
Global Power and Regional Stability

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Speaking Notes

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Thank you for asking me to speak today. Let me make a few general points as we start our discussion.

The last few years have seen **a fundamental reordering and structural changes in the global security environment**. This has occurred at the same time as instability has increased in several regions of the world. As a result **uncertainty in the international system is higher than it has been for a long time**.

The **signs of change are all around us**. The **open economic era of globalisation** in the two decades after the Cold War is **now sought to be replaced by regional and plurilateral arrangements** such as the TPP, RCEP and TTIP; the **geopolitics of energy are changing in fundamental ways**; and global economic growth is increasingly driven by emerging powers. **Once stable regions like East Asia are no longer as harmonious as they were**. **Terrorism has globalised its reach and is fusing across regions, as Central Africa, Syria, Libya and Pakistan-Afghanistan show**. And the **commons, in cyberspace, air space and on the high seas, are now domains of contention**.

Unusually, the impulse for change in the global economic order is coming from the established powers who set up and ran the system after WWII, not from the re-emerging powers who were the greatest beneficiaries of the last two decades of globalisation and open trade and investment flows. The **impulse for change in the political and security order comes from several sources**, most of them local, (such as aspirations and the rising curve of expectations), but in conjunction with regional and major powers.

It could be argued that we are now seeing in the security and political domains what we saw for two decades before the 2007-8 crisis in the economic domain, namely, globalisation and an open international system. It is **increasingly hard to draw a clear line between regional and global stability**. What happens in Syria, the South China Sea or in other regional hot spots affects more than just the region around it. This is certainly true of the newly contested commons in cyber space and the high seas and in counter-terrorism.

Are the **changes in global power linked to the increase in regional instabilities**? To my mind the link is tenuous, not causal, indirect but contributory. None of the major powers seeks direct confrontation or escalation in confrontation with another major power in regional conflicts and confrontations. Nor does it appear that the global powers are willing to risk global instability for regional gains. But when sovereignty and territorial issues are involved the balance of force may be overridden by the imbalance of interests of the major powers involved. Nor can mistakes and folly be entirely ruled out.

India's primary interest is to create an **enabling external environment** for the transformation of India. That requires a peaceful periphery and a stable international environment which is supportive of India's security, growth and development. In other words we seek a reduction in regional tensions, wherever they may be, an open and democratised international order, and more effective and representative global institutions.

We draw a simple lesson from the experience of how the international community has responded to regional instability and crises in the last few years. **When the international community and major powers have acted in concert, in consultation with each other and regional powers, respecting international law, we have been successful in dealing with complex issues like piracy off the Somali coast.** We are also making progress on the Iran nuclear issue. On the other hand, **unilateral (sometimes covert) interventions, as in Libya or Syria, have led to unexpected and dangerous outcomes.** We clearly need to improve, strengthen and use the processes and institutions of multilateral consultation and action available to the international community. In the Asia-Pacific the process of building an open, inclusive security architecture based on a common understanding of the rule of law is at its very inception, and must be hastened. In the last fifty years **Asia-Pacific countries have shown the maturity and ability to manage conflicts** despite major disputes and differences.

Europe has played a significant political and military role in both the successful examples that I mentioned, (piracy off Somalia and the Iran nuclear issue). Your historical experience is of value as we attempt to tackle increasing regional instabilities. And Europe has a major role in bringing about an international economic recovery that provides a supportive economic environment for the political stability that we seek. Europe's commitment to political stability and to working with the re-emerging powers is an additional useful step.