

Sino-Indian Competition and the Burma Imbrolio

by

Dr. Brahma Chellaney

Brahma Chellaney: This is a very well timed seminar, although by accident, coming as it does just a day after the conclusion of the latest Sino-Indian summit meeting in Beijing.

A Reordering of Power

The relationship between China and India, which together make up 40 percent of the global working age population and 14 percent of the world's GDP, in my view, needs to be viewed in the larger context of the evolving qualitative reordering of power in Asia and the implications that reordering holds for Asian and international security.

As we all know, major shifts in economic and political power are happening in the world, and these shifts are occurring not because of battlefield victories or military alignments but due to a factor that is unique to the modern world: rapid economic growth. These shifts are most conspicuous in Asia, which is bouncing back from a relatively short period of decline in its history; as the Asian Development Bank said, "Asia accounted for 60 percent of the global GDP in 1820 at the advent of the industrial revolution." By 1945 - that is in 125 years - Asia's share of global GDP had plummeted to just 20 percent.

Now, Asia is bouncing back, and through its economic dynamism is all set to shape the future of globalization. That this reordering of power in Asia has been accompanied by sharpening geopolitics should not come as a surprise. In fact, a new great game seems to be underway,

reshaping major equations and challenging strategic stability in Asia. In fact, the main challenge in Asia now is to ensure strategic stability.

Recent events are a reminder of the high stakes geopolitical competition sweeping Asia. These developments range from the formation of exploratory alliances like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Quadrilateral Initiative to some of the major war games that we have seen in recent months. The most recent are Chinese exercises in the East and South China Seas, the five-nation war games in the Bay of Bengal, and the Russia-China exercises in the Chelyabinsk region.

What is striking is that this new flurry of alliance formation in Asia is being led by Asia's rising powers, not by the United States which has policed Asia since the end of World War II. In this larger context, Asian cooperation and security will be very much influenced by the equations between and among China, India and Japan - Asia's three largest powers, who constitute a unique strategic triangle.

Never before in history has there been a strong Japan, a strong China and a strong India at the same time; in fact, since the emergence of Japan as a world power during the Meiji Emperor's reign, there has never been a non-Western power that has emerged with such capability to reorder, to change the international order, as China has today. So, stable political relationships between China and India, and China and Japan hold the key to Asian security.

India and China as New Neighbors

Although we all talk about China and India as neighbors, the fact is that these two countries are new neighbors. They may be 5,000 year-old civilizations, but they have been neighbors for barely 57 years since the disappearance of Tibet as the neutral buffer between them. They had no historical experience in dealing with each other politically until the fall of Tibet.

Since then, they have been on a learning curve trying to build equilibrium in their relationship. That relationship today is more stable and more cooperative than it was in the past. Both China and India have built a mutual stake in maintaining the peaceful diplomatic environment on which their economic modernization and security depend.

But just as China is haunted by three T's in its domestic sphere - Tiananmen, Taiwan and Tibet - its relationship with India is also defined by three T's - territorial disputes, Tibet and trade. Of these, the first two are stuck, and the third issue, trade, is booming with China enjoying a ballooning trade surplus in its favor.

But as we know from the Sino-Japanese relationship in recent years, flourishing economic ties - as Dr. Pei has also mentioned in his writings - flourishing economic ties by themselves do not assure moderation and restraint in the absence of progress in bridging political differences. In fact, in today's market-driven world, trade is not constrained by political differences unless political barriers have been erected. So, if the Sino-Indian trade were to overtake U.S.-India trade, a likely scenario within the next two years, political differences will still divide China and India.

The Burma and Tibet Factors

One political issue emblematic of the underlying Sino-Indian strategic dissonance is Burma. There are several important and interesting parallels between Burma and Tibet. India has had close historical ties with Tibet and with Burma, which was part of the British Indian Empire until 1937. The majority people of Burma, the Burmans, are of Tibetan ethnic stock, and the Burman script, like the Tibetan script, was taken from Sanskrit.

Burma and Tibet, today, epitomize, in my view, India-China historical tensions. Having lost Tibet as the buffer, India values Burma as a hedge against China's rise. It is significant that the resistance to repressive rule in both Burma and in Tibet is led by iconic Nobel laureates, one living in exile in India and the other with close ties to India but under house arrest in Rangoon for a long time. It is also interesting that the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in quick succession for the same reason - for leading a non-violent struggle in the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi.

Yet another parallel is that more than half a century after forcibly absorbing Tibet, China has failed to crush the Tibetan resistance. That non-violent struggle today ranks as one of the longest and most powerful resistance movements in modern history; with no links to violence or to terror, this movement, in fact, stands out as a model.

Similarly, despite keeping Aung San Suu Kyi in detention for nearly 13 of the past 19 years, the junta in Burma has failed to suppress the democracy movement as last September's monk-led mass protest showed.

Today, the Sino-Indian competition over Burma is rooted in two factors - geopolitics and energy.

Geopolitics

For China, Burma is an entry way to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. Burma, in fact, overlooks vital sea-lanes of communication to the Strait of Malacca. China is busy completing the Irrawaddy Strategic Corridor involving road, railway, river and energy transport links between the Burmese ports and Yunnan.

For India, the Irrawaddy Strategic Corridor means strategic pressure on the eastern flank given the fact that China is already building strategic corridors in two other areas around India. One is another north-east strategic corridor, the Trans-Karakoram Corridor linking Xinjiang with Pakistan's Chinese-built Gwadar port, which is located at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz through which 40 percent of the world's oil supply passes. And the second corridor is an east-west corridor in Tibet across India's northern frontiers.

For India, China's growing strategic clout in Burma holds important military implications because such transportation and strategic links give China a levee to strategically meddle in India's restive northeast, including the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims to be Chinese territory. Operating through the plains of Burma and in India's northeast is much easier than having to operate across the mighty Himalayas. In the 1962 war, the Indian army in Arunachal Pradesh found itself outflanked by the invading People's Liberation Army, spurring speculation that some units of the PLA, rather than entering by climbing the mighty Himalayas, came from Yunnan through the plains of Burma.

It is no wonder that during World War II, both the Allied and the Axis powers classified Burma as the "back door to India."

The potential for Chinese strategic interference has to be viewed against the background that the tribal insurgencies in India's northeast were all instigated by Maoist China, which trained and armed these rebels partly by exploiting the Burma route. Today, India has an 850 kilometer-long porous border with Burma, with insurgents operating on both sides with the help of shared ethnicity.

Energy

Energy is another factor. In Asia, we have not only the world's fastest growing economies, the fastest rising military expenditures, the most dangerous hotspots, but also the fiercest energy competition anywhere. The intra-Asian competition over energy is driven by the fact that some parts of Asia are energy-rich and the other parts, where economic growth is concentrated, are energy deficient.

Like elsewhere, energy-rich states in Asia tend to be governed by autocrats - that is the harsh reality. Against this background, you have a country like Burma sitting on vast gas reserves which are coveted by its neighbors, but Burma because it is sanctions-hit, it is an isolated state, it has not reaped the energy dividends like some other autocratically ruled energy-rich states in the world.

Foreign investment in Burma's gas exploration and production has not been too significant, plus sanctions have prevented Burma from accessing liquefaction technology to become a major LNG exporter. So the only choice Burma is left

with is to sell natural gas by pipeline, and to whom can it sell natural gas by pipeline? To its immediate neighbors as it is doing to Thailand and is going to do to China once the new pipeline is complete, and as India would like to do, but it has failed so far to secure a contract to buy Burmese gas.

Contrasting Authoritarianisms in Burma and China

Until September - last September's pro-democracy uprising, Burma, like China, had been free of any major, I underline the word major, pro-democracy demonstrations for nearly two decades. The last major pro-democracy demonstrations in Burma were in 1988; in China, in 1989. Then came fuel price increases both in Burma first, then in China. We had fuel price increases in Burma followed by fuel price increases in China eight weeks later. In Burma, we had mass protests with the monks coming out on the streets. In China, we had a few sporadic incidents of violence, one person killed in Henan, but no pro-democracy protests in China.

The reason why we had this contrast is that China has transformed itself radically in the last 20 years since Tiananmen Square, while Burma remains impoverished, isolated and battered by sanctions. The post-Tiananmen trade sanctions against China did not last long on the argument that they were hurting ordinary Chinese and that engagement was a better way to promote political change. The same principle, however, was never applied to Burma. The junta, or the military, has been ruling Burma for 46 years now. The Communist Party has governed China for 59 years now. Neither model is sustainable. The longest any autocratic system has survived in modern history was 74 years in the Soviet Union.

For the time being, however, the Chinese political system through its remarkable economic success story is advertising that autocracy is a better or a more rapid route to prosperity and stability than the tumult of liberal democracy.

It is not an accident that there is a strong streak of authoritarianism in Asia. If you look around Burma's neighborhood, you see that. It was the fast track of authoritarianism that was associated with prosperity, with the strong one-party systems in Singapore and Malaysia in the lead.

So in a way, one can argue that the Chinese political system has emerged as a challenge to liberal democracy - maybe the first direct challenge to liberal democracy since the rise of fascism.

Trends in the Future of Asia

In analyzing future Sino-Indian trends, I wish to look at this relationship by identifying certain challenges that are common to the larger Asian continent.

Overcoming Historical Legacies

Challenge one in Asia is to overcome the harmful historical legacies that weigh down all major interstate relationships. Be it the China-India relationship, the China-Japan relationship, the Korea-Japan relationship, all these are weighed down by history. The shadow of the 1962 war bedevils the India-China relationship. Not only does it weigh heavily on the Indian psyche, but also, the wounds of that war have been kept alive by China's assertive claims to additional Indian territories - claims that underline the fact that China is not willing to accept the territorial status quo for a settlement with India.

India-China ties test Asian security. But given the fact that China and India are pointing across the mighty Himalayas in very different geopolitical directions, they need not threaten each other as long as they abstain from hostile actions against each other.

A cooperative Asian security environment, in my view, is very much linked to how the India-China relationship evolves. How that relationship evolves in turn will depend on how the Tibet issue is managed or settled. Having ceased to be the political buffer between India and China, Tibet can still be the political bridge between these two giants if China were to begin a process of reconciliation and healing in Tibet and grant that region the genuine autonomy that it promised in 1951.

Banish Hegemony

Challenge two in Asia is to banish the threat of hegemony by any single state as Europe has done, so that political homogeneity in terms of shared goals can be established. The shadow of hegemony looms so large in Asia - as the effort to fashion an East Asian community has shown - that, let alone an Asian community, even a rules-based Asian order will not emerge unless this challenge is addressed. In fact, this challenge is the main driver of the new great game that we are witnessing.

Build Common Norms and Values

Challenge three, in the absence of a common Asian identity, is to build common norms and values so that institutionalized cooperation and collaboration could be promoted in Asia. Without common norms and values, you cannot have any community. Think of the European Union without common norms or values, even

NAFTA is built on certain common norms. But given the divergent political systems in Asia, building common norms is a daunting challenge made worse by the mix of history, cultural diversity and unsolved territorial and political problems. Yet, this challenge ought to be addressed because Asia stands out as being the only continent where regional integration has not taken hold.

In the absence of efforts to build common norms, the risk is that political values will become the main geopolitical dividing line in Asia, pitting a China-led coalition that values centralized domestic control and whose favorite institution is the SCO, against a constellation of democracies loosely tied together by a web of strategic partnerships. In fact, the Sino-Indian rivalry plays to this political divide.

Internal Challenges

Challenge four is to address the threats from within. All the emerging powers in Asia - particularly China and India - the main threats that they face come from within. India and China's future will be determined very much by how they address these challenges, which include rising disparities in society, high incidence of corruption, poor governance, environmental degradation and growing discontent among ethnic groups located in outlying regions. Unfortunately, we have become too focused on GDP growth rates, as if development really means GDP growth; but development is more broad-based. The concept includes far more things than GDP growth or even the acquisition of military muscle.

Water Resources

Challenge five, which is a challenge you rarely hear about, yet, if you scratch the surface, this challenge is very visible. And

this challenge is to build river basin arrangements in Asia, particularly between India and China because all of the major rivers of Asia originate in the Tibetan Plateau except one, the Ganges. Only the Ganges of all the great rivers of Asia originates on the Indian side of the Himalayas. But the other rivers - the Mekong, the Salween, the Karnali, the Indus, the Brahmaputra, the Sutlej, the Yangtze, the Yellow - name any major river of Asia - they all originate in the Tibetan Plateau. And these rivers that originate from Chinese-held territory are a lifeline to 47 percent of the world's population. Wars of the future will be fought not so much over oil but over water. No region better illustrates this danger than Asia, which according to a 2006 U.N. report, has less fresh water per capita than any continent other than Antarctica.

I think Asia's sharpening energy geopolitics, driven in part by high GDP growth rates and in part by mercantilist efforts to lock up supplies, has obscured the fact that water shortage is already becoming an obstacle to Asia's continued rapid economic expansion. If water geopolitics were to spur interstate tensions, the Asian renaissance would definitely stall.

Asia's water woes are likely to be aggravated by climate change. Intrastate water disputes are rife from South Asia to Southeast Asia to China. Name any part of Asia, intrastate disputes are common. Of greater concern should be this potential for interstate conflict over water.

No country will determine the direction of Asian geopolitics more than China, simply because it controls the riverhead of Asia's waters. Yet, it is pursuing major interbasin and interriver water transfer projects in the Tibetan Plateau. Plus, it has dammed the

Mekong with two dams upstream: six upstream on the Brahmaputra, one upstream on the Sutlej, and this has created a lot of unease in the lower riparian states.

It is also pursuing this project called the "Great South-North Water Transfer Project," which has the blessing of Hu Jintao who actually was trained as a hydrologist and who made his name, guess where? In Tibet as a martial law administrator. So you combine water and Tibet and you have Hu Jintao as the president of China, and then keep at the back of your mind the officially blessed book that was published the year before last with the title, quite revealing, *Tibet's Waters Will Save China*.

So against this background - and I do not have too much time - against this background, the protection of Asia's shared water resources demands interstate cooperation. Interbasin arrangements that already exist for the Indus, the Nile, the Niger and the Senegal rivers offer a model on how to avert water conflict in Asia. These arrangements have worked well and they offer the technical and the institutional means to manage water disputes.

Democracy Promotion in Burma

My last challenge, and I think it is a very important one in terms of the title of this seminar, is to underline the fact that a resource-rich Burma remains in abject poverty under a brutal military regime. And this challenges us on how to fashion a forward-looking international approach to promote democracy so that outside actors, far from shutting themselves off, actively engage to influence developments within that country.

Only 16 out of the 39 states in Asia are free, according to Freedom House, and in recent years we have seen democracy in retreat, underlined most prominently by the way Russia is sliding back from democracy. And instead of democracy spreading, we have Islamic revivalism spreading.

So this challenge is an important one, but I admit this is a challenge easier to define than to address. Difficult as it may be, this is a challenge that needs to be taken head on because of the different standards that we are applying and of the fact that often sanctions by themselves - as Burma's case illustrates - sanctions by themselves are not helping to promote political freedom. It has been more than two decades since the free world began implementing boycotts, trade bans, aid cutoffs, and began exerting diplomatic pressure on Burma, and what do we find today? That the free world has even less leverage over Burma than it had earlier.

So it is very clear that sanctions by themselves, as a sole instrument, are not going to deliver the promised objective, but engagement by itself cannot be the answer. The notion that democracy is going to follow capitalist development has been belied by China. So we need a more calibrated, a more nuanced approach which ensures that outside actors are able to play a role in influencing developments within.

Also, it is important to ensure that promotion of freedom does not become a diplomatic instrument to target not the powerful big autocracies, but the weak, unpopular, isolated states. The fact is that the more you push and punish the weak renegade states, the more likely the big autocracies are going to gain.

Beijing, in recent years, has signed tens of billions of dollars worth of energy and arms contracts with pariah regimes from Burma and Iran to Sudan and Venezuela. Because of its U.N. veto, it is able to provide political protection to regimes the international community seeks to isolate.

Building democracy in Burma is vital not only to end repression and to empower the masses, but also to facilitate ethnic conciliation and integration in a very ethnically divided society that cannot be held together indefinitely through brute military power.

Institutional Capacity in Burma

This calls for refining the sanctions tool, achieving better targeted sanctions, an ongoing process. Yet even as we are trying to achieve better targeted sanctions, the sanctions instrument has become more blunt.

One thing we need to bear in mind is that the seeds of democracy will not take root in an isolated, sanctions-battered economy - in a stunted economy - with little civil society in existence in support.

Burma is a case of a country that has been at war with itself since day one, since it became free, independent, in 1948. The reason why the military is so strong is that there are more than 400,000 troops in the Burmese military, making the Burmese army one of the largest standing armies in the world. The reason why it became so big and powerful is because it has been fighting internal wars from day one. Today, it is the only functioning institution left in Burma - this is a sad story.

So given on one side, a stunted economy, lack of an entrepreneurial class,

underdeveloped civil society, a military as the only functional institution, how do we bring about political change in a country like Burma? This is no easy task. After all, what we are seeking to achieve in Burma is not the replacement of the junta with another autocratic regime with a civilian mask. What we are seeking in Burma is the empowerment of the masses through genuine democracy.

What we need are not just negative but positive conditionalities; that is, sanctions that do not prevent Burma's regional integration, but sanctions that are more carefully targeted, and more importantly, Burma's rulers are given a set of benchmarks - the meeting of each benchmark bringing positive rewards. This is what I mean by positive conditionalities, and these benchmarks should be designed to expand civil society because it is only a growing civil society that is likely to sound the death knell of any dictatorship.

Therefore it is very important for outside actors to play a role within and not shut themselves out and hope that sanctions by themselves are going to deliver the results. Without the Bush administration engaging Pyongyang, to give you one example, would it have been possible to achieve the progress, however tentative it might seem at this stage, on the North Korean nuclear program? And it is nobody's assertion that Burma is worse than North Korea. So with these thoughts I would like to close. Thank you.

Charles Kupchan: Thank you very much, Brahma, for a very rich set of remarks, which I'm sure will provoke our discussants as well as our conversation. Dr. Pei?

Minxin Pei: It is a daunting task always for a Chinese to follow an Indian because Indians can really be eloquent and can talk and I think Professor Chellaney's performance here reinforces this stereotype.

It is both easy and difficult for me to comment on his wide-ranging discussion, and I'm certainly not going to focus on Burma because I know next to nothing about Burma. I must confess that in this town ignorance has never prevented people from commenting on things they do not know about. But I think being a good Confucian I will follow the principle of being modest.

The Puzzle of Sino-Indian Relations

I think one of the things that I'm always struck by is a puzzle regarding Indian-Chinese relations. On many fronts, you can see that there are structural, deeply embedded sources of conflict, tensions, competition, and distrust, but the relationship in the last 10, 15 years has been growing in a quite positive direction. The competition between the two countries has remained quite muted. Both sides have exercised enormous strategic restraint in dealing with each other.

How do we explain this puzzle? I think that puzzle actually is far more interesting for policy analysts. This discussion of mine focuses really on this puzzle rather than on the specific issue of Burma. I believe that Burma is important, but in the overall scheme of things between China and India, Burma occupies probably a secondary place; there are far bigger bilateral issues between these two countries.

Sources of Conflict and Competition

When you look at Sino-Indian relations, there are four serious sources of conflict and competition that are very, very obvious.

The first one is structural. It is embedded in the geopolitics of Asia. Both countries are regional powers with huge aspirations for bigger influence both within the region and on the global stage. And, of course, that geopolitical rivalry pits the two countries against each other over issues such as Burma, such as Southeast Asia and, of course, Tibet.

The second source of tension is historical. The two countries fought a border war in 1962, which left a bitter taste especially among the Indians and, of course, the unsettled territorial disputes between the two countries are among the most difficult in the world and that issue continues to dog the two countries.

The third is that the two countries are influenced by third parties. For India, China's relations with Pakistan, which are very strategic, has been a sore spot because China uses Pakistan as a strategic balancer against India. And for China, India is being used or at least Washington is trying to use India as a strategic balancer against China. So there are third parties involved.

And finally, both countries are developing very rapidly economically and that means they are engaged, as Professor Chellaney said, in a competition for resources, for markets, for access to capital and I think also for international prestige. Everywhere you go, they always raise this issue of India versus China and vice versa.

So these sources of competition are structural, are embedded in the nature of geopolitics, in the nature of the two

economies and in the nature of the two political systems.

Sources of a Cooperative Relationship

But why have these two countries been able to go beyond these immediate sources - the structural causes of competition - and have tried very hard, and I will say quite successfully, in developing a relationship that is very pragmatic and that is largely mutually beneficial? Here I offer four explanations.

I think, first of all, leaders in both countries understand that gains from seizing the strategic opportunities available to them at the moment are far more important than possible gains from strategic competition with each other. Just look at what both countries face at the moment. Globalization means China and India, with enormous cheap labor, will benefit hugely from this strategic opportunity. And if they throw away this opportunity for economic development and engage in a zero-sum geopolitical rivalry against each other, it's a lose-lose proposition, and I think neither country has decided to go down that path.

The second is that the rivalry between India and China is what I call structural: that means it is not acute. In other words, none of the issues that I mentioned at the beginning of this discussion are so pressing that the government in either country will have to take immediate action against the other in response, and that allows political leaders to take action to delay competition or to restrain competition.

Thirdly, both countries understand the immediate costs of strategic competition against the other. China, for example, understands that being nasty to India will certainly push India into the arms of the

U.S. and that will repeat the mistake the former Soviet Union made regarding China itself. For India, its leaders understand that it will be facing a far stronger China. China's GDP is, however you measure it, double or triple the size of India's, and taking on a stronger rival at the moment when you are not ready is irresponsible and strategically counterproductive.

And finally, I think both countries have very different strategic priorities at the moment. China's priority is the East: Taiwan, Japan. India's priority is the region of South Asia, so they really do not have overlapping strategic priorities that would force them into a game of competition. That is why I think China and India have been quite successful in putting aside their long-term strategic differences and focusing on gains from cooperation. That is why I'm personally quite optimistic about the short to medium-term developments in Indian-Chinese relations. For the next 10, 15 years, even 20 years, both countries will prioritize their domestic economic development over foreign policy and that can only mean a moderate, cooperative foreign policy, especially when it comes to Sino-Indian relations. Thank you.

Derek J. Mitchell: Thanks very much for having me. I want to thank our friends at Sasakawa for running this program and Brahma for his very eloquent comments. I really very much appreciate it and some of it surprised me, frankly, to some degree about India's perspective on Burma. I detect some tension among what he talked about - some questions that are raised about India's foreign policy that perhaps Brahma can elucidate a bit, and I have seen an evolution, overall, in my sense of where India is on Burma.

Indian Perspective on Burma

I had a meeting in Delhi in March. This is the second meeting I have had with the Indians talking about Asian issues. The first one - the only issue we talked with the Indians about in Asia where there were some tensions was Burma. I raised Burma, suddenly, the room got cold, there were problems even among the folks on the U.S. side - there may be some here in the audience who remember this. And then in March, I raised it again and I remember the Indian side saying, "Why are you Americans so on about Burma? Leave Burma alone. Leave us alone about Burma. We have our problems with energy; we have our problems with the northeast insurgency. It is our concern, it is our border, stop telling us what to do."

I'm going to raise some of these questions. There is a sense of more recognition of the problem of Burma, and maybe an evolution in thinking about Burma, even the word "sanctions" is raised as, certainly not the be-all, not the only thing, but an approach even if engagement also needs to be coordinated along with it. So, let me raise a few questions, a few tensions that I noticed, and I think it might get at broader issues of India's foreign policy in this transitional period.

Strategic Realism and Idealism

I got a sense in the comments of a tension between India's attention to a new realism and its values-based approach. In the sense that India has concerns about its northeast insurgency, about the issue of China's strategic incursion into its border regions, the issue of oil needs, energy needs, but at the same time, I was really interested to hear much more explicitly talk about values, about liberal democracy - this balance in

East Asia between, as Brahma puts it, democracies and China-led autocracies or China-modeled autocracies.

Obviously, it's not an either/or thing, you have to mix them both. Most countries mix to some degree both realism and values or idealism. But I just wonder where that line is for India now? How much are values a factor in its foreign policy, and to what degree is that a realist value if it is seen as a tension, a dividing line in East Asia? You can see it is as a realist value in India's competition with China.

Secondly is the question of strategy itself, of long-term versus short-term strategy. Whenever I heard my Indian friends talk about how we have to compete with China in Burma, they would say, "Look, they are outflanking us, we have to hedge against their rise," et cetera. And then I noticed how India is trying to balance China in Burma, and I do not see much success. I see that they are losing out to China in the energy sector. All these things are happening with the pipelines and the roads and such, regardless of India trying to engage Burma. If you think in the short-term perhaps you can say, "Well, we need to compete with China there." But I do not see India as ever successfully competing with China in Burma under any circumstances.

China can always go deeper in the gutter - can go deeper and do whatever it takes. India has some interest in democracy, it has some constraints on what it can do, what it is willing to do; even if it tries to go in the gutter, I'm not sure it is being successful. So there is a tension between the realist terms of this short-term strategy of competing with China, which I see is not being very successful, and the longer-term strategy of really getting change there - that

would be the fundamental benefit to Indian interests.

So I tried to make that point in March. It is really in India's interest to get change there and to really concentrate on this. Will it be the short-term tactical approach, or a longer-term approach?

The third question - all these are somewhat related - is as I listened to how Brahma outlines India's policy towards Burma, it does raise a question of how is it different from China's? If you have a different vision, there is a different strategy, how is this engagement approach on the energy sector and such different from China's? How can India stand above that and promote a different vision for how Asia should be ordered and the values upon which Asia should be organized? This I do not quite see. I see where the strategy can be different but not necessarily where the policy is in India's approach.

Coordination

Fourth, the issue of sanctions. I could not agree more with Brahma's last five minutes talking about how sanctions are not sufficient; they haven't done the job. Sanctions alone don't work; engagement hasn't worked, you don't hear a lot of that in East Asia, but maybe more recently you've started to hear it since September, October. In East and South Asia, you used to always hear, "Oh, your sanctions are isolating, they do not work. Cut it out," and of course our response is, "Constructive engagement has not worked either, nothing has worked." You need some kind of mixing of the two, a calibrated, coordinated approach. This seems to me the right approach, the necessary approach. Obviously, it takes time, and how we do this is the issue. It is a clear area for U.S.-

India cooperation and a clear area for U.S.-India-Japan cooperation and a clear area potentially for U.S.-India-Japan and maybe others in Southeast Asia.

Isolation of China's Position

China is the one outlier. When I was in China in the spring as well, I raised the Burma issue. Of course, anytime before September, October, you raised it with China and they'd say, "What are we doing in Burma?" No one had any idea about Burma; it was not on their radar screen. But the people who did know somewhat, they basically said, "We are not going to change in Burma. We have too many interests, too many things going on." And then I would say, "Well, what if there are others particularly led by ASEAN and the United States, Japan, India, isolating China's position and sort of shining a light on what they are doing there?" "Well, then we may think about it." Because that is the kind of thing that China abhors most, to be isolated.

So as we deal strategically with Burma, or strategically on issues of democracy, is India's approach, which is not very dissimilar from China's - just trying to compete with China on an unlevel playing field - is that strategically viable? And is it where India's foreign policy is going? This is the question I have on that balance between realism and idealism, on values. I see a lot of rhetoric on values. I have not seen it in practice, but I have always believed in American foreign policy that values are realist notions; they do have strategic value. So maybe with that, I'll leave it for commentary.

Chellaney: If I could quickly respond to three specific questions that Derek had. I do not want to disappoint Derek, but I was

not pretending to be speaking on behalf of India. What you had was one view among a billion on Burma and India, but since you have asked me specific questions on Indian foreign policy, let me just give you a little background so that people here understand from where India is coming.

Burned by Idealism

Post-1988, India with missionary zeal cut off all contact with the junta in Burma, and for 10 years, India pursued this foreign policy activism. No contact with the junta, doing things basically that inflamed the junta like giving the Nehru Award, the highest international award of India, to Aung San Suu Kyi. By the time India reversed that policy after a decade, it realized that it had actually lost Burma to China. China had built in those intervening years reconnaissance facilities in the Coco Islands, which was ceded by India - by Nehru - in the 1950s to Burma. So this shift from moral, value-based foreign policy to a realpolitik approach on Burma came after India had burned its hands and feet and did not have much face to show. After a decade of such activism and really burning your interests, then you complain that China has opened a new flank against you in Burma. So what do you do?

So, I think even today, and I think you are very good in your description of the dilemmas Indian foreign policy faces. India has not fully resolved this dilemma between moral values and realism. That dilemma continues to this day; even though everybody will argue in a debate that realism has to be the focus of Indian foreign policy.

Indian Links to Dissidents

But given the fact that India has such close links with the democracy activists - with the movement, now you look at how many top dissidents are based in India, the majority of top dissidents from Burma are sheltered in India. From where do these anti-junta publications come from? The websites are hosted in Indian territory. Just as India has not given up the Tibetan cause and, in fact, remains the seat of the Tibetan government in exile. Despite doing business with Beijing, India remains, I would say, one, if not the most active supporter of the Burmese democracy movement. It remains home to officially 70,000 Burmese refugees - unofficially twice that number - and allows all sorts of anti-junta political activity from its territory despite low-level engagement with the junta.

On your last point, how is Indian policy different from the Chinese policy towards Burma? I think it is different because India does all that. It allows Burmese dissidents to operate from Indian Territory, provides all kinds of material and moral support to the Burmese dissidents. But you are right, as far as the final result is concerned, India has still not managed to recoup its losses in Burma. And despite recent years of efforts to reclaim some ground - there have been some little successes - but there has been a series of major setbacks both on the energy front as well as in the field of building some sort of a political rapport with the junta which is carefully calibrated to promote political reconciliation in Burma as well as to stem the growing Chinese clout. I think India has failed both in persuading the junta to engage Aung San Suu Kyi more honestly, more productively, and it has failed to stem the growing Chinese influence in Burma.

But the question is, should India now give up? The answer is no. Since it has made some progress, I think India can play the role of a facilitator in the final political reconciliation in Burma because there is not any party which can play that role, and India, I think, is well positioned to continue to persist in the face of adversity.

Regime Type, Democratization, and Security

Kupchan: Let me, before we open it up, ask you, Brahma, to stay on this topic for another few minutes, but I want to broaden Derek's question out away from Burma and pose the following issue: we Americans, as you know I'm sure from listening in from the outside, are bedeviled by the question of how important regime type should be in our decisions about foreign policy. What states do we see as allies and what states do we not? Should we be in bed with the Saudis and the Pakistanis and the Russians even though they are not democracies?

And it seems to me that India faces the same question in some ways in spades because of the neighborhood in which you live where there is little liberal democracy to be found. And so I'm wondering whether you could address two specific issues.

One is, do you really want democratization to proceed in a, let's say, a paced fashion in the countries that have a direct bearing on your strategic situation - Pakistan, Russia, China? Or do you think that would create more instability and less security for India in which case you would like a more realist approach?

And secondly, in discussing the vision that you see for security architecture in your part of the world, do you think we are

headed toward a kind of SCO versus a grouping, a security community, an alliance, if you will, of democracies? But why not think about an architecture that cuts across regime type? The Concert of Europe, ASEAN, GCC - all of these have functioned reasonably well as security groupings despite the fact that they included non-democracies. So I'm wondering if you could say just a little bit more about the equation between regime type and security from your perspective.

Chellaney: I think you have hit the nail on the head on a very core issue, which is given the difficult neighborhood that India is in, how does Indian foreign policy fashion a standard on democracy promotion which is principled and consistent and can be applied across the board, in the region at least? How does India promote democracy in Burma but tolerate or do business with a dictator in Pakistan or have an increasingly large business relationship with China?

These are difficult issues, but certainly I think regarding the second part of your question, India's interest very clearly would be better protected through the spread of democracy in its neighborhood. You take the case of Pakistan. Now what we see in Pakistan is a pressure cooker type of society, which has no safety valve of any kind and this kind of pressure cooker is creating more extremism. It is very congenial to the growth of terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism because it lacks a safety valve. The safety valve can only be provided by democracy, by empowering the masses.

Similarly, in Burma, if you want that country to survive as one state without the military in charge, it is very clear that the only way to do that is to empower the masses. Otherwise, that country will not stay as one state. It is too ethnically divided.

I think all across South Asia, and unfortunately, there has been a big retreat of democracy in India's neighborhood with Bangladesh now coming under de facto military rule. But I think overall if you want a more stable South Asia, the only answer lies in the promotion of democracy, in my view, because that will provide stability and a better guarantee of more cooperative relationships between states in the region and less room for mischief by any state.

Kupchan: Let's go to the floor.

Democracy Promotion in Quotidian Foreign Policy

Questioner: It's nice to see you in Washington, Brahma. Let me pursue this a little bit further because the issue of democracy has been at various points described as a great bond between India and United States, and at other times has been described as largely irrelevant in relations between India and the United States, and there is some truth in both.

What you have just described is how you see India's preferences, what kind of neighborhood it would ideally like to live in and I would guess that an awful lot of people would agree with you. But I think the more difficult question for India, and it is one for which Americans have never found a broad and satisfying answer, is what do you do about it and how do you get closer to that ideal? What does a preference for a particular regime type do to your day-to-day foreign policy?

In practice, at the moment, the Indian government is saying as little as it can possibly get away with on Pakistan's political crisis next door, and I think it is wise in doing so. The U.S. has wrestled

with what kind of profile democracy promotion should have and under what circumstances it should become a secondary or an invisible issue in U.S. foreign policy.

Take your logic to the next step and give us at least the beginnings of your answer to these questions. I think the answer is perhaps a bit too much to hope for.

Chellaney: Well, I think that to help democracy or allow democracy to take root, you need to have a flourishing or at least a developed civil society. Now, there are some countries in India's neighborhood which lack any civil society whatsoever. Some, like Pakistan, do have now an increasingly vibrant civil society and where that is the case, it is easy to make the transition from military rule or autocratic rule to full democracy. But I think it is also important to ensure that free and fair elections are held in whichever state elections are called; we've seen too much of the sham variety.

In fact, there is a parallel between Burma and Pakistan, the senior general in Burma, Than Shwe, as if he was emulating General Musharraf in Pakistan, has announced a roadmap to democracy. You will remember the same language from Musharraf's roadmap to democracy. He has also called for a referendum, elections. It all sounds like a parallel to what Pakistan went through or is going through.

So I think that while the international community has to play a role, it has to ensure that the roadmap to democracy is a real one; it is not a sham, and that you are not trying to allow a dictator to retain power with a civilian mask, which, unfortunately, seems to be the general belief that in Pakistan, if this country is to

hold together, then we have to allow President Musharraf to stay on in office and have a veneer of democracy in existence. But actually, if Pakistan is to become stable and moderate and is to begin the process of deradicalizing itself, it is important to demilitarize its polity, to get the military to go back to the barracks. Only then will you have a stable, moderate Pakistan emerge.

Similarly I think in Burma, if you're going to have the junta in power, you will not see a stable Burma emerge. It's one thing to expect the military to play a healthful role from outside, to assist a civilian-led government in Burma, as Aung San Suu Kyi is willing to accept, but it's another for the military to actually run the government.

And having the military run the show, directly or indirectly, indirectly like in Bangladesh, maybe in the interim in Bangladesh we have averted chaos, but by and by we will face the same problems in Bangladesh. Because Bangladesh was a country where civil society was growing. And now with the creation of de facto military rule, you have the reverse process in motion.

So, to sum up, I think that it's very important for the rest of the world to encourage the development of a robust civil society in every country, because in no country where there is a robust civil society has the state become dysfunctional.

Bangladesh, BIMSTEC, and Lentils

Questioner: You've talked of Burma as a back door to China, perhaps a back door to India is Bangladesh, and the non-cooperation of Bangladesh with India's initiatives has been a major factor in the Indian approach to Burma. So would you

comment a bit about Bangladesh in Indo-Burmese relations?

Secondly, we have an architecture, BIMSTEC, which nobody has brought up, and would you comment on where BIMSTEC is and what is the future for BIMSTEC?

Let me throw in a third question. India imports ten percent of its lentils from Burma. So there's an agricultural aspect, more than energy and geopolitics, to Indo-Burmese relations. So would you also comment on the non-geopolitical, non-energy sources of convergence of interests. Thank you.

Chellaney: Actually the percentage of lentils that India imports from Burma has gone up to fifty percent, and given the fact that lentils are the main protein intake for vegetarians, who constitute more than half of India's population, Burma is becoming very important for the nutritional upkeep of Indians.

But on a more serious note, I think Bangladesh, Burma, northeast India: this is one region. The creation of political borders upset an integrated economic structure in this region. Unless you integrate Bangladesh, Burma, and the northeast of India together, you will not really develop these areas. It's very important therefore, and I think the BIMSTEC concept is good, but BIMSTEC has remained at the level of an idea. Integrating regional states, allowing free commerce, free transport and movement of people and trade, is something we have to work toward. Today, of course, we have problems with insurgents, we have problems with the junta in Burma, and certainly we have problems internally in Bangladesh, but the final road map has to be integration of the northeast of

India with Bangladesh and with Burma so that we have one vibrant region which is booming economically, and it can only boom economically if it is integrated.

Sino-Indian Collaboration in Burma?

Questioner: I'd like to ask the same question that I asked the other night at the World Affairs Council, where Derek and Priscilla Clapp were on the panel, but I'd like to see the Indian and Chinese response. The common view in the West is, and the title of this forum is the competition between China and India over Myanmar, but the fact is that there are tremendous developments between China and India, there is growing collaboration in many areas, military, economic, and so forth, and in fact many people there view Myanmar as a key area of collaboration, not of conflict. The building of the road, the Burma road, there are competitions over energy of course, but in fact one of the subjects of discussion this past week when Manmohan Singh was in Beijing was collaboration on Myanmar. And many people there I know view this from the opposite view from the U.S. and the British, which is in fact that the British and the American preoccupation and demonization of Myanmar has more to do not with human rights in Myanmar but more to do with their not wanting to see China and India and Russia collaborate, that the British don't like the SCO, and especially in the context of the global financial crisis we're in, the whole policy they view as a destabilization policy against them. So I'd like to see how you respond to that.

Pei: I find it hard to believe that the Brits and the Americans imposed sanctions on Burma and put pressure on Burma because they do not want China and India to work closely over Burma. In the Chinese press

and based on my knowledge of what the Chinese thinking over Burma is, this is not factual.

Chellaney: Well, you know, on collaboration between China and India in Burma, I have not seen any evidence of that. What I see is something to the contrary. I'll give you one example of how India and China are competing within Burma in a very salient way.

The Chinese are now building a 1,500-kilometer road that will link up with India's Arunachal Pradesh state, which they claim is Chinese territory. So to meet that threat, India just announced about two weeks ago that it will build a road to Sittwe port and also redevelop Sittwe. This is to counter the road that the Chinese are building in parallel.

So this is just one example of how the two are competing within Burma, but India is a much smaller player as Derek mentioned. India has not really managed to reap the real dividends from engagement with Burma. It lost out even on the two offshore gas fields which are 30 percent owned by Indian companies and yet the Burmese took India by surprise, but this was more a reward for the Chinese veto of the U.N. resolution in January 2007. So they had to provide a reward to Beijing so they decided to sell the gas from the partly Indian-owned gas fields to China.

So despite those setbacks, India is now at a very modest level trying to compete with China and trying to ensure that the implications of certain Chinese projects which are antithetical to India's strategic and military interests are moderated through rival projects that India is launching or seeking to launch.

Questioner: I know more about Burma than I do about China or India, but I would like to make just a few comments. I'm fascinated by what you are saying today and I agree with most of it I must say on a larger scale, but there are certain things or misconceptions that seem to be in your minds when you talk about Burma.

One-Man Rule

First of all, this military regime right now has sort of become a one-man rule more along the lines of Ne Win than it was. Ten years ago, it was a committee rule, but now it is much more ruled by one man - this one man is quite erratic and unrealistic and delusional in many of the things he does but he has tremendous influence over the way decisions are made. He makes the decisions.

Indian Myths about the Chinese Presence?

And if you are sitting in Burma looking at the question of Indian-Chinese competition or activity in Burma, it looks very different from what you are saying. First of all, all of these things that get discussed in the press like the pipeline and the road and the surveillance facilities on the Coco Islands are not real - they do not exist. There is a lot of talk right now. Yes, it looks like some deals have been agreed to, but there is nothing there yet. There is some work going on in some ports. There are no big Chinese bases in the Coco Islands like the Indians say. I mean there is a lot of exaggeration and the Burmese generals are very wary of China. They fought China during the period of the Cultural Revolution. Mao Zedong and the Chinese government were supporting the insurgent forces that controlled 40 percent of Burma against the democratic government, well, and then Ne Win later. Anyway, I just wanted to say

that there are some things that we have to bear in mind that have to do with the realities inside Burma. Sorry to take so much time.

Mitchell: This goes to my answer the other night, it was basically along these lines in the sense that I think the Burmese are very, very willing to have the Americans engaged and involved there. They do not want to have to deal with China but, yes, the isolation strategy and such means they have to turn to whoever they can turn to and that happens to be the Chinese. They do not particularly like it, but they have to deal with it because that helps them to stay in power. But this is the situation we find ourselves in for better for worse through our policy, but I have to echo, though, the idea that China and India are not their ideal partners and players in this country, in Burma, so they're certainly partners of last resort given the situation.

Chellaney: Very briefly, well, I agree with you that it is more of a one-man dictatorship led by Than Shwe than a real junta. I also agree with you that several of the things that the press talks about don't exist, and some of these things may be happening or they are happening at a very insipid level. But some things have happened. There is no Chinese naval base in the Coco Islands, but they have a Chinese listening post. And if you wish, I can send you by e-mail pictures of these big antennas on Great Coco Island. They have a full fledged station operating for more than - since the 1990s.

But you are right, some of these port projects have not taken off, but they will take off very soon. Some things are happening very fast. For example, you take the energy pipeline that PetroChina is building. This was announced only a few

months ago, and work is going on in full earnest. That pipeline will be complete in less than a year.

Burma and Iran

Questioner: I just want — I will not open a whole new chapter, I just want to make a little comment about what you said about Burma and Iran, speaking of the two countries at the same level referring to what Dr. Kupchan said earlier regarding whether or not the type of government should be a determining factor when it comes to policy. A lot of times, we see countries in the region with terrible records who pay merely lip service, and I mean that. They have policies that go counter to the vital interests of the United States, but just because they pay lip service and just because they appear subservient, they are put in the good guys' list, and countries like Iran who have been, as I said I do not want to get into the details of issues, but countries like Iran whose policies have been in line and globally should be respected and honored, and you look at the history, you look at its conflicts with the Taliban, you look at Iran's history of having conflicts with Saddam and how reasonable Iran was. All the time, it was portrayed in a dark light, even during the war with Iraq. Then I would - I mean, I expect the public, the fact that there is no relationship between the two countries. I understand that the public has no knowledge of what is going on. But for experts, it kind of baffles me if they make that kind of comparison. I'm sorry.

Chellaney: But I did not compare Burma with Iran. And I'm cognizant of the big differences between Burma and Iran. I had no intention of comparing Iran with Burma.

Rationale for China's Burma Policy

Questioner: Some of the discussions here leave me with the impression that China has a very concrete strategic interest in Burma and its policy is based on that strategic interest. But when we look at it closely, China-Burma trade is less than 0.5 percent of China's total, China does not receive any gas right now, and even if we go by the 2020 projection of Burmese gas exports to China, it will satisfy less than 1 percent and probably like 0.5 percent of China's energy needs.

From the defense perspective, China has not transferred any strategic weapons to Burma, and the rumor about the port and listening post and the radar base was clarified in 2003 when Burmese intelligence let Indian intelligence fly a surveillance plane over the Coco Islands and Indian intelligence confirmed that there was not a Chinese base.

So, my question is if we do not see any substantial evidence of this strategic interest in terms of trade, in terms of defense, in terms of energy, how can we explain China's policy on Burma? Maybe China's policy on Burma came from somewhere else, like China's perspective on Taiwan, a policy to deal with other countries by telling them not to interfere in somebody else's affairs, this kind of thing as basic principles.

Mitchell: Yes, I think there are many things to say. First of all, I think China's interest is about the fact that Burma is a neighbor. I mean they are trying to make sure that they have good relations with all their neighbors and there is a stable situation. They also have intense interests in resources, and whether it may be a small percentage, it is still vital for the

development of its west - what they are trying to develop in Burma through pipelines and other trade.

There are cross border problems. I mean Yunnan Province itself has its own foreign policy with Burma and they are engaging on a bilateral basis and this is, you know, there is AIDS, there are refugees, all kinds of problems. They want to have a stable situation on their border, particularly in Burma.

You also have the opportunism. I mean, this is, yes, the fact that we are isolating or not dealing with them, China sees an opportunity to get strategic advantage in there, to have a special relationship, to have access to the Indian Ocean, to have access in their west and a buffer in essence that is not dominated by potentially hostile forces. They get what they can out of it.

So there are a number of things. I agree with you that it may not be as critical for China's strategic interest as, say, North Korea. And I always saw that as an opportunity for us to engage China, to try to find a way to partner on finding a mutually satisfactory - and when I say mutually, I also mean in the Burmese interest - means of change, of political reform, because it is not as critical and fundamental to them as maybe some other issues are. But this is the type of thing, as Brahma suggests, we ought to be testing both on U.S.-India and also broadly in the region to coordinate and calibrate an approach.

But I have to say, even though it is not very important to China, all this stuff is very important to Burma. Again, so you said there are no strategic weapons and the weapons they do send are very useful for their purposes inside Burma to keep the population down. The economic

relationship is also critical for them; the political relationship is very critical to Burma, so there is an imbalance in that sense that concerns those of us on the outside.

Pei: Let me just add a few words to that. Based on Chinese foreign policy strategy, it always wants to have neighbors that are friendly, that are not hostile to China - that's its top priority. So Burma in that sense is almost like a client state.

But if China cannot have Burma, it will have to deny Burma to another big power; so that is the second order, denial. If China cannot have it, nobody else can have it.

And the third strategic objective is what I call "neutralization." If nobody can have it, and China cannot have it, that country should not be a threat to China in any way either by its own capabilities or by its lack of state capacity. For example, if Burma descends into chaos, then that would be a huge concern for China.

The Name Question

Questioner: I have a simple question about the name of the country that we are talking about. I have heard Burma a lot and Myanmar very little, and I'm wondering if there is any hope of pushing this government along the road to democracy. How does it help to call the country "Burma" all the time especially when they have gone through and followed the international norms and have gotten the United Nations to accept the name of the country as "Myanmar"?

Chellaney: I'm glad that you raised that question. It is not such a simple issue. The name was changed by the military regime in '89. The name change is not

objectionable in itself because "Burma" was a corruption of "Myanmar" in the first place and the junta is seeking to return to the old name and seeking to do so on the nationalistic plank that it has done so. Yet, the fact is that if you accept the name change and changing the name of a country, that has a lot of symbolic importance.

Take the case of Sri Lanka: it went from Ceylon to Sri Lanka. They gave it a very Sinhalese name and that name change was one very critical factor in instigating the civil war in Sri Lanka. It gave the impression to the minority Tamils that they were not part of the state.

The Burmese dissidents and the Burmese democracy movement, in general, including Aung San Suu Kyi uses the name "Burma." So if you use the name "Myanmar," you are legitimizing the action of an illegitimate government in Burma. So I, as a rule, always use the word "Burma," and even though for example in India, like it is tradition now even in the American press except for the *Washington Post*, all other newspapers in the U.S. use name "Myanmar." But when I write an op-ed in an Indian paper on Burma I contribute that op-ed on the condition that the newspaper will not change the name from "Burma" to "Myanmar" because I think name change is something that is very important. It is a name change that we should accept only under a democratically elected government in Burma.

Mitchell: I would just say this is a kind of mini sanction. This is a sort of individual sanction that people put on Burma, on the junta, by calling it "Burma." Two quick sort of anecdotes.

One is, when I worked in the Pentagon, I was a representative to the ASEAN

Regional Forum, which has 27 nations including Burma, and the United States, of course, was the only one around the table who kept saying, “Burma, Burma, Burma,” and the only time that the Burmese representative would speak up was to say, “Our name is Myanmar,” and then he put his thing down, that is all he would ever, ever say. “Is there a rose by any other name,” and then he put his thing down and then we would say, “Okay, Burma,” and we’d move on. It is our little way we, the State Department and officialdom and others, have of jabbing them.

Secondly - a little mini plug - I had a piece that I co-wrote on Burma recently in *Foreign Affairs*. We almost pulled the piece because *Foreign Affairs* said it has to be “Myanmar.” And my co-author and I went back and forth with the editors and, I probably shouldn’t say this publicly to embarrass them, but we said, “No, we will not have anything in our name that has Myanmar in it,” and we kind of came to a semi-resolution by putting a footnote at the bottom saying the authors disagree and stuff like that, and we had talked to people and figured it is better get this thing out there. This was really back and forth over about two weeks. I got a phone call a week later from one of the editors and he said, “Well, in the same edition, we have John McCain writing a piece and Nick Burns of the State Department writing a piece, both of which will not use or “Myanmar.” So you are safe.” And he said it was the biggest headache he had to deal with in years. And of course, that tells me that the only way to push authoritarian regimes is to use authoritarian powers, or bigger powers like McCain and Burns, but anyway, this was a big issue. It almost led to a little bit of a crisis there with our piece.

Kupchan: Did you want to say something about the country in question?

Questioner: It is actually the official U.S. government position to call it “Burma,” and also the official British position. I believe the Australian government may also take that position for the reasons that Brahma said.

But there is another distinction, if you go back into Burmese lore, the Myanmars, that was the name of tribe that came down originally from Tibet and eventually pulled all of the other tribes together and that was always the written name of the country. But they came to call themselves “Bama” in the spoken language and today they still call themselves “Bama.” That is the Burmese ethnic group in the country.

So when the military took the name back to “Myanmar” and tried to make that not only the written but the spoken name of the country, it had some negative connotations for the other ethnic nationalities in the country, that is, that they were trying to impose their own ethnic nationality on the rest of the country. So there is also that overlay in addition to the political and democracy question, and it is very, very tricky inside the country.

Stability and Multilateralism

Questioner: Derek and Minxin both mentioned two things I think that are critical in this discussion: stability and Chinese interests. And I think that what we are finding and in particular, Brahma, your comments in the beginning of your talk sound very pessimistic about the 21st century. You started out saying the U.S. is no longer policing the Asian continent, which I think is probably not a bad idea but I’m wondering who will be. But the

question is, I think, more in terms of parallels. Well, let's say similarities, not parallels, with North Korea, where China has finally gotten to the point where they feel that their next-door neighbor in the Korean Peninsula is perhaps a problem that needs to be resolved. And I think this lack of stability - the long-term stability as another questioner said - the junta in Burma is run by one man, essentially, at this point, Than Shwe. When he dies, what is the source of stability going to be? Is it going to continue? Maybe it will, but I think in the long term, both in Burma in terms of the government structure, but also in terms of Northeast India, Bangladesh, et cetera, if it continues as it is, I think it is going to be less than 20 years before people come to fisticuffs up there. And I think that hopefully, maybe there is a possibility of a five-party conference or something in Southeast Asia: India, China, Burma, ASEAN, Japan maybe, maybe the U.S. as well. But, you know, we have kind of taken ourselves out of the game at this point with sanctions, but I think perhaps there could be a meeting of the minds when people realize that the present situation is anything but stable.

Mitchell: I actually agree with that. One of our conclusions in the *Foreign Affairs* piece was the idea of a six-party or a regional process. No one has mentioned Gambari and his approach in the U.N. I do not think that is sufficient; I do not think that is going to go anywhere. It is a U.N., lowest common denominator thing. There has to be someone driving this. We proposed the U.S. to take the lead on this. We are an outsider; we may not be the right ones, but more taking the lead in trying to get ASEAN to take the lead, trying to encourage those folks, which is a tall order.

All this is much easier said than done, but the idea that this is a common interest for stability in Burma, that there is an international component to this. That what happens in there has external effects, that you cannot have a pure non-interference policy, pure sovereignty, because it is going to have an impact, and you cannot sort of close your eyes and say, "Well, we will take care of it later."

So I think we have common interest in this. The key is getting someone to step up and others to step up and say, "This is worth it for these reasons." The issue of having civil society in the country is again an ideal. It would be great to build step-by-step civil society and through engagement et cetera. First of all, it takes a lot of time, Burma has already lost generations and, you know, we can go through what they have lost. And secondly, there is just no space for it right now. You can help on health, maybe, or drugs, but to build civil society, you do not want things to crash quickly, but more likely than not it may happen in a way that we cannot control and we ought to be preparing for that in a coordinated, calibrated multinational fashion.

Sri Lanka, Lentils, and Why Burma is Important

Questioner: I would like to ask since you mentioned - this is not Burma but Sri Lanka - there was no mention in connection with the question about the name, the appalling carnage in Sri Lanka and you are mentioning, as an Indian, the factor that the name change had, which in part would be a part of the reason for the carnage. Could you explain where India has stood since the name change with regard to not using Ceylon but bending over and saying Sri Lanka, which you have said yourself?

Chellaney: Thank you. India is a very liberal state; it accepts anything that states around it do. So, for example, India calls Burma “Myanmar,” and it began calling Ceylon “Sri Lanka” from the day it changed officially to Sri Lanka - that was way back in I think 1972. Others might know better on Sri Lanka, but I think the point was made here that this name change even in relation to Burma has important ethnic connotations, which is also another factor that we need to bear in mind.

Kupchan: I’m going to collect a few final questions, and then we will come back to the panelists for a few closing remarks.

Questioner: Very short question. I was struck and I think others were struck by the lentils statistic. You mentioned the fact that half of India’s lentil imports were from Burma. My question is how much of the local consumption is actually imported, because this makes a difference if you have a lot of local production.

Questioner: Well, I was just going to comment that in Hindi, Ceylon was always Lanka, Sri Lanka, so there is a long tradition of being called Lanka.

Kupchan: And we will take a final question from - did you want to jump in on that?

Questioner: As long as we are doing nomenclature trivia, you are a Sindhi from India, I’m an American who studied Hindi and Sinhalese, and I was told by the embassy’s Tamil tutor that the normal way of referring to the country among Tamils, was Lankava. So the issue was “Sri” which is holy in most of the Sanskrit languages.

Kupchan: We will take one final intervention from the gentlemen there.

Questioner: My question was related to just Burma. I’m not too sure if you discussed this earlier, I was not around, but I just wanted to ask. My question was why is Burma so important? I mean, why is it so consequential not just for India - okay, for India and China, yes, but why is it so consequential for some Western power like the United States? I mean it is totally irrelevant what the interests of the United States are in Burma. It is like India’s views on American views vis-à-vis, say, Nicaragua or Honduras or something like that. It just does not make a difference. I mean, we should just be competing with each other - the Chinese and the Indians. I’m an Indian so I just wonder why Burma matters to the U.S.

Kupchan: We will take some final remarks from all three of our panelists. Why don’t we go Derek, Minxin and then Brahma can close this off.

Mitchell: Before we hear Brahma on Nicaragua and Honduras, which I really want to hear actually. No, I mean, as I said in my remarks, this is what I get when I go to India, “Why do you care? Stay out of it,” which is legitimate and I think many other countries probably say the same thing to Americans, “Stay out of it,” but Burma, for Americans, this is the whole background of America. We do care about human rights; we do care about democracy; and we do have, values make a difference, you know, we are founded on an idea - the idea of democracy. And we are not perfect in our own implementation, we are not perfect in our foreign policy of democracy, but it does appeal to an American sensibility when you have, on the one hand, a Nobel Peace Prize-winning woman with perfect British English and monks in the streets being shot down in cold blood versus the SLORC - a junta named SLORC

or the SPDC, which is their newer name. It is a pretty easy one, so it does appeal to American sensibilities and there are obvious health and refugee and potential strategic interests there as well, but the reason why it does not get more attention in the United States, you are asking that question, too. It does not get a lot of attention; it is left largely to NGOs. You will get people in this room who gnash their teeth - from the State Department - at how they could not control the policy because it was done in Congress, driven by NGOs, controlled by sanctions. And so we do not have the flexibility that we need, and I think now hopefully we can get it. But it will remain - I hope it remains - an issue the U.S. cares about, and as I suggest, it has strategic interests even for India and others.

Pei: This issue has been adopted by certain American groups, and once it is adopted, it is there. It is going to be on the table. And secondly, even for the U.S. at the grand strategic level, it cares because it affects two very important regional countries - India and China, and so the U.S. has to pay attention.

Chellaney: First on the question of lentils.

Pei: I have to have lentils tonight.

Chellaney: India's domestic production has been declining, and therefore the imports have been growing. Now, India only grows half of what it consumes in terms of lentils, so the other half is imported and of that 50 percent comes from Burma alone. This is the figure for 2007, so Burma is supplying 25 percent of the entire Indian consumption of lentils.

In addition to Derek's, three more points on why Burma is important. One, it is the largest country in Southeast Asia - people

tend to forget that. Two, it is a very resource-rich country. Three, it is a land bridge between Southeast Asia and Southern Asia. So if it were to be a normal state, imagine the potential - economically and politically - in bridging Southeast Asia and South Asia. Fourth, but for its poisoned politics and its deep internal fault lines, Burma has the potential to be the most prosperous state in the region. So given those realities and given its strategic importance, I think it deserves the attention it gets internationally.

Kupchan: Let me close by thanking the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for bringing us all together this evening and a special thanks to Brahma, to Minxin, and to Derek for a very enlightening discussion. Thank you.