

China and India

- Panel:** Session 4 (Lilac & Tulip Room)
Date/Time: Wednesday, December 12, 2012 / 9:00-10:15
Speakers: Andrew Small, German Marshall Fund (Moderator)
Maj Gen YK Gera, United Service Institution of India
Jia Lieying, Beijing Language and Culture University
Lt Gen PC Katoch, United Service Institution of India
Li Tao, Sichuan University
Rapporteur: Brittany Billingsley, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Panel Short Summary

YK Gera led off the panel emphasizing that historically, China and India have been both regional competitors as well as economic partners, and even in modern times both countries have continued to function at two levels: cooperation in trade and economics, but divergences in regional security and other security issues. China and India's economic growth since 1978 and 1991 respectively have served both countries well and have revived the promise of the Asian giants regaining economic clout held prior to colonization. Bilateral trade and investment has expanded to the point where China is currently India's largest trading partner, and a number of institutionalized bilateral dialogues will help to ensure the two remain engaged. China and India have also cooperated credibly on a number of global issues, including climate change, pollution control, and multilateral trade agreements. Nevertheless, several areas of divergence are likely to cast a shadow on China-India ties, such as India's relations with the United States; the China-Pakistan nexus; the border dispute; and the Tibet issue. Gera recognized that China is a rising power, and will continue to be so, which is likely to lead to strategic assertion in the region. Toward India, it is pursuing a policy of economic engagement and political restraint. India, thus, may follow a policy of engagement with Beijing but simultaneously balance it by developing diplomatic, economic, political, and military leverages in pursuit of its own national interests.

Jia Lieying focused on different conceptualizations of contemporary China-India

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relations, including bilateral ties as addressed by Chinese literature; as multi-structural, specifically that China and India engage within multilateral diplomatic institutions, the international political structure, and the changing international economic structure; as interpreted by the Chinese government, scholars, and common people; and bilateral ties as considered through recent developments of communication mechanisms. Jia concluded by stating that he was very optimistic about the future, but recommended enlarging contact, increasing mutual trust, strengthening bilateral mechanisms, and constructing a future in order to improve bilateral ties.

PC Katoch stated that in his perception, the civilizations of China and India held striking resemblances, from the earliest dynasties to the beginnings of new states in the 1940s. He went on to describe four mechanisms in which China and India could cooperate, specifically border talks, high-level summits, confidence building measures (CBMs), and bilateral trade. Nevertheless, there was apprehension in India to greater cooperation, namely in the areas of border security, concern about interference in the internal matters by the other side, China's relations with Pakistan, and China's recent activity in Kashmir. However, Katoch argued that the main issue of concern between the two countries was that there is no institutionalized framework for dialogue on these matters, that discussions are sporadic. In order for the two sides to move forward, the future, he said, depends on China.

Li Tao's remarks focused on the Tibetan issue within China-India relations, which she interpreted as an element of India's geopolitical and national security concerns. She noted the Tibet issue remains for some as a source of doubt in bilateral ties due to concerns that it could be a "card" to be played by the Indian government in order to condemn or influence China. Li pointed to several factors in support of this argument, including the belief that India had inherited much of its Tibet policy from British colonial rule, and that India's policy on Tibet has been largely consistent. Li also noted that India could use the Dalai Lama and his supporters to pressure China or try to turn Tibet into a buffer state. She warned that India must act prudently on the issues of separatism and Tibetan independence, and be mindful of diplomatic conceptualization of non-interference in domestic affairs of another nation.

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