

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL EXCHANGE COUNCIL

ASIAN FORUM ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, INDIA

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Executive Summary

The fourth Asian Forum on Global Governance was hosted by the Zeit Stiftung and Observer Research Foundation in Delhi, India. The forum was made up of delegates from thirty-one countries and presented an opportunity for all participants to immerse themselves in a diverse agenda over ten days. The conference ranged over topics from climate change, sovereignty, the growth of Asia, the use of drones, global finance to the use of digital media. The organisers engaged excellent speakers to present to the conference and delegates were able to question and debate topics and were encouraged at all times to participate.

The conference provided an opportunity for the delegates to not only learn from the many interesting speakers but to also learn from one another about different practices in various countries. The collection of delegates was impressive with many outstanding individuals representing many fields participating over the ten days. The benefits gained from working directly with such a diverse group of people are immeasurable and the alumni network is a strong focus for the participants and organisers once the conference concludes.

During the conference we were able to participate in a program in the local community working with children from a slum. The Magic Bus program uses sport to engage children from the local slum community in extra learning activities, increasing resilience in these young people and forging links across communities. The opportunity to work directly with these children was a wonderful experience and provided an insight into the challenges a developing country like India faces as it grapples with economic inequalities and cultural norms which relegate many to poverty.

Of course the significant cultural history of India looms large everywhere in the country and the conference was enhanced by a trip to Agra where we were granted time to visit the Taj Mahal. This impressive structure is recognised globally and I appreciated the chance to enjoy the cultural and built heritage of India and spend some time outside the comforts of the air-conditioned conference room.

The conference was well designed and incorporated lengthy periods of academic discourse with time for networking, cultural appreciation and sightseeing.

Report

New Technologies of War

Micah Zenko, Douglas Dillan Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, USA

Amb. Latha Reddy, Former Deputy National Security Advisor, India

Paul Kapur, Professor, Naval Postgraduate School, USA

There is concern about the use of drones in the international sphere. Most drones have surveillance ability but not missile capability with the majority of countries opting not to develop missile capability due to the cost. Countries with this technology do rely on the use of drones to monitor disputed territory and to gather intelligence.

The missile technology control regime was developed in 1987; however, China and Israel are not members. Despite this, the regime has limited the sale of drones internationally but it is estimated that in about one decade every country in the world will either have the capacity to build or to buy drones.

Due to the lack of legal certainty regarding the use of drones, the governance of this relatively new technology is unclear. There is a real requirement for international norms to be developed regarding the use of drones and for those countries with military drones to take a leading role in doing this.

Drones have three inherent capabilities:

- They can loiter over targets for a long time, anywhere in the period of twelve to fourteen hours and the Reaper can loiter up to twenty-four hours.
- They have an incredible responsive capability which enables the operator to precisely target but also divert the drone at the very last second.
- The use of drones creates no risk to human pilots.

The number of civilian casualties from the use of military drones varies but ranges from five to twenty-seven per cent of all killings depending on the source of the information. Experts predict that the use of drones will become the preferred mode of warfare in ungoverned spaces and therefore discussions around non proliferation and regulation need to occur but the expectation is that these discussions will take many years.

Technology, Democracy and Rights

Memduh Karakullukcu, Vice-Chairman and President, Global Relations Forum, Turkey

Raheel Khursheed, Head of News, Politics and Government, Twitter, India

Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia Director, Human Rights Watch, India

There are a range of truths in the world based on perspective. The internet enables people to voice their views but at the same time we are hearing how security is challenged through the use of the internet.

There is a view that people should be able to say what they want. On the other hand there are people who are highly offended by what people say. Freedom of expression does lead to law and order challenges; it can be used to incite violence or for the recruitment of terrorists.

The challenge is to balance rights and risks. If freedom of expression means a group will be offended and violence may ensue and people might die, is there not an argument for moderating information or material to prevent violence? In this scenario the role of Government should be one of surveillance that is lawful, necessary and proportionate.

The persistent question is how do you protect privacy rights with the increasing use of technology and how do you balance privacy rights against security and property rights? Over time privacy norms have changed and evolved. Privacy can also be threatened by private citizens and corporations and we should not assume they are only threatened by governments.

There is also debate about international relations in this discussion with some arguing that sovereignty is challenged when surveillance by another state occurs. The growing risk of cyber crime and espionage has no borders and where privacy rights may have been enshrined in legislation in one jurisdiction, they don't apply to another country and therefore privacy across borders suffers as there is no international law, only national laws.

Depending on your view we either need enshrined global privacy rights if you believe it is a categorical right or if you believe it's a contingent right then we need an agreement on standards. Cross border individual privacy might be enhanced if there is an interest in attracting the citizens of other countries for economic interests or for soft power. Security and economic interest of individual states might be the most likely way to enhance privacy rights rather than a global privacy rights movement.

New Media and Politics: Dialectics of Perception

The Modi Campaign and the New India

A conversation with
Ashok Malik, Senior Journalist, India
Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament, India

Ashok Malik

Demography: India has an interesting demography with a very high percentage of young people who were voting for the first time. This presents challenge and opportunity for politicians and political parties who need to capture the important youth vote.

Urbanisation: Sixty-five per cent of India's GDP is urban centric. There are a high number of people dependent on the urban economy even though more people live in the rural communities. People were looking for a national leader who could do things in big cities rather than small communities.

Use of media and new technology: Prime Minister Modi used TV and social media to develop a national brand for himself. Technology is also transmitting habits from one part of the country to the other and Modi capitalised on this and used this medium to transmit his message so that it became the habit and norm.

What were the key messages? Prime Minister Modi identified himself as everything his opponents were not. He presented himself as incorruptible to contrast himself with the previous government which is still battling corruption claims. He pitched himself as the guy from outside Delhi; he pitched himself as someone from "real" India.

India is going through an aspirations revolution but the population continues to find barriers (social, family, economic) and Prime Minister Modi identified this and pitched himself as the candidate that wasn't from a family of power or politics. He was aspiration personified. He pitched himself as someone who had come from nowhere and he said to the constituency that if he could do it so could they.

What does this mean for India? If Prime Minister Modi succeeds in delivering on his promises it means one thing, if not, it means another.

If he is able to get the economy going again and jobs are created and there is hope, then it suggests that India is moving on from a top down democracy to a bottom up democracy where non English speaking and non traditional leaders will have a chance to make it in India.

Shashi Tharoor

The polarising features of Prime Minister Modi are not yet clear. He has not acted divisive in language or identified his religious beliefs in policy, however, he has empowered his campaign team and campaigners in by-elections since the election to use religion to polarise the electorate.

He is not truly leading a right of centre party because they are not open to globalisation and liberalisation of markets. It's only right of centre due to the conservative religious element.

This poses the question of what kind of economic transformation can Prime Minister Modi bring about then? He is focused on punctuality, working long days, having clean offices, and being efficient in the workplace, however, this does not guarantee productivity or economic growth. He is very good at messaging and communicating his aspirations and intention to create jobs but he needs to deliver.

The Congress party failed to win the election due to a number of factors. Prime Minister Modi was better at tapping into the aspirations of the youth. The Bharatiya Janata Party won the corruption debate through the media and portrayed themselves as the less corrupt party. The Congress party was a major victim of price rises in food and fuel in a global economy which the government was blamed for. There was also a strong anti-incumbency sentiment which persisted after ten years in power which is a long period in India's democratic history. Even though the Congress party had a good story to tell for the past ten years in government, people don't want to think about the past, Prime Minister Modi's story about the future was more appealing.

The final question remains unanswered and will besiege parties in any democratic system across the globe. Should elections be fought on the future rather than the past? Governments become increasingly more reactive rather than more visionary as they manage the day to day business of governing. How do parties in government continue to articulate a vision for the future with ideas that appeal to an aspirational constituency?

Growth, Equity and the Global South

Hegemony of Trade and Investment Flows

Sony Kapoor, Managing Director, Re-Define, UK

John Hulsman, President, Hulsman Enterprises, Germany

Surupa Gupta, Associate Professor, University of Mary and Washington, USA

Whilst there is talk of austerity and lack of money, the fact is there is more investment capital in the world today than at any other time. The problem is with how it is used. Corporations have never had more savings. They are not investing it. The link between savings and investment in infrastructure and real investment has broken down.

There is a big retirement savings crisis that is happening in the developed world. American pension funds have an assumed rate of return of 7.5 per cent which is incredibly high when the global growth rate is nowhere near this. Ten years ago the expectation was a nine per cent return. There is an unachievable expectation that pensions will be paid with returns on investments.

The demographic dividend is equally likely to turn into demographic curse if there are no jobs created for people. We therefore need substantial investments to create jobs for people. Despite this need and the fact there is more money in the world today than any other time, the investment is not occurring. This is a worrying fact when we know there is nothing as destabilising as millions of young people facing a bleak future.

Whilst the investment requirements are in the developing nations to help improve the lives of millions and create jobs, the money flows to real estate in London, or bonds in Germany where it is perceived to be a safer investment. Unfortunately investing money in these initiatives might be perceived as safer but it is not an investment in global growth.

Despite the perceptions of security, the best returns on investments are in India, sub-Saharan Africa and China where figures have been better than OECD nations. However, the investment of OECD nations is disproportionately in OECD nations, rather than outside the OECD.

Despite the abundance of investment capital, the degree of indebtedness of governments is at an all time high and is unsustainable. This means that if there is any shock to the economy now, the capacity of governments to respond is extremely limited and poses a huge risk.

Post 2015 Agenda and the Global South

Renato Flôres, Professor, Fundação Getulio Vargas, Brazil

Camille Eiss, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Policy (Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning), USAID

Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India

In 1989 half of the developing world lived in poverty. That number is one in five now.

The idea for post 2015 indicators is to design Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with sustainable environmental development incorporated in light of the more extreme weather events taking place and the impact climate change has on many people. The ambition is to build a global coalition for action and the post 2015 agenda provides the best opportunity to do this. The aim is to lift 1.2 billion people out of poverty.

One criticism of the MDGs is that the global south weren't involved in developing the goals that related to them in the 1980s. The development of the post 2015 goals need to include the global south so they can take more ownership over their future and be provided with the facts to make good decisions about policy.

Some commentators fear there has been too much ambition, all well intentioned, but that the ambition should be controlled and focused on a few objectives, goals and targets. The UN has no enforcement powers with regards to climate change or the completion of MDG objectives and many important ones haven't been followed by many countries.

Countries still adore GDP but it has a lot of shortcomings. However it is widely used because it is one indicator and it has value as a summary of one area. This is an example of a well used focus of an objective.

The Nation state has the power to enforce objectives but there is a gap between the nation state and UN. This results in a governance problem which reveals huge gaps. Some have argued that there should be a transfer of powers from UN to the nation state and the community level.

The Climate Debates

Catherine Cameron, Director, Agulhas, UK

Lydia Powell, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India

Arunabha Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer, Council on Energy, Environment and Water, India

Twenty years ago we took the approach that ecosystems would adapt naturally to climate change, that food production would need to adapt and so would economic development. The assumption was that business as usual would prevail and there would be limited impact.

Today we have a different view but there are challenges:

- In business, there is a quarter by quarter business approach.
- Government have about a four-year period to fit in with election cycles.
- Climate policies are typically developed for a period of ten to forty years.
- Infrastructure policies look at a timeframe of thirty to fifty years.
- Climate change is century scale.
- The average lifespan is sixty-six years.

The framework for global negotiations around action on climate change has been clunky. The UNFCCC has 190 member states, compared with membership of the G20 where decisions can be made around a table. Smaller groups are now meeting on the margins to negotiate deals because convening a sensible meeting of nearly 200 delegates is difficult.

Even without any global agreements on targets, cutting carbon is still a smart business objective, irrespective of political drivers. Unfortunately to date, governments have missed the opportunity to convince business that this is a smart thing to do and that there is a sound business case for investing in technologies and strategies that combat the effects of climate change. We are still talking about climate change from a science perspective and not a human perspective. To change the narrative around the imperatives for taking action we need to stop using data and start using stories.

Despite policy positions of various governments and organisations, the world's carbon emissions continue to rise year on year. The only time there has been recorded impacts on emissions have been in times of economic slowdown. There are no other signs of any other policy having an impact and at this rate we will reach a two degree increase in twenty to thirty years.

Where countries have argued they have reduced their carbon emissions i.e. the European Union, what they have actually done is trade with developing countries to lower emissions and therefore the global emissions of carbon is not adjusted at all.

G20 countries account for eight per cent of global carbon emissions. Despite this, on average China and India add about three large coal based fire plants per week.

Conclusion

The opportunity to participate as a delegate at the Asian Forum on Global Governance will remain with me as one of the most interesting experiences of my professional career. The diversity of discourse and level of intelligent debate has reignited my interest in international affairs in a far deeper way.

The number of challenges and opportunities facing the world are immense. The response to these will need to come from both the developed and developing nations with a particular expectation that Asia will be required to play a major role in international relations for any outcome to be agreed upon, implemented and successful. The exact geographic definition of Asia is unclear, however, what is clear is that India and China with their large populations will play central roles in determining the approach the globe takes to addressing climate change, how we maintain stability across borders, how we lift people out of poverty and how trade and investment patterns change this century. Australia needs to position itself strategically to take advantage of the opportunities that will present in the coming years as the rise of Asia continues.

In addition to the very stimulating debate and confronting questions there was also a strong emphasis placed on networking by the conference organisers. The friendships that were created from participating in the conference are ones I hope to build on, not just to maintain a wonderful network of colleagues across the globe, but because of the genuine interest that was shown in helping each person develop their own path in life. One of the great advantages of a conference hosting delegates from the ages of twenty-eight to thirty-five is that we each are at a stage in our career where we are beginning to face new challenges and to be able to share that experience in the light of far greater global challenges was a truly unique opportunity.

I am extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to represent the Labor party and Australia at this conference and without any hesitation recommend future conferences to any aspiring delegates.