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**CHINA AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF REGIONAL
SECURITY AMIND THE ONGOING CONFLICT
BY
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**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS
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The Changing Indo-Pacific Security Architecture

Dr. Arun opens by establishing that the Indo-Pacific is undergoing a fundamental structural transformation. A key marker is Japan's dramatic departure from its post-war pacifist posture by amending national security documents, legalising lethal weapons exports, and significantly increasing its defence budget. The common denominator driving these regional shifts is China, with virtually every actor recalibrating its military, diplomatic, and economic strategy in response to China's growing assertiveness.

Lessons from the Ukraine and West Asian Wars

Both conflicts have revealed defining features of modern warfare. The Ukraine War demonstrated the centrality of low-cost unmanned systems particularly First-Person View (FPV) drones which can overwhelm expensive air defence systems and create unfavourable cost asymmetries for defenders. Russia's mixed strike packages combining cheap one-way drones with cruise missiles forced Ukraine into selective use of advanced interceptors. Iran replicated this approach against Israel and Gulf states, exposing a structural vulnerability: technologically advanced nations can be overwhelmed by swarms of inexpensive weapons.

The wars have also dismantled assumptions about short, decisive modern conflicts, underscoring instead the importance of industrial capacity, manpower sustainment, and prolonged warfare readiness. Ukraine's rapid, decentralised innovation cycle, generating new unmanned warfare solutions at battlefield speed stands in sharp contrast to China's highly centralised, politically constrained military system.

China's Selective Learning

Dr. Arun's central argument is that the PLA is interpreting battlefield evidence through pre-existing doctrinal assumptions rather than genuinely revising its thinking. China's investment in AI-enabled unmanned systems and swarm technology predates Ukraine. Xi Jinping had outlined "intelligentisation" as a modernisation priority in 2020. Post-Ukraine developments include the Atlas swarm command system (coordinating 96 drones), the Chiyuti unmanned drone carrier, and converted J-6 fighter jets repurposed as attack drones.

However, while the wars demonstrate that cheap, simple systems can be devastatingly effective, China continues to prioritise sophisticated, survivable platforms. PLA scholars have framed FPV drones as merely a "temporary and imperfect stage" toward fully intelligentised warfare, a framing that conveniently preserves existing doctrine and avoids confronting the logic of disposable, attrition-based systems.

Institutional Constraints: Loyalty Over Innovation

Political dynamics compound these blind spots. Repeated PLA purges driven by Xi Jinping's insistence on party loyalty have created a culture where officers avoid challenging doctrine for fear of appearing disloyal. This culture of "yes-men" structurally inhibits the bottom-up feedback that drives military adaptation. China's 15th Five-Year Plan reflects this shift, reframing innovation as a national security imperative where ideological discipline takes precedence over creative risk-taking. The emerging "platform state" model seeks to manage the entire innovation ecosystem like economy, technology, and military under a unified national security objective.

Diplomatic Gains and Regional Responses

Despite military blind spots, China has made significant geopolitical gains, positioning itself as a responsible global power promoting peace while contrasting itself with an increasingly erratic United States. Its alleged role in the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement and use of Pakistan as a back-channel mediator in Iran-US ceasefire discussions exemplify its growing diplomatic reach.

Japan has emerged as the most significant regional actor recalibrating in response to China, becoming the preferred security partner for ASEAN nations. Its overseas security assistance to the Philippines and Malaysia, a reciprocal defence agreement with the Philippines, and evacuation coordination with Taiwan signal its growing role as a regional anchor. ASEAN nations are pursuing hedging strategies like increasing defence budgets and military capabilities while maintaining deep economic ties with China, encapsulating the Indo-Pacific paradox: countries simultaneously prepare for conflict with China while funding their security through trade with it.

Conclusion

Dr. Arun concludes that Indo-Pacific security is no longer simply about preventing war, it is about managing competition, preserving strategic space, and navigating a world where coercion and cooperation coexist. China is growing more sophisticated, patient, and indirect, yet the region is not band wagoning with it. The PLA's institutional inertia, selective learning, and prioritisation of loyalty over innovation remain significant constraints on its adaptation, even as China's diplomatic and economic influence continues to expand.