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Q5(e)

Historical ties between India and Japan grew into a 'special strategic and global partnership'. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · India and the Global Centres of Power

India and the Global Centres of Power: USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.

Core demand of the question

- Trace India-Japan from post-war distance to special strategic and global partnership
- **Name drivers:** China, **FOIP**, quality infrastructure, tech and defence
- **Give concrete pillars:** Quad, 2+2, nuclear deal, bullet train, semiconductors
- Comment on limits (trade imbalance, Russia, pace)

Revision summary

India-Japan moved from post-war distance and aid to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership (**2014 upgrade**).

Drivers are China's rise, **FOIP**, quality infrastructure and technology.

Pillars include the Quad, 2+2, a civil nuclear deal, the bullet-train project and semiconductor talk.

Japan finances and manufactures without a U.S.-style treaty bill; India gives **FOIP** continental scale.

- **Limits:** trade deficit, Russia residue, and still-thin military integration.

Introduction

India and Japan did not begin as brothers-in-arms. Post-1945 Japan was a U.S. ally with a peace constitution; India was a NAM republic that recognised the PRC early and tested nuclear weapons Japan hated. The climb to a **Special Strategic and Global Partnership** is therefore a historical achievement, not a cliché. It grew because **China's rise** and a **free and open Indo-Pacific** gave both capitals the same map.

Body**Historical ties, then a turn**

Buddhist and civilisational memory, the **IJN's** wartime Indian links, and post-war Japanese aid (steel, autos, Metro) were the soft base. The political turn is twenty-first century: **2006** strategic partnership language, **2014** upgrade to special strategic and global partnership under Abe and Modi, a **civil nuclear** understanding, and annual summits. **Shinzo Abe's** confluence of the two seas and later **FOIP** gave India a maritime vocabulary Japan already lived.

Why 'special'

• **Japan is India's most serious** quality infrastructure **partner**: Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail, metro systems, northeast roads. Defence has moved from taboo to **2+2**, exercises, and talks on engines and electronics. Both sit in the **Quad**. Both want semiconductor and supply-chain hedges. Both distrust a Sino-centric Asia (Q5(c)). For India, Japan is the partner that can finance and manufacture without the political bill of a U.S. treaty. For Japan, India is the scale that makes **FOIP** more than a Japanese-American lake.

Limits

A large **trade deficit**, slow FTA ambition, India's Russia oil and defence residue, and Japan's still-tight export controls on some dual-use items keep the partnership below its press. Domestic politics in Tokyo can return to a China-market first instinct. The partnership is special in **strategy and trust**, not yet in the density of U.S.-Japan or even Australia-Japan military integration. That honesty keeps the 10-mark note from becoming a brochure.

Flow diagram

Historical and aid ties -> Special strategic global partnership
China / FOIP -> Special strategic global partnership
Special strategic global partnership -> Quad 2+2 nuclear HSR
Special strategic global partnership -> Trade and Russia limits

Conclusion

Historical regard became a special strategic and global partnership when China and the Indo-Pacific forced both states to need each other. The title is earned in infrastructure, Quad and nuclear trust. It is still being earned in trade and hard defence.

Facts & figures

2014 upgrade

Special Strategic and Global Partnership announced during Abe-Modi diplomacy, the title the question quotes.

FOIP

Abe's Free and Open Indo-Pacific, later taken up by India as IPOI and by the Quad as a public-goods frame.

Mumbai-Ahmedabad HSR

Flagship Japanese-financed high-speed rail, symbol of quality infrastructure as strategy.