

## China seeks to reset ties with Japan

Common interests: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo.

After engaging with India in Wuhan, China is rebooting ties with Japan, as part of a larger pan-Asian initiative that appears to counter growing protectionism in the U.S.

Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang has concluded a major two-stage visit to Japan earlier this week. That included talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, following a trilateral meeting, in which South Korean President Moon Jae-in also participated.

The trilateral dialogue had a pan-Asian flavour, as all three participants pressed for the early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Apart from the trio that met in Tokyo, RCEP negotiations include India, Australia and New Zealand, with the 10-nation ASEAN as the core.

The RCEP is drawing international attention, since the Trump administration walked out of the Washington centred 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade deal.

Analysts say the U.S. exit has miffed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a leading supporter of the TPP. Besides, Washington has not exempted Tokyo of fresh steel and aluminium tariffs that it has imposed. This is another factor souring ties between the two allies.

### Trade war

China is bracing for a full-blown trade war with Washington, which is forcing it to look for new supply chains, markets, and technology within Asia. That would help prevent disruption of its Made-in-China 2025 strategy, geared towards internet-based digital manufacturing.

Xinhua has reported that the three countries pledged to accelerate negotiations for a trilateral free trade agreement (FTA) as well. In a joint statement, they expressed their commitment “to building an open world economy”—an open-rebuke Mr. Trump’s “America-first” doctrine.

“We will work together to strengthen the rules-based, free and open, transparent, non-discriminatory and inclusive multilateral trading system underpinned by the WTO,” the statement observed.

In a relationship that went rapidly downhill over the last six years since China and Japan quarrelled over the status of a group of East China Sea islands, the Japanese ensured that there was strong symbolism of an ongoing Beijing-Tokyo reset. A Xinhua commentary noted that Mr. Abe bade farewell to Premier Li “in person” at the airport in Sapporo, capital of Japan’s northern island of Hokkaido, when he wrapped up his visit on Friday. It pointed out that “bilateral ties are now on the right track again”.

Mr. Abe was quoted as saying that the two sides should “turn competition into coordination”.

He stressed that “starting today, bilateral relations have entered the era of coordination”.

Ahead of Mr. Li’s visit, Mr. Abe, for the first time telephoned Chinese President Xi Jinping. “This means Japan-China relations are really improving,” the Japanese Prime Minister later told reporters

On Wednesday afternoon, the two Prime Ministers announced at a joint press conference that a decision had been taken to establish a direct line to avoid military confrontations in the East China Sea.

“We will make the East China Sea as the sea of peace, cooperation and friendship by easing tension and nurturing mutual trust,” Mr. Abe observed.

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

crackIAS.com