

Global Scholars Gather in Niigata to Rethink Good Governance from Asian Perspectives

Report provided by Chengwei Xu

The 2nd International Workshop on *Asian Perspectives on Good Governance* convened leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioner–academics from across Asia, Europe, North America, Africa, and the Middle East in Niigata, Japan, on 15–16 May 2026. Hosted by the IUJ Research Institute, International University of Japan, the workshop explored how Asian experiences and institutional innovations are reshaping global understandings of governance.

Sponsored by the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, Nanyang Technological University, the two-day event brought together 35 distinguished scholars and speakers came from leading institutions across Asia, Europe, North America, and the Middle East, including Carleton University, Chiang Mai University, City University of Hong Kong, Georgetown University in Qatar, Hiroshima University, Hunan University, International University of Japan, Kings College London, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Meiji University, Nanyang Technological University, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), National University of Singapore, Peking University, SOAS University of London, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Tokyo, Tsinghua University, TOBB University, University of Central Florida, University of Indonesia, University of Nottingham, University of Southern California, University of the Philippines, Yonsei University, and Zhejiang University. Around 30 students and 8 IUJ faculty attended this event.



On May 14, President Kikkawa visited the conference venue and held separate meetings with Professor Arkebe Oqubay and the Nanyang Technological University delegation led by Professors Liu Hong and Wang Jue. During his meeting with Professor Oqubay, the former Senior Minister and Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, President Kikkawa shared his perspectives on Japan’s green transformation and energy policies, as well as the potential global implications of the current energy crisis. At the pre-event welcome dinner, President Kikkawa also met with Associate Vice President Professor Liu Hong, Professor Wang Jue, Director of the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, and other distinguished guests.



Opening the workshop, Liu Hong, Associate Vice President of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Director of the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA), emphasized the growing importance of Asia as a source of governance innovation rather than merely a recipient of Western administrative models.

Professor Hiroshi Kato, Vice President of the International University of Japan, welcomed participants and underscored the importance of international academic collaboration in addressing governance challenges amid growing global uncertainty. Following his remarks, Professor Liu Hong, representing Nanyang Technological University and the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, presented a token of appreciation to Professor Kato. In return, Professor Kato, on behalf of IUJ, presented a commemorative gift to Professor Wang Jue, Director of the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration.





In a keynote address titled “*The Governance of Economy in Asia: Rethinking and Moving Beyond Western Models and Colonial Legacies*,” Arkebe Oqubay, former Senior Minister and Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, argued that governance systems in Asia and the Global South must move beyond inherited colonial frameworks and develop context-sensitive institutions capable of supporting long-term development.



One of the featured sessions was the Garden Talk @ Sakura Lane conducted by the IRI director Professor Zhang-Zhang YingYing. Her topic of presentation was ‘Strategic People Management for Navigating Uncertainty and Advancing Sustainable Development’. Based on the book, *People-centric Innovation Ecosystem: Japanese Management and Practices* (Zhang Zhang and Kikkawa 202), Prof Zhang-Zhang shared her arguments on how strategic people management contributes to innovation and sustainable management.



Across multiple thematic sessions, speakers examined governance through lenses including regional economic integration, policy innovation, public sector reform, digital transformation, urban governance, civic participation, and higher education governance. Topics ranged from

special economic zones in Turkey and East Asia to ASEAN regional integration, ecological governance in China, and collaborative governance models in Japan and Singapore.



Several presentations focused on the challenges and opportunities created by artificial intelligence and digital governance. Xufeng Zhu discussed agile governance in the age of intelligent technologies, while M. Jae Moon explored the implications of AI for governance from a Korean perspective. Discussions also addressed platform regulation in the Middle East and the governance of generative AI in higher education.



The workshop also highlighted the diversity of governance experiences across Asia. Presentations examined Philippine political dynasties, Malaysia's Madani reforms, Indonesia's civil service reforms, Thailand's civic crowdfunding initiatives, and Sri Lanka's institutional rebuilding efforts. Speakers stressed that governance models cannot be separated from cultural, historical, and social contexts. For example, Professor Cooray gave a keynote speech on Sri Lanka's recent political economy and on rebuilding better institutions for good governance.



A recurring theme throughout the event was the emergence of an “Asian model” of governance. In the concluding sessions, scholars debated whether Asian governance approaches could provide alternatives to traditional Western public administration frameworks. Andrew Massey argued that the global governance landscape is increasingly shifting toward Asian institutional experiences and policy innovations.





The event concluded with closing remarks delivered by Celia Lee, with an introduction on the publication timeline for the forthcoming handbook project. According to the organizers, the workshop forms part of a broader collaborative initiative to develop an academic handbook tentatively titled *Asian Perspectives on Good Governance*. The publication seeks to contribute new theoretical and empirical insights to governance studies from distinctly Asian and Global South perspectives.

The conference ended with a cultural tour of Minamiuonuma, providing participants with further opportunities for academic exchange and collaboration. The tour also introduced international guest speakers to the region's rich natural landscape and cultural heritage.



