

Pacific partnership: India, Japan and Israel

written by Joseph Rozen | 18.09.2026

On April 28, 2027, India and Japan will mark 75 years of diplomatic relations. Both governments already have a full calendar of events to observe the anniversary under the slogan “Year of Shared Horizons.” It covers almost every aspect of the relationship, from defense to sports.

India and Japan aren’t waiting until next year to show what the relationship has become. This month, the two countries are doing something they have never done before. Japanese F-2 fighters landed in Jodhpur on Sept. 9 for Veer Guardian 26, Japan’s first-ever fighter deployment to India. Later this month, on Sept. 22, the two countries’ cricket teams will meet in Sano, Japan, for the first-ever India-Japan T20 international match.

The depth of India-Japan relations reflects the strategic importance of the partnership. It is not only about direct security and economic interests or the soft-power diplomacy of cultural and sports exchanges. It is a genuine comprehensive bond between the two strongest democracies in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Indo-Pacific framework was the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s idea, dating back to 2007. Current Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is pushing it further and faster than Abe himself. This is one of the reasons for Japan’s current military buildup.

Japan has just concluded its fourteenth consecutive year of increased defense spending. It has achieved its 2% of GDP military spending target two years ahead of schedule and is projected to have a defense budget of \$64 billion by 2027. It test-fired its first Tomahawk missile in July and adopted a “counterstrike” doctrine, breaking from its post-war defense-only strategy. The same month, it formed its first new intelligence agency since World War II—the National Intelligence Bureau.

U.S. officials have flagged 2027 as the year by which China wants its military to be capability-ready for a move on Taiwan. Although there’s no timeline for a Chinese invasion, both India and Japan intend to shape what will be the Indo-

Pacific's security architecture in that year. They want to be prepared and will not wait for Washington to act. As anchor states of the Indo-Pacific, China is a mutual rival and supports their most dangerous neighbors: Pakistan and North Korea.

Neither India's nor Japan's recent relations with the United States have been smooth enough. India spent most of 2025 under 50% U.S. tariffs, which U.S. President Donald Trump imposed as "reciprocal" duties along with a penalty for Russian oil purchases. A February 2026 deal cut the rate to 18% in exchange for trade concessions still contested in New Delhi.

Japan fared better in one sense: A 2025 trade agreement left most Japanese exports facing a 15% U.S. tariff. However, Section 232 auto duties remain intact, and Tokyo is still lobbying Washington for relief.

In both India and Japan, discomfort with the Trump administration's policies has sharpened the logic of investing in each other. Ironically, this is in line with Trump's position on military intervention and aid to American allies, as well as his desire to see partners take more of the security burden on themselves.

Israel fits perfectly into this framework.

2027 is a milestone year for Israel's own ties to India and Japan. The two nations first established diplomatic relations on May 15, 1952, weeks after India and Japan did the same. That relationship cooled during the Middle East wars but is regaining momentum under Takaichi. A former senior U.S. official shared that Japan wants the kind of special relationship with Washington that Israel has long enjoyed.

Meanwhile, Israel and India will mark 35 years of full diplomatic relations in January 2027. This relationship has moved from cautious, low-profile ties to a full strategic partnership since 2014, as shown by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second visit to Israel in February.

Israel's partnerships with Japan and India are deep. Israel and Japan were both founding members of Pax Silica, the Washington-led coalition securing AI and advanced-chip supply chains. India joined two months later, in February 2026.

In other words, Israel, Japan and India are already part of the same framework regarding the technology that will shape the next decade of great-power

competition. The next step is to enhance their collaboration by expanding trilateral efforts in areas influenced by Pax Silica, such as infrastructure, model training, data-center sharing, standards and safety, physical AI and critical minerals.

Moreover, Israel's defense-tech sector, especially missile defense, drones and cyber, fits directly into the interoperability layer India and Japan are assembling through exercises like Veer Guardian. Israeli firms should be pursuing joint trilateral development arrangements now, while that architecture is still open. Such cooperation will be of high value as it connects technological innovation, scale, engineering and manufacturing capabilities and operational experience.

Geopolitical and strategic logic binds the three democracies together, but their partnerships also reflect shared values. While India and Japan mark what they have built over 75 years, Israel should focus on making sure that it is investing in establishing a strong trilateral relationship that will prompt like-minded countries to join. As a first step, Israel should adopt an official Indo-Pacific strategy, declaring India and Japan its essential anchors.

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