

‘India and the West: The Future Geopolitical Landscape’

With Members of the German Marshall Fund

3rd December 2009

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



(From left to right: Dan Twining GMF India Expert, Craig Kennedy, President GMF, Will Inboden, Senior VP Legatum and Tarun Das, President Aspen Institute India)

“The German Marshall Fund is a unique organization, with a unique history and a close collaborative past with CII” said Tarun Das, President of Aspen Institute India as he introduced the speakers of the German Marshall Fund (GMF), speaking at the Aspen Institute India session on “India and the West: The future Geopolitical Landscape” on 3rd of December, 2009 in New Delhi.

Mr. Craig Kennedy, President of GMF, opened the session by outlining a brief history of the GMF. The GMF was started in Europe as a way to thank the Marshall plan for the restructuring and reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. GMF, an American organization, involved in many countries in Europe, is primarily a grant making organization, which brings together and funds scholars, economists etc in various fields of study. They host an annual event in Belgium known as the Brussels Forum is a gathering of top minds, political leaders and academics that are brought together to discuss and create policy.

According to him Asia has become the new focus for the GMF. China and the West has been largely discussed in most major conferences around that world and GMF seeks to engage India at the same level. He mentioned that while China is grabbing attention around the world, India has been largely ignored, especially in the United States and Europe. He also elaborated on GMF’s plan to start an annual India Forum, in which India’s role in Europe and in its own regional stability will be discussed.

Mr. Das introduced the next speaker Mr. Dan Twining as the resident India expert in the GMF and said his knowledge of India and its intricacies was immense. In his remarks, Mr. Twining outlined 3 issues that India is facing with relation to the west. The issues mentioned were the following:

1. Afghanistan and Pakistan (AFPAK): In this case, India, US and Europe have great symmetry in their interest in the region. According to him, the result in AFPAK will affect India first and foremost. India will have to play an important role and the US and European countries involved in AFPAK will have to consult India as regional instability will only lead to negative consequences for ‘the democratic prosperity’ of all democratic countries in the region.
2. India as an Asian power? In this, he discussed the idea of India being instrumental in the Asian regional architecture. He said that India’s new look east policy is of great interest to the West, especially its ties with Japan, and ASEAN. He mentioned that India’s role as a global player will truly benefit the Asian region and economy.
3. India’s global partnership with the west: According to Mr. Twinning, a greater partnership between India and the West must be initiated. The partnership could be in areas such as;
 - a. World Trade
 - b. Space
 - c. Liberalization of technology
 - d. Global economy: Globalization, Human Capital, Financial institutions.
 - e. Climate: Sharing of technology will help India achieve its goal, and a policy shift in India to assume some responsibility of climate change will help India not alienate itself from the west.

The last speaker from GMF team was Mr. Will Inboden, former Senior Director for strategic planning for the National Security Council in the Bush Administration and currently a Senior Vice-President for The Legatum Institute. He defined his stance as ‘Pro India’ in which he said that the partnership of democracies across Asia is important. Values-based cooperation is required to promote relations between the “largest democracy (India), the oldest democracy (US) and new democracies (Asian Tigers)”. In his opinion, interaction with India is a wise policy step as India is valuable in both global economics and politics.

He further elaborated on his work in Legatum, a think tank based in London, which recently released the Prosperity Index. The index is to measure economic growth + Human welfare. He argued that this was the first index of its kind and it has tried to capture the full aspect of prosperity. The method in choosing the right variable, he explained, was by answering two basic questions:

1. Does the variable show causal relationship with economic growth?
2. Does the variable show causal relationship with well being?

He discussed how India fared better than countries like China and Pakistan. He argued that given aspect such as familial ties, community interaction, traditions, membership, India was high in the ranking at 45. The negatives for India were sectors like Health, Education and Security. Within this, he said “India is one of the top models for a successful socio-economic model”.

In the interaction with the audience, the primary focus was India and its role vis-a-vis China. The members of the GMF argued that China’s current position of bullying India was due to an external agenda and by fear of India’s growing influence on the world. They did point out that China should not be left out of the conversation.

Other discussions included regional instability due to AFPAK, in which Vincent Jauvert, a journalist for a leading French news magazine and member of the GMF team mentioned that as US should have listened to Europe before the Iraq war; India’s warning on AFPAK should have been heeded as well. India’s global responsibility, agricultural technology flows; financial institution knowledge sharing, patent and IPR and security information sharing were also part of the discussion.

The final key point made by the visiting members of the GMF was that India must start projecting itself to the world, for the world to notice.