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**Analysis of the Strengthening of the India–Japan  
Alliance from a Realist Perspective of International  
Relations**

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To my mother, for being my foundation, my strength,  
and the greatest example in my life.

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# **Analysis of the Strengthening of the India–Japan Alliance from a Realist Perspective of International Relations**

## **ABSTRACT**

The present research aims to analyze the strengthening of the strategic alliance between India and Japan through a realist interpretation of international relations. It focuses on how these two countries have developed a strategic partnership grounded in national interest, security, and relative power within an international arena characterized by anarchy and competition. Through a combined documentary and theoretical analysis, this research seeks to identify the main factors that have led India and Japan to strengthen their alliance, emphasizing their focus on protecting national interests, maintaining the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, and adopting a form of containment strategy in response to potential emerging threats. The study also delves into how this relationship aligns with the principles of realism, highlighting the centrality of the state, rational decision-making, and the use of power as an instrument of influence. The findings reveal that this alliance is not driven by cultural or historical factors but rather by a pragmatic and strategic logic that enables both countries to strengthen their autonomy, ensure security, and project their influence in a regional environment where competition and tensions frequently emerge

### **Key Words**

- Realism, International Relations, Indo- Pacific, Security, Power.

# **Analysis of the Strengthening of the India–Japan Alliance from a Realist Perspective of International Relations**

## **RESUMEN**

El presente trabajo de investigación busca el análisis del fortalecimiento de la alianza estratégica entre India y Japón desde una interpretación realista de las relaciones internacionales. Este mismo se centra en como estos dos países han desarrollado una cooperación estratégica basada en el interés nacional, la seguridad y también en el poder relativo en un campo internacional en donde la anarquía y la competencia son las bases de este entorno. Mediante un análisis tanto documental como teórico, se busca identificar los principales factores que han llevado a que la India y Japón refuercen su alianza, resaltando el enfoque que se tienen en la protección de sus intereses nacionales, el equilibrio de poder en la región del Indo- Pacífico y una especie de estrategia de contención ante una posible amenaza emergente. El estudio también profundiza en como esta relación se ajusta a los postulados del realismo, este destaca la centralidad del estado, la racionalidad en la toma de decisiones y el uso del poder como instrumento de influencia. Los resultados de estos mismos revelan que esta alianza no es una respuesta a temas culturales o históricas, sino a una lógica pragmática y estratégica que permite a ambos países fortalecer su autonomía, garantizar la seguridad y proyectar su influencia en un entorno regional en el que la competencia y las tensiones emergen

### **Palabras Clave**

- Realismo, Relaciones Internacionales, Indo- Pacifico, Seguridad, Poder.

# Analysis of the Strengthening of the India–Japan Alliance from a Realist Perspective of International Relations

## 1. Introduction

This study arises from the interest in understanding the growing strategic alignment between India and Japan within the current international system. These two countries have chosen to strengthen and deepen their cooperation in key strategic areas such as defense, technology, economy, infrastructure, and energy security. However, beyond their shared democratic values and historical ties, it is argued that the consolidation of this alliance is the result of concrete, calculated, and rational interests. This partnership has raised significant concerns in terms of security, stability, and the balance of power, prompting critical questions about the motivations, timing, and terms of their cooperation—particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, which is currently marked by a pronounced hegemonic expansion. The present research seeks to understand the logic behind state action in an anarchic, highly competitive, and uncertain international system—one lacking a supranational authority capable of ensuring compliance, balance, or justice. Accordingly, the study examines how the increasingly close relationship between India and Japan emerges as a paradigmatic response to the core principles of the realist theory of international relations. From this perspective, key elements such as sovereignty, decision-making autonomy, power projection capabilities, and the imperative of survival are considered essential in a global scenario where the influence of certain hegemonic powers is expanding and constantly contested.

### 1.1 Objectives

Interpret and analyses the growing India-Japan strategic partnership over the past five years using realist theory paradigms of international relations.

#### Specific Objectives

1. To learn about the agreements of cooperation made between India and Japan over 5 years.
2. The objective of the paper is to find the economic and political factors for the strengthening of the India-Japan alliance over the last five years.
3. To determine whether the actions undertaken by India and Japan within their alliance align with the principles of realism in international relations theory.

### 1.2 Theoretical framework

In order to address the analysis of the strengthening of the India–Japan alliance from a realist perspective of international relations, it is essential to understand the definition of international cooperation as the sum of various actions carried out by both public and private representatives, all aimed at fostering economic and social development (Alvares, 2012). International cooperation emerges as a vital tool for building new political and economic relationships between two or more states with the goal of achieving specific objectives, which are crucial to establish a peaceful live for humans (Alvares, 2012). With the aim of promoting global development through international cooperation, a series of Millennium Development Goals were created, which later evolved into the Sustainable Development Goals. These serve as a clear representation of what international cooperation entails, involving 193 states along with civil society actors engaging in a negotiation process (United Nations, 2015). Cooperation can be classified in different ways. According to Alvares (2012) it is divided into governmental associations which is carried out between governments or through multilateral organizations that represent states. This form of cooperation can be bilateral, multilateral, or decentralized. There is also non-governmental cooperation, referring to initiatives led by private actors such as companies, NGOs, and others. Lastly, there are mixed funds, which are combined to support projects in health, education, and infrastructure.

In a more specific context, there is financial cooperation, which refers to the transfer of funds for a country's development; technical cooperation, which involves the transfer of knowledge, services, skills, and technology; emergency and humanitarian aid, which responds to natural disasters; and finally, food aid, aimed at populations affected by crises. Another form of cooperation is found in strategic alliances, which Rojas et al. (2014) define as a series of actions in which organizations collaborate on projects and in achieving shared goals that benefit all parties involved. These alliances are carried out in a flexible manner, allowing

organizations to cooperate without relinquishing full control over their operations. This flexibility enables them to collaborate in specific areas without compromising their autonomy. However, in a world that is undergoing changes in the international environment, it is important to recognize that the private sector facilitates collaboration between industries from different countries, which in turn becomes a race for technology and information (Arenas y Garcia, 2007).

This study centers its approach on the realist perspective of international relations. To that end, it is essential to understand what realism is and what it entails. According to Jaquenod (2013) realism in international relations is a theory that views the world as anarchic, where states coexist without a superior authority, meanwhile each state is responsible for its own security. This situation creates a constant state of war, in which—even if active conflicts are not always present—the potential for them to erupt is ever latent. From this, it can be understood that realism asserts that states are always engaged in a struggle for power and security in a world inherently marked by rivalry, where cooperation is only possible when it aligns with the national interests of the states involved. According to Clulow (2013), realism states an overview of the international system that is clearly rooted in competition and conflict, in which states seek to maximize their power and safeguard their security within an anarchic and hostile environment.

On the other hand, liberalism in international relations is presented as the counterpart to realist theory and is therefore understood by defining its key principles. According to Abad (2019), liberalism seeks a peaceful world order based on the rule of law and promotes the idea of a new global order. This theory advocates for cooperation and firmly believes that conflicts can be prevented through institutions and international agreements, prioritizing both democratic values and human rights. Additionally, in relation to liberal theory in the field of international relations, (Prado, 2021) argues that although individuals and states are naturally competitive, they can cooperate when they share common interests, which leads to collective benefits. Even when barriers such as lack of information or distrust make collaboration difficult, it is still possible to work together. Shiavon et al. (2014) also explain that there is a clear relationship between economic development and the reduction of conflicts, as sustained economic growth generates greater employment opportunities, investment, and social stability—thus reducing political tensions and confrontations between state and non-state actors. Furthermore, trade and economic cooperation promote interdependence among countries, decreasing incentives for conflict and strengthening diplomatic relations.

According to Cvitanic (2014), political realism is one of the main schools of thought in international relations. It focuses on the world of power and security as it "is," rather than as it "ought to be," the latter being closer to idealistic political visions. Many actions can be understood and justified from a realist point of view. When national interests come into conflict with the principles and norms dictated by prevailing ethics and morality, the concept of *raison d'État* characterized by pragmatism is invoked. This type of approach has been considered one of the most important among existing interpretations worldwide. In this sense, *realpolitik* serves as a guiding principle for the foreign actions of many governments. Both, pursuit and possession of power are common aspirations of any government, no matter how small it was.

Regarding the main proponents of realist theory, three figures stand out as particularly important for the development of the current research: Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Henry Kissinger, each of whom made fundamental contributions to the development and application of this school of thought. Morgenthau is considered the father of classical realism. Morgenthau (1948) argues that international politics is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, which tends to seek power and security. For him, the state is the main actor in international relations, and its primary goal is the accumulation of power to ensure its survival in an anarchic system such as international relations, where there is no authority above the state. Morgenthau emphasizes morality in politics, but from a pragmatic point of view, where decisions must be based on national interest rather than on idealistic principles (Blinder, 2021).

Waltz (1979), on the other hand, developed structural realism or neorealism in his work *Theory of International Politics*. Unlike Morgenthau, who focused on human nature and the agency of leaders, Waltz argues that the international system is anarchic and that the behavior of states is primarily determined by the structure of the system and the distribution of power. In his model, competition among states does not stem from their intrinsic nature, but from the logic imposed by the international system, in which states seek to maximize their security in an environment lacking a central authority to regulate their behavior.

Finally, Henry Kissinger was not only a realist theorist but also applied its principles in practice as U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State during the 1970s. Kissinger was a key proponent of *realpolitik*, based on the pursuit of balance of power and pragmatism in diplomatic decision-making. His strategy focused on using diplomacy as a tool to stabilize the international system, as demonstrated by his rapprochement with China, the *détente* with the Soviet Union, and the negotiation of peace agreements in conflicts such as the Vietnam War (Blinder, 2021).

Taken together, these three authors provide a comprehensive view of realism: Morgenthau with his emphasis on power and human nature, Waltz with his structural model of the international system, and Kissinger with the practical application of the theory in foreign policy. Understanding their contributions is essential for a realist analysis of international relations.

Realism bases its analysis on the actual practice of foreign policy and on the logic that states will always choose to protect, maintain, and consolidate their power over other international actors. This means that realism holds a reasonable position in which the state, as the highest actor in international relations, conceals its tangible elements to reshape decision-making. From this standpoint, the state must understand its strengths and to some extent, its weaknesses in relation to other states, to develop strategies for potential confrontations, even if those are military conflicts or not. Therefore, the realist perspective is grounded in the concept of interest to explain the actions that countries undertake to fulfill that interest (Tah, 2018).

From a realist perspective, the strengthening of the alliance between India and Japan responds to the logic of balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in response to China's growing influence. Both countries have increased their cooperation in security, defense, and economic matters with the objective of countering any threat to their strategic interests (Sharma, 2022a).

Realism is linked to an old tradition for understanding the relationships between states. It is worth noting that realism or neorealism are not theories typically used to explain social violence, but rather are focused specifically on the field of international relations. Nevertheless, they remain among the main theories in International Relations because they offer a pragmatic and rational explanation of how states seek to maximize their security and power in an anarchic international system. Despite criticism from liberal or constructivist approaches, realism continues to be relevant in the analysis of conflicts and other international events (Vidal, 2010).

## 2. Literature Review

The foundations of this relationship date back several decades, when the two countries established diplomatic ties that would later serve as the basis for an increasingly strong cooperation. Since the official establishment of diplomatic relations on April 28, 1952, India and Japan signed an independent peace treaty following the end of World War II. One of the drawbacks of the ties between the two nations grew stronger India beginning its path as a newly independent nation, and Japan embarking on its reconstruction under the guidance of the United States.

As for the significance of this agreement, it can be understood as the beginning of a period of mutual understanding—something quite unusual for its time, especially considering that India was one of the few Asian countries that did not support the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in 1951. Indian officials argued that the treaty was too favorable to the interests of the United States. Instead, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made the decision to establish a separate treaty with Japan, one that would respect Japan's sovereignty and integrity. This gesture became a key moment, as the Japanese people began to value India, and it also served as a symbolic foundation for a relationship based on mutual respect and equality. (Igarashi T, 2017).

Over the past 70 years, these relations have been marked by several key aspects, including: the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA), the economic complementarities between both nations, the establishment of Comprehensive Partnerships at various levels over the years, and the alignment of their foreign policy outlooks regarding security and defense in their immediate geographic space (Sotés, 2020).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, Japan became India's main bilateral donor through its support program known as Official Development Assistance (ODA). This assistance was not limited to infrastructure projects but also extended to initiatives in transportation, healthcare, potable water, and energy—placing special emphasis on human and sustainable development. According to a report by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), over 25% of Japan's global ODA in recent decades has been directed to India. This reveals a strong commitment from Tokyo toward New Delhi (JICA, 2023).

The way in which both economies complemented each other became evident starting in the 1980s. While Japan had a large and powerful technological industry, as well as surplus capital for investment, India possessed what Japan lacked: a vast market and a capable labor force. This mutual need laid the foundation for and strengthened a form of cooperation based on a win-win dynamic, which over time evolved and led to agreements, technology transfers, and knowledge exchange (Borah Rupakjyoti, 2018).

When the world was facing the Cold War, Japan and India had very different strategies, yet their relationship remained strong and consistent in specific areas such as economic cooperation. During the Cold War, Japan was aligned with the Western bloc under the protection of the United States, while India promoted



and led a policy of non-alignment, playing a central role alongside Yugoslavia and Egypt in the Non-Aligned Movement—comprising countries that refused to side with any dominant bloc during the Cold War. However, despite not being aligned in terms of defense or geopolitical stance, both states maintained stable diplomatic relations focused solely on economic development and technical exchange. These facts serve as evidence that they already shared a long-term vision that went far beyond the ideological divisions of the time. (Harsh & Yogesh, 2016).

As the 1990s began, following the end of the power struggle brought by the Cold War and the reestablishment of the global order, Japan and India began to redefine their roles on the international stage. With the conclusion of the Cold War, India underwent economic liberalization in 1991, marking a major turning point. Meanwhile, Japan was one of the main Asian countries that supported India's economic reforms and invested significantly in key sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, and manufacturing, which were vital for India's development. In early 1992, the two countries intensified their trade exchanges and began exploring their shared interests in multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit (Singh, 2020a). Amid this major shift, their relationship gained renewed significance, turning the evolving global dynamics into a platform for advancing their common interests, building new alliances, and promoting a security architecture that emphasized regional balance.

Once Asia had consolidated its position as the center of global economic dynamism, in the following decades both Tokyo and New Delhi came to understand that they needed to see each other as strategic partners—working together to ensure stability in a regional space that was becoming increasingly autonomous. This shift was further driven by the perception in both countries that China's rise posed a potential threat, bringing with it trade imbalances and increasing militarization in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In this context, the Indo-Japanese relationship evolved beyond merely diplomatic and economic ties, beginning to incorporate significant investment and strategic collaboration (Smith, 2019).

According to Horimoto (2016), According to Horimoto (2016), the end of the Cold War marked the true beginning of a new phase in their bilateral relationship. The 1990s also represented a turning point, as the world began to recognize that both Japan—as an economic power—and South Asia, represented by India, had grown, and improved significantly. Japan harbored a strong ambition to reemerge as a leading actor in the field of international relations, while India embraced a shift toward more open and flexible economic policies (Chansoria, 2022).

Over time, this relationship has become stronger and broader, encompassing not only cooperation between the two countries but also specific and strategic issues that serve as key points in the Asian region. This is evident through high-level visits made by both Japan and India—since 1980, Japanese officials have visited Indian territory, while Indian representatives have visited Japan since 1982. The existence of shared elements between their economies highlights the level of importance they place on one another. India and Japan are considered the largest and oldest democracies in Asia. Key factors such as security in the Indo-Pacific region, the containment of China's expansion across the Asian continent, and the adjustments required for various mechanisms of economic, trade, and defense integration in the region are of great importance to both parties (Sotés, 2020).

These visits have been crucial in reaffirming commitments and outlining future strategic paths. For example, between 2000 and 2020, more than 15 visits by heads of state took place between the two countries, making this one of the most active bilateral relationships in Asia. These visits have led to the signing of several key agreements, such as the Global Strategic Partnership (2006), the Japan-India Economic Partnership Agreement (2011), and the Joint Statement on a Shared Vision for the Indo-Pacific (2018), among others (Embassy of India, 2024).

Likewise, the creation of institutional mechanisms such as the “Dialogue on Japan-India Vision 2025” has contributed to the continuous review of progress in areas such as cooperation, defense, energy, education, infrastructure, and industrial development. These types of mechanisms reflect diplomatic maturity that goes beyond changes in government and electoral contexts (Panda, 2024).

These visits go beyond diplomatic ideals, as they have served to consolidate both countries and enable them to advance in unison toward their strategic objectives. A concrete example of this can be seen in the joint statements issued at each bilateral summit, which address a wide range of topics—from how to enhance regional connectivity to matters of security such as cybersecurity, supply chains, and overcoming financial challenges.

One of the most important achievements of these summits has been the “Connect India–Japan” initiative, which highlights the commitment of both countries to promote physical, digital, and human connectivity through joint projects both bilaterally and in third countries across Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific

(Jain, 2019). Topics such as cybersecurity, supply chain resilience, and space cooperation have been increasingly included and structured, turning these summits into genuine platforms for strategic planning.

An example that illustrates this is the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to India in 2007, during which he delivered his famous speech “The Confluence of the Two Seas” before the Indian Parliament. It was at this moment that the Indo-Pacific concept gained momentum and began to play a significant role in the bilateral relationship. The speech stood out for its proposal to create an “arc of freedom and prosperity,” referring to the connection between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. This idea, supported by concrete actions, would go on to become a central pillar of Asia’s foreign policy (Abe, 2007).

This speech marked a turning point not only in Japan’s foreign policy but also in the international discourse on the Indo-Pacific region. According to Abe: “The Pacific and the Indian Oceans must not be considered separate regions, but rather as parts of a single geopolitical and economic maritime entity” (Abe, 2007). Since then, this vision has been adopted, adjusted, and expanded by India, the United States, and Australia.

In recent years, there has been a series of reciprocal visits, as reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2024). One such visit was that of then-Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to India in 2021, during which topics such as high-speed rail development, cooperation in clean technologies, and defense agreements were addressed. The continued interest shown by the top leadership of both nations reflects a high-level strategic relationship and a deep commitment that appears to have no limits and is clearly oriented toward the long term.

A representative example of technological and financial collaboration between the two countries is the Bullet Train (Shinkansen) project in India, which aims to connect Mumbai with Ahmedabad. This project is primarily financed through a loan from the Japanese government and stands as a symbol of mutual trust and technology transfer (Ministry of Railways Government of India., 2022). Similarly, recent agreements have also addressed cooperation in green hydrogen, renewable energy, and cyber defense systems.

Likewise, this political exchange has been accompanied by growing academic and business interest, as universities and strategic research centers in both nations have promoted dialogue forums, cooperation in technological fields, and the analysis of public policy. This strengthens mutual understanding and promotes the shared vision both countries have for the Indo-Pacific. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, more than 1,500 Japanese companies are currently operating in India—an indication of a consolidated common agenda that goes far beyond politics and manifests itself in economic, technological, and cultural dimensions over the short, medium, and long term (Ministry of External Affairs, 2023).

At the academic level, initiatives such as the Japan–India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM) have been developed, with the goal of training thousands of young Indians in technical skills aligned with Japanese standards. This initiative is part of the “Skill India” campaign and is directly supported by the Japanese government. Additionally, institutions such as the Japan Foundation and the Indian Council of World Affairs have contributed to ongoing political and cultural dialogues, including publications on regional security and multilateralism (Sasayama, 2020).

Over the years, Japan and India have built a partnership grounded in strong cultural ties, spiritual affinity, and pragmatism. As noted in the article “The Geopolitical Context of Changing Japan-India Relations,” in 2006 the two countries established the Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership, which emphasizes contributing to greater regional peace and stability through closer political and diplomatic coordination on bilateral, regional, multilateral, and global issues, as well as stronger defense relations (Sanjana, 2013). Likewise, it is important to highlight that this rapprochement has brought about an evolution in the foreign policy of both nations, which have sought to position themselves as foundational and key actors within the Asian region, given the constantly shifting international reality. This strategic partnership not only reflects shared historical values but also a common vision centered on the need to maintain and preserve the international order. This shared vision is reflected at multiple levels—from strengthening multilateral institutions to promoting a Free and Open Indo-Pacific based on rules and norms. The shaping of their global strategic interests goes beyond diplomacy and is clearly evident in the growing bilateral trade, infrastructure investment, and collaboration in increasingly vital areas such as digital technology, green energy, and, as previously mentioned, maritime security. These two countries have found a fundamental role in acting as a counterbalance to the rise of regional actors like China, while also confronting the broader challenges of the 21st century.

In the context we are addressing, the stability and development of the Indo-Pacific has gradually become a central priority of Japanese diplomacy—closely aligned with India’s strategic interests. As the Indo-Pacific emerges as the engine of global growth, establishing peace and prosperity in the region has become one of the most important objectives of Japan’s foreign policy. From this perspective, Japan emphasizes the creation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” grounded in international law and supported by countries that share a common

vision (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). The concept known as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) was first introduced in 2016 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and has since become a foundational pillar of Japan's foreign policy. Its core goals include promoting an inclusive international order, upholding the rule of law, ensuring freedom of navigation, and strengthening regional connectivity. India has also adopted this vision as part of its own foreign policy, making both nations ideal partners in promoting regional stability through multilateral cooperation and strategic interconnectivity.

In recent years, the two countries have actively collaborated within the framework of the QUAD, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which also includes powerful partners such as the United States and Australia—nations that, like India and Japan, share maritime space in the Indo-Pacific. This cooperation has strengthened their shared interests in areas such as maritime security, cybersecurity, infrastructure, and the resilience of supply chains. At the QUAD summit held in September 2024, the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to building and maintaining a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, clearly highlighting the central role of India and Japan as stabilizing actors in the region (White House, 2024). Japan's commitment to the Indo-Pacific, therefore, is not merely a geopolitical reaction—it is also a demonstration of active diplomacy, aimed at building a regional architecture rooted in democratic values, with inclusive cooperation and technology transfer as key pillars. In this effort, India plays the role of a key partner and trusted ally in achieving that vision.

In Sharma (2022b) India emphasizes that its ties with Japan are key to maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Alongside the United States and Australia, both countries are members of the regional alliance known as the QUAD. In an interview conducted on August 20, 2024, titled "India and Japan Review Their Indo-Pacific Partnership Ahead of Tokyo's Leadership Transition," the Indian head of state stated that a review had been made of the progress achieved in both defense and security cooperation. He also reaffirmed the critical role of the India–Japan partnership in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity throughout the Indo-Pacific (Swissinfo, 2024).

Nevertheless, the concept of the Indo-Pacific continues to be a subject of debate within the field of international relations, and various interpretations have emerged regarding its nature. In the article "Japan in the Indo-Pacific: A Central Actor in Its Geostrategic Construction within the Asia-Pacific Environment," it is noted that there is still no consensus on the definitions and characteristics proposed for the Indo-Pacific region. However, two dominant perspectives have emerged from international relations analyses conducted thus far. The first views the Indo-Pacific primarily as a military-strategic region, with a structure comparable to NATO, largely aligned with U.S. interests in its power rivalry with China. The second perspective sees the Indo-Pacific as a geostrategic concept that enables middle powers in the region to confront the economic and military challenges posed by Chinese revisionism (Parra, 2024). Beyond these interpretations, some scholars—such as Parra (2024)—argue that the concept has not stagnated but has instead evolved into a vital and indispensable strategy for the liberal democratic bloc of countries situated around both oceans. This perspective places strong emphasis on multilateral cooperation and the promotion of a rules-based order as a way to counterbalance the growing regional hegemony.

Parra (2024) also points out that the term "Indo-Pacific" serves as a way to reflect a dominant narrative originating from the West, one that emerges in opposition to China's growing presence in the region. This interpretation suggests that the use of the concept may be influenced by specific geopolitical interests, rather than representing a true geographic reality or a shared cultural identity among the states involved. In short, the concept of the Indo-Pacific is open to multiple representations and interpretations, depending on the interests and perspectives of various international actors. While some see it as a military strategy to counter regional hegemony, others interpret it as a platform for economic cooperation and the promotion of democratic values in the region.

As highlighted in the article "Selective Multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Case of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)," India views the oceans as essential to achieving global power projection. For this reason, the Indian Navy has taken steps to develop a long-term strategy aimed at identifying suitable partners as well as the necessary technologies to enhance the country's capabilities—especially within the Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile, middle naval powers such as Australia and Japan are working to improve their own capabilities while also strengthening global ties with North America and other Western powers, particularly considering the growing tensions between the United States and China (Gonzalez & Ipuche, 2021).

The concept of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) has gained importance as a way to define the strategic objectives of the region. To understand the Indo-Pacific's strategic relevance, two main aspects must be considered: the economic and the geopolitical. These are crucial to the global economy, as the Indo-Pacific comprises 38 countries that together account for 62% of the world's GDP. Moreover, the region includes some of the world's largest economic powers—such as the United States, China, and Japan—which together

represent 45% of global GDP. Therefore, it can be argued that the Indo-Pacific region is positioned to shape the future configuration of global power, as its economic, technological, and social progress will undoubtedly have a significant global impact (Castillo, 2023).

The article “Japan in the Indo-Pacific: A Central Actor in Its Geostrategic Construction within the Asia-Pacific Environment” states that the Indo-Pacific has become both a normative and strategic concept with regional and global dimensions. It has served as a framework for driving structural changes essential to shaping a new form of maritime regionalism with transnational implications. The Indo-Pacific rests on two fundamental principles: practical cooperation, based on joint efforts to achieve regional consolidation, and a defensive outlook on strategic and military affairs. Based on these principles, Japan’s vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific has supported the diplomatic foundations of the region, leading to the institutionalization of a political action agenda that defines Japan’s current transnational posture and relationships (Parra, 2024).

According to Indian naval officer Captain Gurpreet Khurana, in his paper “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation,” the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) refers to the maritime area stretching from the coasts of East Africa and West Asia, across the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific, to the shores of East Asia. At the same time, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his political strategy, stated that he would engage in strategic-level dialogues with countries that share fundamental values, such as Australia and India. From this initiative emerged the concept of the Quadrilateral, or QUAD. Subsequently, Japan, Australia, the United States, and India began referencing the term in official statements and documents, alongside the broader concept of the “Indo-Pacific” (Tirado, 2021).

The recent meeting between their leaders reflects the strengthening of bilateral cooperation between India and Japan. In Tokyo, on March 7 of the current year, India’s Minister of External Affairs, Jaishankar, during a meeting with Japanese government officials and business leaders, stated that both India and Japan—as two major countries in the Indo-Pacific region—remain deeply concerned with the peace, security, and prosperity of the region, and are ready to play a responsible role in line with the demands of the current era. On the same day, Japan and India agreed to intensify their economic and security cooperation in response to China’s growing influence in the region. They also committed to exploring opportunities for expanding collaboration into new areas such as outer space and cybersecurity (Yamaguchi, 2024).

Beyond their bilateral alliance, both India and Japan also participate in broader integrative projects such as ASEAN, which aims to promote economic integration and regional stability in Asia. The article “ASEAN as the Main Integration Mechanism in Asia: Relations with China, Japan, and India” explains that ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) has served as an effective integration mechanism for various countries due to its high degree of consolidation. Under the ASEAN Plus Six framework, countries such as Japan and India were incorporated. The organization’s objective is to strengthen the foundations for a future process of economic integration, covering areas such as trade, investment, industry, services, and energy, among others (González & González, 2015)

Both Japan and India prioritize the safeguarding of maritime security and the strengthening of relations with Indo-Pacific countries, particularly with ASEAN member states. A key element of the Japan–India Vision 2025 is the development of India’s northeastern region, which serves as a point of convergence between India’s Act East Policy and Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy (González y González, 2015)

Throughout this analysis, it becomes evident that there is a clear intention to strengthen bilateral cooperation, particularly through the adaptation of strategic approaches to new development dynamics and regional security challenges. Several projects have been carried out under the framework of India–Japan cooperation. One notable example is from 2015, when Japan renamed its Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter, adopting the new title “Development Cooperation Charter” (DCC), thereby emphasizing national security and interests. According to Kimihiro Ishikane, Director of the Office for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), this name change was made for two key reasons: first, the pursuit of economic development cannot rely solely on official aid programs, but must also encompass broader initiatives, including private sector efforts; and second, to address the challenge posed by middle-income countries (MICs) graduating from the international cooperation system, which highlights that traditional ODA is no longer a viable strategy for supporting them (Romero & Uscanga, 2016).

It is important to highlight that both countries have expanded their collaboration in key areas such as defense and infrastructure. In recent years, India and Japan have strengthened their cooperation in defense, particularly in the transfer of equipment and technology. The two countries also share a strong economic relationship, with bilateral trade reaching a value of \$20.57 billion during the 2021–2022 fiscal year. As Japan redefines its security strategy and India strengthens its defense capabilities, the complementarity of their strengths becomes increasingly evident. Japan sees India as an indispensable security partner and contributes financially and through advanced technology to address shared needs. A clear example of this cooperation is

Japan's support for infrastructure development in India, including the high-speed rail project (Agencia EFE, 2024).

Similarly, as noted by JICA (2023), India and Japan collaborate in third countries such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In Myanmar, Indian funding is directed toward the development of schools supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In 2019, India, Sri Lanka, and Japan jointly backed a plan for the development and operation of the East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Port of Colombo (Nair, 2024).

In an effort to address global challenges and promote sustainable growth, both countries have also established agreements in the energy sector. Following the Annual Summit attended by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, the two nations outlined key areas of cooperation. One of the most important is the energy supply required to achieve sustainable economic growth and tackle climate change. Both countries share the view that there is no single path to a low-carbon economy, but rather multiple approaches. India has set a goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, while Japan aims to reach this target by 2050. They agreed to expand cooperation under the framework of the Japan–India Energy Dialogue to include electric vehicles, energy storage systems—including batteries—EV charging infrastructure, the development of solar energy (including photovoltaics), wind energy, and clean coal technologies (Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana S.A., 2022).

The high-level summit between the two countries demonstrates their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations in all areas. Likewise, the meeting between the leaders was timely, as it allowed for an assessment of the current state of their relationship and the renewal of agreements concerning investment, cooperation, the environment, security, and technology (Sotés, 2020).

### 3. Methods

For the purposes of this thesis, the strengthening of cooperation between India and Japan was analyzed from the perspective of realist theory, using the desk-based research methodology. This approach involved the collection and analysis of information from secondary sources, such as academic articles, official reports, digital repository documents, publications by international organizations, and other reliable online sources. This methodology proved to be the most appropriate for gathering relevant information about the India–Japan alliance, including its history, economic and political dynamics, and its connection to key theoretical frameworks in international relations—particularly realism, which is the central focus of this study.

The desk-based research methodology consists of five key steps of critical importance:

1. **Definition of the topic:** The main focus of this study was defined as an analysis of the strengthening of cooperation between India and Japan over the past five years, from a realist perspective in international relations. This analysis is highly relevant, as it provides an updated and clear view of the dynamics and behavior of alliances in the Indo-Pacific, a region that currently serves as a key pillar of the international order.  
Approaching the topic from the field of international relations contributes to understanding the processes, impacts, and transformations involved. It also enables an evaluation of the continued relevance of key theories such as realism. This perspective is particularly valuable for analyzing the increasing prominence of actors like China in the region, which clearly drives a reconfiguration of strategic alliances aimed at preserving regional balance. Furthermore, it allows us to assess whether realism remains a useful framework for interpreting foreign policy decisions made by states seeking to preserve their autonomy and security in a highly competitive international environment.
2. **Identification of Sources:** The selection of sources was a key component in carrying out this research, as it enabled a clear and precise analysis of the objectives established in the thesis. A wide range of both primary and secondary sources was used. Among the primary sources were official reports from the Asian Commission, documents and statements issued by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both Japan and India, as well as reports from multilateral organizations involved in international cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.  
Regarding secondary sources, a systematic search was conducted through official academic databases, both internationally and nationally recognized. The main platforms used in this thesis include Scielo, Dialnet, Scopus, Google Scholar, and various digital repositories, along with search engines affiliated with prestigious universities. These resources provided access to scientific articles, books, and specific documents essential to the development of the research.  
During the search process, relevant keywords were used to locate information related to the topic, including: “alliance,” “Japan,” “India,” “Indo-Pacific,” “international cooperation,” “strategic cooperation,” “QUAD,” “international relations,” and “realist theory.” These keywords were

applied in both English and Spanish to broaden the scope of the results and ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic across multiple geopolitical contexts highly relevant to the research.

3. Data collection: The data collection process involved a meticulous analysis aimed at gathering the necessary information in a reliable and up-to-date manner. This process enabled the construction of a solid foundation for analyzing the strengthening of cooperation between India and Japan.

The collected data included both historical background, which helped to understand the origins and evolution of the bilateral relationship between Japan and India, as well as recent examples of joint initiatives in various areas such as maritime security, infrastructure investment, technology, and collaboration in multilateral forums in which both countries actively participate.

Likewise, the data were integrated with studies and analyses produced by experts in international relations, with a focus on those that adopt a realist theoretical approach. These documents were essential to understanding how cooperation between India and Japan is interpreted from a perspective grounded in security, national interests, and regional balance in the Indo-Pacific. The academic articles and sources included in this research were selected based on strict criteria concerning their relevance, timeliness, thematic focus, and credibility—all of which are crucial. Priority was given to works published within the last five years, except in the case of historical and theoretical sources, which were included due to their foundational importance. The academic reputation of the authors was also considered essential in establishing a strong and reliable basis for analysis. Additional factors included the editorial quality of the journals and the credibility of the platforms in which they were published. Articles that offered only descriptive or controversial content were excluded, while those that presented analytical or comparative perspectives were prioritized, as they contribute solid arguments, trustworthy data, and applicable theoretical insights. Furthermore, a balance was maintained between Spanish- and English-language sources, allowing for both regional perspectives and broader contributions from Asian and Western academic contexts. Special care was taken throughout this process, with particular emphasis placed on ensuring that the thesis is grounded in accurate and reliable information that aligns with both the real-world context and the adopted theoretical framework. This approach reinforces the validity and strengthens the overall solidity of the conclusions drawn in the study.

4. Comparative analysis: This analysis was developed from a comparative perspective of the India–Japan alliance and is grounded in the core principles of realist theory in international relations. Through this approach, it becomes possible to methodically observe how both countries respond to current conditions and shifts within the international system. It also allows for the identification of similarities, contrasts, and strategic patterns that reflect the logic and assumptions of realism.

To ensure greater understanding and clarity in the presentation of results, the analysis section will be divided into four subtopics. Each of these subtopics corresponds to one of the main theoretical principles, carefully selected based on their relevance and wide acceptance among international relations scholars. This structure allows for a thematic approach that facilitates both the theoretical explanation of each principle and its direct application to the India–Japan case. In each subsection. In each subsection, the theoretical principle will first be presented with support from key authors such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, John Mearsheimer, and Barry Buzan. This will be followed by an analysis of how each of these principles is reflected in the current cooperation between India and Japan.

The first topic addresses the centrality of the state and national sovereignty. It highlights how both countries, although closely connected, do not seek to compromise their autonomy in their agreements. Instead, specific actions are identified such as accords related to defense and joint declarations that reinforce the credibility and strength of the principle of state centrality and sovereignty.

Secondly, we address the principle of international anarchy and survival, through which we explain how the cooperation between India and Japan represents a response to an international environment lacking a superior authority and constantly marked by competition. It is here that the rise of China becomes evident, and how this could be a factor behind the intensification of the Japan–India alliance.

As a third point, we will explore the centrality of power, both in its military and economic dimensions. This category will be used to analyze and interpret bilateral actions as part of an effort to increase relative power. This directly reinforces the realist logic of regional balance in the Indo-Pacific. The investments Japan has made in India in areas such as defense, technological transparency, and capacity building are of vital importance to support and understand this approach. Finally, as the fourth point, the principle of rationality and moral skepticism will be addressed. This will allow us to understand and analyze the alliance from a pragmatic perspective—one that is grounded in and reinforced by cost–benefit calculations. The involvement of both countries in

forums such as the Quad, Japan's investments in infrastructure, and the prioritization of maritime security are understood as decisions guided by national interest rather than by ethical considerations, which are largely absent in the field of international relations. This entire comparative approach is supported by the analysis of both primary and secondary sources, allowing for the construction of a strong and well-founded interpretation of the phenomenon—namely, the Indo-Japanese cooperation alliance.

Through this analytical approach, the adopted methodology will help us understand the strategic motivations of both states and provide a clear and coherent interpretation of the previously established theoretical frameworks.

5. Interpretations of results: For the interpretation of the results obtained, both deductive and inductive analytical approaches will be applied. The aim is to offer the reader a deeper and broader understanding of the strategic alliance between India and Japan within the theoretical framework of realism in the field of international relations.

From a deductive approach, the key principles of realist theory—such as the centrality of the state, international anarchy, the pursuit of power, and state rationality—serve as the basis for explaining and interpreting the strategic decisions made by India and Japan. These principles are reflected in concrete actions, such as the intensification of defense cooperation, infrastructure investment, and the consolidation of bilateral agreements aimed at strengthening national security and autonomy in the Indo-Pacific region. All of these decisions, far from being driven by ideological motives, clearly reflect a rational calculation based on national interests.

From an inductive perspective, the analysis focused on specific actions and events involving both states, such as official statements by ministers, joint military exercises, and active participation in forums like the Quad. This helped identify patterns of behavior that reveal a shared purpose, which is vital for balancing the growing geopolitical and military influence of China in Asia. Since these actions can be interpreted as containment mechanisms against a dominant actor, they must be evaluated concretely by measuring the strategic decisions made under the premise of cooperation and regional stability.

Thus, the Indo-Japan Alliance not only responds to the logic of bilateral cooperation but can also be understood as a strategic response to an international environment shaped by power dynamics, uncertainty, and the constant need to ensure state survival.

## 4. Results

The alliance between India and Japan can be analyzed from various perspectives; one of them, and the one chosen for this analysis, is the realist theory of international relations. Below are the main principles of the theory, followed by an analysis of the case study based on each of them.

### 4.1 State Centrality and National Sovereignty

Within the realist approach to international relations, the state is considered the central actor in the international system. This view, defended by Hans Morgenthau and later developed by Kenneth Waltz, holds that states are rational, unified entities that act based on their national interests in pursuit of power and security (Waltz, 1979). From this perspective, all forms of cooperation—even those that appear harmonious—are ultimately subordinated to the state's interests and its need to ensure survival in an anarchic international system (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The analysis of the strengthening of the India–Japan alliance can be examined from the perspective of classical realism. Classical realism, represented by figures such as Hans Morgenthau, establishes that the state is the central actor in international politics. In this way, states are the main actors in international politics. As Morgenthau (1948) argues in *Politics Among Nations*, states become the primary units of analysis, and their actions determine the direction of international relations. In the case of India and Japan, their governmental decisions, infrastructure projects, and defense agreements reflect this centrality we refer to. The cooperation between these countries is carried out without compromising their sovereignty, highlighting the importance of the principle of autonomy found in realism.

This principle of sovereignty is also shown in the way the two countries develop cooperative arrangements without a decentralized structure, such as might exist in supranational blocs. The strategic relationship between India and Japan is symmetrical and flexible in that both maintain control over their foreign and defense policy, allowing them to cooperate without subordinating each other.

India-Japan collaboration, though deep, does not compromise each nation's independence. International relations are inherently marked by competition and conflict. As realism points out, the international system

always has an inherent bias towards competition. A clear example is Japan's and India's concern over the current Chinese influence, as reported by Kosuke (2024), at a press conference, Japan's defence and foreign ministers, Kihara Minoru and Kamikawa Yoko, along with India's defence and foreign ministers, Rajnath Singh and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their bilateral cooperation in the space and cyber fields, but opposed any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, showing that competition is not the only factor that concerns India and Japan.

On the other hand, states seek to maximize their power and security, and within this the pursuit of security is a crucial point. The intensification of defense cooperation with joint naval exercises and the transfer of military technology are clear examples of this pursuit. This can be seen in the agreement between Japan and India to intensify economic and security cooperation, which was reached in Tokyo on Thursday 7 March 2024 at a press conference between Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

Japanese Minister Kamikawa mentioned expanding bilateral cooperation both in security and in the field of defense equipment and technology as well as determined to seek new possibilities for cooperation in new areas of cyber security and space (Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana S.A., 2022).

It can thus be said that from a state-centric perspective, the India-Japan alliance is a concrete expression of realism in action. More than just a friendly partnership, it is above all a strategic alliance based on factual appreciations at the same time to maintain autonomy, external threats and strengthening each state's position within the international system (Krasner, 1999). Both India-Japan, maintain their sovereignty as a non-negotiable principle, which is why all cooperation is structured in advance so as not to compromise this principle of inter-state order.

#### **4.2 International Anarchy and Survival**

From the perspective of classical realism in international relations, as presented by Morgenthau (1948), the cooperation between India and Japan functions as a strategic response to the anarchic structure of the international system. That is, the balance of power becomes a central mechanism to ensure both the security and survival of nations. Morgenthau states that, due to the absence of a higher authority in the international sphere, the state acts according to its own interests. It identifies its security priorities and maximizes its power to face potential external threats.

Applied to the India-Japan case, this reflects their strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, where both countries are trying to resist China's overwhelming and growing influence, their alliance not only represents historical and shared cultural factors, but also reflects the pragmatic need to enhance and strengthen their regional stability and national security. In the news: 'Japan and India agree to intensify economic and security cooperation' Jain (2019) says:

India and Japan as two important nations of the Indo-Pacific with shared values, history and interests, have a permanent stake in the peace, security and prosperity of our region and are ready to play a responsible role commensurate with the needs of our times. (Yamaguchi, 2024)

Kamikawa in turn mentions the special importance of its relations with India as it has nurtured both democracy and history by representing the Global South. Both Japan and India, members of the QUAD that includes the United States and Australia, have also strengthened bilateral ties effectively due to mutual concern over China's increasingly assertive economic and military activities in the region (Embassy of India, 2024).

This interaction clearly aligns with the concept of international anarchy. In such a system, states operate in an environment where each must rely on itself and make strategic decisions to ensure its survival. From the perspective of Kenneth Waltz's structural realism, the cooperation between Japan and India can be explained through the structure of the international system. This structure compels states to respond to the dynamics of power within their geopolitical environment. In this sense, the growing economic, political, and military presence of China in the Indo-Pacific region has led to the strengthening of India-Japan cooperation in areas such as national defense, trade, and diplomacy, all in an effort to preserve their influence and autonomy. This is clearly evidenced in the growing strength of initiatives like the Quad, which—although not a formal alliance like NATO—operates with a balance-of-power logic within an anarchic environment, aiming to contain China and secure regional autonomy for its members. Furthermore, Japan has promoted the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision not as an idealistic strategy, but as a tool to address the structural challenges posed by rising powers attempting to change the status quo. India, specifically, has adopted its Act East Policy to align with this framework, which allows it to strengthen its position in multilateral forums such as ASEAN, while also contributing to the creation of a new model of regional security.



The strategic and comprehensive partnership established in 2006 between India and Japan reinforces this understanding and has a special emphasis on regional security. Diplomatic relations and defense cooperation demonstrate that the two states not only seek to strengthen their bilateral ties, but also act very strategically to balance power in the region. This strategic and global partnership, called the Bilateral Summit, is an annual meeting of the top leaders of India and Japan, where the two states concluded the following agreements: a memorandum of cooperation in cyber security, cooperation in the field of sustainable development and cooperation in wastewater management. They also discussed climate change, clean energy, infrastructure development and cultural cooperation (Sotés, 2020).

Such alliances can respond to the logic of realism. In this logic, states must adapt to their ever competitive and anarchic environment by ensuring that their interests are not subordinated to other powers. Cooperation between India and Japan can be understood as falling within the logic of realism, in which international anarchy and the need for survival or survival drive states to create strategic alliances, and although their relationship is based on shared values and a common vision for the Indo-Pacific region, their main motivation will always be the pursuit of power and security in the anarchic international system, where competition and balance of power are key to establishing global stability.

### 4.3 The centrality of power

The centrality of power is one of the main pillars of realism. This theory holds that power is the currency of exchange in international relations. Power is the main objective of states. As already established in the theoretical framework of this thesis, and according to the interpretation of the authors previously presented, the primary drive of states is to obtain and maintain power, which is not only governed by military strength but also reflected in geopolitical and economic influence.

In the case of India and Japan, this cooperation has a very clear objective: to increase their relative power in the Indo-Pacific region. This shows that their collaboration in security, economy, and infrastructure reflects a constant pursuit of influence. As mentioned in the previous analysis, another important point is that states seek to increase their relative power to ensure their survival. In the anarchic system in which states exist, each seeks to surpass its rivals to guarantee its own survival. This concept of relative power is crucial to understanding the dynamics of alliances. The growing concern over China's increasing influence has strengthened this alliance, as both countries aim to balance power in the region and ensure that no single state dominates the others. This increase in relative power is clearly evidenced by the multiple agreements made in the fields of maritime security and military technology transfer.

Singh (2020b) mentions how India is increasing its naval and military capabilities to protect its interests in the Indian Ocean as well as strengthening its ties with other countries in the region including Japan and Australia to balance power, its influence has been given through its economic and military growth, on the other hand Domínguez & Ninivaggi (2023) with respect to Japan, has increased its defense spending and military build-up to respond to security challenges in the region, to ensure its regional stability, Japan is strengthening its alliances with the United States and other countries, and like India, Japan is increasing its influence through military agreements and economic power..

We can also see, as mentioned in the State of the Art, that one of the clearest examples of relative power projection is the development of the Bullet Train project, which, although it seemed a very difficult project to fulfil, has been demonstrated through deeds that it is possible, and not only with words but also through agreements between the two countries. This is not only a transfer of advanced technology, but also a manifesto of Japan's regional leadership in infrastructure. According to Ministry of Railways Government of India. (2022) this project is considered one of the most ambitious initiatives in bilateral cooperation. No other bilateral agreement has achieved such considerable projects as this one, as it is not only a technical financial loan, but also an investment in soft power and strategic positioning.

The aforementioned approach to relative power can be analyzed through the offensive realism proposed by Mearsheimer (2001) who argues that all states constantly seek to maximize their power, not only to defend themselves but also to prevent other states from achieving hegemony. In this sense, the India-Japan alliance can be seen as a wall containing Chinese growth, which is perceived as a structural threat to regional balance.

Moreover, according to Buzan (1991) and his analysis of the complexities of power within regional security systems, this type of alliance only makes sense within what he calls "regional security complexes." In such a framework, the most powerful states in a region adopt an active role in shaping the geopolitical environment to suit their interests. In this case, both India and Japan focus on projecting their influence as a counterbalance, without relying on external actors such as the United States.

This much-talked-about strengthening of bilateral cooperation can also be clearly observed in the multilateral sphere, as both also participate in forums such as the Quad or ASEAN Plus SECS, India and Japan. Gradually, they are positioning themselves not only as functional players, but also as regional leaders. This helps them to promote alternative infrastructures, common standards, secure maritime trade routes, and also contributions in terms of energy security.

All this in order to put its structural power base in front of other actors, and especially in this thesis development, China. What we want to show is that both countries have avoided formal military alliances, and instead they strengthen their strategic partnerships responding to a realist logic of obviously maximizing power without compromising their Metcalfe 2020 autonomy. Such behavior is a classic pattern in realism. Power is cumulative, and both India and Japan are interested in strengthening their internal capabilities, and also their influence over the rules of the international game, particularly in a field as important as Indo-Pacific law. In this way, strategic cooperation between the two can be seen as a manifestation of a structural competition for influence. They prevent the consolidation of a hegemonic order, which realism identifies as a fundamental threat to the equilibrium of the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001).

#### 4.4 Rationality and Moral Skepticism

Regarding to rationality and moral skepticism, these are characterized by a pragmatic approach and by their skepticism toward the application of universal moral principles in international politics. It is assumed that states are rational actors who pursue their interests strategically. As previously mentioned, according to realist theorists, states always act based on a rational analysis of their interests. Both India and Japan exemplify this.

Every step in their cooperation from defense agreements to economic projects is calculated to maximize the benefits shared between the two. A clear example is Japan's investment in infrastructure projects carried out in India, such as the high-speed railway project. In this case, Japan has provided a highly significant loan, investing 650 billion yen (approximately 4.5 billion U.S. dollars). This investment is of vital importance for the viability of the project. Japan has also contributed technology and expertise in the construction and operation of Shinkansen high-speed trains. This technology transfer is essential for the modernization of railway infrastructure in India, as the use of the E5 Shinkansen ensures the implementation of cutting-edge technology in this project. Japan also supports the initiative with secure signaling systems and training for 4,000 people, giving India the assurance of having skilled personnel not only to operate but also to maintain this system (Villamin, 2024). This reflects both Japan's economic interest in expanding its influence in the Asian market and India's strategic interest in modernizing its infrastructure two goals that align well. States make decisions based on cost-benefit calculations. This principle shows us that political decisions are always based on a careful and meticulous evaluation of potential advantages and disadvantages.

These two countries assess that the benefits of protecting their interests in the Indo-Pacific outweigh the costs of increasing their military presence in such a highly competitive region. Realists also tend to be skeptical about the possibility of applying universal moral principles to international politics. Realism holds that, in an anarchic world, the survival of the state will always take precedence over moral principles. Although this has been mentioned many times, it remains crucial this position illustrates how both countries prioritize the protection of their national interests over those of others. The priority of keeping their maritime trade routes secure prevails over any other form of consideration. The ethics of responsibility and prudence are more important than the ethics of principle. This means that, rather than adhering to vague ideals, proponents of realist theories value decisions that produce practical results rather than merely theoretical ones.

The foreign policy of both Japan and India is marked primarily by pragmatism. These two countries seek solutions that strengthen their security and regional stability, even when this requires taking on highly complex commitments. The clearest way to illustrate this is by observing how both countries have managed their relationships within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This regional organization serves as a strategically important space for India and Japan to project their influence without antagonizing other major powers. ASEAN is committed to prioritizing economic cooperation and regional stability over the promotion of democratic values an approach that aligns with the ethics of responsibility that both countries have adopted in their international relations. Cooperation between India and Japan is also reflected in security and economic ties, particularly in response to China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region Yamaguchi (2024) reports that, according to the agreement reached during the meeting between Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yoko Kamikawa, and her Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the two countries have decided to expand their cooperation in vital areas such as the transfer of technology and defense equipment, as well as to explore new fields of collaboration in space and cybersecurity. This bond of commitment reinforces the pragmatic vision shared by these two major nations, whose goal is to strengthen their strategic position in the region not through reliance on universal moral principles, but by prioritizing national and regional interests.

On the other hand, these two countries are part of the Quad, along with the United States and Australia, which is a forum for strategic cooperation in response to the growing concern over China's economic and military presence (Novak & Imai, 2024). In this context, Jaishankar stressed that India and Japan share values, history, and common interests, making them key players for peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Kawikawa, for his part, reaffirmed the importance of bilateral cooperation with the main emphasis on strengthening defense and security ties in the face of a deteriorating geopolitical environment (Yamaguchi, 2024).

In light of the above, we can see that these developments demonstrate that the India-Japan relationship has a meticulous pragmatic basis and a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, aligned with political realism. The security of maritime trade lines and regional stability are given a little more importance over other considerations, reflecting a clear application of the ethic of responsibility in how they manifest their foreign policy. ASEAN functioning as a platform for dialogue and cooperation represents a key point for both countries to strengthen and consolidate their influence without generating conflicts with other powers as outlined in the state of the art.

## 5. Discussion

The strengthening of the India-Japan alliance cannot be understood outside the framework of realist international relations theory. This is because each of the aspects, points and vertices that have been addressed in the current research respond clearly and directly to the fundamental bases and principles proposed by realism in its postulates. Throughout the development of this thesis, it has been demonstrated that the relationship between these two countries goes far beyond the shared cultural and historical aspects. But rather is based mainly on a strategic rationality, which is reflected in the defense of their national interest and also by the constant cost-benefit analysis in an international environment characterized by competition, uncertainty, and also with the characteristic that there is no central authority that directs and regulates the actions of the states.

This section aims to critically interpret the findings that have been previously analyzed and developed. It also reaffirms the realist approach as the philosophical framework that best fits and helps to understand the rationale, motivations, and actions that have guided Indo-Japanese cooperation in recent years. The core of this alliance goes beyond the many formal speeches made about cooperation. As Mearsheimer (2001) explains, it is better understood as a response to the changes that have taken place in recent years across the Asian region, where the presence and expansion of certain regional powers have raised alarms in terms of security, strategic autonomy, and regional stability.

There are various national interests that have driven the strengthening of the Indo-Japanese alliance. From India's perspective, an alliance becomes necessary as a form of protection against China's expansion. This expansion is not only present in political, economic, and commercial spheres, but also in territorial claims. Classical authors such as Morgenthau (1948) and Waltz (1979) emphasize the primacy of national interest and territorial integrity as the foundations of foreign policy. In this context, it is essential to refer to the Kashmir conflict as a region that has been disputed between India and Pakistan since their independence in 1947. Over the years, this controversy has triggered numerous confrontations, which appear to have been reignited in recent times. The reactivation of armed conflict has led to various responses from international actors. Japan, for its part, has urged the countries to resolve the conflict through peaceful means, while China has expressed full support for Pakistan.

China's support for Pakistan is based on a combination of strategic, economic, and historical factors. From a political perspective, China views Pakistan as a key ally in South Asia—an ally that can contribute to maintaining the regional balance of power in the face of India's influence. In terms of economic interests, the major infrastructure project known as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) represents a strategic initiative that offers multiple benefits to China. Primarily, the CPEC provides China with a shorter and more secure overland route for the transportation of goods and energy, reducing its reliance on maritime routes. Additionally, the significance aligns with China's Belt and Road Initiative, promoting regional connectivity and expanding its economic and strategic presence globally. In addition, India's megaproject, presents complications as it passes through territories that India claims as its own (Hussain & Jamali, 2019). This is seen as a direct threat to India's strategic autonomy and a disruption to regional balance (Malik, 2001).

Therefore, the strengthening of this relationship despite not declaring a specific enemy seeks to create a counterbalance to the dynamics that could disrupt the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region and in Asia more broadly. In this way, the alliance between both states can be understood as a form of preventive containment. It is built on mutual respect, yet driven by a shared national interest within an anarchic system that compels states to be the sole guarantors of their own security.

However, as Jaquenod (2013) explains, this type of cooperation does not eliminate the inherently competitive nature of international relations. In fact, as suggested by the realist tradition, even within the framework of strategic alliances, there exists a dynamic of mutual distrust and vigilance among states, since they are fully aware that anarchy governs the international system, and they also know that today's allies may not be tomorrows. For this reason, Japan, based on its strengthened alliance with India and with the aim of ensuring that India's efforts remain aligned with its own, has emphasized the importance and necessity of India's active participation in regional integration frameworks such as RCEP and SAARC.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) constitutes a trade bloc of significant global importance, bringing together the ten ASEAN member states along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, encompassing approximately one-third of the world's Gross Domestic Product. According to Petri y Plummer (2020), Tokyo's decision to join the RCEP was based on the opportunity to actively participate in shaping its internal regulations. This strategy aligns with efforts to restructure regional supply chains to reduce dependence on Chinese manufacturing. In contrast, India chose to withdraw from RCEP negotiations in 2019. India's justification focused on concerns that early accession would expose its domestic market to subsidized imports, potentially increasing China's already existing industrial advantages (Fangfei, 2020).

In response to this situation, India has intensified the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) in collaboration with Japan and Australia, while simultaneously negotiating high-standard bilateral agreements as an external pathway for strategic containment (Hamanaka, 2022). Consequently, it can be inferred that while Japan implements a strategy of influence "from within" the RCEP framework to moderate China's economic power, India adopts a counterbalancing tactic "from outside" through the strengthening of parallel alliances and the implementation of defensive industrial policies. This dual strategy reflects a coordinated approach to managing China's economic rise in the regional arena.

Alternatively, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), led by India and composed of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, has been in a state of stagnation since 2016, primarily due to mutual political vetoes between New Delhi and Islamabad (Yaven, 2018). Despite this deadlock, SAARC is still considered by India as a vital economic instrument, particularly useful in limiting China's growing economic influence in the subcontinent. This strategy is reflected in the promotion of Indian-funded infrastructure projects such as ports in Sri Lanka and the highways of the BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) corridor as well as in India's efforts to block China from attaining full membership status within the organization.

India's primary objective is to maintain a regional economic space free from significant external dominance (Dash, 2023). Japan supports this strategic logic by providing loans through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for the development of regional transportation and for funding the East Container Terminal in Colombo (Yoshimatsu, 2021). These projects strengthen a regional connectivity framework centered on India, thereby avoiding dependence on China's Belt and Road Initiative. In this way, both RCEP and SAARC despite their differing nature and scope represent two facets of the same strategy. Whether through Japan's active participation in a mega trade agreement like RCEP or India's subregional hegemony within SAARC, both actors collaborate strategically to reduce the surrounding markets' dependency on China. This strategic cooperation aims to preserve an economic balance favorable to their interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indo-Japanese cooperation is therefore of the type explained by Cvitanic (2014) as pragmatic, limited and also focused on concrete interests. Moreover, it reproduces a pattern that can be observed throughout history in other configurations that according to Waltz (1979) seek a balance of power, and where flexible and adaptive alliances emerge in response to changes in the distribution of regional power. The effort being discussed is not meant to imply the need for a direct or explicit confrontation to be declared against any specific power. Instead, it is guided by the strategic logic through which anticipated actions are taken in response to potential disruptions to the regional status quo. In this way, survival and stability are ensured in a region characterized by uncertainty and constant competition.

For instance, the results can be seen that the centrality of the state functions as one of the pillars of realist thinking, and this remains very firm in terms of the diplomatic practice of both countries, since it has been observed that at no time in this alliance is there a need to renounce sovereignty or to submit to supranational structures. On the contrary, the relationship between India and Japan is characterized by mutual respect for the maintenance of national autonomy and the development of cooperation mechanisms that gradually accommodate their interests without the need to infringe on their sovereign capacities. The behavior under analysis is highly consistent with Hans Morgenthau's classic approach. He says that the state acts guided by the national interest defined in terms of power (Morgenthau, 1948). The key aspect of this agreement is

based on defense, technology, security, infrastructure, and energy development. These areas follow a very clear pattern: they are always approached from a symmetrical position and with a clear desire to strengthen national capabilities, rather than allowing them to fade into shared projects that lack defined limits.

As for the behavior that can be seen in the India-Japan relationship, it reaffirms that in the realist scheme of cooperation. This approach does not seek the creation of supranational entities that abrogate sovereign decisions. Rather, it seeks to pursue alliances that respect the independence and potency of national capacities. In the India-Japan relationship, there is no intention to build deep political integration, nor is there an intention to subject their foreign policy to a superior entity, which is not something that is seen in their international dynamics. Rather, it is a common effort that is channeled into concrete areas that mutually strengthen their positions without altering their essential autonomy. And from this way of acting fits perfectly the realist logic that states even collaborate, but as Cvitanic (2014) explains, when they do so in a calculated manner, once again prioritizing the strengthening of their own power and their room for maneuver in an international system that does not guarantee any protection for any state.

It is also of utmost importance to understand and emphasize that the anarchic nature of the international system can compel states to act with foresight and caution. In the case of the India-Japan alliance, it does not arise from a coincidence of values or ideological affinities. Rather, it emerges from the necessity to respond to an environment in which potential threats are real and where the distribution of power is constantly shifting and transforming. The Indo-Pacific has become a region of strategic significance, and China's growing influence has been interpreted by both Tokyo and New Delhi as a factor that could alter the course of regional balance. Within this context, joint actions such as shared military exercises, participation in the Quad, diplomatic positioning, and the promotion of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific can be understood as part of a realist interpretation of the international scenario, where the absence of a central authority compels all states to form alliances that ensure their survival in an ever-competitive world.

From the perspective of realist theory, the India-Japan alliance is not an end, but rather functions just as explained by Waltz (1979) as a temporary instrument for survival and the projection of power. Both India and Japan are aware that strategic isolation in an ever-competitive environment results in a loss of influence and even of autonomy. Therefore, they act pragmatically by strengthening their cooperation. This strategy of anticipatory action is a clear example of the reality of an anarchic system in which states cannot rely on automatic mechanisms of collective defense, nor on universal principles of solidarity. States must therefore build, maintain, and adapt alliances that serve their interests within the constantly shifting dynamics of regional power. In this sense, the strengthening of the Indo-Japanese partnership can be understood as a reflection of the ongoing need for states to secure their position and prevent scenarios of vulnerability.

Additionally, the pursuit of relative power, as affirmed by Mearsheimer (2001), is also revealed as a vital component in the Indo-Japanese strategy. The objective is not to achieve hegemony, but rather to prevent others from attaining it and thereby disrupting the balance or stability maintained in the region. Both countries are fully aware that power in the international system is limited and primarily characterized by competition. Therefore, the best strategy is to expand their capacity for action without relying solely on external actors. This approach follows a logic that is reflected both in the strengthening of their internal capabilities and in the promotion of joint projects with third countries in Asia and Africa.

Clear examples such as the Bullet Train project represent not only an improvement in infrastructure, but also a declaration of intent by both countries. India is modernizing with Japanese technology, while Japan reinforces its presence in South Asia. This creates a cycle that strengthens both sides without compromising their autonomy. This type of initiative is characteristic of a strategy based on smart power. However, there is always an underlying realist perspective that understands influence as another form of power one that is projected rationally and deliberately. Cooperation projects like the Bullet Train are not merely development initiatives; they can also be seen as deliberate strategies to expand spheres of influence and strengthen regional presence without resorting to military dynamics.

Realism, as Buzan (1991) illustrates, also recognizes that power can manifest in subtle and gradual ways through strategic investments, technology transfer, and the consolidation of interdependence networks. These types of actions demonstrate that, even in their most flexible forms, cooperation remains anchored in a pragmatic and rational reading of the international system. Every initiative — even those that appear benevolent — ultimately responds to a strategic interest: to survive, to grow, and to seek balance in the distribution of regional power.

State rationality and moral skepticism are reflected in the way these two countries make decisions. This is demonstrated in bilateral cooperation, high-level diplomatic visits, shared fora, and in strategic sector agreements. In realist thinking, morality is clearly not only a guide to executing what each country needs but is also secondary to the premise of ensuring the survival of the countries as Mearsheimer (2001) mentions.

This logic explains how India and Japan have avoided open confrontation, but at the same time managed to consolidate a strong position on regional security defense. This seems to have been achieved through a strategy of prioritizing stability and secure trade as well as access to resources. These two countries are acting under an ethic of responsibility rather than principle, in line with the realist stance that understands that the national interest must take precedence over any moral idealism. That is, the country comes before anything else that other nations need. And under this logic, prudence becomes a fundamental virtue in international action.

From a realist approach Blinder (2021) explains, acting with restraint and calculation is preferable to acting out of ambiguous values that might compromise stability or national security. India and Japan, in prioritizing regional stability and secure access to strategic resources, are not so much motivated by a disinterested concern for global welfare. Rather, they are driven by the need to consolidate an environment that is conducive to their own growth and that allows them to reduce external risks. This pragmatic approach confirms that in realist analysis, as Tah (2018) argues, any effective foreign policy must be underpinned by the prevention of national interest. Even if this way of acting means acting selectively and strategically in terms of promoting international principles.

## 6. Conclusions

This study set out to analyze the strengthening of the strategic alliance between India and Japan from the perspective of realist theory in international relations. The research reveals that the development of this alliance is not based solely on cultural affinities or shared historical values. Rather, it is a form of cooperation driven by pragmatic and strategic logic. In the context of an anarchic international system, competition and insecurity have affected both states, leading them to strengthen their ties to guarantee their security, protect their influence, and preserve their individual autonomy. However, this alliance is strictly realist in nature, as each nation seeks to maximize its own interests without giving up its independence. In this sense, the alliance implicitly acknowledges the existence of a margin of distrust and mutual vigilance even among allies.

The analysis confirms the centrality of the state as a fundamental pillar in this bilateral relationship. India and Japan preserve their sovereignty and national autonomy, avoiding any compromise to their political or military independence, even as they strengthen their cooperation. This behavior clearly reflects the realist approach of Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, based on the premise that states act according to their national interests, prioritizing their survival in a competitive international environment. This principle is also evident in India's limited engagement with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This organization has been affected by the persistent tensions between India and Pakistan, as well as by growing Chinese influence. These dynamics have driven both India and Japan to prioritize the development of stronger bilateral relations.

Likewise, this research shows that international anarchy is a determining factor of great importance in the strengthening of this alliance. In the face of China's growing power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, India and Japan have opted to establish a strategic cooperation that allows them to balance regional and military power. This dynamic is clearly reflected in their joint participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), alongside the United States and Australia a strategic alliance whose purpose is to counter China's expansion in the region. Additionally, India's exclusion from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) reinforces its strategy of prioritizing bilateral agreements, such as the one it maintains with Japan, offering an alternative to China's economic influence.

Relative power also emerges as a key element in this bilateral relationship. Both India and Japan seek to increase their capacities through infrastructure investment, military cooperation, and technology exchange. A clear example of this is the Bullet Train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, which not only represents progress in infrastructure but also a declaration of strategic intent. In this way, while India modernizes with Japanese technology, Japan strengthens its presence in South Asia, generating mutual recognition without compromising the autonomy of either country. Beyond the Bullet Train, other joint projects in energy, technology, and defense reflect how India and Japan aim to maximize their relative power while maintaining their independence.

In conclusion, the strengthening India-Japan alliance is a strong example of the relevance and applicability of realism in understanding the complex dynamics of international relations in the 21st century. This strategic relationship demonstrates a meticulously calculated balance between the national interests, relative power, and security considerations of both countries. In addition, this alliance not only seeks to counterbalance China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, but also illustrates how two states, without relinquishing their autonomy or becoming completely dependent on each other, can establish flexible

and strategic cooperation. Japan secures its position and projects its influence in South Asia, while India protects its sovereignty and balances China's presence in the region. In an international system characterized by competition and uncertainty, the India-Japan alliance stands as a model of rational and calculated cooperation, where both states seek to maximize their relative power without compromising their independence.

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