



Consortium of
Indo-Pacific Researchers

Conference Report

Nov. (1-4), 2023

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS
IN THE INDO-PACIFIC:
ELEVATING STRATEGIES AND
INTERESTS

Day1

Panel: U.S.-Japan-Korea: Trilateral Security Alliance and regional challenges

In this panel, **Prof. Yoichiro Sato** (Asia Pacific University, Japan), **Prof. Srabani Roy Choudhury** (JNU, India), **Dr. Kei Koga** (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore), and **Dr. Satoru Nagao** (Hudson Institute, Japan) Participated and delivered their expert remarks. The session analyzed the significance and consequences of the newly adopted **Camp David Security Agreement** and explored the potential measures to establish a strong deterrent against regional threats. Prof. Sato highlighted the economic significance and priority of the **U.S.-Japan alliance** advancing with the trilateral agreement. The session highlighted the overall benefit of the trilateral agreement and strategic cooperation and coordination that also resulted in the improvement in **Japan-Korea bilateral relations**. However, the contingencies and domestic politics are the crucial factors in moving forward to advance the relationship and establishing the peace and stability of the region as discussed. Dr. Koga emphasized the importance of institutionalization of the cooperations (bi-lateral, tri-lateral, and muti-lateral level), that they could be an effective scale to measure the effectiveness of the partnership and agreement. Dr. Choudhry made a significant comment on **India's multi-pronged** and **Look East to Act East policy** to remain engaged with the partners.

Day 2

Panel: U.S.-ASEAN Partnership, Free and Open Indo-Pacific

Associate Prof. Mark Cogan (Kansai Gaidai University, Japan), **Col. Jeffry Hollman** (Chief, Mission Assurance, INDOPACOM, USA), **Dr. Hon-min Yau**

(Associate professor, NDU Taipei), **Mr. José A. Custodio** (fellow, CIPR, USA) participated in the discussion. Dr. Cogan emphasized that the United States needs **closer and more aggressive engagement** with the region as the countries in the regions have been trying to balance their approach towards the **intense competition between China and the U.S.** He cautioned the **inconsistent approach of U.S. towards ASEAN** and suggested to get states like **Lao, Cambodia, and Myanmar** on the table despite democracy deficit in these countries. Col. Hollman emphasized U.S. support for financial and security assistance and **firm backing of the ASEAN Outlook of Indo-Pacific.** However, he also raised a critical issue regarding the **lack of coordination among ASEAN states.** Mr. Custodio emphasized strengthening the **U.S.-Philippines security defense cooperation** amid increasing pressure from Chinese Navy vessels in the South China Sea. He also highlighted Marco's **effort to modernize the Philippines' forces** with the assistance of Japan, India, Korea, and European countries. Dr. Yau spoke about China's strategy to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean Region through the **'Two-Ocean Strategy,' the Border Road Initiative (BRI), and the String of Pearls.**

Panel: U.S. and IOR Region with Reflections on Quad: Strategic Priorities and Partnerships

Esteemed speakers **Mr. Binoj Basnyat** (Maj. Gen.(retd), Nepal), **Dr. Sannia Abdulla Close** (Former fellow, CISAC, Stanford University, USA), **Dr. Mohd Aminul Karim** (Lt General (Ret.), Bangladesh) and **Dr. Nanda Kishore** (Pondicherry University, India) delivered their remarks. The session focused on the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region and the regional challenges with the growing influence of China in the region. **China's investment, infrastructure projects, and deep seaports in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives and in Pakistan** have caused anxiety in the region especially

for India that sees herself surrounded by its adversary China. The session highlighted the **Quad as a crucial multi-lateral and non-military platform** for shared goals and to deal with the regional and wider Indo-Pacific challenges. Lt.Gen. (Dr.) Karim emphasized that the U.S. should engage pro-actively in the **capacity building of institutions, coast guards, and militaries in the region states and should engage 'one-on-one'** despite the size of the state. Major Gen. Basnyat made the case that Quad serves avenues of security cooperation and stability in the Indo-Pacific and is important for strategic and economic interests in the region. Dr. Sannia raised the topic of **Pakistan's threat perception due to bolstering U.S.-India relations** and the prominent role of India in Quad. Dr. Nanda spotlighted the threat India is facing due to the growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean **and India's proactive role in Quad and tilt toward the West tends to maintain the rule-based order and international law** in the Indo-pacific.

Panel: Pacific Island: A Growing Strategic Importance

Distinguished speakers **Maj. Gen. Paul E. Knapp** (Wisconsin National Guard) and the **Ambassador (former.) Mr. Satyendra Prasad** made impressive remarks on **strategic, economic, and environmental aspects of Pacific Islands**. Maj. Gen. Knapp talked about the **State Partnership Program (SPP)** and particularly focused on the activities and involvement to Papua New Guinea (PNG). He highlighted the priorities of the state partnership: maintaining free and open **global commons, people-to-people ties**, promoting prosperity, and creating a conducive environment as he pointed out the pacing challenge with China and the major threat of **climate change and global warming**. He proposes that allies and partners are critical, and the United States is partnering with the regional powers without any binding conditions like the China does. He also shed light on the defense cooperation agreement

and **Ship Rider Act with PNG** to be helpful in maritime security and dealing with illegal and unregulated fishing. Ambassador Nath rightly mentioned that **the island nations have become strategically overloaded** in recent decades as the global economy shifts towards Asia. He emphasized the increasing **importance of the Blue Pacific** due to its abundance of blue foods/protein, critical minerals found in seabed, and the provision of a healthy environment. He proposed **collaboration between the United States and China** to address climate change instead of competing against each other during their contestation. Additionally, the speakers gave the best suggestions on the U.S.'s role as a leader and what it should do to maintain peace and stability in the region: assistance with security, continue investment in pacific economies, delivering much faster on the development and climate, **integrating small island states with U.S. trading system.**

Day 3

Panel: The AUKUS Partnership: Strengthening Security and Alliances

The session examined the security implications of the AUKUS alliance. During the session, the experts conducted a detailed analysis of the **AUKUS defense technology partnership** and its potential implications. They engaged in a well-balanced discussion on whether this pact, which involves Australia, the United States, and Britain, constitutes the **largest defense project in the history of Australia**. They also explored whether this partnership can effectively **deter China's increasing power** in the Indo-Pacific region. **Prof. Rajat Ganguly** (Murdoch University, Perth, Australia) raised questions on necessity, timing, reactions, **and concerns about an arms race to the agreement by regional powers**. He also noted that **China's threat is less in the naval domain and more in the economic, cyber, and space environments**. **Prof. Peter Dombrowski** (Naval War College, USA) explained the importance of the joint agreement on **advanced military capabilities, economic growth, and**

technological innovation and prospects of Artificial Intelligence. He also highlighted the solidification of information-sharing, commercial, and defense innovation among partners and other emerging economies.

Panel: U.S. Taiwan Partnership Amidst Geopolitical Competition

The session focused on the changing regional dynamics due to the Russia-Ukraine War and the Israel-Hamas conflict and how it impacted the U.S.-Taiwan Partnership. The discussion also explored the U.S.-Taiwan partnership in economic and diplomatic dimensions, taking in account geopolitical rivalry with China in the Indo-Pacific. **Dr. Fu-Kuo Liu** (Director of the Taiwan Center for Security Studies), **Dr. Richard Hu** (TCSS), **Dr. Mignonne Chan** (TCSS), and **Dr. Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan** (Academic Visitor University of Reading & Registrar (AIUB) AIUB-Bangladesh) delivered expert remarks. Dr. Liu highlighted the importance **of U.S. assistance to Taiwan** to stand stronger against geopolitical competition. He emphasized that Taiwan must prevent and **deter potential conflicts within its borders.** **Dr. Khan** stated that maintaining the **status quo in cross-strait relationships** is a pressing issue. He also mentioned that the **unification of Taiwan is a priority for China's national rejuvenation**, according to the Chinese Communist Party. He also pointed towards the **strategic ambiguity of the U.S.-Taiwan relations.** Dr. Hu explained that **upgrading defense ties and boosting defense capabilities with the U.S.** is essential for safeguarding Taiwan. He also argued for a **reset of the policy agenda by the Biden administration**, given concerns regarding the security of Taiwan in the face of Beijing's purported **goal of reunification by 2025/2027.** Dr. Chan stated that Taiwan should be an **asset rather than a liability** in the U.S.-China competition. Taking sides would only worsen the situation.

Plenary Panel: The Emerging World Order and Ukraine War

The session focused on the emerging world order following Ukraine war. **Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra** (Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies, India), **Prof. Evan Ellis** (U.S. Army War College, USA), **Prof. Simon Reich** (Rutgers University, USA), **Prof. Nagalaxmi M. Raman** (Amity Institute of International Studies, India), **Dr. Mehmed Ali** (U.S. Space Force) were distinguished speakers. Professor Chintamani said **world order is constantly in flux** due to political, economic, and strategic developments. He emphasized the concept of **"international order" over world order** and stated that a non-aligned international order existed during the Cold War. China and Russia have benefited from the **liberal international order** and are unlikely to dismantle institutions like the World Bank and the WTO. However, they **will continue to challenge the Bretton Wood structure mainly through the BRICS and will likely challenge the USA** selectively, resulting in **"mini-cold wars."** He also opined that the **Global South** would continue to seek changes in the international order to protect their interests as all major powers continue to court these countries for greater legitimacy and support. Prof. Ellis discussed the ongoing conflict in Gaza, stating that **Hamas's two years of planning with impressive secrecy aims to have a "strategic effect," possibly with Iran's intelligence support.** He argued that a prolonged conflict could **marginalize U.S. influence in the Middle East**, derailing the normalization of relationships between Israel and other Arab countries. He cited several **South American countries that have withdrawn their ambassadors from Israel or cut diplomatic ties**, along with the potential economic stress of a protracted Middle East war and Iran's involvement. He predicted **the emergence of an "illiberal" world order led by China and Russia.** Also, India could have a crucial position in the emerging world order.

Professor Simon presented a comprehensive picture of the emerging world order, introducing the concept of "**fuzzy bifurcation**." He argued that **traditional terms like bipolar, unipolar, or multipolar are inadequate to describe the current reality of global order**. In this "messier" world order, alliances will be tenuous across policy domains, and even small and medium-sized states may pursue strategic autonomy in domains such as trade or climate change. He contended that America needs to be prepared for this tumultuous world, while **China is better prepared for the emerging world order**. Dr. Nagalaxmi M Raman highlighted the **West's efforts to promote a value-based international order** amidst challenges from Russia and China. She noted that **strong economic interdependence** prevents unrestrained competition despite increasing geopolitical competition and economic protectionism. Dr. Nagalaxmi observed the paradox of the Ukraine war, noting that the **West is now more united but less influential** than ever before. Economic sanctions on Russia have prompted countries to avoid critical dependency on Western institutions. Mechanisms to prevent such dependency will happen sooner than expected. Dr. Mehmed Ali presented on **the growing militarization of space**, focusing on the U.S. Space Forces and their various functions. He gave practical examples of how **space-based assets are being used in the Russia-Ukraine war**, highlighting the importance and **vulnerabilities of space-based communication and intelligence systems**.

Day 4

Panel: Bay of Bengal Partnership in the Indo-Pacific

Prof. Ali Riaz (Illinois State University, USA), **Rear Admiral Kazi Sarwar Hossain** (Security Analyst, former Ambassador), **Dr. Rasheduzzaman** (University of Dhaka), **Dr. Indu Saxena** (Senior Fellow CIPR) delivered their

expert views. The discussion focused on strategic priorities and partnerships of states in Bay of Bengal region with **Indo-Pacific construct**. Admiral Hossain explained the connectivity, trade routes, and energy resources in the region. He highlighted the challenge of maritime security and the issues faced by regional states, such as **strategic ambiguity, gray zone warfare, and the militarization of the Bay of Bengal region**. Dr. Rasheduzzaman remarked that the U.S., China, India, and other powers, play a role in the region and portray a shift from **land regionalism to maritime regionalism**. He underscored **Bangladesh's ambition to become a middle power** in regional and global affairs with a critical objective to achieve **security pluralism** in the region, which is a littoral state. During his remarks, Prof. Riaz emphasized the significance of having a solid economic framework and the necessity for inclusive economic growth. He also warned that the **absence of an institutional setup for economic collaboration** could pose difficulties for the progress of small states despite their strategic importance in the region. Dr. Saxena highlighted the **significance of space and time in the regional and Indo-Pacific dynamics and its geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geo-cultural aspects**. She emphasized **India's view of inclusive growth and 'neighborhood first' policy** to enhance regional development and connectivity. She noted that China's increasing influence in the region is a grave concern for India.

Panel: India-Israel-U.S.-U.A.E.(I2U2): Expanding Partnership

The session involved deep discussions between the speakers: **Amb. (Fmr.) Anil Trigunayat** (New Delhi, India) **Dr. Hayat Alvi** (Associate Professor, U.S. Naval War College, USA) **Dr. Ali Tekin** (Professor, İstanbul Gedik Üniversitesi. İstanbul, Türkiye) **Prof. B. M. Jain** (Fellow (Fmr.) Ohio University, USA) and **Dr. Manjari Singh** (Assistant. Professor, Amity University, Noida, India).

Ambassador Trigunayat stated that **I2U2 is an economic and technological advancement group** with convergences of areas of work from inside and outside the group. He emphasized the importance of strengthening the U.S.-India partnership in the West Asian region, especially in light of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the recent Hamas-Israel conflict. Dr. Alvi mentioned the **linkage between the Abraham Accord and the I2U2**. She commented on the necessary **preconditions for regional economic integration**: resolution of conflicts, political and economic development, and reduced tariffs between trade partners. Dr. Tekin emphasized that today, **minilateralism** is critical to maintaining global connections and preventing adversaries. And the U.S. strategy to deter China's influence in the Middle East through I2U2. Dr. Singh stated that I2U2 results from the geopolitical convergences of four countries aimed at holistic development among regional challenges. She elaborated that this grouping is a geoeconomic integration of non-conventional issues like food, energy, space, etc., and that the group has the potential to expand more to tackle the challenges of the wider world.

Panel: Historical Lessons from the Pacific Alliances

1st Lt. Grant Willis (USAF, USA), **Capt. Brendan Donnelly** (USAF, USA) **Mr. José A. Custodio** (CIPR, USA) presented and examined the historical perspective of U.S. alliance. The session analyzed the concept of alliances from a historical perspective. Two presentations scrutinized the **trajectory of North Korea and Russia relations** over the past 80 years and the relations between the **US and the Philippines**. The third presentation evaluated **airpower as a strategic asset** in the context of 1941 and 1958.

The CIPR conference concluded with ten expert panels featuring academia, professionals, and practitioners discussing Indo-Pacific affairs. The event

sparked newer dialogues about a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific, highlighting the U.S.'s leading role alongside its like-minded partners. Additionally, the discussions emphasized the need for the U.S. to assume greater responsibility for the overall development and prosperity of the region and to protect U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific.