



**Indian Council of World Affairs**  
**Sapru House, Barakhamba Road**  
**New Delhi**

**Report**

on

**Roundtable Discussion**

with

**Professor Shaun Breslin**  
University of Warwick, UK

on

**“China, Regionalism and Globalization:  
Implications for India”**

at

**Sapru House, New Delhi**  
**13 January 2014**

Continuing its emphasis on understanding and analysing China, the Indian Council of World Affairs organized a Roundtable Discussion on “China, Regionalism and Globalization: Implications for India” with Professor Shaun Breslin, an internationally acclaimed expert on China, at Sapru House, New Delhi, on 13 January 2014.

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General of ICWA, in his opening remarks, extended a warm welcome to Professor Breslin and explained the rationale behind ICWA’s China programme investing great efforts and resources in terms of research and dialogue on China.

The chair, Ambassador R. Rajagopalan, noted that the ‘28 character directive’ proposed by Deng Xiaoping, recommending a low-profile approach of China has been modified. Of late, China has become assertive and confident enough to prefer the multilateral path rather than its earlier preference for the bilateral arrangements.

Prof. Breslin, known for his three-decade long scholarship on China, presented an interesting account of China’s approach to multilateralism, globalization, regionalism, and the debate within China on different issues, especially those related to its self-perception and stature in international politics.

Prof. Breslin, noted that the current debate in China revolves around the question: what kind of Great Power China should aspire to be? While explaining different Chinese views on the subject and their concerns, he also highlighted China’s inflexibility on ‘core national interests’ such as Tibet, Taiwan and human rights. He described China as a dissatisfied responsible power and also referred to China’s four different identities as proposed by some Chinese scholars: a developing country, a rising power, a global power and a G-2 power.

Prof. Breslin highlighted that China has increased its multilateral engagements, and this is apparent with Beijing’s participation with the United Nations, and other global multilateral platforms. He emphasized on China’s pro-active role in multilateral organisations and traced its history to the financial crisis of 1997. He argued that the rationale for China’s pro-active diplomacy

to strengthen its bilateral relationship with different countries in the late 1990s was its need for a peaceful international environment conducive for its economic development. Before 1990s, China was seen to have a weak presence in Southeast Asia, however, 1997 onwards, it is an active partner in different regional multilateral forums. He also drew attention to the growth of China's trade and investment in various countries, especially in Southeast Asia as an active economic player in what he termed the 'regional production network'.

Prof. Breslin also highlighted that in 'normal times' it is the political leadership which drives Chinese policy, however, during the crisis situation technocrats push the policy with pragmatism and innovation. He argued that epidemics like SARS and Bird Flu have significantly changed China's attitude toward national security and now it gives increasing attention to human security. He cited China's 2002 'new security concept' as an example. He pointed out that SARS and Bird Flu spell brought about a change in China's stance towards human security measures, and this, ultimately gave a boost to multilateral tendencies in China's foreign policy as it realised the significance of Southeast Asia and ASEAN's cooperation in such matters.

He argued that competition between different conceptions of region and increasing concern in Southeast Asia about China's territorial pretensions create space for countries to maneuver. He cited Australia's endorsement of the concept of Indo-Pacific as an example and referred to APEC as an 'anti-region' organization.

Prof. Breslin believed that Indian scholarship on China is significant. He added that India needs to identify its functional areas for cooperation with China and observed a natural warmth between India and China as Asian powers.

The participants raised a number of queries pertaining to China's insecurity as a global power, domestic vulnerability caused by inequality and other factors, status of Chinese economy, China's assertiveness on maritime and territorial disputes, China's role in Africa, and multi-polarity in international system, etc., Prof. Breslin opined that President Xi Jinping might give a push to centralisation and expect the market to solve problems related to Chinese economy. He referred to China as a 'discursive power' in some areas and acknowledged the presence of 'discursive

instability' in China. He held that multiple modes of authority are shaping the discourse in international system and cited India-China cooperation on environment as an example. Further, he emphasized that although the world order is shaped by multiple poles it is important to assess how other countries respond to these poles in international system.

*The report is prepared by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, Research Fellow and Ms Antara Kar, Research Intern, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi*

\*\*\*