



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF
INDO-PACIFIC STUDIES

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on

Winds of Change in Japan's Defence & Security Policy

By



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Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific
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27th January 2023

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Chair



*Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra,
Founder and
Hon. Chairperson, KIIPS*

KIIPS Distinguished Lecture on
Winds of Change in Japan's Defence and Security Policy

On 27th January, 2023

Chair: Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra,

Founder and Honorary Chairperson, KIIPS

Speaker: Prof. Yoichiro Sato,

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan

Winds of Change in Japan's Defence and Security Policy

- **Report by Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra**

Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies as a part of its ongoing Distinguished Lecture series held a talk by Prof. Yoichiro Sato on the topic '**Winds of Change in Japan's Defence and Security Policy**' on January 27, 2023. The talk is very relevant considering the recent developments in the region and the changing strategic posture of both Japan and South Korea.

Salient Points:

1. Three documents released by Japan clearly indicate a major change in Japan's emerging defence and national security strategy:
 - a. [National Security Strategy](#)
 - b. [National Defense Strategy](#) (formerly known as the National Defense Program Guidelines)
 - c. [Defense Buildup Program](#)
2. The emerging policy gives primacy to US-Japan strategic alliance, which remains a bedrock of Japan's defence policy for last seven decades.
3. The second priority is given to growing numbers of networked partnerships, such as the ones with Australia, the United Kingdom, India and the QUAD. The relationship with Australia is also moving towards an alliance type of tie. The recently signed Reciprocal Access Agreement with Australia allows joint military exercises, whereas the earlier agreements focused mostly on logistics. The Reciprocal Access Agreement between Japan and the UK includes military exercises on land, water and air.
4. India, Japan and the US trilateral military exercises and QUAD naval exercises in the South China Sea all indicate Japan's emerging defence policy.
5. The reasons for Japan's networked partnerships, bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral, are two: A. it has a legal dimension in the sense that while the US has not ratified the UNCLOS, other networked partners have done that. B. The US resources and commitment to Indo-Pacific security are stretched. Washington is preoccupied with Atlantic security issues, and there is a domestic political divide on the importance of the Indo-Pacific.

6. Japan believes that the economic potential of the Indo-Pacific is enormous, especially with the rise of China and India and the EU realises it more than the US. In the US, the business community understands the value of the Indo-Pacific regions' economic potential more than the political class. Thus, Japan has welcomed positive moves from the UK, France, Germany and other EU member states.
7. Some in the US support commercial engagement with China, while others see it as a challenge and competitor. This divided opinion confuses others, including Japan and alternative security networking has become essential.
8. With the depth and nature of US commitments in doubt, China's grey zone activities, such as the use of its coast guard fleets in the guise of civilian activities pose additional problems. Japan knows that the Chinese Coast guards operate under the PLA. For example, China does not send its naval ships to territorial waters around the Senkaku islands but sends its coast guards to make it appear like civilian activity.
9. One good development for Japan is the open declaration by the United States, after repeated Japanese requests, that Senkaku's security protection comes under the provisions of the alliance treaty.
10. The most discussed aspect of the emerging defence and security policy of Japan is its plan to develop a counter-strike capability. It is a paradigm shift in Japan's defence doctrine. Japan did not have any plan or doctrine for ground attack capability for any security challenges in its neighbourhood. Now it aims at developing a counter-strike capability. The main rationale behind this change is growing threats from the modernization of the Chinese military and North Korean missile developments.
11. The last important aspect of the emerging defence policy of Japan is the desire to expand its defence industrial base. It has reached out to European countries for joint development of fighter aircraft. The reluctance of the US to sell certain defence equipment to Japan has led Tokyo to reach out to Italy and the UK in this regard.
12. Significantly, Japan is showing increasing interest in selling military equipment abroad, especially to friendly countries. It has signed an agreement to sell 8 ships to Indonesia, for instance. The Philippines is another market for Japan.
13. Responding to a question on how Japan would react to South Korea going nuclear, the professor viewed that Japan does not even want South Korea to have missiles that can reach Japan. More concern to Japan is any movement towards Korean unification. He said South Korea's nuclear capability may not immediately lead to Japan seeking to acquire nuclear

capability. This sentiment is understandable because neither South Korea nor Japan would like to state their preference for a nuclear option.

14. Significantly, he said in response to a question that ASEAN is not comfortable with the concept of Indo-Pacific, although it has issued the "ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific".

Note: The views expressed above belong to the speaker(s). The speaker(s) are solely responsible for the content and facts presented in the report. The author has only summarized the reports.