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Conference Report: International Conference on India-Japan: Growing Partnership and Opportunities for Co-Operation



Date: 26-27 February, 2019

Venue: Riviera Suites, Kochi

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CPPR – Centre for Strategic Studies, Kochi in collaboration with the Consulate-General of Japan in Chennai hosted the two day International conference curated around the theme ‘India and Japan: Growing Partnership and Opportunities for Cooperation’ on February 26-27, 2019. Over 80 participants and 15 speakers took part in the conference where economic and security implications of Asia Pacific transformation, India-Japan maritime visions in Asia Pacific, India-Japan Partnership in information age, trade and investment etc were key topics of discussion. Edgar Morris, recipient of one of Japan’s highest civilian honours, Order of the Rising Sun (Gold and Silver Rays) with the Emperor’s Medal of Honour was felicitated by the Deputy Consul General during the event.

Background:

The Asia-Pacific region is undergoing transformation of an unprecedented scale characterized by ‘new dynamics of the re-emergence of civilizational powers’. Among the Asian democracies, the India and Japan have experienced new dynamism in economic relations, patterns of interdependence and security convergence that sync to respond to the challenges of global and regional turbulence.

Objectives:

The theme of the conference opens up important vistas on the subject in view of the new imperatives in Indian and Pacific Ocean regions as maritime basis of “Confluence” –cooperation of India and Japan in the coming decades.

- The conference aims for a well-balanced dialogue with informed discussions between and with professionals and experts from industry, policy arena and international relations.
- The initiative further aims to provide a platform for networking of think-tanks in peninsular India, with their Japanese counterparts in academia and policy research.

Kochi, located in the fulcrum of the Arabian Sea-Indian Ocean confluence provides the perfect venue of this conference lending an apt background for maritime-peninsular perspective of India-Japan relations and cooperation.

Event Highlights

Dr D Dhanuraj, Chairman CPPR, welcomed delegates during the inaugural session. He said that the conference reiterates the significance of the growing partnership between the most prosperous democracy (Japan) and the biggest democracy (India) in Asia.

P.K Hormis Tharakan, former R&AW chief and Advisor, CPPR and Madam Hiroko Taniguchi, Deputy Consul-General of Japan in Chennai also graced the occasion.

Delivering her inaugural address **Madam Hiroko Taniguchi**, Deputy Consul-General, Consulate-General of Japan in Chennai, said that she looked forward to a strong partnership with India.

- Reiterated Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s idea of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).
- “Strong India Japan relation is a global common good because they share common values of commitment to democracy, openness and rule of law”.

The keynote address was delivered by international affairs analyst **Dr. Kanti Prasad Bajpai**, Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

- He pointed to the converging national interests of India and Japan and analysed the strategic choices in front of them in the context of China's rise and the US's erratic behaviour.
- Highlighted soft balancing against China through India-Japan partnership, as the most viable strategy for both countries in the foreseeable future.
- Listed various soft balancing strategies for India and Japan including shaming tactics against China where both have implicitly criticised Beijing's Belt Road Initiative (BRI). He highlighted regional and multilateral arenas where India and Japan can use debates to bring attention to Chinese actions that hurt others.
- Stressed on the need of India and Japan to create and sustain new institutions and forms of Asian strategic cooperation.

Speakers included:

- Air Marshal Dr M. Matheshwaran, President, The Peninsula Foundation
- Dr. H. S. Prabhakar, Professor, Formerly at the Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal University
- Dr. W. Lawrence Prabhakar, Associate Professor of Strategic Studies and International Relations, Department of Political Science, Madras Christian College
- Dr. Madhuchanda Ghosh, Assistant Professor Dept. of Political Science, Presidency College
- Mr. Gazi Hassan, Research Assistant, Centre for Public Policy Research
- Dr. Heigo Sato, Professor, Takushoku University, Tokyo, Japan
- Dr. Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies
- Dr. Titli Basu, Associate Fellow, East Asia Centre, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis,
- Commodore Somen Banerjee, Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation
- Dr. Josukutty C.A, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Kerala University
- Dr. Prakash Paneeselvam, Assistant Professor, School of Conflict and Security Studies, National Institute for Advance Studies
- Dr. Amrita Jash, East Asian Study Centre, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

The sessions were moderated by

- P K Hormis Tharakan, Former Chief of R&AW and Director General of Kerala Police,
- Muraleedharan Nair, CPPR Senior Fellow and formerly Indian Consul in China,
- K V Thomas, CPPR Senior Fellow, and formerly Assistant Director, Intelligence Bureau.
- Dr W Lawrence S Prabhakar, CPPR-CSS Advisor, Associate Professor of Strategic Studies, and International Relations, Department of Political Science, Madras Christian College, Chennai
- Dr D Dhanuraj, Chairman, CPPR.

Session Round up:

Session 1: Asia-Pacific and its Grand Transformation: Economic Imperatives and Security Challenges

Air Marshal Dr M Matheshwaran, AVSM VSM PhD (Retd), President, The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai dealt with the transformation underway in the Asia-Pacific. Key takeaways were:

- In the unipolar era dominated by US hegemony, US managed to put in place institutions that retained its power advantage.
- Challenge to US has come from Asia Pacific which has risen as the centre of power transition struggle. Asian states gradually realise that the Westphalian system was imposed on them and there is a need to take note of their civilizational nature and challenge the status quo.
- India and China which had missed the bus of Industrial Revolution has leapfrogged using the knowledge era model of disruptive technology. Factors like of demographic dividend, globalization also work in their favour.
- The real question is that in this world of emerging powers (or in absence of hegemonic power) who will provide the public goods.
- Challenges to the emerging powers are centered on economic factors, productivity, education, trade, connectivity as well as the role of technology.
- We live in a multilateral age characterized by nuclear weapons, paradoxes of hyper-nationalism and globalization, proxy wars and regional grouping with rivals as partners.
- In this context we need to explore the potential for partnership between Japan and India as there is significant alignment of strategic concerns and principle. Economic and technological partnerships, rationalization of global institutions are the key tasks ahead.

Dr H S Prabhakar, Professor, Formerly at the Centre for East Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi dealt mainly with the economic aspect of India-Japan relations.

- He traced the economic evolution of Japan from the traditional economy to fully advanced economy of 21st century driving on the back of technological innovation.
- He then moved to the challenges that Japanese economy faced today including the China Factor, high public debt to GDP, demographic constraints like shrinking population and ageing well as dipping investor confidence. He called for Structural reforms to revive Japanese economy as fiscal stimulus and monetary easing has fallen flat.
- Japan has been a trade sensitive economy and is uncomfortably subject to Chinese influences. Today the trademark Japanese quality reputation has prevented Japan from cutting costs in the wake of Chinese onslaught.
- He stresses on the need to place India Japan relations in this backdrop.
- Modi- Abe equation has been a harbinger of good times. Trade has shot up to 15 billion dollars and the low interest loans from Japan has helped us bridge India's infrastructure Gap. However the partnership is yet to attain its full potential. The CEPA has been unable to cut tariffs in most items and the trade imbalance against India is wide.
- However he stressed that India Japan Partnership should be imagined keeping global rather than bilateral priorities in mind.

Dr W Lawrence S Prabhakar, Associate Professor of Strategic Studies and International Relations, Department of Political Science, Madras Christian College, Chennai dealt with the topic, 'the Emergent

Transformation Dynamics of the Asia-Pacific: Perspectives of Regional Architecture and Security Challenges'. He explored the 7 causal factors of the Asia-Pacific transformation.

- **Civilisational narratives** have determined the scope of diplomacy, economy and security with their attendant rivalries in case of reemergence of Asian states like China, Japan and India.
- **Emergence of identity-politics** has led to contestations in these multi cultural multi lingual re-emerging states as reflected in boundary disputes. These states are better held together by soft character of co existence rather than totalitarianism.
- **Strategic cultures** fashion how elites conceptualize strategic narratives and this in turn have influenced power rivalries.
- **Great Power Competition** that has been resurrected in the context of US retreat has led to contending power, territorial and resources rivalries inducing regional turbulence in Asia Pacific. Does Great Power Competition augur for power transition or power shift?
- **New regionalism frameworks** have been crafted on geographical and identity configurations and these have promoted trade and connectivity through a strategic pattern of a maze of infrastructural buildups and connectivity. Viewed in this context BRI cannot be called a failure as China's focus was strategic connectivity rather than economic prosperity.
- **Strategic modernization dynamics** like introduction of nuclear and missile arsenals and anti-access and area denial measures have emerged as the action-reaction to the rise of China and other Asian powers.
- Element of cooperation and convergence in **Global Commons discourse** reflected in cooperative diplomacy in transnational challenges like disaster response etc.

He explored the governing trends of emergence of Asia-Pacific region based on the above factors.

- He threw curious points to ponder like is there actually a power shift or is it an offshore balancing tactic of US, wanting its allies to share more burdens.
- Is China's rise real and does neutralization of adversary mean war for China.
- He studied the foundations of India-Japan bilateral partnership in this context. He asserted that India-Japan bilateral cooperative partnership is a fulcrum point of this harbinger of the Asia-Pacific transformation.

Session 2: New Regionalism": Connotations, Corridors and Consequences in the Asia-Pacific

Dr Heigo Sato, Professor, Institute of World Studies, Takushoku University, Tokyo, Japan joined discussions over skype.

- The emerging trend in current Indo-Pacific region is shaped by two interrelated factors; Chinese assertiveness in multi-front and changing mode of conflict with focus on controlling the opponent's political ambitions. This is made possible by extensive investment on information infrastructure across the region and commitment to shape the digital and cyber domain within the region.
- He explored the rise of new regionalism in Indo-Pacific, characterized by flexible and adaptive network of counties based both on formal and informal frameworks.
- It is interesting to see how new regionalism surges in the time of the history when U.S is retreating from multilateral frameworks and gradually moving toward ending the era of liberal internationalism.

Dr Madhuchanda Ghosh, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Presidency College, Kolkata talked about India and Japan as new Partners in the Emerging Regionalism in East Asia.

- She noted that for the first time in history, India and Japan have simultaneously become key stakeholders in East Asian affairs. The leaderships of the two states exhibit a broad consensus that the core interests and concerns of the two states converge.
- India-Japan partnership is relevant to prevent a China-centric regionalism through the introduction of BRI- which is considered to be a vehicle for writing new rules to protect China's interests.
- She discussed the implications of India-Japan partnership for the regional project of the East Asian Summit, the regional balance of power and elaborated on how it can contribute to the current regionalism through the ASEAN approach.

Gazi Hassan, Research Assistant, Centre for Public Policy Research, Kochi, analyzed the China factor in India-Japan Relation.

- The assertiveness of China in the Asia-Pacific region is changing the geopolitics and the regional security architecture.
- The Asia-Pacific is more of an economic conception, rather than a political and security one.
- He traced the evolution of India-Japan relationship through a rough past with a remarkable change occurring post US signing the civil nuclear deal in 2005.
- The assertiveness of China in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond is changing the geopolitics and the regional security architecture. The looming China factor and common concerns/values motivated the coming together of India, Japan, US and Australia.
- He explored the possible scenarios that could be the outcome of strengthening of India-Japan relations. China claims dominant power status in the region. Coming together of India and Japan can trigger China to be more aggressive which could result in the vulnerability of smaller nations in the region. He pondered on whether AAGC will balance the Chinese influence in the region.

Session 3: India Japan Partnership: Building Synergies in the Global Platform

Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore analyzed the growing cooperation between Japan and India in the infrastructure sector in North East India.

- His paper also looked at the challenges to Japan's infrastructure building efforts in the region, especially given the terrain of the region and other factors.
- He outlines various ways in which Japan has been involved in North East through ODA, counter terror operations in Mizoram. He mentioned the Japan India Act East Forum with Chief Minister's of North Eastern States and stakeholders from centre.
- He suggested a road map for Japan's infrastructure-building efforts in Northeast India.
- Japan- India Partnership in North Eastern India will be a test case for AAGC infrastructure investments.

Dr Titli Basu, Associate Fellow, East Asia Centre, Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, New Delhi presented on India-Japan: Making of a Global Partnership.

- She underlined how they shared Universal Values towards Global Commons and are aligning their interests in international organisations like the United Nations.

- She explored India-Japan stand on free and open global trade regime and the scope of working together in Africa.
- Translating idea into deliverables and effective implementation of projects in Africa will need to focus on economic viability, local job creation, capacity building to strike an effective contrast to Chinese projects.

Session 4: The Maritime Transformation of Asia-Pacific: Interdependence and Security: Comparing Indian and Japanese visions

Rear Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, VSM, Chief Staff Officer (Training), Southern Naval Command, Kochi analyses the maritime power play in Asia Pacific.

- Maritime power will not only be a determinant of the geo-politics of Asia-Pacific region but will also shape the future destinies and economic prosperity of the three major powers in Asia-Pacific- India, China and Japan.
- He explored the conditions that made these three powers pivot towards the sea and build a pro active and dynamic defence architecture based on the new realities of Asia Pacific.
- Even as maritime domain is tightly contested, it is also an area of convergence and commonality for all three powers where they face similar threat from non state actors like piracy, maritime terrorism, narcotics etc. All three have compulsion to keep the global commons safe and the need to uphold the spirit of the sea with freedom of navigation and rules based order.
- Thus as the centre of gravity of the world shift to Asia Pacific, maritime issues will take centre stage and shape the trajectory of transformation in this region.

Commodore Somen Banerjee, Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, Delhi explored the broad contours of India Japan partnership.

- Opaque nature of China's rise and US retrenchment from the region has unsettled the contours of international order in the Asia- Pacific.
- 2018 vision statement between India and Japan is in fact a setback to the momentum built painstakingly over previous years.
- He then identified that India and Japan differ in their understanding of the definition of Asia Pacific. This plus India's sensitivity to China has been important triggers for Japan lowering expectations from India.
- He recommended policy vectors for India- Japan partnership.
 - Militarily India needs to generate security surplus and will require Japanese assistance in capacity building.
 - The confluence of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and Western Pacific Naval Symposium to Indo Pacific Naval Symposium will bring greater synergy between the navies of the region.
 - Strategically, hybrid warfare model utilized by China could be the way forward. China's geo-economic strategies like BRI can also be emulated.
 - However Chinese hegemony is built over coercion and not legitimacy and hence needs to be punctured.

- As aspirational UNSC members and leaders in Asia-Pacific, India and Japan need to work together to bring greater moderation and provide alternative leadership in the region.

Dr Josukutty C A, Assistant Professor and Honorary Director, Survey Research Centre, Department of Political Science, Kerala University, Thiruvananthapuram said that structural changes underway in Asia Pacific has found India and Japan converging in geo-political, strategic and geo-economic domain.

- Situation demands that India and Japan to be the Southern and Eastern anchor in the emerging Balance of Power in Asia Pacific.
- They have common positions on their opposition to Sino-centrism and support to American Primacy impacting the security and balance of power in the region. The Japanese advocacy of a free and open Indo-Pacific, and India's Look/Act East Policy and their allegiance to the U. S. driven Quadrilateral (QUAD) schemes confluent liberal and realist visions and interests for a rule-based, stable and prosperous maritime domain in the Asia-Pacific.
- He warned that however the practical possibility of India and Japan convergence in military domain is limited in comparison economic and other symbolic aspects.
- Even as they share a common vision for the liberal rules based order, the operational strategies diverge on ground. This could be due to strategic objectives of India and Japan in this region being different as well as due to the lack of consistency in India's China Policy.

Dr Prakash Paneerselvam Assistant Professor, International Strategic & Security Studies Programme, National Institute for Advance Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru deliberated on the Idea of Global Partnership: Role of Indo-Japan Maritime Cooperation in 2025.

- He traced the trajectory of India-Japan Maritime cooperation which began in early 2000s to address non-traditional threats like natural disasters, piracy, smuggling etc but is gradually unfolding its strategic wings.
- He focused on the India-Japan idea of 'global partnership' which has been an underlying feature of the Joint Statements in the recent years since Prime Minister Mr. Yoshiro Mori's visit to India in 2000. After sixteen years India and Japan has actually chalked out a plan for a 'global partnership'.
- The signing of a joint declaration on Asia-Africa growth Corridor (AAGC) and development and infrastructure activity in the Asian region is a major step forward to achieve much talked about Indo-Japan dream of 'Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific'.
- AAGC will be a win-win for both India and Japan as both countries stress on quality, environmental friendly, financially sustainable infrastructure. India and Japan must initiate the leadership in best practices sharing between Asia and Africa as well as strengthening security institutions to stabilize the region. He also discussed the business opportunities for both countries in AAGC and the existing maritime security threats and explored the response options in African Coast.

Session: 5: India Japan Partnership in the Information Age, trade and investment

Dr Amrita Jash, Associate Fellow, Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) New Delhi dealt with the topic India, Japan and the AAGC: Geopolitics driven by Infrastructure Investment.

- She examined how India and Japan are maneuvering their act of soft balancing against China led BRI through their own AAGC. She acknowledges India and Japan's commonality of concern especially in regard to China and explores whether the intent behind AAGC is individual interest or a collaborative vision.

- Then she moves on to compare and contrast AAGC with China-led BRI. Considering the fact that both have economics as substance and geo-politics as purpose, quality of infrastructure investments as opposed to quantity will be the major bargaining point for AAGC over BRI.
- This combined with stress on open, transparent, non-intrusive implementation based on international standards and responsible financing methods is what will work in favor of AAGC in Africa.
- She added that Asia-Africa Growth Corridor should initiate more proactive exercises rather than merely giving reactive responses to China's BRI initiative.

Dr H S Prabhakar, Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, JNU, New Delhi concluded the session giving an overview of the possibilities of India-Japan partnership in investment, trade and information age.

- He spoke about the diversification of Japanese investment basket to India beyond electronics and automobiles to infrastructure.
- Recent stress given to transfer of Japanese Technology must be calibrated keeping in mind the fact that outcomes may differ in the two countries based on cultural attitudes.
- Other modes of cultural interaction like academic, sports, people to people and cultural exchanges are key. However the language barriers in these interactions need to be eliminated.
- He also contemplated on CPPR's post conference course to keep the India- Japan engagement going.

Media Coverage: The event was extensively covered in all the major print media in Malayalam and English. The All India Radio aired an event round up with interviews from major stakeholders.

