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The India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue: A New Stage in the Special Strategic and Global Partnership

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In this article: What the 2+2 is, the Tokyo agenda, the relationship timeline, defence and security cooperation, the economic dimension, practice questions, FAQ



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Why in the news

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar are co-chairing the **fourth India-Japan Foreign and Defence Ministers' Dialogue (2+2)** in Tokyo on 18-19 November 2026. Japan is represented by Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi. The dialogue reviews the full spectrum of bilateral strategic and defence cooperation, exchanges views on regional and global developments, and reaffirms the shared commitment to a **free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific**. It is the third meeting this year between the two defence ministers (New Delhi in August, and on the margins of ADMM-Plus in Cebu in October).

What the 2+2 is

The 2+2 format brings together a country's foreign and defence ministers with their counterparts from a partner country - a joint platform for diplomacy and defence policy. India holds such dialogues with a select few partners (the US, Japan, Australia, Russia). The India-Japan 2+2 began in 2019 in New Delhi; the second was held in Tokyo in 2022 and the third in New Delhi in 2024.

The Tokyo agenda

- Advancing **defence equipment and technology collaboration**.
- **Maritime security** - in August 2026, the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) signed a memorandum of arrangement (MoA) on maritime security cooperation.
- Raising the **scale and complexity of joint exercises** across all three services.
- Expanding **industrial partnerships**; reviewing the working group on operations, intelligence, equipment, technology and industrial cooperation.

- Regional developments and Indo-Pacific security.

> **Related reading:** India-Japan Relations: Economic Security and the Challenge of Projects

The relationship backdrop

- **Special Strategic and Global Partnership (since 2014):** rooted in shared democratic values, mutual trust and converging strategic interests.
- **16th India-Japan Summit (about five months ago):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi unveiled cooperation measures in defence, energy security, rare earths and artificial intelligence, and finalised a **joint roadmap on economic security**.
- **ACSA (signed 2020, in force 2021):** The Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement lets the two militaries use each other's supplies and services.
- **Joint exercises:** Malabar (with Quad partners), JIMEX (bilateral naval), Dharma Guardian (army), Veer Guardian (air force).
- **Quad and the Indo-Pacific:** Convergence between India's Act East policy and IPOI and Japan's FOIP outlook; new Quad steps such as a business forum and maritime intelligence sharing.

The economic and technology dimension

- Japan is a leading investor and technology partner for India; a target of 5 trillion yen of investment over five years was announced in 2022.
- The Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail (bullet train) project symbolises Japanese technology and finance.
- Semiconductors, energy security, rare earths and economic security are the new areas of cooperation.

Challenges

- Trade imbalance and the real pace of investment targets.
- Managing economic dependence despite both sides' strategic concerns about China.
- Taking defence-cooperation agreements from announcement to implementation.

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Way forward

- Moving joint exercises and equipment cooperation to the operational level; tracking the working group's milestones.
- Concrete projects on supply chains and critical minerals under the economic security roadmap.
- Complementary use of Quad and bilateral mechanisms for a rules-based Indo-Pacific order.

Mains practice questions

Q1. How does the India-Japan 2+2 dialogue institutionalise the two countries' Special Strategic and Global Partnership? Evaluate the major dimensions of bilateral cooperation in light of the Tokyo meeting (November 2026). (250 words, 15 marks)

Approach pointers: Meaning and history of the 2+2 format (2019); November 2026 agenda - maritime security MoA, joint exercises, industrial partnership; summit-level direction (16th Summit, economic security roadmap); Quad/Indo-Pacific context; challenges and conclusion.

Q2. Analyse the significance of India-Japan maritime security cooperation in the evolving Indo-Pacific landscape. (150 words, 10 marks)

Approach pointers: Maritime security MoA (August 2026); JIMEX/Malabar; ACSA; rules-based order and SLOCs; supply-chain security.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the 2+2 dialogue?

A joint meeting of the foreign and defence ministers of two countries; the India-Japan version has run since 2019.

What is the India-Japan relationship formally called?

A Special Strategic and Global Partnership (since 2014).

What are the recent key agreements and initiatives?

The August 2026 maritime security cooperation MoA; ACSA (signed 2020, in force 2021); and the 16th Summit's economic security roadmap with cooperation in defence, energy, rare earths and AI.

Sources

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