



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

January 16, 2014

Press Release

Roundtable Discussion

on

‘China, Regionalism and Globalization: Implications for India’

with

Professor Shaun Breslin, University of Warwick, UK

Speaking at a Roundtable Discussion on ‘China, Regionalism and Globalization: Implications for India’, organized by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), at Sapru House, New Delhi on January 13, 2014, Prof. Shaun Breslin, an internationally acclaimed expert on China, presented a fascinating account of China’s approach to globalization, regionalism, multilateral diplomacy and the debate within China on different issues, especially those related to its self perception and stature in international politics.



(L-R) Professor Shaun Breslin, Ambassador R. Rajagopalan and Amb. Rajiv K. Bhatia, DG, ICWA.

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 very assertive and confident enough to prefer the multilateral path to its earlier preference for bilateral arrangements.

Prof. Breslin, known for his three-decade long scholarship on China, 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, he highlighted China’s inflexibility on ‘core national interests’, such as Tibet, Taiwan and human rights. He also

referred to China's four different identities as delineated by some Chinese scholars: a developing country; a rising power; a global power; and a G-2 power.

Prof. Breslin emphasized China's pro-active role in multilateral organisations tracing its background to the financial crisis of 1997 and 2008. He argued that the rationale for China's pro-active diplomacy to strengthen its bilateral relationships with various countries in the late 1990s was its need for a peaceful international environment conducive to its economic development. He also highlighted that in 'normal times', it is the political leadership that drives Chinese foreign policy, but during the crisis situations, it is the technocrat that steer 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'.

In the Q&A session, the participants raised a number of queries pertaining to China's perceived insecurity as a global power, domestic vulnerability caused by inequality and other factors, state of the Chinese economy, China's assertiveness on maritime and territorial disputes, its role in Africa, and multi-polarity in international system, etc., Prof. Breslin opined that President Xi Jinping might give a push to centralization and expect the market to resolve China's economic problems. He referred to China as a 'discursive power' in certain areas but also acknowledged the factor of 'discursive instability' in China. He held that multiple poles of power are shaping the discourse in the international system but it is equally important to assess how other countries respond to these poles in international politics.



Discussion in progress.
