



Indian Council of World Affairs
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Press Release

on

Sapru House Lecture on

“India and the Great Powers: Managing Strategic Triangles”

Dr. C. Raja Mohan, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, Delhi, delivered the latest Address in the continuing Sapru House Lecture series on 31 August, 2012 from 1130 hours on the theme “India and the Great Powers: Managing Strategic Triangles”. The event was hosted by Shri Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General, ICWA. It was chaired Shri Salman Haidar, Member of the Council and a distinguished former Foreign Secretary of India. It was attended by over 120 members of the Diplomatic Corps, serving and retired Indian diplomats, media, representatives of think tanks and policy research institutions, research scholars, students and academics of international relations and geopolitics, including from the OP Jindal University, Delhi University, JN University and Jamia Milia Islamia. The entire proceedings were broadcast live through the website www.icwa.in of the ICWA, so that it could be followed by interested persons worldwide.

Dr. Raja Mohan postulated that as Sino-American rivalry began to envelop Asia, one of India’s biggest foreign policy challenges would be the management of its relations with China and the United States. The nature of Delhi’s relationship with Beijing and Washington was bound to influence the future balance of power in Asia and the regional institutional structures which had to manage it. India’s current engagement with the world’s pre-eminent power, the United States, and the rising challenger, China would not be the first triangular dynamic that India has had to manage over the last six and a half decades. Nor would it be the last.

Since independence India has had to cope with many conflicts, alignments and re-alignments among the great powers and their impact on India’s immediate and extended

neighbourhood. While Indian discourse has traditionally been uncomfortable in seeing the world through the lens of power politics, much of modern India's foreign policy has found compelled to adapt to global and regional power shifts.

Drawing on the lessons from India's earlier strategies of coping with the US-Soviet Cold War and détente, Sino-Russian alignment and rivalry, Sino-American rapprochement, Dr. Raja Mohan listed out certain potential options for Delhi in coping with the current phase of competition between China and the US. These include, among others, neutrality, collective security, non-alignment, selective alignment, swing-state strategy, and building a coalition of middle powers.

Depending on how Sino-US relations evolved India would have to use a varying combination of options to deal with the changing scenarios.

During the lively interaction that followed, Dr Raja Mohan addressed questions and comments on internal pressures on China's future orientation; its relations with Africa; possible decline in US power; and the scenario emerging after recent events in the Middle East. He mentioned that India's policy would have to adapt to new realities and paradigms, and traditional mantras would have to be reevaluated to correspond to the new realities both globally and in its own neighbourhood.
