



ASPEN INSTITUTE INDIA

Session on “India, China and the Asian Strategic Landscape”

4:00pm, Wednesday, July 21st, 2010

WWF Auditorium, 172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi



Aspen Institute India organized a session on ‘**India, China and the Asian Strategic Landscape**’ on July 21st, 2010 in New Delhi at the WWF Auditorium. The panellists included **Dr. C Raja Mohan**, Strategic Affairs Editor, Indian Express, **Dr. Kim Holmes**, Vice President, Foreign and Defence Policy Studies and Director, Heritage Foundation, **Dr. Lisa Curtis**, Senior Research Fellow, Heritage Foundation and was moderated by **Ms. Indrani Bagchi**, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India. The session focused on the growth of India and China as the new superpowers, the effects of their growth on not only the Asian geopolitical landscape, but on the rest of the world as well. The discussion also dwelled on the bilateral relationship between India and China, each country’s relationship with the United States and the path that India and China and the US must take in the coming years for a mutually beneficial co-existence.

Dr. Holmes opened the discussion by introducing the Heritage Foundation as a think tank—whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free

enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defence. In this regard he termed India and China's development as one the most important geo-strategic developments of our time saying "it impacts Washington's interests in several ways". Mr. Holmes added that "Beijing is still not comfortable with India's rise or its growing relationship with the US. America hopes China will see it as US-India relation and nothing else." Despite President Obama's conciliatory relations with Beijing, the US is concerned whether China will take a responsible position about Afghanistan and Pakistan especially in light of the recent nuclear deal with Pakistan and its investments in copper fields in Afghanistan. China's long-term military ambitions are another major area of worry for US.

Dr. Raja Mohan started by saying that "Many still wonder if India still belongs to Asia. India was not a part of Asia's dynamic. It was secluded from the East Asian Summit unless it paved its way through. At one time India didn't matter. George Bush put India back into the narrow prism of the Asian balance of power. Japan recognised India and signed for security relations. The big story today is India's comeback".

In a telling statement about Indo-China relationship Mr. Raja Mohan said "India & China have already begun to bend the spaces around them. How we are going to avoid stepping on each other's toes is important. India's *karma* is balancing China. If China thinks itself as number 1, India will not accept itself as number 2." Furthering the discussion he said that it is high-time to re-do the relationship especially due to the expanding business relations and travel groups on both sides.

Dr. Lisa Curtis stressed on how China is changing the landscape by approaching other countries of Asia and how India must do the same to achieve a similar standing in the Asian strategic landscape. She also talked about America's strategic interests in India's problems like terrorism, education etc, saying that Washington is deeply invested and interested in helping India achieve the development it needs.

During the interaction with audience, Dr. Homes said that China is a 'revisionist power'. It is acutely nationalistic now and less communist. Replying to a question on the China's substitution as the USSR during the cold war, Mr. Holmes said that "the world can no more be bipolar as China can't replace the USSR and the US has grown fluid relationships with countries they never were friends with". He was also sure that China fears democracy and thus in a way fears India's growth and development as a competing superpower. Dr. Raja Mohan was concerned about how India and China were going to manage their want of natural resources and other issues like water and environment.

Ms. Indrani Bagchi concluded the discussion by saying that one of the key challenges for India' foreign and security policy for the next few years will be management of China's emergence as a great Asian and, increasingly, global power. As it is, for both countries, Asia remains the principal platform for power projection. She ended by summing up the panellists' remarks and proposing a vote of thanks.