

India and China: Collision or Collusion?

Panel: Session 2 (Lilac/Tulip)

Date/Time: April 25, 2012 / 17:15-18:30

Organizing Institution: German Marshall Fund

Speakers: Dhruva Jaishankar, German Marshall Fund (moderator)
S. Jaishankar, Ambassador of India to China
Rory Medcalf, Lowy Institute
Shi Yinhong, Renmin University

Panel Short Summary

Sung-Yeon Kweon, Korea University
Sunkyo Hong, Korea University

Moderator Dhruva Jaishankar opened the panel discussion by stating India's relevance on the world stage. India has the world's second largest population, the third largest market, and the fourth largest military. He then noted the blossoming trade and regular summits between India and China and turned the floor to the panelists.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar put the relationship between the two countries in terms of convergence and divergence. India and China have the greatest convergence in global issues, with similar stances toward climate change, R2P (responsibility to protect), and the events that unfolded in Libya and Syria. They diverge in their stances to regional issues, where balance of power considerations and regional politics kick in. In bilateral issues, the picture is mixed. Trade and investment between the two countries have burgeoned, but their 3,500-kilometer border dispute has not been resolved. On the positive side, China and India are working together pragmatically on regional issues for a long-term integrated view.

Dr. Shi Yinhong pointed out the room for progressive relations between the two countries. He stated the two countries have some assurance to avoid possible discord and that their first priority will become their bilateral relations in the near future. In terms of bilateral relationships there is great potential for economic, trade, and especially global issues such as climate change. Even for some difficult issues, the two countries still have room for cooperation and reducing mistrust. However, it is certain that the two countries are in a strategic rivalry within the global society, with historical resentment and a complex regional

political situation to deal with. These are the obstacles that hinder solving the sensitive issues. He suggested that both countries should take a selective position for developing a positive relationship.

Rory Medcalf stated his view that the relationship between India and China would be neither simply collision or collusion. While he acknowledged the positive developments mentioned by the two other panelists, he focused on the possible sources of mistrust, as the two countries would have to move away from them in order to attain a full comprehensive relationship. Mr. Medcalf listed 12 sources of mistrust. Among these, security-related sources include the border dispute and the 1962 war, China's missile and nuclear assistance to Pakistan, military modernization of the two countries, the nuclear issue, and the perception that India may be trying to constrict Chinese strategic options in the Indian Ocean. More general competition-related sources include soft power and diplomatic competition with third countries, China's growing economic and diplomatic influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, competition for sea resources, and attempts to exclude each other from multilateral fora.

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