

The Eleventh Biennial International Conference of IAAPS at Kolkata (November 17-18, 2022)

Asia- Pacific from Past to Present: Bonding and Challenges

Concept note

The vast region that comprises what is today known as Asia Pacific, despite being divided by national boundaries into nation states, share commonalities of challenges which must be overcome in the interest of the wellbeing of all the countries involved through bonding, bilateral or multilateral. Even in the past, the seas and oceans created a network of communications, be it trade or religious or both, because of which greater areas of cultural interactions could be formed. Cultural interactions included in a large way literary and linguistic interface. Contacts were based on the movement across land and sea, of objects, of people, and of knowledge systems by sea and land routes. Despite debates on whether the connections and convergences led to influences or interaction, multiple historicities entangled the concepts leading to majority of scholars speaking about social nearness to be of crucial importance. There can be no denying that in the period following decolonisation in major parts of the region, nationalism often triumphed over cosmopolitanism leading to divergences in national growth in the countries of Asia -Pacific region.

In recent times, a new construct of the Indo-Pacific plays a pivotal role in the contemporary discourse. The term Indo Pacific refers to the wide geographical expanse combining the Indian and Pacific oceans. Indeed, at the heart of the Indo-Pacific lies the Bay of Bengal, situated at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Ocean and fringed by countries of both South and Southeast Asia. The increasing engagements of several stakeholders in the region have made the region a theatre of cooperation and challenges. The assertive rise of China has increased the apprehension of multiple major powers such as Japan, USA, UK, Australia and India and has propelled the region into the centre stage of strategic power play.

With this historical focus in the background, the Eleventh Biennial International Conference will be a meeting point of scholars working on Asian & Pacific studies. ASEAN regional cooperation has promoted peace and security among the countries leading to growth of mutual trust through cooperative efforts. Several economic strategies have been developed to help improve exports and despite differential economic development in the countries, cooperation has been stressed through productive sectors and trading networks. Common positions and strategies have been developed in longterm and new trading partners. Multilateral cooperation in this region has also been successful as a whole. Of course the challenges that ASEAN countries have faced in geopolitical uncertainties, oil crisis and its economic implications must be dealt with through sustainable development goals. There have been long term problems and concerns of gender discrimination and trafficking which need to be addressed sooner than later and strategies and plans need to be made both nationally by the different countries as well as through international cooperation.

In the recent years climate change and health concerns have been bane of human existence and has affected the Asia Pacific region in universal ways as well as with its own peculiar dynamic. It has become vital for all thinktanks to deliberate and find solutions to the multiple difficulties arising from it. Finally since the hosts of the conference are India and Thailand, we hope also to explore the multiple dimensions of interaction between the two countries in the past and the present. We hope that

through the deliberations in this conference we will find the key to resolving the challenges that Asia Pacific region faces not merely through political and economic action but a people to people bonding.

The panels on which discussions will be held are:

1. Religion, Society and Culture: Asia in View
2. Geopolitics, Geostrategic and Geo-Economic Dimensions of Indo-Pacific.
3. Asia Pacific vs Indo-Pacific- Trends in International Relations
4. Covid and its Impact in Asia
5. Dynamics of Multilateral Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
6. ASEAN: Success and Challenges
7. Sustainable Development Goals and Indo-Pacific
8. Gendered Asia: Issues and Concerns
9. Thailand- From Past to the Era of Indo-Pacific

I have attached the programme schedule and topics under the panels in a separate file.