

RAPPORTEUR REPORT

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MEA-IISS-IDSA

Foreign Policy

Dialogue

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A joint initiative of the Public Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of External Affairs and the International Institute of Strategic Studies, this series of Foreign Policy Dialogue began in London in February 2007. On this occasion, the issues discussed were: 'Growing Asian Economies: Challenges and Opportunities', 'Terrorism and Transnational Security Challenges in South Asia', and 'UK-India Partnership in a Global Perspective'. The second Dialogue was held in Delhi in December 2007 and covered themes such as 'Global Developments', 'International Terrorism' and 'Energy Security'. London was once again the venue for the third dialogue in this series, which was held in February 2010 and focused on 'Countering Terrorism and Extremism', 'Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament' and 'Climate Change and Security'. This year, the MEA and the IISS collaborated with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) for the fourth dialogue of the series held in New Delhi. The Dialogue was inaugurated by Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai who delivered a Keynote Address on the theme 'Towards Stability in Asia'.

Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai's Keynote Address

Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai examined the future and the importance of forging a new stability in Asia. The vast expanse of Asia, he noted, required a look at whether Asia can be considered as a single strategic entity. He touched on the themes of the three sessions scheduled for the day. Asymmetric war is 'actually war by other means' and state-sponsored terrorism is a form of asymmetric warfare. In particular, the danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists needs attention. Terrorism, he noted, is a serious source of instability across regions in Asia. Concerted international efforts must continue to counter terrorism and become the norm in policy-making.



With regard to stability in the AfPak region, an architecture built on the concept of economic cooperation in a region stretching from Turkey to South Asia and Central Asia to the Gulf passing through Afghanistan, metaphorically called the 'Silk Route', could be useful today to lock in the kind of common interests that can foster Asian stability. This also includes maritime routes which are quite natural to Asia and must be made part of the Asian architecture. Such a 'Silk Route' would not only be economically beneficial but also act as a confidence-building measure. Better relations with Pakistan and other countries of South Asia could leap-frog the SAARC region into a high-growth trajectory. The rise of a new democratic West Asia will bring its own set of challenges and opportunities and India among other nations will have a role to play.

As far as China is concerned, India-China relations are both competitive and complementary. There is a need for continued engagement with China across all spectrums despite outstanding problems on the border issue. A trilateral dialogue between India, China and the US could be a major factor of stability in Asia. In conclusion, he dwelt on the concept of an 'Inclusive Asia' as the basis for a new Asian identity and stability. Economic cooperation in the region will provide the best prospect for working on an architecture of stability in Asia.

Session 1: Asymmetric Warfare and International Security

The first session of the Dialogue focused on 'Asymmetric Warfare and International Stability'. Chaired by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Lal Bahadur Shastri Chair at IDSA, the session had two presentations, one by Mr. Nigel Inkster of IISS and the second by Dr. S. Kalyanaraman of IDSA.

Mr. Nigel Inkster focused on a new paradigm of conflict in the 21st Century which has a significant economic dimension where a range of actors are engaged in conflicts that fall short of a conventional warfare between states. Two manifestations of the new paradigm of conflict are Islamic jihadism and activity in the cyber domain. Exploring the first manifestation, Inkster stated that South Asia has served as the main crucible of jihadism. Two major developments in



the recent past appear to be significant road-marks pointing towards the eventual demise of Jihadism – the Arab awakening and the death of Osama bin Laden. There has not been enough evidence available of al-Qaeda successfully exploiting the uncertainties that have arisen as a consequence of the Arab awakening. Moreover, the appeal of jihadist ideology in the Islamic world as a whole has been in decline for sometime. The future of Jihadi activities depends on how our situation in Afghanistan evolves after 2014. The IISS's assessment has not been optimistic thus far about any kind of political settlement or peaceful outcome. Pakistan will find itself relying more heavily on the Haqqani network and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) to help neutralize those Jihadist elements which have declared a war on Pakistan.

The second manifestation of conflict in the cyber domain, especially the internet, has proven to be a great leveller calling into question the state's hold over its subjects and has also questioned state sovereignty. Since the barrier to entry into this domain has declined to the point of insignificance, a range of malign actors have been enabled to exercise unprecedented effects. Managing the cyber domain is a challenging issue for national governments as most of the Information Communication Technologies (ICT) is in the hands of the private sector. Given this, policy makers can no longer just contemplate these problems but must begin to address them on a pragmatic basis.

In his presentation, **Dr. Kalyanaraman** argued that the term 'asymmetric warfare' was coined to include insurgent and terrorist campaigns that Western states have had to contend with in the course of interventions. Their engagement in asymmetric wars is a matter of choice, not a matter of necessity, and depends on whether their interests are sufficiently aroused and on whether their national capabilities and circumstances at a particular point in time permit them. Such a choice



is not available for countries where such wars are mainly prevalent, especially in South Asia. Countries in the region have to contend with asymmetric wars waged both by domestic and foreign groups. Dealing with domestic insurgencies is part of nation-building and hence it is not helpful to use the word 'war' to describe a counter insurgency campaign. He contended

that the essence of the Indian approach to counter-insurgency 'is not so much the physical attrition of the insurgents but their psychological exhaustion over an extended period of time'. This is accompanied by political concessions and socio-economic measures that address popular grievances and aspirations. This approach is a product of democratic politics.

Asymmetric warfare in South Asia is not always a purely domestic phenomenon. Pakistan employed asymmetric actors against India in October 1947, in 1965, and again since the 1990s. Stopping state sponsorship of terrorism is quite difficult as America has discovered even after providing more than \$20 billion in aid to Pakistan as well as stepping up drone attacks within Pakistan.

He further argued that it is best not to conflate the terms insurgency and terrorism. Insurgents basically target the security forces and state apparatus and work to acquire popular support in order to eventually overthrow the government in power. But in the case of terrorism, the people are the targets. At the core of counter-terrorism strategy must be the physical attrition of terrorist groups. In conclusion, he stated that asymmetric warfare has not suddenly emerged as a new face of conflict in the post-cold war era but has been the predominant form of conflict for the last two centuries at the least.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were highlighted. India's approach in dealing with insurgency is judicious as it has been using calibrated force against the insurgent groups. While democratic values of India are a useful instrument against the insurgencies, at the same time there has been a lack of strategy in the Indian approach to dealing with insurgencies. The necessity of distinct counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategies was also stressed. The threat of cyber crimes will be a major challenge to international security in the future.

Session 2: Towards stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan

The second session focused on 'Towards Stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan'. Chaired by Amb. Yash Sinha, Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran), in the Ministry of External Affairs, the session had two presentations, the first by Brig. Ben Barry of IISS and the second by Dr. Ashok Behuria of IDSA.

Brig. Ben Barry gave a military perspective on the topic. He argued that the American decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan will result in the Afghan forces gradually taking charge of security. The Afghan army has grown in size and capabilities and is likely to expand to 350,000 and will eventually take full control of the country's security after 2014. At a time when air power superiority is decisive in Afghanistan, NATO has succeeded in bringing down insurgent attacks in



the country by as much as eight per cent from the previous year. Although there has been military progress and an improvement in the security situation in southern Afghanistan, the situation remains a matter of concern in the south eastern part of the country especially in the area across the Durand Line and in the outskirts of Kabul where the Haqqani militant network is pretty strong and active. Although a significant improvement can be seen in

improving the efficiency of the Afghan army, the same cannot be said of the Afghan police. Further, the country lacks key developed institutions in the form of courts, lawyers and prisons. In the near future, the Afghan army and police will reach their full strength and be capable of holding southern Afghanistan on their own without any external assistance. This part of the region is now relatively free from insurgency. However, eastern Afghanistan and the lawless hinterland around Kabul will remain under the insurgent sway in the near future. As far as Pakistan is concerned, its punitive action against the Haqqani network leaves a lot to be desired. It seems that, for Pakistan, the objective is to try and block India's role in the region. Moreover, its deteriorating relationship with the US has further compounded the problem. It does not appear that Pakistan has the political or the economic will to sincerely act against the Haqqani network in North Waziristan.

Dr. Ashok Behuria argued that in 2014 when the Americans leave Afghanistan, the warlords, ethnic leaders and different local groups will try to assert their influence in a fractured society. At the recent Loya Jirga Assembly, it was unanimously held that the interests of all the groups had to be protected. A disturbing trend has been observed wherein the Taliban is trying to reach out to the local population without diluting its ideology.



Therefore, key policies of the Taliban remain the same which does not bode well for the future. The future of the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) region will depend on the strategic choices that Pakistan makes. There is a very distinct possibility that Pakistan will come in the way of attaining regional stability in Afghanistan. Therefore, the time has come for the international community to force the Pakistan army to make the right strategic choices. Afghanistan is in dire need of fresh investment not just in meeting its security requirements (weapons modernization, etc.) but also in building the much needed critical infrastructure. In order to bring normalcy to Pakistan, socio-political transformation is a must given the clear divide between the civilian leadership and the omnipresent army. Till the time terrorist haven and sanctuaries are removed in Pakistan, it will be difficult to have a complete pullout of Western troops from Afghanistan. Pakistani army will never want any kind of Indian foothold in Afghanistan. As long as Pakistan tries to define itself through India it will be very difficult to find any solution to bring about stability in the region. India, for its part, has contributed through small-budget, high-impact projects which have been very well received by the people of Afghanistan. India has also opened tracks of communication but the road ahead is long and extremely difficult.

During the subsequent discussion, several important points were raised and suggestions were made. It is necessary to ensure regional and international cooperation to bring about stability in the region. Many roadblocks lie in the way to achieve even moderate success. However, the recent India-Pakistan Commerce Secretary level talks have given a ray of hope. The civilian leadership must play a more prominent role in Pakistan and confidence building measures need to be built amongst the stakeholders especially in political, economic and security fields. Regional cooperation and better connectivity would increase the chances for success on account of all countries being involved as part of the inclusive process. It would be difficult for India to directly talk with the military in Pakistan since that would legitimize the

military structure. Track II diplomacy needs to be emphasized and attempt is being made to have periodic interactions with the members of India's and Pakistan's National Defence Colleges. Dialogue is the best way to achieve stability in Afghanistan.

Session 3 – Engaging China

The third session of the Dialogue titled 'Engaging China' was chaired by Mr. Gautam Bambawale, Joint Secretary (East Asia), Ministry of External Affairs. The two presentations in this session were made by Mr. Adam Ward of IISS and Prof. C. Raja Mohan of Centre for Policy Research (CPR).

Mr. Adam Ward argued that China has already risen to a significant extent and is desirous of being seen as a responsible power. At the rhetorical level, China talks of a harmonious international system and peaceful co-existence. It espouses the idea of political non-interference and rejects military alliances by terming them as 'Cold War mentality'. It does not want to be part of military alliances that would confine it in a geopolitical sense. At the practical level, it has



associated itself with a number of multilateral institutions which would serve as avenues for China to make a case for its own interests. Its bilateral relations have also fanned out impressively. China does not want to impose a huge burden on itself and does not want to make huge investments in global public goods. He argued that China presents itself in the guise of something much lesser than it actually is. Chinese strategic thinkers argue that China has learnt from history and will not follow the path which other world powers have tread. However, it is likely that future generation Chinese leaders may be more assertive. There is enough evidence in China's current behaviour to contradict the official position espoused. Though China does not want to become a part of the Cold War mentality, there are strands in Chinese strategic thinking that resemble 'Middle Kingdom Mentality'.

As far as engagement with China is concerned, the rest of the world wants to benefit from China's economic emergence and integrate with it regionally and globally since there are limited alternatives. The policy of containment is futile, counter-productive and expensive to pursue. If properly structured, the policy of integration could help contain Chinese behaviour in some way. Since China's strategic trajectory is opaque, the only other alternative is to hedge. But the challenge is to get the balance right between hedging and engagement. Blatant hedging could block the possibility of fruitful engagement. If engagement is far too unconditional a country's interest would be trampled upon by China. Asia-Pacific, which is a multipolar region, is bound together by a spectrum of concerns that they have about China and as a result the latter is today feeling "claustrophobic". China in the future could react in two ways: it may deepen its commitment to multipolarity or assert its position by imposing choices on its immediate neighbours. In the next 10 years or so, China's behaviour is likely to oscillate between assertion and conciliation and it will depend on the context and contingencies.

Prof. C Raja Mohan reflected on the recently held Bali Summit where the question of balancing China was put on the table. During the last two decades, the assumption about the rise of China was that it would be peaceful and can be accommodated in the international system. Despite talks of hedging, the actual expression is that others must prepare for the unhappy consequences of China's economic rise. Though the issue has been put in a multilateral context, there is no doubt that it is



about dealing with China's rise and the way to balance China. He pointed out three developments that are noteworthy. One, initially, it was assumed that the Asia-Pacific would grow in a collective framework through APEC or ASEAN and that the regional integration would be Sino-centric. But today, a counter organization, the Trans-Pacific Partnership in which China is not a member is being formed as an alternative. At the recent EAS summit, 15 out of 18 members raised the question of the South China Sea and maritime security issues. Therefore, China's maritime assertion has also been countered. Three, the US is announcing a new military doctrine as it feels threatened by China's forward presence along its coasts and is also trying to establish a basing facility in Australia to stay out of reach China's reach and maintain flexibility. So the developments in all three domains suggest that the future of Asia is going to be different from what was seen in the last two decades.

However, there are structural constraints in dealing with China. China remains the No.2 economy and if its economic power grows, its military power is also likely to grow which could assume mammoth proportions which the entire world will have to deal with. China cannot be contained like Russia was. Russia voluntarily opted out of the international economic system but China is well integrated within it. So the strategy to isolate China and prevent it from acquiring a pivotal role within the international system will not work. Balancing a well-integrated China is a problem. With regard to India's approach in dealing with China, India is going to plough a lonely furrow. India has balanced China in the past and will not be China's pawn. Its dealings with China will be based on four issues –territoriality, periphery overlap, global order (UN Security Council, etc.) and expanding trade deficit. India has two options to deal with China either through internal balancing (by improving its military strength) or through external balancing (by making alliances). And the third way would be to combine both. The challenge that India faces is how to balance China without sacrificing its autonomy.

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Select Photographs

