

# Japan-India-France Trilateral Dialogue:

**THE EMERGING POLITICS OF THE INDO-PACIFIC**



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ISAS-SPF Trilateral Dialogue

Japan-India-France Trilateral Dialogue: The Emerging Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific

Authored by Yogesh Joshi, Ippeita Nishida and Shavinyaa Vijaykumarr

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# Japan-India-France Trilateral Dialogue: The Emerging Politics of the Indo-Pacific

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# CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Ukraine, Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific’s Emerging Balance of Power</b>                  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Maritime Security and Naval Cooperation between India, Japan and France</b>           | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Technological Cooperation in Cyber and Space</b>                                      | <b>25</b> |
| <b>Regional Engagements: ASEAN’s Perspectives on the Role of India, Japan and France</b> | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Contesting the Monopoly over Regional Development and Supply Chains</b>               | <b>35</b> |
| <b>Global Crisis Management and Peacekeeping</b>   | <b>39</b> |
| <b>Appendix 1: About the Authors</b>   | <b>44</b> |





## Executive Summary

The Indo-Pacific region faces significant geopolitical changes, with China's rise challenging the United States' (US) dominance and the ensuing great power competition. This has created anxiety among other regional players about the future security and economic order in the Indo-Pacific. The region is also a significant global economic and technological development driver, making its stability crucial.

*All of them have a geographical presence along the most critical maritime arc of the Indo-Pacific and a unique set of relations with the US, China and Russia.*

France, India and Japan are uniquely positioned to collaborate on maintaining the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. All of them have a geographical presence along the most critical maritime arc of the Indo-Pacific and a unique set of relations with the US, China and Russia. There is significant convergence of anxieties and interests between the three countries, including China's increasing assertiveness in the region and its territorial and maritime revisionism. All three countries fear the possibility of American retrenchment in the face of China's growing power and capabilities and are concerned about the future of international order.

France, India and Japan are taking active measures to maintain the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. France has boosted its naval and military presence in the Indo-Pacific waters and territories while maintaining engagements with China. India has stated its preference for a liberal order in the Indo-Pacific, augmented by the threat of Chinese aggression and revisionism. Japan has doubled down on its commitment to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific with the declaration of the Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative in 2018 and its new National Security Strategy (NSS).

The three countries are equally concerned about the future of international order. They fear the paralysis of the United Nations (UN) Security Council (UNSC) and support the democratisation of its decision-making. Question enveloping the Indo-Pacific's future security, and economic and technological order motivates these countries to collaborate on a shared understanding and response to

the challenges they face. Even as allies or strategic partners of the US, all three countries are apprehensive about the potential retreat of the US in response to China's increasing power and capabilities, and its impact on the regional order. They hope to maintain the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific and contribute to a liberal, rules-based international order.

To understand the role of France, India and Japan in the emerging geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region, the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore and Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan (SPF), organised a Track 1.5-level dialogue among experts from the three maritime democracies of the Indo-Pacific. The presentations, discussions and policy recommendations offered during the trilateral dialogue are compiled and analysed in this Special Report.

This report also assesses the emergence of the France-India-Japan trilateral as an initiative that could provide the three critical stakeholders with an avenue to discuss and debate their Indo-Pacific strategies, identify common interests and challenges, and lay down a vision for the region that encompasses the interests of democracies in the Indo-Pacific region. It provides policy recommendations for the kind of coordination that can be achieved by the three states across six critical aspects: the Indo-Pacific's emerging balance of power; maritime security; technological cooperation in cyber and space; regional engagements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); regional development and supply chains; and global crisis management and peacekeeping. France, India and Japan should focus on these issue areas and associated recommendations:

### **Indo-Pacific's Emerging Balance of Power**

- Cooperate on managing China's rising influence in the Indo-Pacific region to prevent a full-blown military conflict.
- Clearly underline that nuclear blackmail to further war aims and crisis behaviour is detrimental to the security and stability of the international system.

*Even as allies or strategic partners of the US, all three countries are apprehensive about the potential retreat of the US in response to China's increasing power and capabilities, and its impact on the regional order.*



*They should also strengthen regional cooperation and counter the instability arising from China's increasing assertiveness.*

- France and Japan should help India overcome its defence dependence on Russia. Even while Ukraine is too far to directly impinge on India's national security, India also cannot neglect the military consequences of a conflict over Taiwan.
- Prioritise the development of a central and coherent security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region through their trilateral dialogue. They should also strengthen regional cooperation and counter the instability arising from China's increasing assertiveness.

### **Maritime Security**

- Collaborate in joint military exercises and training focused on island security, and building upon existing bilateral and multilateral exercises and dialogues to strengthen their regional trilateral naval cooperation.
- Establish trilateral naval cooperation to enhance maritime domain awareness by sharing threat information, including unauthorised oceanographic research vessels, exploitation of marine resources and military base construction in countries friendly to China.
- Establish information fusion centres in Japan and France's areas of influence and coordinate with existing centres across the Indo-Pacific region for effective information sharing and dissemination.
- Conduct a naval conference focused on island security, where the information gathered and disseminated can be shared, along with best practices on island security policies and the independent implementation of those policies. The platform can also share the particular countries' expertise in island management.

## Technological Cooperation in Cyber and Space

- Enhance situational awareness and cyber attribution capabilities and achieve operational and cyber resilience through information sharing, technological collaboration and setting standards for response and recovery.
- Establish a 'Space Security Alliance' to cooperate in the military space domain and work towards India's inclusion in the Artemis Accords.
- Work towards crafting technical and overarching agreements covering a broad scope from the arms race to cyber warfare in the cyber and space domain, leveraging their existing bilateral partnerships and norms to develop multilateral norms and creating a platform for continuous discussions, norm development and consensus building.

## Regional Engagements with ASEAN

- Engage with ASEAN on their terms and for the engagement not to be defined purely by US-China relations.
- France and Japan are to consider upgrading their ties with ASEAN to a comprehensive strategic partnership (CSP) to deepen cooperation and political commitment.

*Engage with ASEAN on their terms and for the engagement not to be defined purely by US-China relations.*

## Regional Development and Supply Chains

- India and Japan to invite France to join them as a trilateral partner for their African development projects, given France's economic and diplomatic presence in Africa.
- Cooperate in establishing ground rules for concerns regarding the transparency, efficiency and militarisation of development aid. Japan's emphasis on quality infrastructure can be a guiding principle for such collaborations.
- Supply chains should prominently figure in the agenda of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). There is a need for coordination and synergy on supply chains between multilateral efforts like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

*Leadership is needed to set forth a values-based vision of fair and reciprocal standards, and multilateral cooperation with private sector representatives can ensure balanced and future-oriented priorities.*

for Prosperity (IPEF), plurilateral initiatives among advanced Western powers such as the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) and trilateral initiatives in the region similar to the India-Japan-Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.

- Collaborate to bridge the gap between commitment to the Indo-Pacific and concrete financial support for initiatives like business relocation incentives. Leadership is needed to set forth a values-based vision of fair and reciprocal standards, and multilateral cooperation with private sector representatives can ensure balanced and future-oriented priorities. Such practices must protect against national security threats without obstructing the market or inhibiting innovation.

### **Global Crisis Management and Peacekeeping**

- Leverage their respective expertise in disaster management and peacekeeping operations to build relationships and display a shared commitment to the Indo-Pacific region's stability, particularly through joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) missions and exercises with other regional and middle powers.
- Expand their existing alliances on environmental and climate security issues to cover a wider area of the Indo-Pacific region and tap into each other's existing environmental security infrastructure and capabilities.
- Prioritise utilising existing platforms and organisations and expanding regional partner engagement to further dialogue on HADR missions before formalising a trilateral partnership.
- Leverage the shared values and democratic principles to support conflict resolution and promote peace, including advocating for the inclusion of India and Japan as permanent members of the UNSC.

## Introduction

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the most critical geography of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The region – from the Western Indian Ocean to the Eastern Pacific – is undergoing enormous geopolitical change. The rise of China and its contestation of the US' primacy in the region is exacerbated by the anxieties of other regional players, mainly around the future shape of the Indo-Pacific's security order. The Sino-Russian entente and the consequences of the Ukrainian war on the Indo-Pacific have only heightened the challenges faced by the democratic forces in the region. The concerns of the future of the Indo-Pacific are, however, not limited to the emerging balance of power between authoritarian regimes in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific's maritime democracies. It is also the emerging fulcrum of global economic and technological development and influences the entire spectrum of international relations. The exact geographies of the region and efforts at maintaining the stability of the region are yet to take a concrete form. Geographically, Europe's entry into the Indo-Pacific dialogue is a welcome addition. Increasingly, European powers are taking a keen interest in the region's geopolitics and have become essential stakeholders in the future of the Indo-Pacific. Diplomatically, even when much of the rebalancing is taking place under the leadership of the US, prominent regional actors have explored new avenues and partners to create synergies on a collective vision of the Indo-Pacific.

The unsettled question of the Indo-Pacific's geography and its future security, economic and technological order provides an excellent opportunity for France, India and Japan to collaborate on a shared understanding and collective response to the challenge of security and stability of the Indo-Pacific. First, the three countries encompass geographies and have a geographical presence along the most critical maritime arc of the Indo-Pacific: from the Western Indian Ocean to the Northern Eastern Pacific. Second, they are all resident maritime powers, with French territorial interests in the Western Indian Ocean and Oceania, India's presence in the Northern Indian Ocean and

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Japanese territorial waters in East Asia and Northern Pacific. Third, they have a unique set of relations with the US, China and Russia, which in the current circumstances, play the role of the extant hegemon, the rising challenger and the declining disruptor in the region. The triangular relationship between the US, China and Russia uniquely impacts the geopolitical calculations of France, Japan and India. Fourth, there is a significant convergence of anxieties and interests between the three states. China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and its territorial and maritime revisionism have left India, Japan and France anxious about their maritime security and territorial integrity. All have also accepted the China challenge head-on. France is the first European state to embrace an Indo-Pacific vision and strategy. It actively boosted its naval presence in the Indo-Pacific waters and its military presence in the French island's territories to keep the Indo-Pacific free and open to all. India has also categorically stated its preference for a liberal order in the Indo-Pacific, unburdened by the threat of Chinese aggression and revisionism. Japan, which had called for the liberal democracies of the region to unite as early as 2007, has doubled down on its commitment to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific with the declaration of the Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative in 2018. Their anxieties, however, also stretch to the role of the US in the region. France and Japan are treaty allies of the US, and India is a major strategic partner. Yet, while they witness the growing rhetorical provocations over democracy and authoritarianism, all three fear the possibility of American retrenchment in the face of China's growing power and capabilities. The recent signing of the AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom [UK]-US) agreement on sharing military technologies has created a feeling that the US will prioritise its Anglo-American alliances more than its other regional partners. They are also equally concerned over the future of international order given the emerging challenges from revisionist powers such as Russia and China. The anxieties over the paralysis of the UNSC and the democratisation of its decision-making inform their foreign policies.

The emergence of the France-India-Japan trilateral initiative provides the three critical stakeholders with an avenue to discuss and debate

their Indo-Pacific strategies, identify common interests and challenges and lay down a vision for the region that encompasses the interests of democracies from Europe to the Northern Pacific. ISAS and SPF, therefore, organised a Track 1.5 level dialogue among experts from the three maritime democracies of the Indo-Pacific. The dialogue focussed on the following aspects of the contemporary international relations of the Indo-Pacific.

First, it discussed the Indo-Pacific's emerging balance of power in the shadow of the Ukraine war and the Taiwan tensions. Eurasia's authoritarian powers – Russia and China – and their increasing assertiveness are changing the Indo-Pacific geopolitics, posing significant challenges to Europe's and the Indo-Pacific's democratic states. The response has been quite varied, with some complementarities but multiple contestations between India, Japan and France. Yet, given the significant role the three states play in the global and regional dynamics, it is pertinent to investigate the kind of coordination that can be achieved in global and regional forums to restrict the freedom of action of Russia and China in undermining the status quo.

The second area of dialogue was the naval cooperation between India, Japan and France. The Indo-Pacific is undergoing a transformation in the balance of maritime power in the region, with China's emergence as the largest navy in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, it is significant how these three major naval powers in the region view China's naval capacity and build up and understand the challenges it engenders. Russia's entry into the Indo-Pacific and increasing coordination with China raises serious concerns for all three. Japan, India and France's response to these challenges and their cooperative endeavours in creating new capacities and capabilities in the naval domain are extremely pertinent to the maritime security of the Indo-Pacific.

*The Indo-Pacific is undergoing a transformation in the balance of maritime power in the region, with China's emergence as the largest navy in the Indo-Pacific.*

The third issue of convergence between India, Japan and France is the domain of emerging technologies, especially cyber and space. All three have been significant space powers and are increasingly concerned about cyber readiness. The cyber and space domain are

central to active military operations and provide substantial avenues for Russia and China to conduct grey zone operations. They are also at the forefront of global technological competition, which has a geopolitical angle and is intricately related to economic development.

Fourth, India, Japan and France have underlined the centrality of Southeast Asian geography and the institution of ASEAN in their Indo-Pacific strategy. France, Japan and India are critical economic partners and some of the important arms suppliers to the Southeast Asian countries. A significant advantage of conducting the trilateral dialogue in Singapore is the availability of the Southeast Asian strategic community and, therefore, to have a conversation over how Japan-India-France trilateral forum can collectively engage with the Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN, as an institution, to understand the unfolding geopolitical dynamics in the region and to create avenues for cooperation.

*The economic crisis in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh has unfurled the weaknesses in China's predatory policies.*

Fifth, all three states are continuously watching the emerging trends in regional development and restructuring of supply chains in the Indo-Pacific. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is targeted at establishing its monopoly over regional development. Further, the BRI undercuts the fundamental principle of freedom of navigation as Beijing increasingly uses its connectivity and infrastructure projects to deploy military power. The economic crisis in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh has unfurled the weaknesses in China's predatory policies. The battle over economic development through infrastructure and connectivity is far from over. The COVID-19 pandemic has also underlined the critical importance of supply chains in the global economy. The extreme concentration of supply chains in China disrupted national economies and gave Beijing significant geostrategic heft. The Ukraine war has again shown how resource competition has become central to contemporary geopolitics. Therefore, how France, Japan and India confront the issues of development politics thrown open by China's BRI and contribute to supply chain resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is a serious challenge.



Lastly, the trilateral focused on Japan, India and France's role in global crisis management and peacekeeping. The deterioration in the international security order, underlined by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's continuous pressure on Taiwan, has necessitated major countries like India, Japan and France to focus more on their security concerns and perhaps less on global peacekeeping and stability efforts. While India remains one of the top troop contributors to UN peacekeeping, Japan is slow to embrace its role as a worldwide net security provider. France remains to have a strong overseas military presence; yet, it has just ended its nearly nine-year military engagement in Mali. Spanning from Africa to Asia, there are increasing possibilities of new instabilities, humanitarian crises and non-traditional security threats that require more coordinated action among these states. The dialogue focused on India, Japan and France's approach to crisis management and peacekeeping roles.

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## Ukraine, Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific's Emerging Balance of Power

*Russian aggression is construed as a clear challenge to European and Indo-Pacific security and the stability of the international order.*

The Ukraine War and the Taiwan tensions expose the challenges underlying the Indo-Pacific region. Japan sees the Ukraine war as a cautionary tale for the future trajectory of the Taiwan tensions. Russian aggression is construed as a clear challenge to European and Indo-Pacific security and the stability of the international order. Japan believes the Russian invasion of Ukraine sends a message “that an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force is acceptable”<sup>1</sup> and that it could set a precedent for and encourage China’s ambitions in Taiwan. As the 2022 NSS underlined, “Russia’s aggression against Ukraine has easily breached the very foundation of the rules that shape the international order. The possibility cannot be precluded that a similar serious situation may arise in the future in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in East Asia.”<sup>2</sup> Tokyo’s tough stance on Russian aggression finds enormous support from the Japanese public. In a survey by *Nikkei Asia*, 61 per cent favoured the imposition of harsh sanctions on Russia, and 77 per cent believed that Russia’s use of force could encourage China to do the same in Asia.

Tokyo’s reactions to Russian aggression are also motivated by the shifting dynamics of Russian-Japan relations. Under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Tokyo worked hard to find a *modus vivendi* with Moscow, especially in resolving the outstanding territorial disputes over the Northern territories. Therefore, per the 2013 NSS, Russia was viewed from a lens of active cooperation, which was needed to manage the long-pending “Northern Territories Issue”.<sup>3</sup> However, in the last few years, the prospects of peace with Russia have significantly decreased. Moscow appears to be colluding with China to threaten

<sup>1</sup> “Japan sounds alarm on Russia, threats to Taiwan”, *DW News*, 22 July 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-defense-report-warns-russias-war-could-set-a-precedent-in-taiwan/a-62561785>.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “National Security Strategy of Japan”, 16 December 2022, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we\\_000081.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we_000081.html).

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “National Security Strategy of Japan”, 17 December 2022, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoku/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

Japan's maritime and air space with coordinated air and naval patrols over the Sea of Japan. Its military activity around Japan's territorial waters has seen a significant uptick. In December 2022, Moscow deployed mobile coastal defence missile systems on a northern Kuril island. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno stated that the government would closely monitor the Russian military activity, which has been intensifying in the far east regions, in tandem with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> Though the 2022 NSS unequivocally states Japan's preference for a "peace treaty" with Russia to resolve the territorial dispute, the tone and tenor of the NSS indicates its readiness to deter Russian advances both against its national security interests as well as the threats to the peace and stability in the region and beyond.<sup>5</sup>

However, the most immediate and long-term strategic threat remains China. China's military activities have been recognised as "unprecedented and the "greatest strategic challenge" for Japan's peace and security.<sup>6</sup> China's adamant attitude towards the forcible reunification of Taiwan deeply concerns Tokyo. Japan views Taiwan as a first line of defence before facing the full might of Chinese military prowess and as a test case of US commitments to the region. After Speaker of the US Senate, Nancy Pelosi, visited Taiwan in August 2022, China launched large-scale military exercises in the waters surrounding Taiwan. The incident emphasised the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits for the sovereignty and security of Japan. China's increasing military threat has forced Japan to reorient its military strategy to actively confront threats further from home and boost its deterrent capabilities, including stand-off weapons such as conventional long-range missiles for active area denial. The momentous nature of the ongoing churn in Japanese military strategy can be gleaned from the discussions over possible

*Japan views Taiwan as a first line of defence before facing the full might of Chinese military prowess and as a test case of US commitments to the region.*

<sup>4</sup> "Russia deploys defence missile system on Kuril island near Japan", *Reuters*, 6 December 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/russia-deploys-defence-missile-system-kuril-island-near-japan-2022-12-06/>.

<sup>5</sup> Tunchinmang Langel, "Significance of Japan's New National Security Strategy 2022", Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi, 26 December 2022, [https://www.icwa.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls\\_id=8770&lid=5733](https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=8770&lid=5733).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

nuclear sharing with the US and the stationing of the US nuclear arsenal on the mainland.

*In response to Russian aggression, France has increased its military presence in Romania, Lithuania and Estonia on NATO's eastern flanks.*

On the other hand, the French perceive the Ukraine invasion as an immediate and direct security issue and the Taiwan tensions as primarily a diplomatic concern. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has sparked political and military discussions and changes in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It has triggered an unprecedented call for European unity in both diplomacy and defence cooperation within the European Union (EU) and NATO. In response to Russian aggression, France has increased its military presence in Romania, Lithuania and Estonia on NATO's eastern flanks. It has also offered military support to Ukraine by supplying French-made Caesar self-propelled howitzer guns, essential in Ukraine's counter-offensive efforts in the Donbas region.<sup>7</sup> Paris is convinced of the return of interstate conflict.

This reality facing the European continent is driving France's military procurement, training and doctrine. The French Armed Forces and European partners in NATO are refocusing on high-intensity military operations. The Ukrainian conflict has underlined France's strategic intent to be an "independent, respected, agile power at the heart of the European strategic autonomy" while emphasising its strong links to the Atlantic alliance, particularly with the US.<sup>8</sup> Yet, President Emmanuel Macron has stressed that Europe should reduce its reliance on the US and "take a more assertive role within the [NATO]...and develop its own defence capabilities, to secure peace in a region rocked by the war in Ukraine."<sup>9</sup> The new defence strategy gives France the "freedom of action and the capacity to...plan, conduct and control multi-environment and multifield operations, in isolation or

<sup>7</sup> Pawel Zerka, "The case for defence: How Russia's war on Ukraine has proved France right", European Council on Foreign Relations, 21 November 2022, <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-case-for-defence-how-russias-war-on-ukraine-has-proved-france-right/>.

<sup>8</sup> "Macron unveils shift in military posture as war returns to Europe", *France 24*, 9 November 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221109-france-reorientates-its-military-goals-as-war-returns-to-europe>.

<sup>9</sup> Noemie Bisserbe and Stacy Meichtry, "France's Macron calls on Europe to reduce reliance on U.S. for security", *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 December 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/macron-renews-call-for-russia-to-receive-security-guarantees-to-end-war-in-ukraine-11671627645>.

in a coalition when France is a framework nation at the operational level.”<sup>10</sup>

While the strategic document also specifies France’s commitment to maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region and guarantee unrestricted access to “common spaces”<sup>11</sup> such as the deep ocean floor, international waters, outer space and digital networks, the reality is that France is preoccupied with the conflict in the European continent with very little attention and capabilities focused on the Indo-Pacific and its military contingencies. It views the Taiwan crisis as both a diplomatic issue and a military contingency that does not require much focus at present. Additionally, the French political class is uncomfortable with the US’ rhetoric on Taiwan, especially Pelosi’s visit, which has led some to argue that France should distance itself from the US.<sup>12</sup> For most Europeans, the Taiwan issue will not likely impact Europe; it would be challenging to imagine French military capabilities or, arguably, that of NATO involved in any future Taiwan contingency.<sup>13</sup> The French reaction to the Ukraine-Russia crisis and Taiwan tensions reveals its paradoxical foreign policy situation. France values the strengthening of transatlantic ties and unity. However, at the same time, Paris tries to position itself as a distinct foreign policy player in the Indo-Pacific. It desires to position itself as a credible third way in the politics of the Indo-Pacific by not antagonising China and avoiding an overreliance on the US for its strategic calculations.<sup>14</sup>

India appears to be distant from both conflicts. For New Delhi, Ukraine and Taiwan instead symbolise the growing fissures in the rules-based order in Europe and the Indo-Pacific, which it sees as an obstacle to its rise in the international system. Russia’s adventurism

*The French reaction to the Ukraine-Russia crisis and Taiwan tensions reveals its paradoxical foreign policy situation.*

<sup>10</sup> Secretariat-General for National Defence and Security, “National strategic review 2022”, 2022, 50, <http://www.sgdns.gouv.fr/uploads/2022/12/rns-uk-20221202.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> “Jean-Luc Mélenchon calls Nancy Pelosi’s Taiwan visit an American ‘provocation’”, *Le Monde*, 5 August 2022, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/08/05/jean-luc-melenchon-calls-nancy-pelosi-s-taiwan-visit-an-american-provocation\\_5992591\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/08/05/jean-luc-melenchon-calls-nancy-pelosi-s-taiwan-visit-an-american-provocation_5992591_4.html).

<sup>13</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady and Oskar Glaese, “What Could European Militaries Contribute to the Defense of Taiwan?”, *The Diplomat*, 1 April 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/what-could-european-militaries-contribute-to-the-defense-of-taiwan/>.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolas Francoise, “France’s incoherent China policy confuses partners”, East Asia Forum, 22 October 2020, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/10/22/frances-incoherent-china-policy-confuses-partners/>.

placed significant pressure on New Delhi's multi-aligned foreign policy. Though India has repeatedly underlined the need to respect territorial sovereignty and called for an immediate cessation of violence, it has remained conservative in openly criticising Russian President Vladimir Putin's policy. India's conservatism stems from various factors. The strategic engagement between India and Russia in the defence sector has created deep interlinkages and dependence between the two countries. The Stimson Center's research noted that "the depth of [Russian] relative support to India's technology base and strategic systems have engendered a relatively high degree of indebtedness and trust in key strategic circles."<sup>15</sup>

*A Sino-Russian alignment, void of Indian engagement, tips the balance of power in China's favour on the Sino-India border dispute.*

Further, New Delhi's desire for continued engagement with Russia is part of a larger policy decision to cushion India's national security implications of a Sino-Russian alignment. China has demonstrated its support for Russian actions by accelerating the Russian narrative of NATO expansion in public discourse. A Sino-Russian alignment, void of Indian engagement, tips the balance of power in China's favour on the Sino-India border dispute. However, India's restrained reaction to Russia's invasion poses two issues for the former's commitment to an open, free and secure Indo-Pacific region guided by a rules-based order. First, India's absence of criticism contradicts its dedication to upholding international law, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the unjustified use of force or threat of use of force to change its international borders. In light of India's border conflicts with China, the contradiction facing Indian decision-makers is simple but acute: if India will not stand for Russia's disregard of the values and norms of the international order, why would the world stand for India against its similar recriminations against China?<sup>16</sup> Second, a more significant dissonance with the West would complicate India's growing alignment with not only Indo-Pacific democracies but also European powers such as the UK, France and Germany, all of which

<sup>15</sup> Sameer Lalwani, Frank O'Donnell, Tyler Sagerstrom, and Akriti Vasudeva, "The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment", *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2021): p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Yogesh Joshi, Ippeita Nishida and Nishant Rajeev, "The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific", Institute of South Asian Studies and Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Special Report no. 21, (SPF Special Report no. 21), 28, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ISAS-Special-Report-21-Content-V5.pdf>.

are critical to maintaining a favourable balance of power in Asia and India's fight against China.<sup>17</sup>

Though India has adhered to the 'One China' policy, Taiwan is significant to India's interest in stability and security throughout the Indo-Pacific. The Taiwan Strait is crucial to its maritime trade network as a large portion of trade passes through East Asian waters.<sup>18</sup> Any regional military conflict would severely undermine India's economic security. New Delhi has been explicit in its hope for a peaceful resolution of the issue between Taiwan and China. It condones the use of force or threat of the use of force to change international borders. In the wake of Pelosi's visit to Taiwan and China's reaction in the waters near Taiwan, India argued for "restraint and the avoidance of unilateral actions which might alter the status quo" and instead urged for "a de-escalation of tensions and efforts to maintain peace and stability".<sup>19</sup> However, there is an apparent neglect of the military consequences of the Taiwan crisis on New Delhi's security concerns vis-à-vis China. China's military adventurism may engender severe security dilemmas for New Delhi. If China overpowers Taiwan, it will significantly alter the military balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. It will free the People's Liberation Army (PLA) from operations against India in the Himalayan frontier and the Indian Ocean. If aggression fails, the Chinese Communist Party may look for other military opportunities to save face domestically; India may appear to be an easy target. Indian decision-makers, therefore, cannot neglect the military consequences of a conflict over Taiwan.

*China's military adventurism may engender severe security dilemmas for New Delhi.*

The issue of managing China is a common national interest among the three countries, which can serve as a crucial avenue for trilateral cooperation. Both France and Japan are moving away from their overreliance on the US for different national and regional security needs. Japan hopes to become an equal partner and limit its dependence on the US. Consequently, Japan must manage US-China

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Shivshankar Menon, "Taiwan: An Indian View", Brookings, 16 December 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/12/16/taiwan-an-indian-view/>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



tensions, especially over Taiwan, to prevent a full-blown military conflict. Similarly, France wants to avoid antagonising China and aspires to be a credible voice in the politics of the Indo-Pacific by not leaning toward either side of US-China tensions. India is moving away from its over-dependence on Russia. Consequently, New Delhi must find other ways to manage China's aggressive rhetoric over the Indo-Pacific region.

*All three countries are concerned over China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, irrespective of their contending views on Ukraine and Taiwan.*

Additionally, the need for a central and coherent security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region makes the trilateral dialogue involving the three countries an appropriate platform to strengthen regional cooperation. While there currently exist many regional bodies and organisations in the Indo-Pacific region, they need to expand their scope and ability to promote regional governance. Hence, in the absence of instruments of regional governance, a trilateral dialogue is pertinent in building momentum in creating a web of strategic partnerships for stronger cooperation. All three countries are concerned over China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, irrespective of their contending views on Ukraine and Taiwan. Therefore, countering the instability arising from China's rise in the Indo-Pacific region could serve as a common ground for cooperation between the three countries.

## Maritime Security and Naval Cooperation between India, Japan and France

Within the last two decades, the Chinese navy has tripled in size and, today, China has built the largest navy in the world.<sup>20</sup> The PLA Navy (PLAN) is amassing “modern surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, fighter jets, amphibious assault ships, ballistic nuclear missile submarines, large coast guard cutters and polar icebreakers at [an] alarming speed.”<sup>21</sup> Pentagon’s recent annual China military report estimated that by 2025, the PLAN “is expected to grow to 400 hulls, up from its fleet of 340”.<sup>22</sup> If this trend continues without any corrective measures from other powers, the PLAN may dominate the region by 2035.

Russia’s entry into the Indo-Pacific and its increasing coordination with the PLA complicates the maritime balance of power. The strengthening of the Sino-Russian alliance provides a formidable counter-coalition to the Indo-Pacific democracies. Additionally, Russia’s involvement and presence in the region could pose an issue for the strategic partnerships between the Indo-Pacific democracies due to the complexity of bilateral relations between Russia and states like India and Japan.

*The strengthening of the Sino-Russian alliance provides a formidable counter-coalition to the Indo-Pacific democracies.*

China poses a substantial maritime security threat to Japan. In 2022, China announced that it would normalise its military activities beyond the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which had previously served as an unofficial barrier between the two countries.<sup>23</sup> In August 2022, Chinese military drills conducted near Taiwan resulted in ballistic

<sup>20</sup> Brad Lendon, “China has built the world’s largest navy. Now what’s Beijing going to do with it?”, *CNN World*, 5 March 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/05/china/china-world-biggest-navy-intl-hnk-ml-dst/index.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Sam LaGrone, “Pentagon: Chinese Navy to expand to 400 Ships by 2025, growth focused on surface combatants”, *USNI News*, 29 November 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/11/29/pentagon-chinese-navy-to-expand-to-400-ships-by-2025-growth-focused-on-surface-combatants#:~:text=By%202025%2C%20the%20People's%20Liberation,report%20estimates%20released%20on%20Tuesday>.

<sup>23</sup> “Taiwan says China seeking to ‘normalise’ military activities near island”, *Reuters*, 4 October 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-says-china-seeking-normalise-military-activities-near-island-2022-10-04/>.

missiles landing in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).<sup>24</sup> China has also frequently dispatched its ships near the Japan-administered Senkaku Islands.<sup>25</sup> Unlike Japan, India and France do not immediately and directly feel the maritime and national security threats posed by China. For India, the Chinese security threat remains primarily a continental problem and increasingly a maritime security issue. Similarly, for France, the Chinese presence in the Indo-Pacific waters is a distant reality in the face of the war on the European continent.

*India has responded to China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea by conducting more training exercises and defence cooperation between states in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral formats.*

Nevertheless, both India and France are conscious of the threat China's involvement in the maritime space in the Indo-Pacific poses to their national security and the region's stability, as informed by China's capabilities and perceived intentions in an area of common interest.<sup>26</sup> India has responded to China's increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea by conducting more training exercises and defence cooperation between states in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral formats.<sup>27</sup> France has denounced Chinese expansionism in the region and Beijing's non-compliance with arbitral disposition regarding the South China Sea region.

Japan, India and France share a common maritime security interest regarding their Indo-Pacific islands covering a vast defensive area. There are three main challenges that the countries face in ensuring the security of these islands. First, the islands are far from the major military bases and repair sites. Tokyo is approximately 1,000 kilometres away; Paris is approximately 15,900 kilometres away; and New Delhi is about 1,450 kilometres away. Second, only a small number of troops and surveillance capacities are deployed to safeguard the vast expanses. Japan has an airbase with several rescue

<sup>24</sup> Justin McCurry, "China missile drills around Taiwan a threat to regional security, says Japan PM", *The Guardian*, 5 August 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/china-missile-drills-around-taiwan-a-threat-to-regional-security-says-japan-pm>.

<sup>25</sup> "China firmly opposed to Japan's updated defense documents", *Kyodo News*, 16 December 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/12/da2cb6187b61-china-wary-about-japan-defense-stance-budget-hike.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Siddhant Hira, "Naval Commanders' conference: Can India deal with increasing Chinese maritime threat?", *Outlook India*, 2 November 2022, <https://www.outlookindia.com/business/naval-commanders-conference-taiwan-can-india-deal-with-increasing-chinese-maritime-threat--news-234135>.

<sup>27</sup> Sreeram Chaulia, "Malabar 2021 and Beyond: India's Naval pushback against China", *The Diplomat*, 9 September 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/malabar-2021-and-beyond-indias-naval-pushback-against-china/>.

helicopters and two patrol boats of the Coast Guard on Chichijima Island that protect more than 30 islands about 1,000 kilometres south-southeast of the mainland. France has one infantry regiment, one frigate, several patrol boats, one patrol aircraft and floating docks that guard approximately 2,500,000 square kilometres of ocean area, about 130 islands with a total area of around 4,167 square kilometres and an EEZ of an estimated 4.5 million square kilometres. Similarly, India has a limited military capacity that oversees the vast space its islands cover. Third, the metropolises have little regional information and information-gathering facilities in place.

The three Indo-Pacific democracies have much space for collaboration in joint military exercises and training, which could revolve around island security. Currently, some platforms and dialogues provide an avenue for military coordination in the Indo-Pacific. In 2017, the Japan Self-Defense Forces began its “Indo-Pacific Deployment” that aimed to uphold and reinforce a free, open and inclusive maritime order. There are a few bilateral exercises between the three countries. For example, the sixth edition of Japan India Maritime Exercise commenced on 11 September 2022 in the Bay of Bengal. The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of Exercise Varuna, a bilateral exercise between India and France, was conducted in 2022 to improve interoperability and naval complementarity between the two countries.<sup>28</sup> There are also multiple multilateral exercises, such as Malabar and La Perouse 21, which include like-minded Indo-Pacific democracies that are committed to upholding and reinforcing the ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific’ (FOIP) concept. France and the Quad also held joint exercises, which India and Japan are a part of, indicating the potential of a Quad plus France alliance in the Indian Ocean through the Malabar naval exercises.<sup>29</sup> The existing platforms and naval coordination can springboard trilateral naval cooperation between Japan, India and

*The three Indo-Pacific democracies have much space for collaboration in joint military exercises and training, which could revolve around island security.*

<sup>28</sup> Sayantan Halder, “India and France in the Indian Ocean: The making of a new strategic partnership”, Observer Research Foundation, 21 May 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-and-france-in-the-indian-ocean/>.

<sup>29</sup> Kiran Sharma and Mailys Pene-Lassus, “France to lead Quad naval drill in Indo-Pacific challenge to China”, *Nikkei Asia*, 2 April 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/France-to-lead-Quad-naval-drill-in-Indo-Pacific-challenge-to-China>.

France for island maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. It could include coordinating patrols among the three countries that target a specific area or season, conducting exercises and training utilising overseas dispatches and ocean training voyages.

*There are several fusion centres in the Indo-Pacific region that focus on maritime domain awareness.*

The synergy generated from this trilateral naval cooperation can also be used to fill the gap in regional information by working on coordinated maritime domain awareness efforts through the sharing of threat information and the dissemination of strategic communication between the three countries. The sharing of threat information would include details about oceanographic and seafloor observation and exploration by unauthorised oceanographic research vessels, information on the exploitation of marine resources such as fish, red coral and seabed rare earth in the EEZ of the countries, data on the construction of military bases on coral reefs and in countries friendly to China and intelligence about secret agreements with friendly countries of China. There are several fusion centres in the Indo-Pacific region that focus on maritime domain awareness. The India-based Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Information Fusion Centre (IFC) focuses on maritime security in the Indian Ocean. IONS IFC collects and analyses information on maritime security threats and it works with member states of the IONS to improve their maritime domain awareness capabilities. The IONS IFC also promotes information sharing and coordination among its South Asian member states. Japan and France can work on setting up an IFC in their area of influence and the various IFCs across the Indo-Pacific region could coordinate on sharing and disseminating information.

It would also be beneficial for these efforts to lead to a naval conference that will bring the information gathered and disseminated on Island security for each of them. It will allow for knowledge-sharing of best practices on island security policies and the independent implementation of those policies. Additionally, such a platform can also be availed to share particular expertise of the countries in Island management. For example, Japan can learn from India's coordinated

efforts between public and private sectors in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Abhishek Kumar, "India's Act East Gateway: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands", *The Diplomat*, 25 October 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/indias-act-east-gateway-the-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/#:~:text=The%20central%20government%20has%20cleared,connectivity%20go%20hand%20in%20hand.>

## Technological Cooperation in Cyber and Space

*France, Japan and India have very stellar space research agencies and their digital footprint in cyberspace has expanded dramatically in the last two decades.*

If France and Japan have been European and Asian giants in technological research and development, India's emergence as a serious actor in the technology domain is a recent phenomenon. France, Japan and India have very stellar space research agencies and their digital footprint in cyberspace has expanded dramatically in the last two decades. Space and cyber have emerged as two critical technologies in the current technological ecosystem. Both bring enormous opportunities for civilian and military applications but also create major vulnerabilities against attacks by state and non-state adversaries.

In recent years, India, Japan and France have experienced increasingly sophisticated cyber operations against government agencies and organisations providing critical infrastructure. In October 2020, following the increased instances of border skirmishes in the Himalayas between the PLA and the Indian Armed Forces, Mumbai's power grid control systems were jeopardised, causing a significant power outage in the city. While reports have revealed that the attack likely emanated from China,<sup>31</sup> India has denied these allegations citing the lack of evidence to support this.<sup>32</sup> Japan underwent a cyber-attack on its software distribution network, initiated using Fujitsu's ProjectWeb system to infiltrate the networks of the Japanese government and vital infrastructure. The attackers stole sensitive data pertaining to Japan's air transportation operations and schedules.<sup>33</sup> The likely source of the cyberattacks is still under investigation. However, this attack is reminiscent of the ongoing global cyber

<sup>31</sup> David E. Sanger and Emily Schmall, "China Appears to Warn India: Push Too Hard and the Lights Could Go Out", *The New York Times*, 28 February 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/28/us/politics/china-india-hacking-electricity.html>.

<sup>32</sup> "It was human error: Cyberattacks took place but didn't cause Mumbai power outage, says govt", *The Times of India*, 2 March 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/2020-mumbai-power-outage-caused-by-human-error-not-cyber-attack-union-power-minister/articleshow/81292545.cms>.

<sup>33</sup> "Cyber readiness in Asia Pacific region: Australia, India and Japan", *Trellix*, 14 April 2022, <https://www.trellix.com/en-us/about/newsroom/stories/perspectives/cyber-readiness-in-asia-pacific-region.html>.



espionage campaign, which is usually associated with Russia and China.<sup>34</sup>

In 2021, the French cybersecurity agency, ANSSI, announced that several French entities were breached from 2017 to 2020 in an intrusion campaign linked to GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency.<sup>35</sup> Russia has also been accused of launching a cyberattack on Ukraine's power grid system alongside its conventional military campaign against Ukraine since February 2022. The difficulty in attributing the source of cyber-attacks and the lack of international norms and code of conduct regulating the cyber domain turn "cyber vulnerabilities in the national and international critical infrastructure [into potent] conduit for attacks with highly dangerous consequences."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the ongoing military transformation and modernisation are also highly network-centric, and are, therefore, heavily dependent on cyber technologies. The central role played by cyberspace in both civilian and military infrastructure renders states vulnerable in events of international crisis and escalation.

The world has entered a new space age.<sup>37</sup> Space exploration is back in vogue, with states again keen on exploring the solar system for extracting and utilising space resources, scientific and research work and as new states rise in the global system for status and prestige. The radical transformation in information and communications technology, along with geospatial data requirements, is also putting significant demands on information and communication satellites. Military uses of space, particularly for surveillance, reconnaissance and communications, have also led to substantial crowding of outer space. Such overemphasis on space-based assets for both civilian and

*Military uses of space, particularly for surveillance, reconnaissance and communications, have also led to substantial crowding of outer space.*

<sup>34</sup> Alicia Hope, "Japanese government agencies suffered cyber attack exposing proprietary data", *CPO Magazine*, 3 June 2021, <https://www.cpomagazine.com/cyber-security/japanese-government-agencies-suffered-cyber-attack-exposing-proprietary-data/>.

<sup>35</sup> Laurens Cerulus, "France identifies Russia-linked hackers in large cyberattack", *PoliticoPro*, 15 February 2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-cyber-agency-russia-attack-security-anssi/>.

<sup>36</sup> David Livingstone and Patricia Lewis, "Space, the Final Frontier for Cybersecurity?", Chatham House, International Security Department, Research Paper, September 2016, 20, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2016-09-22-space-final-frontier-cybersecurity-livingstone-lewis.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Julia Ciocca, Rachel Hulvey and Christian Ruhl, "The New Space Age: Beyond Global Order", University of Pennsylvania, Perry World House, Fall 2021, <https://global.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/perry-world-house/The%20New%20Space%20Age%20-%20Beyond%20Global%20Order%20Report.pdf>.

*The space security environment has worsened significantly, with more and more states gaining the capability to militarise outer space and target space-based civilian and military assets.*

military use has created vulnerabilities that adversaries could target during wartime through kinetic and non-kinetic means. However, the extant international regimes for the management of outer space fall seriously short of answering the complexities engendered by such unfettered use of space for civilian and military services. The Cold War space partnerships between the US, Russia and China have fallen through the cracks because of their geopolitical competition. The space security environment has worsened significantly, with more and more states gaining the capability to militarise outer space and target space-based civilian and military assets. Even when the US and other western powers have created new initiatives, such as the Artemis Accords, to promote responsible and peaceful exploration of outer space, key players such as India remained outside its ambit.

The growing threat to cybersecurity and the weaponisation of space have forced India, Japan and France to build stronger technological partnerships to counter such threats. However, such technical partnerships are primarily bilateral. Japan and France started their annual bilateral consultation on cybersecurity in 2015. Indo-French dialogue on cyber security began in 2017 and, in August 2019, the two countries agreed on a “Roadmap on Cybersecurity and Digital Technology”.<sup>38</sup> Japan and India finalised a cyber-security pact for cooperation on 5G, artificial intelligence and critical information infrastructure in the same year.<sup>39</sup> Such bilateral dialogues and initiatives also exist in the space domain. In 2019, Japan and France started their bilateral space dialogue with India.<sup>40</sup> Though France has been one of the oldest partners for the Indian Space and Research Organisation,<sup>41</sup> space cooperation with Tokyo has picked up in the last

<sup>38</sup> “Indo-French Roadmap on Cybersecurity and Digital Technology”, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 22 August 2019, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31757/IndoFrench+Roadmap+on+Cybersecurity+and+Digital+Technology+August+22+2019>.

<sup>39</sup> “India, Japan finalise landmark cyber-security pact for co-operation on 5G, AI and critical information infrastructure”, *Firstpost*, 8 October 2020, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-japan-finalise-landmark-cyber-security-pact-for-co-operation-on-5g-ai-and-critical-information-infrastructure-8890591.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Saki Hayashi, “Japan-India ‘Space Dialogue’ to include surveillance sharing”, *Nikkei Asia*, 9 December 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-India-Space-Dialogue-to-include-surveillance-sharing>; and Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “India-France Agree on Space Security Dialogue”, *The Diplomat*, 3 September 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/india-france-agree-on-space-security-dialogue/>.

<sup>41</sup> Economic Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs, “India and France: Together in Space since 1964”, 28 December 2020, <https://indbiz.gov.in/india-and-france-together-in-space-since-1964/>.

few years. Japan and France also conduct an annual space dialogue since 2018.

Given such already existing bilateral efforts, it is pertinent that India, Japan and France should come together to cooperate in the cyber and space domain, sharing threat assessments and best practices. The three countries should also collaborate to help build defensive capabilities, including escalation control, a mechanism to maintain sovereignty and stability amidst the big power rivalry in the cyber and space domain.

In the cyber domain, there are two main areas of cooperation on the tactical front. The first is to enhance situational awareness and cyber attribution capabilities and the second is to achieve operational and cyber resilience. Enhancing situational awareness and cyber attribution capabilities can be achieved through information and intelligence sharing, technological collaboration and human exchange.<sup>42</sup> In the Indo-Pacific, “there is a systemic lack of transparency and willingness to share information”. India, Japan and France are disadvantaged as none are members of the Five Eyes network. Moreover, non-political platforms, such as the Asia-Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team, are highly inadequate due to insufficient information.<sup>43</sup> The mutual sharing of knowledge on the technical aspects of the cyber-attack will enable one attacked to bolster defences by filling the gaps and achieving cyber-resilience.<sup>44</sup>

*Enhancing situational awareness and cyber attribution capabilities can be achieved through information and intelligence sharing, technological collaboration and human exchange.*

Achieving operational and cyber resilience is the second domain for cooperation among the three countries.<sup>45</sup> There should be an effort to set standards and expectations for the response and recovery of

<sup>42</sup> Ivan Kwiatkowski, Anastasiya Kazakova, Julia Ryng and Kendrick Chan, “‘Unpacking’ technical attribution and challenges for ensuring stability in cyberspace”, *Securelist*, 20 June 2022, <https://securelist.com/unpacking-technical-attribution/106791/#:~:text=Cyber%20attribution%20is%20a%20necessary,accordance%20with%20national%20applicable%20laws>.

<sup>43</sup> Bart Hogeveen, “The Future of Cyber Warfare in the Indo-Pacific”, Observer Research Foundation, 13 January 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-future-of-cyber-warfare-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>44</sup> Ivan Kwiatkowski, Anastasiya Kazakova, Julia Ryng and Kendrick Chan, “‘Unpacking’ technical attribution and challenges for ensuring stability in cyberspace”, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> Tobias Adrian, International Monetary Fund, IMF Communications Department, “Cyber Resilience – Delivering through Disruption”, 17 January 2023, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/01/17/sp-cyber-resilience-delivering-through-disruption>.

systems in the event of disruptions due to cyber-attacks. Further, the three countries should conduct formal assessments of existing cybersecurity risk management efforts to help better “monitor developments and strengthen policy frameworks across member countries”.<sup>46</sup>

*France has prioritised military space capabilities as a national and European security concern.*

In the space domain, cooperation in satellite technology is an area relevant to the three middle powers. Showcasing their combat capability in outer space, China and Russia have tested “low-Earth orbit anti-satellite missiles”<sup>47</sup> and India has followed suit. Japan is on track to increase its space capabilities, with plans to commence the operation of a space situational awareness system in 2023 and to launch a space surveillance satellite by 2026.<sup>48</sup> France has prioritised military space capabilities as a national and European security concern.<sup>49</sup> The three powers are well-suited to collaborate in the task of establishing a resilient and robust space industry ecosystem by forming a “Space Security Alliance”<sup>50</sup> to “deepen interoperable architectures and build resilient space systems”.<sup>51</sup> France and Japan should also vouch for India’s inclusion in the Artemis Accords.

The three countries also have much to contribute to the emerging rules and norms guiding state behaviour in the cyber and space domain. France, India and Japan are middle powers and like-minded democracies with similar views and approaches to international law and the development of norms for responsible behaviour in the cyber and space domain. The three countries can work on crafting technical and overarching agreements covering a broad scope from the arms race in space to cyber warfare. Such an effort can capitalise

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> M. Bruce, “An Indo-Pacific Space Security Alliance is what Australia, the Indo-Pacific, and the world need”, ASEAN-Australia Strategic Youth Partnership, 17 December 2020, <https://aasyp.org/2020/12/17/an-indo-pacific-space-security-alliance-is-what-australia-the-indo-pacific-and-the-world-need/>.

<sup>48</sup> Gabriel Dominguez, “As space race escalates, Japan bolsters defense capabilities in new domains”, *The Japan Times*, 6 January 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/01/06/national/japan-space-defense/>.

<sup>49</sup> Vivienne Machi, “France puts space at top of national – and European – security priorities”, *DefenseNews*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/space/2022/03/14/france-puts-space-at-top-of-national-and-european-security-priorities/>.

<sup>50</sup> M. Bruce, “An Indo-Pacific Space Security Alliance is what Australia, the Indo-Pacific, and the world need”, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> Philip Citowicki, “AUKUS security alliance launching boldly into space”, *Asia Times*, 12 November 2022, <https://asiatimes.com/2022/11/aukus-security-alliance-launching-boldly-into-space/>.

on the countries' existing bilateral partnerships. For example, the EU-India Strategic Partnership & Roadmap to 2025 entails agreements to collaborate on new and developing technologies, standards and regulations, as well as international norms.<sup>52</sup> It would be beneficial to expand on such existing bilateral norms to develop multilateral norms across the various aspects of the cyber and space domain. As the rapidly evolving cyber and space capabilities "challenge the meaningfulness of the agreements already made, by their technical nature",<sup>53</sup> it is vital that the middle powers create a platform for continuous discussions, norm development and consensus building to keep up with the demands of constantly unfolding technological innovations.

*It would be beneficial to expand on such existing bilateral norms to develop multilateral norms across the various aspects of the cyber and space domain.*

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<sup>52</sup> "Atlas Report – Compare India, Japan and European Union", EU Cyber Direct, European Union, 22 February 2023, <https://eucyberdirect.eu/atlas/country/india/compare/japan/european-union>.

<sup>53</sup> Alexandra Kulikova, "Cyber norms: technical extensions and technical challenges", *Journal of Cyber Policy* 6, no. 3 (2021): 355, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/23738871.2021.2020316?needAccess=true&role=button>.

## Regional Engagements: ASEAN's Perspectives on the Role of India, Japan and France

Southeast Asia has been grappling with the intensifying US-China strategic competition in the region. The region finds itself vulnerable to spillovers from bilateral trade tensions and disputes threatening to diminish global value chains. Reshoring of supply chains could weaken an essential pillar of ASEAN's regional economic growth. China and the US are the largest export destinations for most ASEAN member nations. This renders the ASEAN member countries vulnerable to the cascading effect of regional supply chain disruptions. Therefore, the US-China bilateral trade relations impact the economies of Southeast Asian countries significantly.<sup>54</sup>

*ASEAN was created to protect the member states' territorial integrity and sovereignty and the Ukrainian war serves as a stark reminder that interference is a possibility.*

The Ukraine crisis has not only intensified but deepened ASEAN's insecurity. There is persistent angst about territorial integrity, inviolability of borders and interference within ASEAN circles. ASEAN was created to protect the member states' territorial integrity and sovereignty and the Ukrainian war serves as a stark reminder that interference is a possibility. Soaring energy prices, chronic food insecurity and hyperinflation have resulted in severe domestic unrest. While ASEAN does not view the tensions in Taiwan as a crisis, it still presents significant implications for ASEAN and Southeast Asia. ASEAN follows the 'One China' policy. The Taiwan issue has flared in the background of intense US-China competition. Therefore, if US-China relations attain stability, the probability of military conflict over Taiwan can be contained. The ASEAN member states fear that any kinetic conflict over Taiwan will directly and seriously affect Southeast Asia and ASEAN and may drag the region into a quagmire.

The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), adopted during the 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, is the region's attempt to provide an alternative

<sup>54</sup> Ian Coxhead, "The US-China Trade War and Prospects for ASEAN Economies", Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organisation, May 2022, [https://www.ide.go.jp/English/ResearchColumns/Columns/2022/ian\\_coxhead.html](https://www.ide.go.jp/English/ResearchColumns/Columns/2022/ian_coxhead.html).

vision for the Indo-Pacific.<sup>55</sup> The AOIP seeks to re-assert ASEAN's centrality amidst competing narratives of the major powers regarding the emerging Indo-Pacific security architecture. It provides a common script for the ASEAN member states responding to growing external pressures on taking a stand over the "Indo-Pacific".<sup>56</sup> Driven by anxiety over the existing international order, the AOIP reflects ASEAN's renewed vigour towards multilateralism. There is a desire not to allow extra-regional forces and initiatives and Western-inclined organisations, such as the BRI, the Quad and AUKUS, to seize the initiative.

The AOIP is premised on the hope that emphasising ASEAN's normative and convening power would be sufficient to tone down great power politics and change regional geopolitical outcomes. This presents two main challenges. First, there is no clear vision of what the AOIP encompasses and, consequently, there is no consensus amongst the ASEAN member states on further implementing the ASEAN outlook.<sup>57</sup> For example, there are clear divisions on the issue of Ukraine. Ironically, ASEAN's anxiety about sovereignty and territorial integrity is not translated into a coherent stance on the Ukraine crisis.

Nevertheless, the concept of the 'ASEAN Way' guides ASEAN's diplomatic norms and there is a shared understanding of the principle of non-interference in member states' decisions and actions. For example, when Vietnam and Thailand abstained from voting on a UN resolution, the member states' calculus on this decision was respected by the other ASEAN member states. Concomitantly, there is a reluctance to spend precious political capital on such divisions; amongst a whole host of issues concerning ASEAN centrality, the Ukrainian war still does not rank very high. Therefore, the effect of the division on the Ukraine crisis on ASEAN cohesion is weak.

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<sup>55</sup> "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", ASEAN, 23 June 2019, <https://asean.org/speechandstatement/asean-outlook-on-the-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>56</sup> Hoang Thi Ha, "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Old Wine in a New Bottle?", ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 25 June 2019, [https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/10731/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2019\\_51.pdf?sequence=3](https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/10731/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_51.pdf?sequence=3).

<sup>57</sup> Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia, "Improving the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", East Asia Forum, 28 July 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/07/28/improving-the-asean-outlook-on-the-indo-pacific/>.



*ASEAN's diplomacy is limited by resources, distracted by issues such as Myanmar and lacks internal consensus.*

The second challenge in the AOIP's premise is that it lacks strategy, resources and outcomes. The AOIP provides a limited framework for the ASEAN member states to refer to in situations where they must make binary decisions regarding their involvement with the US and China, given the two economies are moving towards decoupling.<sup>58</sup> For example, there were obvious limits to ASEAN diplomacy in the Ukrainian issue. Ukraine signed the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in November 2022, which stipulates that by signing the agreement, the parties involved are entitled to safeguard their national institutions from external meddling, aggression, or pressure.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the agreement prohibits any intervention in the domestic affairs of member states and encourages peaceful resolution of disagreements or conflicts. It promotes the avoidance of violent threats or actions and emphasises the importance of effective collaboration among members.<sup>60</sup> Ukraine has also appealed to ASEAN to condemn Russia more forcefully; however, this request did not find much traction. Similarly, the escalation of tensions in Taiwan has brought to the fore the need for clarity over ASEAN and its member states' policies and reactions. The ASEAN member states are at pains deciding what merits condemnation and under what conditions they should offer access to military bases and logistical help during international crises such as Taiwan. ASEAN's diplomacy is limited by resources, distracted by issues such as Myanmar and lacks internal consensus.

The Ukraine crisis is a timely reminder to ASEAN that it should remain in the driving seat over the emerging geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. France, India and Japan can capitalise on this in two principal ways. The first is to engage with ASEAN meaningfully, substantially and sustainably. For example, US president Joe Biden administration's IPEF includes nearly a half dozen countries from ASEAN who have stepped forward to join the negotiations to formalise the new and loosely defined economic pact. The IPEF's purpose is to add economic

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Ukraine Inks ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation", *Tempo.co*, 11 November 2022, <https://en.tempco.co/read/1655582/ukraine-inks-asean-treaty-of-amity-and-cooperation>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

heft to the US Indo-Pacific policy that has, thus far, focused largely on geopolitics. The IPEF seeks and aims to establish new economic rules for the region while excluding Asia's largest economy, China. By design, the Biden administration's push for supply chain resilience particularly appears to be aimed at cutting Chinese inputs out of regional supply chains. However, without the bargaining chip of US market access, there are few meaningful incentives for IPEF signatories. Their interests are best served by not decoupling from China but by abstaining from the geo-economically consequential pillars of the IPEF. Despite knowing that membership to the IPEF will not increase the signatories' market access in the US, many ASEAN member countries were driven by the fear of missing out on the IPEF platform. This provides an opportunity for Japan, France and India to engage with ASEAN on their terms and for the engagement not to be defined purely by US-China relations.

*Despite knowing that membership to the IPEF will not increase the signatories' market access in the US, many ASEAN member countries were driven by the fear of missing out on the IPEF platform.*

The second way is for France and Japan to upgrade their ties with ASEAN to a CSP, which "signifies a high level of maturity in the relationship as reflected in the breadth and depth of cooperation and political commitment".<sup>61</sup> India and the US have recently upgraded their bilateral relationship with ASEAN to a CSP.

Both these strategies work in trying to foster more cooperation to serve the bigger purpose of getting other parties engaged in the region. However, it is important to note that ASEAN has always been sensitive to China's disapproval of these sorts of arrangements that can be seen as playing bloc politics.

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<sup>61</sup> Sharon Seah, Joanne Lin and Melinda Martinus, "ASEAN's Season of Summitry: More Hits or Misses?", *Fulcrum*, 16 November 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/aseans-season-of-summitry-more-hits-or-misses/>.

## Contesting the Monopoly over Regional Development and Supply Chains

*Great power competition is also playing out in restructuring supply chains as countries are now aware that the extreme concentration of supply chains in China disrupted national economies and provided Beijing with significant geostrategic heft.*

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated and exposed the pre-existing issues of over-concentration of supply chain networks in the Indo-Pacific. The Ukraine war compounded these issues and has shown how resource competition has become central to contemporary geopolitics. Governments are now bringing their attention to regional development and restructuring of supply chains in the Indo-Pacific. Great power competition is also playing out in restructuring supply chains as countries are now aware that the extreme concentration of supply chains in China disrupted national economies and provided Beijing with significant geostrategic heft. The BRI's prime target was establishing China's regional development monopoly. However, the BRI undercuts the fundamental principle of transparency and forces the developing countries into a vicious cycle of debt traps. It uses connectivity and infrastructure projects as proxies for deploying its military power. The economic crisis in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh has exposed China's predatory policies. As major economic powers in Asia and Europe and significant providers of developmental aid, India, Japan and France can help provide sustainable development to the global south and help decongest supply chains and increase their resilience to avoid a situation of coercion through supply chain concentration.

Yet, India, Japan and France have reacted to the BRI differently. Even when France opposes China's "human rights violations, unilateral aggression and authoritarianism",<sup>62</sup> it hopes to sustain an economic partnership in areas where both countries' interests align. France has established a joint intergovernmental infrastructure cooperation mechanism with China, where both countries jointly participate in

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<sup>62</sup> Mahima Duggal, "The China Factor in France's Indo-Pacific Strategy", Air University, *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 13 July 2022, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3091134/the-china-factor-in-frances-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

seven key infrastructure projects worth US\$1.7 billion (\$2.3 billion) across Africa, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe.<sup>63</sup> The purpose of the agreement is to bring together the different capabilities of France and China, specifically France's advanced knowledge in areas such as manufacturing, environmental preservation and engineering construction and China's expertise in infrastructure development and energy equipment manufacturing.<sup>64</sup> This collaboration intends to extend developmental assistance to third-party countries.<sup>65</sup> However, France has expressed concern about the "debt trap" issue arising out of the BRI's opaque financing. France has strongly emphasised the importance of adhering to the "G20 Operational Guidelines for Sustainable Financing". The primary aim of these guidelines is to ensure that both creditor and debtor nations' lending and borrowing practices promote sustainable public debt levels.<sup>66</sup>

India has openly opposed the BRI primarily because of the geopolitical sensitivity around BRI's flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which infringes on its territorial sovereignty in Kammua and Kashmir. However, New Delhi also believes that the BRI lacks essential transparency, engages in financial indiscretions and traps developing countries in unnecessary economic activity while burdening developing countries with enormous debt. India has repeatedly emphasised that "connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognised international norms, good governance, the rule of law, openness, transparency and equality and must be pursued in a manner that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>67</sup>

Although Japan has agreed to cooperate on third-country development with the BRI, it is concerned over China's growing geopolitical

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<sup>63</sup> "Europe Construction Industry Report 2022: France Joins China to Build Global Infrastructure Construction Projects – ResearchAndMarkets.com", *Businesswire*, 14 December 2022, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20221214005622/en/Europe-Construction-Industry-Report-2022-France-Joins-China-to-Build-Global-Infrastructure-Construction-Projects---ResearchAndMarkets.com#:text=France%20and%20China%20will%20jointly,investments%20toward%20domestic%20infrastructure%20projects>.

<sup>64</sup> Mahima Duggal, "The China Factor in France's Indo-Pacific Strategy", op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Françoise Nicolas, "France and China's Belt and Road Initiative, Commentary in ISPI Dossier: EU-China Relations: Challenges and Opportunities", *institute français des relations internationales*, 8 April 2019, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/publications-ifri/articles-ifri/france-and-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative>.

<sup>67</sup> Gulshan Sachdeva, "Indian Perceptions of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative", *HKTDC Research*, 19 September 2019, <https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/MzYzMDM2MTMy>.

*Since all three countries, regardless of whether they are members of the BRI, have common concerns regarding transparency, efficiency and militarisation of development aid, there is enough ground for India, Japan and France to cooperate in establishing ground rules for such activities.*

influence. To counter China's development diplomacy, in 2016, Japan spearheaded the FOIP concept. Like India and France, Japan has emphasised that all developmental aid should measure up to standards of transparency and financial, economic and environmental sustainability. To compete with the BRI infrastructure development, Tokyo has heralded the concept of quality over quantity in its development diplomacy, as underlined in the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure". Japan's efforts are set apart from the BRI through its emphasis on "quality", which includes prioritising economic efficiency and taking into account the impact on the local economy, as an essential component.<sup>68</sup> Since all three countries, regardless of whether they are members of the BRI, have common concerns regarding transparency, efficiency and militarisation of development aid, there is enough ground for India, Japan and France to cooperate in establishing ground rules for such activities. India and Japan are collaborating on several connectivity projects in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa. Given France's economic and diplomatic presence in Africa, Paris may emerge as a critical partner for enhancing the effectiveness of connectivity and infrastructure collaborations in the continent. India and Japan should invite France as a trilateral partner for their African development projects.

Regarding supply chain resilience, "friendshoring" or "allied shoring" is a phenomenon emerging in the Indo-Pacific in response to the massive global supply chain disruption. For the past three decades, the organisation of supply chains has been guided by the logic of economic efficiency, which means that supply chains should be location agnostic. Friendshoring, on the other hand, is a political calculation that countries make in reorganising supply chains. To make the supply chains as resilient as possible, preventing disorders from the existing concentrations and making the sourcing wider by including a broader modality of diversification across a group of countries with shared values is critical.

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<sup>68</sup> Jakob Ranglin Grissler and Lars Vargö, "The BRI vs FOIP: Japan's Countering of China's Global Ambitions", Institute for Security and Development Policy, Issue Brief, 8 February 2021, <https://www.isdp.eu/content/uploads/2021/02/The-BRI-vs-FOIP-IB-08.02.21.pdf>.

Countries like Japan and India have financially incentivised businesses to relocate out of mainland China. Friendshoring has led to multilateral efforts in dealing with supply chain disruptions. One such multilateral effort is the IPEF, which has supply chains as one of its priority pillars. There are initiatives like the MSP, which does not include India but includes many other countries, including France, which has a leading position insofar as providing technologies for critical mining minerals is concerned. The strategies of Indo-Pacific's maritime powers have "appeared overwhelmingly focused on security and associated with defence and strategy policies and interests".<sup>69</sup> Such strategies have to "advance beyond this space and serve other interests beyond a particular context (the threat of China's rise) and group (Quad)".<sup>70</sup>

*Friendshoring has led to multilateral efforts in dealing with supply chain disruptions.*

Commitment to the Indo-Pacific rarely results in concrete and sustained financial support. For example, the financial incentives extended to businesses to relocate out of mainland China are often a one-off benefit. Additionally, there would also be an expectation that companies moving out of China have access to the domestic markets of allied countries. However, this is rarely the situation, as in the case of the Korean semiconductor industry.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, leadership is needed to set "forth a values-based vision of fair and reciprocal standards. Working multilaterally and cooperatively with representatives from the private sector will ensure that this set of practices represents balanced and future-oriented priorities, protecting against national security threats but not allowing said provisions to obstruct the market and inhibit innovation."<sup>72</sup> It is where middle powers such as India, Japan and France can collaborate and bridge the gap.

<sup>69</sup> Yu-Shan Wu, "Beyond 'Indo-Pacific' as a buzzword: Learning from China's BRI experience", *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol.29, no.1 (2022): 8, <https://www.tandfonline-com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/epdf/10.1080/10220461.2022.2042373?needAccess=true&role=button>.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Corrado, "Clash or Consensus? The Conflicting Economic and Security Imperatives of Semiconductor Supply-Chain Collaboration in the Indo-Pacific", *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, October (2022): pp. 74-94, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Nov/08/2003110685/-1/-1/1/JIPA%20-%20CORRADO%2022.PDF>

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

## Global Crisis Management and Peacekeeping

*Spanning from Africa to Asia, there are increasing possibilities of new instabilities, humanitarian crises and non-traditional security threats that require more coordinated action among these states.*

The deterioration in the international security order, underlined by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's continuous pressure on Taiwan, has necessitated major countries like India, Japan and France to focus more on their security concerns and perhaps less on global peacekeeping and stability efforts. While India remains one of the top troop contributors to UN peacekeeping, Japan is slow to embrace its role as a global net security provider. France has a solid overseas military presence in Africa but is slowly retrenching from the continent, as underlined by the end of its nearly nine-year military engagement in Mali. Spanning from Africa to Asia, there are increasing possibilities of new instabilities, humanitarian crises and non-traditional security threats that require more coordinated action among these states.

The three countries have different national priorities in global crisis management and peacekeeping. Under Abe, Japan saw efforts to promote Japanese participation in more UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). However, there has been a noticeable reduction in the deployment of Japanese peacekeepers. There is also an apparent shift in Tokyo's preference for providing foreign aid and boosting capacity-building instead of peacekeeping. The decreasing interest in peacekeeping is related to the lack of direct connection between Japanese national security and peacekeeping operations. As Japan deals with territorial disputes with China and Russia, securing stability in Asia is of paramount concern; hence, the peacekeeping operations abroad are not of immediate concern to Tokyo. As a permanent member of the UNSC, France is militarily and politically involved in UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>73</sup> However, France's contribution to peacekeeping operations in terms of troops deployed is low, with just a little more than "700 French troops deployed in 5

<sup>73</sup> Thierry Tardy, "France: the unlikely return to UN peacekeeping", *International peacekeeping*, vol. 23, no. 5 (2016): 610-629, <https://www.tandfonline-com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/epdf/10.1080/13533312.2016.1235091?needAccess=true&role=button>.

<sup>74</sup> "Peacekeeping", Permanent representation of France at the United Nations in New York, 2019, <https://onu.delegfrance.org/peacekeeping-10194#:~:text=Since%20its%20establishment%20in%201948,more%20than%2075%2C000%20by%202022>.

PKOs”<sup>74</sup> as of February 2022. France has “developed an institutional preference for frameworks other than the UN, namely, NATO, the EU and national operations.”<sup>75</sup> A significant trend in French politics has been to use the EU as a multiplayer and credible foreign policy force. India is essential to UN peacekeeping operations, “having deployed more than 250,000 peacekeepers across 49 UN missions”.<sup>76</sup> Despite the recent domestic resistance to the continued strong support for peacekeeping operations, India remains committed to UNPKO. Besides gaining “diplomatic benefits by committing to peacekeeping operations”,<sup>77</sup> participating in peacekeeping operations aligns with New Delhi’s strategic interests as India has vested economic interests in many countries that host the UNPKO.<sup>78</sup>

If India, Japan and France have set different priorities for peacekeeping operations, the divergence over global crisis management is perhaps most evident over the issue of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Over Ukraine, India is not on the same page as France and Japan. While the difference in stance on the Ukraine crisis could be a potential challenge for cooperation between Japan, India and France, it would be wise for Japan and France to understand the Indian position on the Ukraine conflict and develop a more receptive and realistic response. Although the US’ alliance commitments to Japan and France can be seen as a hindrance to their strategic autonomy and their alignment with India, the Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and growing US-China competition can bring them together for global peacekeeping and security cooperation and collaboration.

France and India have an interest in the Western Indian Ocean; France and Japan have an interest in the South Pacific; and both India and Japan have a vested interest in the South China Sea region. Since “disaster management and peacekeeping are low-hanging fruit – while they sit at the ‘soft’ end of the spectrum of security cooperation,

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<sup>75</sup> Thierry Tardy, “France: the unlikely return to UN peacekeeping”, 611, op. cit.

<sup>76</sup> “India largest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping in cumulative terms: Meenakshi Lekhi”, ANI, 8 September 2021, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/others/india-largest-troop-contributor-to-un-peacekeeping-in-cumulative-terms-meenakshi-lekhi20210908210408/>.

<sup>77</sup> Gabriel Dominguez, “South Asia and peacekeeping”, DW News, 1 November 2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/what-drives-south-asians-to-peacekeeping/a-18970732>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



*India, Japan and France can benefit from building relationships with the countries in the Indo-Pacific region and displaying a shared commitment to the region's stability.*

they can be very useful ways to develop personal relationships and inter-operability and provide an opportunity to generate significant goodwill”.<sup>79</sup> India, Japan and France can benefit from building relationships with the countries in the Indo-Pacific region and displaying a shared commitment to the region's stability. Additionally, peacekeeping operations and HADR missions “can...provide a useful locus for cooperation, particularly between the respective armies... building institutional relationships”.<sup>80</sup> India is an emerging net security provider in the Indian Ocean region. At the regional level, India's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region facilitates India to cooperate “with multiple partners to ensure economic growth & security in the region while tackling threats such as natural disasters”.<sup>81</sup> Japan has much experience in engaging with disaster relief efforts. The Japanese SDF are equipped with experience and skills that can be extended to help “improve the HADR capabilities of the armed forces in the Indo-Pacific region”.<sup>82</sup> For example, India held the annual joint HADR exercise Sumanvay 2022 in November, which included stakeholders from the ASEAN member countries. The exercise aims to provide a platform for exchanging HADR expertise and best practices with the participating members.<sup>83</sup> The exercise also aims to “aid in the evolution of institutional frameworks for effective communication, interoperability, cooperation and their application for the successful conduct of [the] HADR.”<sup>84</sup> France has significant cooperation with Australia and New Zealand on the HADR front – “The FRANZ Arrangement between France, Australia and New Zealand facilitates information-sharing for relief operations.”<sup>85</sup> Existing arrangements like the Quad can be capitalised on in conducting HADR

<sup>79</sup> David Brewster, “The Australia-India framework for security cooperation: Another step towards an Indo-Pacific security partnership”, *Security Challenges*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2015): 46, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/13199/2/Brewster%20D%20Australia%20India%20Framework%20for%20Security%20Cooperation%202015.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>81</sup> Swati Luthra, “India has emerged as a regional power and security provider in Indo-Pacific: Rajnath”, *Mint*, 29 November 2022, <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/india-has-emerged-as-a-regional-power-and-security-provider-in-indo-pacific-rajnath-11669727652466.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Ono Keishi, “Japan's Climate Security Strategy in the Indo-Pacific”, S. Rajaratnam School of Strategic Studies, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, NTU, 2 November 2021, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/IP21012-Ono-masthead-final.pdf>.

<sup>83</sup> “Samanvay 2022: Annual Joint HADR exercise of Indian Air Force”, *NewsOnAIR*, 28 November 2022, <https://newsonair.com/2022/11/28/samanvay-2022-annual-joint-hadr-exercise-of-indian-air-force/>.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Eric Frécon, ““France's Third Path” for the Indo-Pacific? Credentials and Challenges”, *Fulcrum*, 23 February 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/frances-third-path-for-the-indo-pacific-credentials-and-challenges/>.

missions. In September 2022, the Quad leaders signed the Guidelines for the 'Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in the Indo-Pacific'. One possible way to capitalise on the Quad partnership would include other middle and regional powers, such as France, in Quad-plus HADR exercises and missions.

The three countries have the political will, interests and capabilities to engage and collaborate on climate security issues. France and India have prioritised environmental and climate security issues in their Indo-Pacific strategy. One example is the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which President François Hollande launched with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015.<sup>86</sup> Japan has also ratified the ISA framework. France also conducts Indian Ocean climate risk mapping with Australia to forecast the security implications of climate change. France and India expect to start an India-France partnership on the blue economy and ocean governance, which seeks to rectify maritime environmental issues.<sup>87</sup> These existing alliances can be expanded to include Japan and India. This will not only serve to cover a wider area of the Indo-Pacific region but also taps into the two states existing environmental security infrastructure and capabilities.

*France and India expect to start an India-France partnership on the blue economy and ocean governance, which seeks to rectify maritime environmental issues.*

Collaboration in HADR missions hold much potential for the three countries. The countries should utilise existing platforms and organisations to further dialogue, such as developing Track 1.5 and to expand to seek out engagement with more regional partners. It would be prudent to pursue these steps first before officialising a formal trilateral partnership.

Lastly, India, Japan and France are pluralistic democracies that share similar values, making their cooperation apt for conflict resolution. The three countries have the ability to assist them in their institutional and nation-building efforts needed for securing and sustaining peace

<sup>86</sup> Eric Frécon, "France's Third Path, for the Indo-Pacific? Credentials and Challenges", ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 15 February 2022, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2022-12-frances-third-path-for-the-indo-pacific-credentials-and-challenges-by-eric-frecon/>.

<sup>87</sup> "India-France road map on the Blue Economy and Ocean governance (20 Feb. 2022)", Ministry of European and External Affairs, France Diplomacy, 20 February 2022, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/india/news/article/india-france-road-map-on-the-blue-economy-and-ocean-governance-20-feb-2022#sommaire\\_1](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/india/news/article/india-france-road-map-on-the-blue-economy-and-ocean-governance-20-feb-2022#sommaire_1).

in conflict-riddled situations. France has also repeatedly made a case for India and Japan to be added as permanent members of the UNSC.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> "France voices support for India, Germany, Brazil, Japan as permanent UNSC members", *The Hindu*, 19 November 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/france-voices-support-for-india-germany-brazil-japan-as-permanent-uns-c-members/article66156370.ece>.

## Appendix 1 About the Authors

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Dr Joshi's research focuses on contemporary Indian foreign and national security policy, with an emphasis on the Indo-Pacific's balance of power, the evolution of India's military power and its approach to the use of force in international relations.

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