral security strategic partnership help to have in maintaining balance in this region. But recent emerging China, Japan, India and US shifted their power to Asia-pacific region for the powerful economic growth. After that these countries engage with England, Russia, Australia and New Zealand in maritime security cooperation. That is proved that of the sufficient maritime security over the indo-pacific region.

Since India look the economic integration with Asia-pacific but doesn't have any trilateral aspiration to a large market for their goods and services. In the respect to India's total GDP of total trade, from US decreased from 12.69% to 8.5% and from EU decreased from 20.84 % to 8.5 % (between FY 2003-04 to FY 2009-10), But in the case of Asia-pacific region trade increased from 26.70% to 30.19%. This statistics proved that India's most trade occurred by sea borne trade, as about 50% trade passes through Malacca straights and the routes of South China Sea and East China Sea. So India has entered into various agreements with different Asia-pacific countries, with bilateral way or may be multilaterally for...

- Maritime security
- Cultural and educational exchanges
- Development programs
- Defense cooperation
- Exercises the trading, port visit services etc.

The policy of India about East initiative is accepted by USA. In this perspective in November-2010, Barak Obama said that, “Like your neighbors in South East Asia we went India not only to “look east”, we want India to “engage east” because it will increase the security and prosperity of all our nations”.

In the above discussion, India maritime engagement with Japan and Vietnam is the issue affecting their economics in the Asia-Pacific region. After that India and Vietnam continue hold their trustable relationship since its independence in 1954. Also Vietnam support same political ideology as well as share a rich cultural heritage with India. So, Indian naval ships also ensure the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea as well as East China Sea. Also takes a part for the rising tensions about disputants over island territories and off shore exploitation in the South China Sea. Sea corridor of Malacca straight from India to Vietnam always has open and free flow of trade. Here Shri A K Antony, Defense Minister said that “the security of sea lanes is important for the Asia-Pacific region, which is now one of the most important drivers of global economic growth.... Cooperative approaches on maritime security would offer benefits for the region as a whole.”

India and Japan sign strategic and global partnership pact in 2006. After that both countries decided to expansion their defense and security cooperation by-

- Information sharing
- Multilateral and bilateral exercises
- Dialogue and training.

Then, in 25 October 2010 both country launch the Japan and India shipping policy and mutual exchange operation by Indian navy. After the bilateral cooperation, Japan planning for creates multilateral security ties where India takes the prominent role. However china feels that this strategic partnership formulated for the rising china. In this regard, Li Hongmei in his article “Look East policy” says that “by taking advantage of the face-off between china and Japan, India still cannot relax its spasm of worries about China, nor can it brush aside the fear that china might nip its ambitions in the bud”. However there has been no response of china to the strategic maritime partnership cooperation between India and Japan. India also maintains the enough space in Asia to economic engagement and cooperation. In the Japanese point of view the partnership maintains different security objectives. That’s are-

- Protect and reduce external threat
- Improving international security environment
- To create global peace and stability
- Secure human security

These objectives make achievable to Japan’s own effects, cooperation and multilayered security cooperation with the international partnership or international community.

## **CAUSES FOR ENGAGEMENT OF VIETNAM WITH INDIA AND JAPAN IN TRILATERAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

Japan and India want to cooperate for the improvement of military power. So both countries look upon the South EastAsian countries for their multilateral alliance. In this regard Japan and India given priority to Vietnam among other South East Countries because of their-

- Strategic location: In the geostrategic perspective Vietnam situated at a significant place and operates like ‘the Gate’ to enter south East Asia from north. At this period, Vietnam also interested to naval and air bases for the vast occupation of South China Sea by china on their trilateral claim “nine dotted lines”.
- Image of ‘strong will’: The image of Vietnam is about defeating France and USA in 1954 and 1973 respectively and also winning the battle with china in 1979. So the basic argument is that formation of threat perception to the opponent country. Here past factor is more emphasized for the power of Vietnam.
- Sharing common interest: India and Vietnam have strong military relation when Vietnam attacked by Cambodia in 1979, this time India support to Vietnam by the help of military power. Also both used shortest part of soviet era weapons when Soviet Union collapsed 1991. But now military relation also very much strong between these two countries. At the period of cold war, Japan only engage by military relations only US that not much more strong. For this reason Japan wants after cold war to the joining of defense cooperation with Vietnam as well as India also. At present Japan is passing to Vietnam for exporting petrol boats in the indo-pacific region. In this perspective we can say only Vietnam is important for the representative of ASEAN country for both Japan and India.

## CONCLUSIONS

At last, after the analysis of trilateral relationship among India, Japan and Vietnam over indo-pacific region Chinese power is the prime factor for the maritime threatening. But in the perception of trade and other economic activity china positively engaged with each other. Now china is the largest trading partner of all these three countries. In the world of complex interdependence, cooperative strategy among India, Japan and Vietnam leads to peace and stability as well as resolve conflicts. This relationship not only formed for the maritime security, they come together for the meaningful goal oriented strategic relationship. Now United States shifted their power to Asia-Pacific and play role for growing tensions in the South China Sea but India maintains their enough space for the achievement, economic engagement and cooperation in Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, maritime security coalition among these countries takes a key role for the freedom of navigation in South China Sea, which could emphasize further improvement and development of recent growing and much dynamic Indo-Pacific region. In the way of prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region lies through cooperative engagement and dispute resolution process promoted to much more economic growth of nation in the region.

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