



Institute of Chinese Studies

WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

*The World Order that
China Seeks*

REPORT

Speaker :
Mohan Kumar

10 April 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speaker: Amb. Mohan Kumar, Dean and Professor, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat; and, former Indian Ambassador.

Chair: Amb. Vijay K. Nambiar, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Indian Ambassador; and, former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations.

Venue: Zoom Webinar

- The seminar focussed on China's strategic posture in the global order as it seeks to replace the US and build a new hegemonic system. The speaker reviewed China's rise and its deft use of international organisations to further its centrality in the world order. Additionally, he also explored China's centrality in the world economy and its attempts to sideline the US through multiple engagements with several nations.
- Amb. Nambiar noted China's attempts to build Tianxia 2.0, which was primarily non-Western in orientation. Further, he pointed to the Chinese party elites' eagerness to replace the West with a rising East. To achieve this, China was building a new type of International Relations and supplementing it with new kinds of partnerships. He highlighted the role that organisations such as SCO are playing this new kind of diplomacy.
- Amb. Kumar added that China sought to build a non-Western multipolar world but as a purely transitory measure. China still seeks to dominate the world but until it becomes a reality, it shall pay "lip-service" to the multipolar world order. He argued that China's main strategy was to use the existing institutions and structures to its advantage to garner power. Thus, China is not interested in reforming the UNSC as it would mean giving voice and representation to states such as Japan.
- China's main challenges lie not in its political but economic order. The speaker noted that "China is caught between a rock and a hard place". Furthermore, he argued that China's dual consumption strategy was a failure and its export-led growth was over. Although China had also cut down on its BRI ambitions, it was still a leading

trade partner of several major nations. Its major challenge lies in tackling the dollar system.

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Amb. Mohan Kumar offered a comprehensive insight into China's desire for building a new world order along with the attendant challenges and prospects. He began by giving an idea of China's overarching objectives. First, he argued, was to replace the US without disrupting the present order and build a "non-Western, multi-polar world order". He further clarified that China did not consider the European Union (EU) and Japan as significant threats. Second, was to use the United Nations as a tool to further its interests. China did not seek a reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to prevent Japan's representation in the same. Understanding the gaps in hard power vis-à-vis the United States, China has gravitated towards the idea of a G2 arrangement, envisaging a relationship in which Washington and Beijing stabilise the international system by backing each other. This has become apparent in climate conferences.

Speaking about China's economy, he argued that there was a serious doubt as to whether China could actually take over the US. He further argued that China's main challenges lie in the economic realm rather than the political one. He gave several reasons for this argument. China would look at the economic order to determine if the non-discriminatory MFN trade can be continued as it serves Chinese interests of export-led growth. However, much to its detriment, the export-led model of economic development was on its way out. Additionally, China has serious problems of industrial overcapacity. To further worsen this problem, China's dual consumption is also a failure as savings are high and domestic consumption is low. Thus, China will be desperate for markets but will grapple with supply chain problems and anti-dumping policies implemented by the West. Furthermore, despite the results of the US Presidential elections, the US will place a tariff on Chinese goods as China has managed to garner "a bipartisan consensus against itself in the US".

Moving on to aspects of security, the speaker emphasised that even though China seeks a non-Western, multipolar world order, its ambitions in Asia-Pacific are quite different. China wants to be the centre of power in Asia and multipolarity would mean giving space to Japan,

India and South Korea. Additionally, China firmly believes that “America has no business in the Asia-Pacific”. In line with this, Amb. Kumar also talked about China’s intentions regarding Taiwan. In his view, China would not go for a direct offensive, but “create incremental micro-aggressions” to trigger US responses.

Speaking about the larger security situation in the Asia-Pacific, the speaker looked at the changing defence policies of Japan and the Philippines. He opined that any changes in the US-Japan relations with regards to the military could create fundamental changes in the region’s security structures and balances. If Japan and the US come together to create a Joint Task Force and place long-range missiles on Japanese islands with China in the range, it can cause a paradigm shift. He elucidated that this would send a strong message of Japan’s national interest as the foremost factor, completely disregarding China as a major trade partner.

In his concluding remarks, the speaker shifted his focus to India and China, identifying China as a major security challenge to India. The Sino-Russian rapprochement is detrimental to India’s interests as Russia would be willing to take China’s part. He asserted that India’s best bet is to get its internal economy on track and join “a lattice-work of fronts” well in time to counter China. He also pointed to a huge blunder of the Chinese foreign policy to open up multiple frontiers of tensions, some of which could be totally avoided, like those with India.

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