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Economic security as strategic diplomacy: Analyzing the 2nd India-Japan economic security dialogue in the Indo-pacific context

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Abstract

The consolidation of economic security as a core pillar of statecraft has reshaped the strategic partnership between India and Japan, especially within the evolving Indo-Pacific order. This article analyses the Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue, held in New Delhi in May 2026, as a case study of how economic tools are used in strategic diplomacy. It situates the dialogue within the broader India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, including the 2025 Economic Security Initiative and issue-specific mechanisms on critical minerals, semiconductors, clean energy, ICT, and pharmaceuticals. The article defines economic security in international relations, linking it to geoeconomics, interdependence, and supply chain securitisation. It then examines the institutional design and sectoral focus, drawing on official and think tank sources to show how bilateral cooperation fits within frameworks such as the Quad, IPEF, and critical minerals partnerships. The analysis shows that the Second Dialogue marks a mature phase of cooperation, where economic security boosts resilience, signals to third parties, and promotes a rules-based order. It also highlights constraints such as technological asymmetries, regulatory frictions, and the need to balance China-related risks with a non-confrontational Indo-Pacific approach. The conclusion discusses implications for regional economic governance and suggests further research on economic security and security architectures in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Economic security; Indo- Pacific; India-Japan relations; Strategic diplomacy; Critical minerals; Supply chain resilience

1. Introduction

The rise of economic security in policy reflects a shift from hyper-globalisation's optimism to an era of strategic competition, technological rivalry, and vulnerability amid cross-border interdependence. For middle and major powers, securing access to critical technologies, data, infrastructure, and minerals has become vital to national security and strategic autonomy. India and Japan, as democracies and leading Indo-Pacific economies, have led this shift.

The Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue in New Delhi on 11 May 2026 highlights how economic security is used as a tool of strategic diplomacy. Co-chaired by India's Foreign Secretary and Japanese officials from MFA and METI, it involved various ministries focusing on critical minerals, renewable energy, electronics, telecom, pharmaceuticals, and industrial promotion. It was built on the 2025 Tokyo Economic Security Initiative and the 2024 Tokyo Dialogue, reflecting continuity and institutional development.

This article argues that India-Japan economic security cooperation is more than risk management; it's a strategic diplomatic effort to shape the Indo-Pacific economic order. It strengthens resilience inwardly and signals alignment outwardly, deterring coercion and promoting trusted, rules-based connectivity. The Second Dialogue is a key part of bilateral, regional, and global efforts on supply chain resilience and critical technologies.

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2. Conceptualising Economic Security and Strategic Diplomacy

2.1. Economic security in international relations theory

In international relations, economic security has been conceptualised along at least three overlapping dimensions: protection from external economic shocks, control over strategic resources and technologies, and safeguarding national development trajectories against coercive dependence. Classical realist approaches have long recognised economic strength as a foundation of military power, but the post-Cold War era saw the emergence of geoeconomics as a distinct lens, emphasising the use of economic instruments for strategic ends. This perspective underscores how trade, investment, sanctions, and infrastructure finance can be deployed as tools of competition, influence, and, increasingly, coercion.[5][3][^4]

The contemporary discourse on economic security is further shaped by the securitisation of interdependence. Vulnerabilities exposed by the 2008 financial crisis, the 2011 Fukushima disaster, the 2010 rare earths dispute between Japan and China, and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have prompted states to reassess the risks of over-reliance on specific suppliers or chokepoints. As a result, policy agendas now prioritise diversification, redundancy, and "friend-shoring" in critical sectors such as semiconductors, energy, health, and digital infrastructure.[3][5]

2.2. Strategic diplomacy and geoeconomic statecraft

Strategic diplomacy involves the intentional, long-term use of diplomatic tools to influence the external environment, promoting national interests and values. In economics, it encompasses negotiating trade and investment deals, technology collaborations, and connectivity projects aimed at integrating states into beneficial networks and regimes. Geoeconomic statecraft intersects with strategic diplomacy but emphasises the competitive dimension, in which nations use market power, regulatory standards, and financial instruments to influence or constrain others.[4][3]

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as a central arena for such geoeconomic dynamics. Major powers are engaged in competing connectivity projects, rival technology ecosystems, and overlapping regional frameworks as they seek to influence the rules and standards governing economic flows. For India and Japan, which both promote a "free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific," economic security cooperation helps shield them from coercive tactics and enables them to collectively influence regional economic governance.

3. Evolution of India-Japan Economic Security Cooperation

3.1. From economic partnership to economic security

India-Japan economic ties have strengthened considerably over the last twenty years, especially after the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which liberalised over 90% of bilateral trade and fostered Japanese investment in infrastructure, manufacturing, and services. Major initiatives such as the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) showcase Japan's participation in India's connectivity and industrial development. Additionally, both nations have expanded their cooperation beyond traditional aid to include cutting-edge technologies, clean energy, and industrial competitiveness.

The 2014 elevation of the bilateral relationship to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership marked a period of growing strategic alignment between the two nations. This included shared concerns about regional power dynamics and the security of maritime trade routes in the Indo-Pacific. It also established a political framework that linked economic connections directly to security goals. As a result, various sectoral and thematic initiatives have emerged, such as the India-Japan Digital Partnership, the Industrial Competitiveness Partnership, and the Clean Energy Partnership, which increasingly emphasise resilience, critical supply chains, and strategic technologies.

3.2. The Economic Security Initiative and inaugural dialogue

The explicit focus on economic security as a core element of bilateral cooperation became prominent with the launch of the Economic Security Initiative at the 15th Annual Summit in Tokyo in 2025. This initiative acknowledged that issues such as supply chain disruptions and technological coercion required specialised institutional mechanisms. It emphasised strengthening cooperation to develop resilient supply chains, safeguard critical infrastructure, and promote secure, trusted technologies, all while tackling regulatory barriers and encouraging private-sector involvement.[2][3]

In November 2024, India and Japan held their first Economic Security Dialogue in Tokyo, covering Strategic Trade and Technology. The event was co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary and Vice Minister and included participation from various stakeholder ministries. The discussions centred on sharing perspectives on economic security policies and enhancing industrial and technological resilience. The joint statement highlighted the importance of closer collaboration to safeguard economic interests, develop resilient supply chains, and strengthen critical infrastructure, partly by fostering policies that support business and academic partnerships.

The first dialogue identified key sectors for strategic partnership: semiconductors, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, clean energy, and ICT, forming a blueprint for more focused sector-specific discussions in upcoming meetings. Simultaneously, a private-sector dialogue on economic security was launched, coordinated by Keidanren, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and other business groups. This effort aimed to support government initiatives by pinpointing practical challenges and proposing joint action plans.

4. The Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue: Structure and Substance

4.1. Institutional design and participants

The Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue took place in New Delhi on 11 May 2026, strengthening economic security cooperation as a regular part of their bilateral relationship. Co-chaired by India's Foreign Secretary and Japan's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, along with Japan's Vice Minister for International Affairs at METI, the meeting involved a wide range of bureaucratic officials from both countries. [^1]

On the Indian side, senior representatives from the National Security Council Secretariat, the Ministry of Mines, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the Ministry of Heavy Industries, the Department of Telecommunications, the Department of Pharmaceuticals, the Department of Atomic Energy, and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade participated. From Japan, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Secretariat, METI, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications attended, emphasising the cross-cutting role of economic security as an inter-ministerial priority.

The dialogue was explicitly tasked with monitoring progress and advancing major projects in strategic industrial sectors as part of the Economic Security Initiative. It serves as a coordination centre for various sectoral working groups and public-private platforms, framing their efforts within a strategic narrative that connects economic resilience with the security environment of the Indo-Pacific.

4.2. Sectoral focus and priority themes

The official press release identifies five key sectors as the focus of "productive discussions": critical minerals, semiconductors, ICT (including artificial intelligence and telecommunications), clean energy, and pharmaceuticals. These sectors reflect the priorities outlined in earlier fact sheets and dialogues, and they correspond closely to the areas where supply chain weaknesses and technological competition are most intense.

In the realm of critical minerals, the discussion reviewed progress since earlier cooperation agreements between METI and India's Ministry of Mines. It also explored ways to strengthen existing joint ventures, such as Toyota Tsusho's rare-earth refining project in Andhra Pradesh, and to leverage newer multilateral efforts, such as the Mineral Security Partnership and the Quad Critical Minerals initiatives. The semiconductor talks were built on the 2023 Memorandum of Cooperation on the Japan-India Semiconductor Supply Chain Partnership and the India-Japan Semiconductor Policy Dialogue, which unites government, industry, and academia to focus on talent development, R&D, and supply chain diversification.

In ICT, the focus was on collaboration in AI, Open RAN, and 5G/6G technologies. This was built on existing partnerships supported by Japan's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japanese firms like NEC and NTT, and Indian collaborators such as Reliance Jio and various data centre projects. Clean energy discussions included hydrogen, ammonia, renewable energy investments, and battery supply chain cooperation, echoing previous joint declarations and investment frameworks. In pharmaceuticals, the dialogue examined ways to enhance regulatory cooperation and build resilient supply chains through mechanisms such as a biopharmaceutical alliance among like-minded countries and joint medical research programmes.[2][5]

4.3. Public-private interface and the role of industry

A key aspect of the Second Dialogue was its explicit mention of the India-Japan Private Sector Dialogue on Economic Security, held on 26 March 2026 and organised by CII and Keidanren. The co-chairs "appreciated" this effort and acknowledged private-sector suggestions for eliminating barriers to increased economic cooperation. This indicates a growing awareness that economic security depends not only on government efforts but also on the coordination between government policies and corporate actions. [^1]

The fact sheet on Japan-India economic security cooperation highlights how joint business efforts help diversify semiconductor supply chains, grow data centre infrastructure, and fund green energy initiatives. Examples include Renesas Electronics' investment in an OSAT facility in Gujarat, Mous with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing and IIT Hyderabad, and a strategic partnership between Tokyo Electron and Tata Electronics to build a semiconductor ecosystem in India. Additionally, Japanese investment organisations such as JBIC, the Japan ICT Fund, and the India-Japan Fund support projects in renewable energy, automotive supply chains, and digital infrastructure, translating strategic goals into tangible capital investments.

By institutionalising a public-private interface, the economic security dialogue aligns strategic narratives with commercial incentives. It provides a platform for firms to voice operational constraints, including regulatory uncertainty, infrastructure bottlenecks, and skill shortages, while enabling governments to calibrate policy instruments in response.[^3][4]

5. Economic Security as Strategic Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific

5.1. Embedding bilateral cooperation in Indo-Pacific architectures

India-Japan economic security cooperation is part of a broader network of Indo-Pacific initiatives and multilateral groups. Both nations are founding members of the Quad, which has expanded from focusing on maritime security to include supply chain resilience, critical and emerging technologies, and maritime domain awareness. Programs such as the Semiconductor Supply Chains Contingency Network, Critical Minerals initiatives, and the Quad Investors Network (QUIN) provide platforms for India and Japan to advance shared economic security objectives.

Meanwhile, both countries are involved in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which seeks to strengthen resilient supply chains, support clean economy transitions, and promote fair economic practices among Indo-Pacific nations. Collaborating on critical minerals, clean energy, and digital trade through IPEF enhances bilateral initiatives and allows India and Japan to advocate for transparency, sustainability, and open markets in broader regional rule-making.

The economic security dialogue aligns with longstanding bilateral frameworks such as the India-Japan Energy Dialogue, the Digital Partnership, and the Clean Energy Partnership. These initiatives incorporate Indo-Pacific language and aim to link domestic industrial policies with regional connections and governance efforts. In this context, the Second Dialogue serves as a unifying platform, aligning sector-specific initiatives with a broader strategic vision that highlights a "free, open, and rules-based" Indo-Pacific economic order.[3][4][^5]

5.2. Signalling, balancing, and norm entrepreneurship

From a strategic diplomacy perspective, India-Japan economic security cooperation serves three key functions: signalling, balancing, and norm entrepreneurship. Firstly, high-level dialogues, institutional innovations, and shared visions send signals to regional and global actors that India and Japan are strengthening their partnership and taking a proactive role in shaping the Indo-Pacific's economic landscape. This signalling can deter economic coercion by showing that neither country acts alone; rather, they are part of a network of alliances that provide alternative supply chains and financial backing.

Second, economic security initiatives serve as a form of indirect balancing. By diversifying supply chains away from reliance on a single country, particularly China, through joint ventures, third-country projects, and coordinated stockpiling strategies, India and Japan diminish the potential for coercive leverage over vital sectors. Their collaborations in rare-earth refinement, battery materials, and semiconductor ecosystems, along with triangular cooperation in regions such as Africa and Southeast Asia, collectively boost their bargaining power and resilience.[3][5]

Third, India and Japan promote norms by advocating for transparency, sustainability, and inclusivity in economic governance. They frequently emphasise the significance of a rules-based system, trusted technologies, and responsible

supply chains in their joint statements. By engaging in multilateral forums such as the Quad, IPEF, and various climate and energy partnerships, they aim to embed these norms within emerging frameworks that oversee critical minerals, digital trade, and clean energy transitions.[2][5]

5.3. The Indo-Pacific context: opportunities and constraints

The Indo-Pacific region presents both opportunities and challenges for India-Japan economic security cooperation. The region's need for infrastructure, clean energy, and digital connectivity presents significant potential for Indo-Japanese partnerships in third countries, including the India-Japan Cooperation Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development in Africa and joint efforts in Southeast Asia. Collaborations in mining, logistics, and processing facilities can help achieve development objectives while ensuring access to vital resources. [^5]

At the same time, structural challenges persist. Bilateral trade between India and Japan remains modest relative to the size of their economies and considerably lower than Japan's trade with China or ASEAN, reflecting asymmetries in industrial capacity and limited supply chain integration. Implementation delays, regulatory frictions, and land and infrastructure constraints in India have slowed the relocation of Japanese manufacturing and constrained the translation of strategic intent into tangible economic outcomes.[3][5]

Geopolitical sensitivities further complicate the situation. Japan's close alliance with the United States and India's tradition of strategic independence led to differing risk assessments concerning overt alignment in great-power rivalries. While both countries are cautious not to appear openly anti-China, Beijing probably sees the growing India-Japan cooperation within the Quad and IPEF as part of a broader balancing act. Maintaining this balance between building resilience and preventing escalation remains a crucial diplomatic challenge for their economic security policies.

6. Critical Minerals Cooperation as a Pillar of Economic Security

6.1. Strategic convergence on critical minerals

Critical minerals now play a key role in India-Japan economic security cooperation, which is vital for the clean energy, electric vehicles, advanced manufacturing, and defence sectors. Both nations have released lists of critical minerals that significantly overlap, including cobalt, lithium, nickel, rare earth elements, and graphite, indicating shared views on strategic vulnerabilities and industrial requirements.

Japan's 2010 disruption of rare earth supplies prompted a long-term plan to diversify sourcing, establish strategic stockpiles, and focus on recycling and substitution tech. Agencies like JOGMEC are now empowered to invest directly in overseas mining projects and assist Japanese companies in maintaining stable supplies. Similarly, India has launched the National Critical Minerals Mission and embedded mineral security into its industrial and clean energy strategies, acknowledging that access to resources is essential to advancing e-mobility and expanding renewable energy capacity. [^5]

6.2. Bilateral mechanisms and projects

India-Japan cooperation on critical minerals began before the recent focus on economic security, but it has gained renewed momentum under this framework. A 2012 memorandum of understanding between India's Department of Atomic Energy and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry laid the foundation for collaboration in rare earths. This led to a commercial deal between Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL) and Toyota Tsusho in 2014, as well as the creation of Toyotsu Rare Earths India to process rare earth oxides for export to Japan. Future joint statements and energy dialogues have consistently highlighted this partnership and emphasised its growth.

In 2025, METI and India's Ministry of Mines signed a memorandum of cooperation on mineral resources. Critical minerals have become a key focus of the Economic Security Dialogue and its associated fact sheets. Both parties also collaborate through the Mineral Security Partnership, the Quad's initiatives on rare earth elements, and joint clean energy frameworks that integrate critical minerals into planning for battery supply chains, electric vehicles, and renewable energy infrastructure.

Table 1 Summarises key milestones in India-Japan cooperation on critical minerals.

Year	Mechanism/Policy	Key relevance for economic security
2012	MoU on rare earths cooperation	Established a framework for joint rare earth development and supply diversification. [^5]
2014	IREL-Toyota Tsusho commercial contract	Enabled rare earth refining in India for export to Japan, reducing Japan's dependence on China. [^5]
2015-2020	Energy dialogues and joint statements	Reiterated rare earth cooperation and linked minerals to broader energy security. [^5]
2021	Quad agreement on rare earths	Embedded bilateral cooperation in a wider Indo-Pacific supply chain resilience agenda. [^5]
2024	Inaugural Economic Security Dialogue	Framed critical minerals as a core pillar of bilateral economic security.[^3][5]
2025	METI-Ministry of Mines MoC	Deepened institutional cooperation on mineral resources.[^2][5]
2026	Second Economic Security Dialogue	Reviewed progress and explored new avenues for critical minerals collaboration.[^1][5]

These developments illustrate how the economic security dialogue serves as an umbrella mechanism, aggregating and directing initiatives that have accumulated over more than a decade. Critical minerals cooperation thus functions as both a practical and a symbolic expression of India-Japan economic-security convergence.

6.3. Policy options and third-country cooperation

Think-tank analyses suggest policy options to boost India-Japan collaboration on critical minerals. These include using the Quad Investors Network to invest in India, fostering cooperation with Africa and Southeast Asia in mining and logistics, and co-developing recycling and urban mining strategies for battery and electronic waste. [^5]

Another approach is developing green extraction and processing technologies through a proposed Clean Metals Research Hub, leveraging Japan's expertise and India's scale. This would boost bilateral economic security and support global sustainability by promoting eco-friendly mining practices. [^5]

Third-country cooperation is diplomatically strategic. Indo-Japanese projects in Africa and Southeast Asia offer high-quality alternatives to supply chains, expanding options for partner nations and reducing reliance on a single provider. This approach combines economic security with development goals, boosting India and Japan's soft power and influence in the Indo-Pacific. [^5]

7. Semiconductors, Digital Infrastructure, and Technological Ecosystems

7.1. Building resilient semiconductor supply chains

Semiconductors are vital to economic security due to their role in digital economies, manufacturing, and defence. COVID-19 caused supply chain disruptions, exposing risks of geographic concentration and complex global chains. Japan seeks to ensure access to equipment and materials and stay ahead in them, while India aims to develop domestic fabrication and design to become a major electronics hub.

The Japan-India Semiconductor Supply Chain Partnership, established through a 2023 memorandum, aims to boost collaboration across design, manufacturing, packaging, and workforce training. Policy talks and joint projects involve governments, businesses, and universities to identify investment opportunities and exchange talent. Notable examples include Renesas Electronics opening an OSAT facility in Gujarat, partnerships with Indian research institutions, and a strategic alliance between Tokyo Electron and Tata Electronics to develop India's semiconductor ecosystem. [^2]

The Economic Security Dialogue promotes a resilience strategy that encourages diversifying away from reliance on a single country and developing contingency plans for semiconductor supply chains, including through the Quad. Sector initiatives align with strategic goals to reduce vulnerability and improve independence in digital infrastructure.

7.2. Digital infrastructure, AI, and data centres

Beyond semiconductors, digital infrastructure and AI are vital to Indo-Japanese economic security cooperation. Japan's Ministry supported Open RAN pilots in India, while NEC partnered with Indian telecoms to deploy 5G. Investments by NTT and Japanese financiers in data centres bolster secure digital infrastructure in Indian cities. [^2]

The Japan-India AI Cooperation Initiative aims to promote research, develop models, and establish a trustworthy AI ecosystem through partnerships among universities, research institutions, and companies. The Economic Security Dialogue oversees these efforts to support secure, open, and interoperable digital ecosystems in the Indo-Pacific region.

Digital cooperation has a normative component. By sharing principles like data protection, cybersecurity, and openness, India and Japan seek to influence new rules in cross-border data transfer and digital infrastructure. This supports their economic security diplomacy, positioning them as rule-makers in the global digital arena.

8. Constraints, Risks, and Future Trajectories

8.1. Structural and regulatory constraints

India-Japan economic security cooperation faces challenges despite its ambition. Trade remains below potential, and investment is sector- and region-specific. Issues such as infrastructure delays, complex regulations, land acquisition, and logistics challenges hinder Japanese firms from expanding manufacturing operations in India. Moreover, differences in technological capabilities and industrial development influence the nature of collaboration. Japan holds advantages in advanced manufacturing, precision engineering, and cutting-edge technologies, whereas India excels in software and digital platforms and has an expanding yet still maturing manufacturing sector. To capitalise on these strengths via joint ventures and integrated value chains, ongoing policy coordination and enhancements in the ease of doing business are essential. [^3]

8.2. Geopolitical uncertainty and strategic autonomy

Geopolitical uncertainties in the Indo-Pacific pose challenges. Japan's alliance with the US and its economic security laws, aimed at protecting infrastructure, technologies, and supply chains, suggest support for US-led initiatives. Meanwhile, India maintains strategic independence and avoids binding commitments that could be seen as containment efforts.

This divergence requires diplomatic adjustment. India-Japan economic security cooperation is stabilising and inclusive, emphasising openness and compliance with international law, rather than exclusive blocs. Yet, as economic security overlaps with sanctions, export controls, and tech denial measures, both nations must carefully balance their interests and external partnerships.

8.3. Prospects for deepening cooperation

The outlook for India-Japan economic security collaboration is cautiously optimistic, with officials committed to strengthening cooperation among governments, industry, and academia. They aim to promote a rules-based economic framework in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on critical minerals, semiconductors, clean energy, digital infrastructure, and pharmaceuticals for future talks.

To move from intent to action, both nations should prioritise regulatory reforms, simplify investment procedures, and improve stakeholder coordination. Regular assessments within the Economic Security Dialogue can boost transparency. Additionally, cooperation in developing human capital through joint training, academic exchanges, and industry skills initiatives would address key obstacles to expanding high-tech collaboration.

9. Conclusion

The Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue marks a milestone in the development of economic security as a strategic pillar of Indo-Pacific diplomacy. It unites efforts across critical minerals, semiconductors, digital infrastructure, clean energy, and pharmaceuticals under a strategic framework, demonstrating how middle powers can collaborate amid interdependence, competition, and uncertainty.

The India-Japan case shows that economic security is now central to foreign policy, encompassing access to resources, trade, technology, digital standards, and human security. It helps transform strategic goals into specific actions but faces challenges in implementation, regulation, and geopolitical risks.

India–Japan economic security cooperation enhances regional resilience by offering alternative supply chains, financing, and frameworks to mitigate dependence and rivalries. Future research could compare security dialogues among Indo-Pacific nations, examine how economic security relates to military alliances, and assess long-term impacts on global economic governance.

The Second India-Japan Economic Security Dialogue shows that economic security is more than shielding economies from shocks; it involves a proactive, outward-focused strategy. As India and Japan deepen their partnership, their experience offers insights into how nations can use economic tools to shape the regional order in resilient, inclusive ways that align with shared norms.

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