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Q9

'The time has come for India and Japan to build a strong contemporary relationship, one involving global and strategic partnership that will have a great significance for Asia and the world as a whole.' Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS II · 10 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- Comment on the call for India and Japan to build a strong contemporary relationship
- Show how a global and strategic partnership would matter for Asia and the world

Revision summary

The quote matches the later **Special Strategic and Global Partnership**.

Japan's capital and technology meet India's infrastructure and market scale.

Maritime security and the **Quad** give the pair Asian and global weight.

Quality infrastructure is an alternative connectivity offer for Africa and ASEAN.

Delivery of rail and defence files is the test that joint statements still owe.

Introduction

The quoted line set the tone for a relationship that moved from aid and nostalgia to a **Special Strategic and Global Partnership**. India and Japan are two Asian democracies with complementary economies, a shared interest in a free Indo-Pacific, and no serious bilateral territorial dispute. A comment that is fair must show both the strategic logic and the slow delivery of projects.

Body**Why a strong contemporary relationship**

- Japan's official development assistance, technology, and quality infrastructure meet India's need for capital in railways, metros, industrial corridors, and the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project.
- India offers Japan a large market, a young workforce, and a strategic partner that is not a US ally in treaty form but is willing to balance in Asia.
- Defence and security talks, including 2+2 dialogue, maritime exercises, and later logistics support, turn the relationship from commerce into strategy.
- People-to-people ties, Japanese language, and skill internships support a contemporary bond that older Colombo Plan images cannot carry.

Significance for Asia and world

- A stable India-Japan pair supports a multipolar Asia against any single-power maritime dominance in the Indian Ocean and the East China Sea, which is why both join the **Quad** with Australia and the United States.
- Quality infrastructure and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor idea offer an alternative style of connectivity to debt-heavy models, which matters for ASEAN, Africa, and the Pacific islands.
- Cooperation on UN Security Council reform, climate technology, and resilient supply chains (including later semiconductor and critical-minerals talk) is a global public good, not only a bilateral file.
- Nuclear-energy cooperation after India's civil nuclear understandings with Japan, and alignment on a rules-based trade order, widen the partnership beyond Asia's shoreline.

Limits a comment must record

- Project delays, India's procurement pace, and Japan's caution on defence exports still cap the headline.
- Neither country will fight the other's wars; the partnership is diplomatic, economic, and maritime, not a NATO-type alliance.
- China is the unspoken third party; the relationship is strongest when it is for something (connectivity, law of the sea) and not only against someone.

Short way forward

- Finish flagship rail and corridor projects on time, deepen maritime domain awareness, and keep **Quad** and ASEAN-centred forums in step so the 2006-14 vision becomes daily strategy.

Flow diagram

Quoted contemporary relationship -> Special Strategic Global Partnership
 Special Strategic Global Partnership -> ODA rail technology
 Special Strategic Global Partnership -> Maritime Quad Indo-Pacific
 ODA rail technology -> Significance for Asia and world
 Maritime Quad Indo-Pacific -> Significance for Asia and world
 Significance for Asia and world -> Rules-based multipolar order

Conclusion

- **The statement is sound:** India and Japan need a contemporary strategic and global partnership, not a narrow aid tie. For Asia and the world that partnership supports a free Indo-Pacific, quality infrastructure, and democratic balancing - if projects and defence talk catch up with the joint statements.

Facts & figures

Special Strategic and Global Partnership

Political label of the upgraded India-Japan relationship, especially from the mid-2010s Abe-Modi period.

Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail

Flagship Japanese-supported infrastructure project that tests whether the contemporary relationship delivers on the ground.

Quad

India, Japan, Australia and the United States grouping on a free and open Indo-Pacific; India-Japan is a core bilateral inside it.

India-Japan 2+2

Foreign and defence ministerial format that moved the tie from aid to security dialogue.

Japanese ODA to India

Long-running official development assistance in power, metro and industrial corridors; the economic spine of the partnership.

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