



## Sigur Center for Asian Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

### India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Ties with Japan

The rise of India has been a major catalyst for the development of the idea of the “Indo-Pacific” and a broadened understanding of Asia. Within the Indo-Pacific, the relationship between the region’s two most important democracies, India and Japan, has taken on particular importance. [The Sigur Center and the Rising Powers Initiative welcomed Sujan R. Chinoy, Director-General of the New Delhi-based Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, and a decorated Indian diplomat, to speak on the Indo-Pacific and India’s role and partnerships.](#)

In his overview of the growing role of Asia and its significant players, Sujan Chinoy put forth the argument that America’s push towards globalization after the U.S.S.R. dissolved opened the door for Chinese expansionism. However, Chinoy argues that the Indo-Pacific and Asia are much more than just about China’s growing influence; instead, the Indo-Pacific comprises numerous land and maritime micro-economies that allow for a flourishing regional marketplace and the simultaneous rise of several regional powers. For example, India is ranked the world’s third largest GDP in purchasing power parity; South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines are performing well and rapidly developing.

### Asia’s Looming Strategic Challenges

The dynamics at play in the Indo-Pacific now extend far beyond economics, with a new security dimension as

China's rapid military growth brings disturbances to the existing equilibrium. Chinoy asserts that China's rapid military rise makes the following fact more apparent than ever before: Asia is not monolithic. He points to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the internal divisions within the organization in dealing with China. Considering how these closely-knit states are unable to come to a consensus provides a pressing example of how Asia is, in fact, heterogeneous with many separate regions and interests.

India is approaching this situation by establishing a vision for the Indo-Pacific as an open and inclusive region, and one that needs a structured plan for the long term in order to continue developing and reach the economic development goals of resident states. Chinoy notes that India is also stressing the importance of equal access to the commons, i.e., freedom of navigation in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as shared access to the region's abundant natural resources. Two-thirds of all globally transported oil and natural gas pass through the region as well as one-third of the world's bulk cargo, meaning it is vital that open access to these transport routes are maintained.

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## **The Strengthening Bond Between India and Japan: Economics Plus**

India and Japan's special relationship has grown more tightly bound in the last decade and is fundamentally based on shared goals and strategies for the region. Chinoy notes that especially since Shinzo Abe and Narendra Modi took the helm of their countries, joint humanitarian, infrastructure and economic initiatives have flourished. Chinoy suggests that their strategic partnership has the potential to challenge China in terms of influence over the Indo-Pacific. He sees the most important aspect of India and Japan's relationship as their shared long-term goals. In his 2018 speech at Shangri-La, Prime Minister Modi when discussing Asian regional development goals, stressed that it is not just about money, but about quality and long-term sustainability.

Japan and India are stepping up cooperation in areas as varied as manufacturing, workforce development, agriculture, defense and security operations, and connectivity projects. As it stands, Japan and India have over fifty different mechanisms for high level policy interactions, a number that is constantly increasing. Japan has invested over \$30 billion in India and is India's largest foreign contributor in manufacturing and engineering sectors. Japan has helped India fund its \$18 billion bullet train purchases which will connect Mumbai and Ahmedabad, as well as help India develop a strong metro transportation system in New Delhi. India offers a secure foreign market for Japanese companies, with more than a hundred opening branches in India each year and over fourteen hundred already established.

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Japanese automobile brand Suzuki manufactures its cars in India, reaching production levels just next to Japan. Chinoy notes that Japan is renowned for its standards of excellence in various industries, and by sharing their manufacturing norms, India will soon be in a position to create rigorous standards of engineering on its own.

In the agriculture and economic development fields, Japan and India are also doing more together. Historically Japan has not been involved in Indian agriculture, but in May 2018 India and Japan announced the establishment of the Japan-India Food Business Council. Japan also helped India open over a hundred medical facilities over the last year and offered advanced medical training for Indian trauma and geriatric doctors. In 2018 the Indian government announced the creation of these medical centers and initiatives as part of its new national health program "Ayushman Bharat." Japan also assisted India in the creation of robust disaster protocols for weather-related events.

Chinoy detailed several ventures on workforce and human capital. The two countries have developed a worker exchange program whereby Indian citizens can travel to Japan to work in information technology and help close the Japanese labor gap, and Japanese workers help establish institutes of manufacturing around India

to impart their stringent engineering standards and procedures. Additionally, India and Japan facilitated an intern exchange program whereby current students can travel to the other country and develop their technical skills for future applications in the workforce. Japan has helped spearhead initiatives like Digital India and Start-up India, which Chinoy argues will open the door for joint progress towards 'Society 5.0', wherein Japan and India would collaborate on artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and big data. This will be facilitated in part with Japan funding a start-up in Bangalore, India's technology hub.

Chinoy posits that as India's economy blossomed with reforms, so has the attractiveness of the Indo-Pacific as a destination for foreign investment and development activities. In 2018 the U.S. passed the Better Utilization of Investment Leading to Development (BUILD) Act, meant to increase funding for infrastructure development in both Asia and Africa. This is in addition to the U.S.'s Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy (Asia EDGE) designed to improve energy security and access to resources in the Indo-Pacific. Even with these programs, however, the level of U.S. funding in the region is still much lower than that of China and its Belt and Road Initiative. Moreover, Japan does not have a history of trade and investment like that of China, and India is torn between domestic projects and military spending to counter Pakistan. To address this challenge, Chinoy points out how Japan and India have been working towards the development of the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, a partnership between them and African countries focusing on economic development, human capital and quality infrastructure.

## **Prospects**

With rising great power tensions between the United States and China, Chinoy notes that many Indo-Pacific countries are apprehensive about having to choose loyalties in the future. Chinoy stresses that in order to continue the current upward trend of economic development, countries should not be forced into this difficult position. Instead, regional states should formulate an understanding of how the U.S.-China competition can benefit the region through multiple competing initiatives. This situation demands greater transparency in the Indo-Pacific by all countries, particularly since the Chinese,

Indian, Japanese and American models for economic and infrastructural growth are not the same. Chinoy concludes that stability and a robust economic zone are keys to the Indo-Pacific's success in the future, and that cooperative relations, even uneasy ones, are better than outright competition.

*By Emilyn Tuomala, M.A. Candidate, Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University*

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### **About the Rising Powers Initiative and Sigur Center for Asian Studies**

The Sigur Center's Rising Powers Initiative examines how domestic political debates and identity issues affect international relations in Asia. RPI acknowledges support from the MacArthur Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York for its activities..

The Sigur Center for Asian Studies is an international research center of The Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University. Its mission is to increase the quality and broaden the scope of scholarly research and publications on Asian affairs, promote U.S.-Asian scholarly interaction and serve as the nexus for educating a new generation of students, scholars, analysts and policymakers. The Sigur Center houses the Rising Powers Initiative, a multi-year, multi-project research effort that studies the role of domestic identities and foreign policy debates of aspiring powers.



Sigur Center for Asian Studies  
Elliott School of International Affairs  
The George Washington University  
1957 E St. NW, Suite 503  
Washington, DC 20052

TEL 202.994.5886  
EMAIL [gsigur@gwu.edu](mailto:gsigur@gwu.edu)  
<https://sigur.elliott.gwu.edu>  
<http://www.risingpowersinitiative.org>