

Briefing Memo

Will Japan-U.S.-Australia-India Security Cooperation be Realized? Different Perceptions for Order and Implications for Japan

Tomohiko Satake

Senior Fellow, Defense Policy Division, Policy Studies Department

Senior Fellow, Policy Simulation Division

*This is an English translation from the original version in Japanese published in July 2018.

Introduction

China's expanding influence in recent years is drawing attention to quadrilateral security cooperation, or cooperation among the three regional democratic nations of Japan, the United States, and Australia plus India. The framework, often referred to as "QUAD" or "QSD" (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), was proposed in 2007 by then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. After the proposal, quadrilateral working-level consultations were held in May 2007, but the framework was essentially shelved due to Australia's subsequent withdrawal and Prime Minister Abe's resignation. When the second Abe government came into power, Prime Minister Abe once again presented the concept, this time as the creation of Asia's "democratic security diamond." It has not, however, materialized into concrete policies. Now, this concept is once again gaining traction with India's increasing wariness of China's deepening relationships with South Asian countries and advancement into the Indian Ocean, along with the enhancement of Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-U.S.-India security relations.

In October 2017, Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Kono indicated in an interview that Japan will aim to hold strategic dialogues among Japan, the United States, Australia, and India at the foreign minister and summit levels. In November, officials from the foreign ministries of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India met in Manila in the Philippines to discuss initiatives for a free and open Indo-Pacific order based on the rule of law. In January 2018, senior officials from the defense ministries of the four countries met in India to exchange views regarding regional affairs. In June, officials from the foreign ministries of the four countries met in Singapore to hold talks again. Today, QUAD is often considered synonymous with (or the core element of) the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" advocated by Japan.

However, the realization of more robust security cooperation among the four countries faces many issues. They include India's appeasement to China stemming from their economic relationship and border dispute, India's traditional nonalignment policy and concerns over incorporation into the U.S. alliance network, and the immaturity of the India-Australia relationship compared to the Japan-U.S., U.S.-Australia, U.S.-India, and Japan-India relationships. In particular, India is said to have a deep-rooted distrust of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's

decision to unilaterally withdraw Australia from the QUAD concept in 2008. Such distrust is said to have become one of the impediments to the advancement of QUAD (Allen-Ebrahimian 2017).

In addition to the above, there exist crucial differences in the “perceptions for order”—in terms of what kind of international (or regional) order they aspire to have and how to achieve such an order—between Japan-U.S.-Australia and India. In particular, post-Cold War Japan-Australia and India both shared growing concerns about China’s rise but had significant differences in view over the role and importance of the United States. Such differences in their perceptions for order are expected to become a critical factor in determining the fate of QUAD. This is further discussed below by examining the post-Cold War perceptions for order of Japan, the United States, and Australia (especially Japan and Australia) and that of India.

Japanese-U.S.-Australian Perceptions for Order

The Japan-U.S.-Australia security cooperation has been strengthened continuously among the three countries after the Cold War, especially since the 2000s. One can hardly deny that the underlying reason has been the three countries’ shared concern and wariness about the rise of China. That does not necessarily mean, however, that the three countries have been always on the same page on their view of China’s threat and China policies. In particular, due to the geopolitical distance and economic relations between Australia and China, the former has a different view of China’s threat than Japan and the United States. Australia has taken China policies that are clearly distinguishable from those of Japan and the United States on issues such as the response to the European Union’s (EU) arms exports to China and accession into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Japanese and U.S. policymakers have some concerns about such China policies of Australia, and some note that such concerns pushed Japanese and U.S. policymakers to institutionalize security cooperation with Australia (White 2007, 109). Recently, a glimpse of such differences in stance and view on China can be observed from the breakdown in the Japan-U.S.-Australia submarine cooperation and subtle differences in the three countries’ response to the Belt and Road Initiative promoted by China.

Nevertheless, the trilateral security cooperation has been strengthened, not because of the three countries’ view of China’s material threat, but because of their shared perceptions for an international order. Japan and Australia, in particular, have been two of the most ardent supporters in the region of the U.S.-led liberal international order based on a strong U.S. military presence. This is evident from the fact that among the countries in the region, Japan and Australia most actively contributed to the U.S.-led “global war on terror” in response to the challenges of the 9.11 attacks. Furthermore, in order to complement the United States’ global role, Japan and Australia have played a leading role in regional security issues, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities in Timor-Leste and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief following the earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in Indonesia. Japan and Australia have deepened practical cooperation in establishing regional and global order, which, at first glance, has nothing to do with China.

Prime examples of this are the Japanese and Australian response to the Iraq War and their cooperation on the postwar reconstruction assistance. Both Japan and Australia expressed support for the United States regarding the Iraq War. The Self-Defense Forces (SDF) of Japan participated in the postwar reconstruction assistance operations, while the Australian Defence Force (ADF) participated in combat with the Iraqi forces. In addition, the John Howard government of Australia dispatched the ADF to the postwar humanitarian reconstruction assistance operations in order to “escort” the SDF. The operations in Iraq entailed enormous risks for both Japan and Australia, including public opposition. Nevertheless, the shared strategic decision by Japan and Australia to keep the United States in the international community and maintain its engagement in regional security drove Japan and Australia to make these contributions. If the SDF had withdrawn from Iraq for security reasons following the Dutch troops’ withdrawal from Iraq in March 2005, the activities of the coalition forces to reconstruct a democratic Iraq would have suffered major setbacks. To prevent such a situation and support Japan’s proactive initiatives to maintain the U.S.-led order, Prime Minister Howard decided to send more Australian troops to Iraq with the objective of escorting the SDF, even by retracting his pledge not to send more Australian troops (Lewis & Walters 2005).

In Iraq, the SDF worked closely with the ADF, including stationing a liaison officer to collect information and coordinate joint exercises at Camp Smitty, where U.K. and Australian troops were assigned. Moreover, the ADF provided various supports for the SDF’s operations, including ensuring security, and these Australian contributions were highly appreciated by Japan. Some scholars note “it is highly unlikely” that the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation of 2007 would have been issued without the Japan-Australia cooperation in Iraq (Cook & Shearer 2009, 12).

As such, although the strengthening of the Japan-U.S.-Australia security cooperation in the 2000s was largely because of geopolitical changes, namely, the rise of China, the cooperation itself was strengthened in areas not directly related to China, such as counter-terrorism measures and humanitarian reconstruction assistance. The cooperation was driven by the strategic decision of allies to support the United States’ regional and global duties and “complement” the U.S. role, so as to maintain order that was ideal to them. From the viewpoint of Japan, and especially Australia, if the United States maintains a superior order structure, this would rein in China’s hegemonic rise and allow Japan and Australia to maintain a favorable relationship with both the United States as a security partner and China as an economic partner (in this sense, it was symbolic that Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Howard, two leaders who attach particular importance to the United States among past prime ministers, maintained favorable relations with China at the same time). The Japan-U.S.-Australia security cooperation has evolved in this context of “supporting” such U.S.-led liberal order through ally cooperation.

India’s Perceptions for Order

In contrast with Japan and Australia that have jointly supported the U.S.-led order, India has continued to be at odds with such order. In particular, India has been inclined towards multipolarity at the global level, rather than a unipolar order led by the United States, and has striven to become one of the poles in the multipolar order. This is

clear from Prime Minister Modi's address at the World Economic Forum in January 2018 as well as his reference to "multipolarity" in the international order during meetings with the Chinese and Russian leaders that followed. In his keynote address at the Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue) held in June 2018, Prime Minister Modi made a point of stating that he and President Vladimir Putin of Russia reached agreement on "the need for a strong multi-polar world order." While Prime Minister Modi mentioned cooperation with Japan, the United States, and Australia, respectively, and the importance of an order based on the rule of law, he touched upon neither the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" advocated by Japan and the United States nor QUAD (Jimbo 2018).

It is certainly the case that India has to some extent accepted the U.S.-led order after the Cold War, especially since the 2000s, and has sought to strengthen its relationship with the United States. This was, however, motivated less by India's support for the U.S. structure of world order than by access to the U.S. market and technologies (Izuyama 2017, 147) and gaining a means for increasing India's strategic autonomy (Limaye 2017, 114). Furthermore, India has supported Japan becoming a "normal country" in security, from the perspective of promoting the multipolarization of the world or the United States' decline in supremacy, and thereby, increasing India's strategic autonomy (Limaye 2017, 115). India's view of Japan is in sharp contrast to that of Australia, which, like India, has supported Japan becoming a "normal country" while positioning this support as a means for maintaining a U.S.-led order.

The differences in perceptions for order between Japan-Australia and India are also evident from the differences in their response to the Iraq War. Unlike Japan and Australia, India opposed U.S. military action in Iraq until the very end. The Parliament of India went so far as to adopt a resolution seeking the immediate termination of military action in Iraq and the swift withdrawal of coalition forces from the country (Izuyama 2017, 151). While India initially prepared to dispatch units for reconstruction assistance following the end of the war, the dispatch was ultimately shelved due to reasons such as India's reluctance to follow the chain of command of the U.S. Forces. Given that there were opinions in India supportive of sending troops to Iraq, many in the United States are said to assess this as India's "learning process" for transitioning from a nonalignment-type nonintervention policy to fulfilling a more proactive international role. It has also been noted that following the Iraq War, a new concept of national interest formed in India, similar to Japan, which was the concept that there is national interest in maintaining international order (Izuyama 2017, 154). There was, however, a critical difference in the Japanese and Indian understanding of "international order." Notably, the idea of supporting U.S. operations to maintain a U.S.-led order, even by defying domestic opposition, was a notion totally inexistent in India.

Multipolar-oriented India's perceptions for order can be inferred from a report entitled, *Nonalignment 2.0*, released in February 2012. While the report was written by India's experts, members of the National Security Council participated in its discussions and the report is thus essentially considered "semi-official." It is said that the basic tone of the report has been approved by the Modi government (Horimoto 2017, 31). According to *Nonalignment 2.0*, the core objectives of India's diplomacy are to maintain maximum strategic autonomy and create a more just and equitable global order, without defining its national interest in terms of foreign ideologies and goals. It states that India's diplomatic approach reflects the reality of the international community where "power itself is

becoming far more diffused and fragmented—less a once-and-for-all achievement, and more a constant wary game to stay a few moves ahead of competitors and opponents.” While recognizing that the United States and China are superpowers, the report notes that it is unlikely that the two countries will be able to exercise “full-spectrum” global dominance as during the Cold War, and that India will need to carry out more complex and skillful diplomacy in environments that are inherently unstable and volatile (Khilnani et al. 2012, 8-9).

The idea in *Nonalignment 2.0* represents none other than India’s strategic idea to maximize its national interest by making and breaking alliances with a variety of countries, without having any clear friend-enemy relationships, assuming an increasingly multipolar and fluctuating international order. Under this worldview, it is difficult for India to accept the idea of taking part in interstate groups fixed by ideologies, such as “democratic union” and “security diamond” (*Nonalignment 2.0* seeks that India’s role be to act as a bridge between nations with different values). It does not have much meaning to differentiate the champions of a liberal order (countries that wish to maintain the status quo) and its challengers (countries that wish to change the status quo). In essence, this is a value-free worldview, though it attaches importance to rules and principles, and is also a perception for order that gives greater priority to power and pragmatism rather than values and norms (*Nonalignment 2.0* acknowledges the usefulness of norms and institutions as a means for maintaining international order while at the same time expresses skepticism). This explains why India engages in omnidirectional diplomacy where, on the one hand, it reins in China’s rise by strengthening its relationships with the United States, Japan, ASEAN, and Australia, while on the other hand, concurrently strengthening its relationships with China and Russia (Takenaka 2017, 296).

Conclusion

As examined above, there were differences in perceptions for order that cannot be ignored between Japan-U.S.-Australia and India—countries which, at first glance, share the strategic challenge of the rise of China. In particular, there appeared to be a critical difference between Japan-Australia and India regarding their positions on whether or not to support a U.S.-led liberal order. Japan and Australia, while recognizing the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States, sought to strengthen their relationships with countries sharing common values and maintain a U.S.-led order from the perspective of “complementing” the U.S. role. India, on the other hand, construed the power shift in international relations as an opportunity to realize its pursuit of a multipolar world and is engaged in omnidirectional diplomacy.

Of course, this in and of itself does not necessarily deny the feasibility of QUAD. As China’s influence further expands around India, the usefulness of QUAD as a means for reining in China will likely increase not only for Japan, the United States, and Australia but also for India. Furthermore, India seems to fully understand the importance of maintaining a U.S. military presence in the region. While it may be premature for high-level cooperation, such as quadrilateral combined exercises in the Indian Ocean, it is fully conceivable that QUAD cooperation will deepen in relatively non-contentious areas, such as capacity-building assistance and disaster response in Southeast Asia and multilateral institutional frameworks. In such scenarios, it is expected that Japan will be able to fulfill the role of bridging India and Australia.

That said, it may be impossible to demand from QUAD the same level of cooperation as Japan-U.S.-Australia trilateral cooperation. Notably, as India develops into a major power backed by its continuous economic growth, it is anticipated that multipolar-oriented India will further strengthen its diplomatic posture. In such cases, there will likely be a further alienation in positions between India and Japan-Australia, which have sought to maintain U.S.-led order as “junior partners” of the United States. When such risks are considered, Japan cannot entrust the future of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” only to QUAD. It will become imperative that Japan seeks to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific order by diverse means, while relativizing QUAD in Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-U.S.-India frameworks as well as bilateral and multilateral frameworks through cooperation with ASEAN and Europe. In addition, while giving emphasis to a liberal order, Japan may need to think more seriously about how to coexist with countries having different values. Japan also needs to develop flexible strategic thinking in a multipolar era.

Referenced Sources

- Takenori Horimoto, “Chapter 1 Political Relationship: Turning Point in the 1990s [Dai 1 sho 1990 nendai wo Tenkanki to suru Seiji Kankei]”, in Takenori Horimoto (ed.), *Gendai Nichiin Kankei Nyumon [Introduction to Contemporary Japan-India Relations]* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2017).
- Satu Limaye (trans. Kazutoshi Tamari), “Chapter 5 The U.S. Bridges Alliance and Alignment with Japan-India Ties [Dai 5 sho Nichiin to Domei Teikei Kankei wo Musubu Amerika]”, in Horimoto (ed.), *Introduction to Contemporary Japan-India Relations*.
- Marie Izuyama, “Chapter 7 Formation and Expansion of the Strategic Partnership [Dai 7 sho Senryakuteki Paatonaashippu no Keisei to Kakudai]”, in Horimoto (ed.), *Introduction to Contemporary Japan-India Relations*.
- Chiharu Takenaka, “Chapter 13 Creative Possibility of Japan-India Relations in the Period of Global Power Transition [Dai 13 sho Kenryoku ikoki no Sekai to Nichiin Kankei no Sozoteki Kanosei]”, in Horimoto (ed.), *Introduction to Contemporary Japan-India Relations*.
- Ken Jimbo, “‘Indo-Pacific Strategy’ and the Silent Japan-U.S.-Australia-India ‘QUAD Cooperation’ [‘Indo Taiheiyo Senryaku’ to Chinmoku suru Nichibeigoin ‘QUAD Kyoryoku’]”, The Canon Institute for Global Studies, June 13, 2018, http://www.canon-igs.org/column/security/20180613_5088.html.
- Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “It’s Not China, It’s You, India Seems to Tell Spurned Aussies”, *Foreign Policy*, June 5, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/05/its-not-china-its-you-india-seems-to-tell-spurned-aussies-malabar-australia-navy/>.
- Malcolm Cook and Andrew Shearer, *Going Global: A New Australia-Japan Agenda for Multilateral Cooperation* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2009).
- Steve Lewis and Patrick Walters, “PM doubles troops to Iraq - 450 more Aussie soldiers to protect 850 Japanese engineers”, *The Australian*, February 23, 2005.

- Sunil Khilnani (et. al.), *Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century* (New Delhi: Center for Policy Research, 2012).
- Hugh White, “Trilateralism and Australia: Australia and the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue with America and Japan”, in William T. Tow, Mark J. Thomson, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Satu P. Limaye (eds.), *Asia-Pacific Security: US, Australia and Japan and the New Security Triangle* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

The views expressed in this column are solely those of authors and do not represent the official views of NIDS.

We do not permit any unauthorized reproduction or unauthorized copying of the article.

Please contact us at the following regarding any questions, comments or requests you may have.

Planning and Management Division, Planning and Administration Department, NIDS

Telephone: 03-3260-3011 ext.: 8-6-29171

FAX: 03-3260-3034 *NIDS Website: <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/>