



Comparing India and China as great powers

Speaker: Prof. Michael Yahuda

Chair: Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty

Date: 08 February 2017

Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi

The Speaker presented a formulation of India and China as a super power in his talk. The formulation basically projected China as economic and military superpower which, however, is likely to go down in near future. The economy may decline as low as 2-4 per cent and its foreign and military policy too will be proven troublesome. Whereas, Indian economy is comparatively low but its democracy and demographic dividend has a positive effect and country which is strategically autonomous has a better prospect.

In his talk, speaker argued that the present idea of 'rejuvenated China' is based on the past experiences such as 'century of humiliation' that ended with Japanese defeat in WWII. Therefore, China in a way, is restraining its greatness which it had lost due to western intervention. However, China claims the United States constantly restrain their rights in the global sphere.

The Speaker believes the United States remains the sole superpower with a global reach in all the dimensions of power, but it is constrained in the exercise of that power. China is often depicted as a superpower too which is wrong. Its hard power (military and economic) is felt primarily by its immediate neighbours and not much beyond that. It has virtually no soft power (i.e., the power to attract others). America did not concern herself much with history and its military power is beyond comparison.

China currently faces huge problems as its government recognises the need to transform the economy from primarily an investment and export led manufacturing one to a more consumer led economy, while seeking to maintain Communist Party controls. Faltering economy implies the weak power leadership. Even today Chinese economy follows “Stalinist model”, where the capital for investment in urban sector would be extracted from the rural. The free trade economy which China advocates is also very vague.

Neither is India’s economy large, nor is its military power great, when compared to China. India has low growth rate which was often described as “Indo growth rate” especially at the end of Cold War. But India is by far the greatest power in its own neighbourhood of the resident states of the Indian Ocean and has significant economic influence in many parts of the world. The current GDP of India is said to be 3.5 trillion \$, which is evidently lower than that of China. However, economy cannot be solely judged from its GDP. In the international sphere, in contrast to China, India’s re-emergence has been checked by external factors such as the Pakistan issue.

Moreover, unlike China, India claims to have significant degree of soft power. However, there have been significant differences in their relations with the United States. China has received much more attention by American governments even though relations are more fraught. From an American perspective, relations with China combine both areas of cooperation and of competition or rivalry, but those with India are basically cooperative, despite some differences of interest. As for Sino-Indian relations, although Chinese tend to think their country is superior to India, they have come to accept it as a major country with which they have both cooperative and competitive relations.

Discussion-

In response to a question on the new administration in US and its policy to Pakistan and China, the speaker replied saying, it’s very difficult to talk about policy at the moment as every new president seeks to change the policy of their predecessor. Trump has not liked the existing policy towards Pakistan but we are not sure what alternative he will come up with. Secondly, on environment pollution as a determinant of economic growth, speaker argued that since both the countries in their approach to climate change have failed, they have to

contribute to this. To stabilise balance of growth and pollution is difficult however, China is doing comparatively better than India.

On the question of who would face more challenges in twenty years, the speaker said its very uncertain, Chinese politicians are not sure and academics are also not ready to give the answers. In case of India, it will be challenged in all sorts of issues but now India is seen to be more adaptable to change than China. On the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), - the Speaker said that Trump's rejection of TPP has been quite strongly felt by Australia and Japan who have been dismayed by this.

Report prepared by Diki Sherpa, Research Assistant, Institute of Chinese Studies.

About the Speaker

Michael Yahuda is a Professor Emeritus of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, where he served from 1973 to 2003. His main fields of interest are China's politics, foreign policy and the international relations of the Asia Pacific. He has published nine books and more than 200 articles and chapters in books. The third revised edition of his book, *The International Politics of the Asia Pacific since 1945*, will be published at the end of 2010. The latest, *Sino-Japanese Relations Since the End of the Cold War: Two Tigers Sharing a Mountain* (2013).

He has been associated with various institutions across the world including Sigur Center for Asian Studies, the Elliott School, George Washington University, Woodrow Wilson International in Washington DC, Australian National University, University of Adelaide (South Australia), University of Michigan and the Fairbank Center for East Asian Studies, Harvard. More recently, he was a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Singaporean Institute for South East Asian Studies, and a Visiting Professor for the Fall Term 2007 at China's Foreign Affairs University. He has acted as an adviser to the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and as a consultant to organizations in London and Singapore.

Disclaimer

The Wednesday Seminar at the ICS is a forum for presentations and discussions on current affairs as well as ongoing research by scholars, experts, diplomats and journalists, among others. This report is a summary produced for purposes of dissemination and for generating wider discussion. All views expressed here should be understood to be those of the speaker(s) and individual participants, and not necessarily of the Institute of Chinese Studies.