

## Political and Defence Aspects of India-Japan Relations

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Mr. Wataru Nishigahiro, Minister, Deputy Chief of Mission & Charge d' Affairs, Embassy of Japan, New Delhi visited CSA on 21 January 2004 and participated in a roundtable discussion. Prof. Gopalji Malviya welcomed the visiting dignitary and presided over the roundtable.

Mr. Nishigahiro spoke candidly and covered wide-ranging subjects in a free wheeling discussion with the members of CSA and a few selected intellectuals from the city. Mr. Nishigahiro began his address by taking note of the recent thaw in Indo-Pakistan relations. He said that Japan's views have always been closer to that of India, i.e., cross border terrorism should end and the terrorist infrastructure should be dismantled to ensure the success of the talks. He expressed his happiness and welcomed the steps taken by both India and Pakistan for improving the relations.

### Defence Aspects:

On the defence policy, he gave out the background to say that Article 9 of the Japanese constitution renounces war as a means to settle international disputes. However, the creation of Self Defence Forces (SDF) was not contradictory to the constitution and they were created not for settling disputes but for self-defence. Two major factors that go into determining the shape, size and functioning of the SDF are:-

- The important aspect of security of Japan is based on the US-Japan pact and on nuclear strategy aspect Japan is dependent on the security umbrella provided by the US.
- The SDF would only take up a defensive posture and would not acquire any offensive capability.

During 1960 when the SDF was upgraded, there was a major controversy in Japan and the public opinion was sharply divided. To mollify the dissatisfied section, a limit on the defence expenditure was imposed in that not more than 1 per cent of the GDP would be spent on defence. And this restriction since then had been by and large followed except on three occasions.

On the subject of arms export, he clarified that there were certain restrictions, in that arms would not be exported to communist countries or to parties involved in conflicts. Further, arms that have been jointly developed with the US could be exported only through the US. The military industrial complex in Japan is not very significant. However, they are increasing their pressure on the government for liberalising the export policy to enable mass production to achieve economy of scale.

On the nuclear issue, the DCM was very frank and candid in saying that having suffered the nuclear attacks in the Second World War, Japan is very very sensitive to the nuclear issue. Legally or constitutionally there is no bar on Japan acquiring

nuclear weapons for defence purposes. However, as a matter of principle, Japan does not possess any nuclear weapons nor it intends to acquire or produce. Because of the Japan's sensitivity to this issue, earlier it had taken strong measures against China and France. It is in this light that Japan reacted and imposed severe restrictions in dealing with India after Pokhran tests in 1998, which have been suspended now.

### **Political Aspects:**

On Indo-Japan relations, the DCM started saying that both the nations had always enjoyed cordial relations and Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose and Vinod Pal were some of the names that had served as a bridge between the two countries. Culturally too, the people of both the countries see a lot of commonalities and look for friendly ties. Till the late 60s and early 70s, the bond was very strong. The China factor always had its importance both for India and Japan. In 1972, Japan recognised China and with peaceable nuclear explosion by India in 1974 the need for close cooperation slowly drifted. The strategic importance of India was also not fully recognised in Japan. The tension on Indo-Pakistan borders during 2000-2001 also kept many Japanese away from visiting and interacting with Indians. However, things changed for good from 2003 onwards. In May 2003, the Japanese Defence Minister visited India and on that occasion, the Indian Defence Minister said that it was a historic moment because it was the first time that the Japanese Defence Minister had visited India since its independence. The joint naval exercises between India and Japan towards the end of 2003 also helped in moving Indo-Japan relations in the right direction. The DCM hoped that the relationship with India **here onwards** would progress for the mutual benefit of both and would cover many areas including political consultation and coordination, defence cooperation, economic cooperation and closer cultural ties.

So far as the membership of the United Nations Security Council is concerned, both the countries are eligible to become members and Japan is not a contender against India. On the Sri Lankan peace initiative, the DCM stated that Japan was very keen to provide overseas development aid to help build the war ravaged region but for the present is waiting for the situation to become clear.

The DCM also observed that media coverage of India and Japan was not good enough but from late 2003 onwards things have improved for good. India's association with ASEAN has also helped in appreciating the progress that India was making and Japan in general is taking note of the strategic, economic and political importance of India.