

Interactive Session on ‘Regionalism and Great Powers’

Speaker: Professor Timothy J. Colton

Date: 5 June, 2017

Venue: Seminar Room, ICS

Report:

The special lecture on ‘Regionalism and the Great Powers’ began with the historical picture of 1815 Congress of Vienna which represented the great powers of that time. Professor Timothy J. Colton spoke about how the end of Napoleonic wars created five victorious powers which eventually became the Great Powers. The speaker added on how China was beyond the horizon for most of the time and the rest of Asia and Africa were in the process of being colonized. The speaker was of the opinion that the great powers were a small set of countries that exercised influence over the world politics.

Speaking about present scenario, the speaker mentioned about how cold war had been the structuring principle for international politics and emphasizing on the fact that today’s world order is the result of many past moments that mislead the world. The speaker further added about some of those past moments, that were, Shock and Awe in Iraq in 2003, U.S. flees Siagon 1975; Japan no longer #No1 and Arab Spring Cairo 2011.

The speaker then expressed his opinion about the structural world politics mentioning the ideas of Robert Gilpin about the primacy of Unipolarity and how they have been challenged by another school of thought (Charles Kupchan and Amitav Acharya). The speaker further added to the challenge that has been posed on the primacy of unipolarity, by mentioning the alternatives to unipolarity, that are – bipolar world, non-polar world and multi-polar world. Further expanding about polarity, the speaker throws light on the idea of Charles Kupchan – ‘Benign Regional Unipolarity’, and highlights about the concept of ‘Global Concert’.

Taking into account the formation of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the speaker elaborated on the importance of an organisation for cooperation in the region and presented the matrix of today's Europe.

Following the elaboration on the regional dynamics, the speaker pointed out the four point criteria for thinking about the great powers in a new way. This criterion included certain determinants needed to become a great power, which were, population above 100 million, nukes, representation in the P5 and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The speaker further drew the connection between the great powers and regionalism. He stated the reasons about why do great or potential powers care about regionalism, bridging the gap between great powers and the concept of regions. Finally, speaking about the regions and the great powers, the speaker mentioned about the unfolding changes that are taking place in the world that have the potential to create a new perspective and imagination about regions.

Report prepared by Avadhi Patni, Research Intern, Institute of Chinese Studies.

About the Speaker

Timothy J. Colton is Morris and Anna Feldberg Professor of Government and Russian Studies and the Chair of the Department of Government. He is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor, National University of Singapore, January-June 2017. Prof. Colton is the author of *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union* (1986); *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (1995), which was named best scholarly book in government and political science by the Association of American Publishers; *Transitional Citizens: Voters and What Influences Them in the New Russia* (2000); and *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and 2000* (with Michael McFaul, 2003). Prof. Colton was a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a member of the Joint Committee on Soviet Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, and vice-chairman of the National Council for East European, Russian, and Eurasian Research. He is a member of the editorial board of *World Politics and Post-Soviet Affairs*.

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