

## **Ambassador's Keynote Speech to the Japan Symposium 2020**

- It gives me great pleasure to be able to address you today at the marvelous campus here at the University of Western Australia.
- Today marks the second time that I have addressed the Japan Symposium, and I very much welcome the opportunity to share some of my views with you on those matters of interest to us all.
- Before I begin, I would just like to express my sincerely sympathy to those affected by the bushfire over the past few months. We are honored to dispatch 2 C-130 transport aircraft to Australia last month to assist firefighters and the ADF in containing the blazes.
- This action was also in reciprocation for the support that Australia showed towards Japan following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Professor Smith was instrumental in arranging this support, and we are eternally grateful to him.

### **Introduction**

- And so, and as I noted in my speech to you last year, the geo-political environment in which we find ourselves is in a state of flux. Power balances that we might have once taken for granted are instead undergoing a shift.
- The rules based order that has underwritten much of the growth experienced by Western and other societies since the Second World War, an order built under the leadership of the United States, has come under intense pressure in recent years.
- The strategic competition between China and the US has intensified and Russia is also seeking strategic opportunities. Authoritarianism, and its

distant but no-less disruptive cousin populism, are perceived to be on the rise.

- This disruption is evident, if not more evident, in the Indo-Pacific region than in other parts of the globe.
- While the US, through its extensive network of alliances and agreements, is able to ensure that the strategic balance does not tip too far in favour of one country over another, there remains a latent level of tension within the region that cannot be easily dismissed.
- Within the East and South China Seas, there have been continued attempts to alter the status quo by force. North Korea has not taken a single step towards denuclearization.
- While not wishing to dwell too long upon the difficulties of the region, I wish to use my address today to make four points, (1) importance of India to the region's future, (2) the maritime domain and the rule of law, (3) economic prosperity, and (4) the role of democratic values.

### **The importance of India to the region's future**

- As alluded to by the theme of this Symposium, Australia and India are like-minded nations for Japan that share a desire to shape the future of the Indo-Pacific region.
- All three countries have our own visions and plans for the Indo-Pacific that bear remarkable similarities in content, namely a desire for the rule of law, increased trade, stability, and development.
- All three countries may not have identical geostrategic interests given that India is both a maritime and continental country with complex relationships with its neighbors. But they certainly share an equal concern

for the maritime domain, and this in turn indicates how much potential there is for greater co-operation between us.

- Given the strategic weight of India, how Prime Minister Modi's Indo-Pacific Ocean Strategy will be implemented in the years ahead will have a significant impact on the region's future.
- The Indian Ocean and the Pacific are interlinked, and our three countries must look at the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. The key is how to bring India to the Pacific side, including through enhancing the India-Indonesia nexus.
- The visit to Indonesia by Prime Minister Modi in 2018 signaled a greater maritime engagement by India in the Pacific. I am pleased that Andaman and Nicobar Islands are emerging as a key pillar in India's strategic partnership with Indonesia. Japan and Australia should encourage this development.
- In so doing, Japan and Australia should expand maritime cooperation with India in the Indian Ocean. By way of example, Japan joined Sri Lanka and India in an effort to develop the Colombo Port by signing a trilateral MOC last year.
- Furthermore, military-to-military cooperation with India is another area to pursue. For instance, India and Japan signed the Implementing Arrangement for Deeper Cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in 2018.
- I am not in a position to confirm the authenticity of the report, but it will be a good thing if India invites Australia to the Malabar exercise as was reported previously.
- As many of you gathered here will be aware, all this is occurring while India's external posture undergoes a period of distinct change.

- India is no longer an unaligned country in the old and immediate sense of the words, neither is it consumed by its relations with its immediate neighbours. India is implementing its Act East policy, and expanding its diplomatic presence across the region. This is a development that Japan wholeheartedly supports.

### **The rule of law and the South China Sea**

- So with an increase in interaction between Japan, Australia, and India, what can our three countries practically do to maintain our interests in the Indo-Pacific region?
- One area of particular concern to us all, and one where we have great potential for co-operation, is the importance of the rule of law.
- All three of our countries strongly agree that the rule of law underwrites the peace and security of the region. The balance of power cannot by itself guarantee either peace or security.
- The greatest litmus test for whether the rule of law can remain viable, and whether we have the collective will to uphold it, lies in the current situation in the South China Sea.
- Obviously the developments there have been of great concern to us all. Many of us here are aware of what happened in and around the Natuna Islands, the Vanguard Bank, and the Thitu Islands.
- Whether or not a country is a claimant to territory in that region, the issues involved are not confined to that region but affect every nation on the planet. What occurs in the South China Sea will determine the fate of the rules-based order.

- Diplomatically, the three countries must express, at every available opportunity – be it the EAS, APEC, and elsewhere -- the importance of the rule of law.
- We must, when it is in our power to do so, assist countries included in ASEAN to do the same.
- In so doing, we must encourage the peaceful resolution of disputes between states, based on international law and respect for international institutions.
- We must continue to advocate for demilitarization of the South China Sea, and the exercise of self-restraint by all parties concerned.
- Furthermore, we must continue to support the adoption of an effective and universal Code of Conduct.
- For our three countries, it is important to ensure that such an instrument of law prejudices neither the rights nor the interests of anyone, including third parties.
- So what can the three countries do beyond their respective diplomatic efforts? I wish to leave that question to the distinguished panelists.

### **Prosperity**

- The interests of the region are not, and should not, be dominated by maritime security affairs only. This is why our respective strategies have embraced economic aspects in order to promote trade and the promise of prosperity.
- Japan, Australia and India all share the vision of a region where national wealth rises with an increase in trade and increased connectivity between nations.

- While we each maintain our respective bilateral agreements, the adoption of broad-ranging multilateral agreements such as RCEP promises to distribute the benefits of trade to more recipients.
- This is why we are still hopeful that India will see fit to join RCEP by the end of this year.
- An RCEP that includes India just makes so much sense both economically and strategically for the region. An RCEP will not be a burden for India but will present economic opportunities. India's population is soon to be the world's largest, and the country has the potential of becoming a competitive hub for manufacturing. If so, an RCEP will enable India to achieve sustainable growth and job creation.

### Values

- While strategy and economics might be facets of our respective relationships, one thing that truly binds us together are our shared values.
- Now, I am aware that there is plenty of argument occurring at present that democracy is in retreat.
- I am of the opinion that while we must acknowledge the geopolitical realities in front of us, this need not entirely impede our ability to engage with the world and uphold democratic values and human rights.
- Our approach needs to be discreet, and we should not preach to countries concerned. We certainly need to consider geopolitical realities. But we should not underestimate the role of values in shaping the future of the region.

- We should pursue opportunities for gradual progress, not sudden breakthroughs. The example of Myanmar is a case in point.
- The ICOE's report on the situation in Rakhine province was a positive development. As you may be aware, the report includes substantial information regarding mass killings, destruction of property etc., in 13 locations as well as recommendations for the Myanmar government and military.
- We must continue to encourage the Myanmar government's own efforts to investigate these matters and address the content of the report, which is itself a significant step.
- Countries such as Japan, Australia, and India, together with partners drawn from ASEAN, must continue to encourage the Government of Myanmar's own efforts to realise the recommendations of the report.

### **Conclusion**

- I believe the relationship between our three countries has great potential and will bring tangible benefits to our region in the coming years.
- For that to happen, it is necessary that the US remains engaged with this region. The trilateral cooperation between Australia, India and Japan is not a substitute for this, but something that complements the existing robust US presence in the region.
- Thank you very much.