

Visit to the People's Republic of China (PRC) by a USI Delegation : A Report

Major General YK Gera (Retd)*

Background

A four member USI delegation visited China from 26 June 2011 to 02 July 2011 in pursuance of ongoing annual bilateral dialogue with China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CIISS) Beijing. This year, in addition, the delegation interacted with the PLA National Defense University (NDU) on 28 June 2011 and Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS), Shanghai on 30 June 2011. The aim of bilateral dialogue is to exchange views and understand as to how each country looks at the contemporary issues driving the international agenda and the long term perspective of the global, regional and sub-regional developments.

Indian Participants

The Indian delegation comprised:-

- (a) Major General YK Gera (Retired), a former Chief Signal Officer, Central Command and Consultant (Research), USI of India - Delegation Leader.
- (b) Lieutenant General PC Katoch, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SC (Retired), a former Director General Information Systems, and a Member of USI Council.
- (c) Major General SV Thapliyal, SM (Retired), a former GOC of an infantry division, and a Member of USI Council.
- (d) Dr Srikanth Kondapalli, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and a Member of USI Board of Management, Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3).

Interaction at PLA Defence Headquarters

On 28 June 2011, the Delegation called on General Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff and Chairman of the CIISS and Member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Interaction lasted for an hour or so. General Ma Xiaotian welcomed the Delegation and traced the history of interaction between the two Institutions since 1992. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere and issues of mutual concern were discussed. General Ma mentioned that the CIISS had received the invitation to participate in the USI National Security Seminar on "Peace and Stability in the Asia-Pacific Region : An Assessment of the Security Architecture" scheduled for 17-18 Nov 2011. The CIISS would participate and should he be in Delhi at that time he too, would participate.

Interaction at PLA National Defense University (NDU)

The Chinese NDU is administered by the PLA. It is the highest educational institution for military education in China. It was set-up in 1985 with the merger of parts of the PLA Military Academy, PLA Political Academy and PLA Logistics Academy. It is claimed to be China's equivalent of "West Point".

For interaction, NDU team comprised four officers from the Strategic Affairs Department - Maj Gen Xue Guo'an, Col Han Xudong, Col Yang Yacai and Lt Col Zhao Jingfang. A presentation on the role, organisation and types of courses run at the NDU was made to the Delegation by Maj Gen Xue Guo'an. Separate Courses are conducted for the Armed Forces officers of the level of corps commanders and civilian government officials of the level of deputy governors and governors connected with national defence. For officers from foreign countries separate courses are conducted on as required basis. Duration of courses is generally one to two months. Strategic studies, operational art, information technology, armament technology and logistics are covered during the course. As far as political aspect is concerned stress is laid on Marxism and other political work.

The University is headed by a PLA officer on active service generally from the PLA Army. The political advice is currently rendered by an officer of the Air Force of the rank of Air Marshal. The teaching faculty comprises guest speakers who are experts in the field. In addition, basic Directing Staff is also posted to the NDU.

Seminar at the CIISS

Chinese Participation

A seminar was held at the CIISS commencing at 0900 hrs on 29 June 2011. The Chinese participants included Maj Gen Liu Pei (Retd), Vice Chairman CIISS, Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo, Maj Gen Sun Peide (Retd), Maj Gen Cai Jihua (Retd), Maj Gen Li Mengyan (Retd), Mr Jin Youguo, Mr Wang Chaunjing, Mr Jiang Zhenxi, Mr Hu Yumin and Mr Zhu Jie amongst others.

Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, Maj Gen YK Gera (Retd) highlighted that the aim of bilateral interaction at the CIISS was to discuss contemporary issues and to promote mutual understanding and co-operation. To acquaint the audience, a short presentation of the role, charter, organisation and main activities of the USI was made. This was followed by deliberations on the necessity for Regional Co-operation. Problems affecting most nations today are: multifaceted terrorism, sea piracy, money laundering, drug trafficking, natural disasters, climate change, environmental degradation, health pandemics and so on. These problems are generally beyond the capability of a single nation to resolve and call for genuine cooperation between nations. Certain problems are best resolved regionally by pooling in expertise, resources, information and intelligence. With problems now taking on a formidable and in certain cases a sinister dimension, like piracy in Somalian waters, sky rocketing oil prices, WMD proliferation, nuclear terrorism,

Fukushima nuclear power plant meltdown and so on, a re-look has become imperative. Their adverse fall out will affect more than one nation and perhaps the entire region. Thus, it is incumbent upon all those who are part of a regional entity to resolve all such issues in a spirit of sincere cooperation beyond narrow partisan interests.

Developments in Afghanistan have brought NATO to our door step and Pakistan has become a major non-NATO ally of the United States of America. The US - India relations, though not very close, have acquired a certain degree of salience because of some shared values. It is also very evident that India will not allow itself to be used in any strategy of containment. In any case, the USA and China remain deeply engaged economically despite occasional political rhetoric.

What is of particular interest and concern to India is China's strategic involvement with Pakistan for the last five decades or so, especially in the areas of non-peaceful uses of nuclear technology and support in their military infrastructure development. China has shown anxiety over rising incidence of terrorism in Pakistan, especially in connection with Chinese workers. In the contemporary world, terrorism is one factor which unites us all. The experience in Afghanistan teaches us that encouragement of *jihād* in a neighbouring country would eventually boomerang. The proposed US pullout beginning July 2011 may pose new challenges of regional cooperation.

The Chinese response was cautious and left out issues of discord. It was suggested by the Chinese speakers that India and China ought to reduce trade dependence on the USA and strive for global stability amongst crucial stakeholders - the USA, Russia, China, India and Japan. Deng Xiaoping's 1980 statement on Indian and Chinese development pattern crucial for Asian Century was quoted, "India as the office and China as the factory in the IT sector". Yet, some speakers insisted on cooperation between China and India at the South Asian / Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) levels, instead of Asian, regional or global levels. Regarding withdrawal of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan, Chinese scholars stated that it would adversely affect regional security situation, although the US would not leave Afghanistan without creating a viable security mechanism.

Security Architecture in Asia

The Seminar had two sessions in all. Session I was chaired by Maj Gen Liu Pei and Session II by Maj Gen YK Gera. The proceedings started with opening remarks by Maj Gen Liu Pei. The first paper on "*The Newly Developed Situation and Security Architecture in Asia*" was presented by Dr Shrikant Kondapalli. It was followed by a paper on the same subject by Mr Jin Youguo of the CISS. The standard of papers was very good and discussion that followed was brief due to paucity of time. Important points covered are contained in the subsequent paragraphs.

A majority of the 43 Asian countries are today faced with a number of new security challenges, in addition to the lingering presence of historical problems. As relatively new modern nation states, these countries were pre-occupied for some time with the protection of their respective sovereignty and territorial integrity as they embarked on enhancing their peoples' prosperity and well being. They are now faced with several new security challenges - mainly in the non-traditional security aspects such as terrorism in different forms, rising food and energy prices, water scarcity, environmental issues, disruption to the international commerce and energy imports through increased piracy. A second bout of debilitating international financial crisis has enhanced advanced western countries' efforts at trade protectionism and resource competition among developing countries. Fukushima nuclear power plant meltdown has confounded the issue at a time when several countries were expanding their plans for the construction of more nuclear power plants.

Despite a spate of new challenges to the security of Asia, traditional threats continued. This is reflected in the higher defence outlays and fresh acquisitions by a number of countries in the region, development of ballistic missile shields and territorial conflicts. WMD proliferation, Cheonan sinking and Yongpyeong firings further added tension in the region. These reflect growing security dilemmas in the region and call for comprehensive, inclusive and effective security mechanisms in Asia which lacks such a mechanism so far.

Efforts for evolving Security Mechanisms in Asia without tangible results include - Asian Relations Conference organised by India in 1946; 27 member Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1954; transformation of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in the 1990s with addition of China, Japan, South Korea, India and others; Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and initiation of Six Party talks on denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Economic and trade issues are being addressed by organisations such as G-20, Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation, Asia-Europe Meeting, Russia-China-India trilateral dialogues; Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa; Tuman River Delta grouping with Korea, Mongolia and Japan; Bo Ao Forum, the Mekong River projects and so on. The Jakarta International Defense Dialogue includes participation by military experts, academics and policy makers from 34 countries including China, the USA and Russia. In March 2011 session, issues discussed included Korean Peninsula, Libya, Somalia, disasters in Japan, oil prices and refugees. The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) succeeded in creating "Nuclear Weapons Free Zone" in Central Asia. No single security architecture exists in Asia that could effectively address diverse challenges. As rising countries in Asia; China, Japan and India have a responsibility to provide initiatives in this regard.

Challenges in Maritime Security

Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo presented a paper on "Challenges in Maritime Security". This was followed by a presentation by Lieutenant General PC Katoch (Retd) on the same subject. Important points covered were as under:-

(a) A holistic view of the maritime security challenges is not being taken. The US aims to maximise sea control and the US dominance has weakened the region, even as the US is manipulating strategic alliances against China. China and India both want a multi-polar world as multi-polarity will improve the situation in the region. Protection of Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) is not within the defence capability of a single country. The authority to deal with maritime security should be the UN and not the USA. Cooperation between China and India will deter western countries from resorting to the use of force in this region.

(b) The USA wants to change political systems and values by force. China has no intent to impose its own political system on others. China is concerned about her national integrity and sovereignty in the context of Taiwan. The sea is very important as 90 per cent volume of China's trade is by sea. 60 per cent of China's population is along the eastern coast, which will go up to 70 per cent by the year 2030. By 2030, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is likely to touch \$ 13 trillion. China is sensitive to her national interests in the 1500 kms Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). China is looking to resolve the disputes with neighbouring countries, as proclaimed by President Hu. Some treat maritime security as diplomatic jargon but it is actually a core concept. China is opposed to hegemony of the US / western powers and use of force since everyone has a right to develop its fair share of sea resources. The UN needs to have an international legislative system to streamline the use of seas. There have been talks of China's increased defence budget but China has no offensive plans. For maritime cooperation, cooperative mechanisms should be established in North East Asia and South East Asia on the lines of ASEAN. The region requires multilateral cooperation, like active cooperation in the Gulf Region, under the UN.

The following points emerged from the discussion on 'Challenges in Maritime Security':-

(a) Both India and China face maritime security challenges - India more with increasing China-Pakistan nexus including continuing Chinese support to Pakistan's *jihād* against India, enhanced Chinese influence on account of impending US withdrawal from Afghanistan and Chinese ambitions in the IOR.

(b) Increased Chinese presence in IOR is inevitable. Though Chinese stance is that they do not believe in force, they have done quite the opposite on numerous occasions in South China Sea against her neighbours especially, arbitrarily extending her EEZ. China can be expected to use force in areas other than the South China Sea as well, if she perceives it in her national interest.

Challenges of Global Counter Terrorism

Major General SV Thapliyal (Retd) presented a paper on "The Present Situation and Challenges of Global Counter Terrorism". This was followed by a presentation by Mr Wang Chuanjing of CISS on the same subject. Important aspects covered were as under:-

(a) Terrorism is a global problem and epicentre of all terrorism is Pakistan. Tackling terrorism needs a global effort. There is need for regional intelligence centres in all affected countries connected to each other for intelligence sharing. The most worrisome today are cyber terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism.

(b) With respect to WMD terrorism, need is to concentrate on biological, chemical and radiological terrorism. Nuclear terrorism is a remote possibility. Terrorism has prompted countries to take unilateral actions thereby rendering the UN to a status of helpless bystander. Terrorism has caused a slump in economic activity. Military budgets are increasing year after year. There is a need to combat terrorism in all its manifestations.

(c) To counter WMD terrorism, access must be denied to the terrorists to material, expertise and other enabling capabilities.

Salient features of the response by the Chinese scholars were as under:-

(a) Terrorism is certainly a global menace. The Chinese scholars maintained an ambivalent stance and were not willing to accept that Pakistan is the epicentre of all terrorism. In fact some scholars endorsed the view that Pakistan was doing a good job of tackling terrorism. Islamic terrorism has spread because of poverty. The Arab nations are against the US because no US President gets elected without support of the Jewish Community.

(b) The US withdrawal from Afghanistan can lead to return of terrorism, and both China and India face the threat of increase in terrorism, energy shortages and religious fundamentalism. As an emerging world power, the Chinese appeared unwilling to join global war on terrorism. The Chinese were unwilling to concede that they were a big influence on Pakistan and, therefore, could restrain it. They were not forthcoming regarding their views on what needed to be done once the US and NATO forces pulled out from Afghanistan.

Interaction at SIIS

The Delegation had interaction at SIIS from 0900 to 1100 hrs on 30 June 2011. The SIIS also fielded four participants for discussion. They were - Dr Shao Yuqun, Deputy Director, Centre for South Asia Studies; Dr Wang Weihua, Mr Zhao Gancheng and Mr Liu Zongyi. Mr Yang Jiemin brother of Chinese Minister of External Affairs is the Chairman of the SIIS. Since he was out of station, the Session was conducted by Dr Shao Yuqun the Deputy Director. Maj Gen Liu Pei and Col Jiang Weiqing of the CISS who had accompanied the Delegation from Beijing were also present during the deliberations but they did not participate in discussions.

Contemporary issues such as likely withdrawal of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan and its effect on regional security; need for Sino-Indian co-operation in Afghanistan for economic and infrastructure development; likely future scenarios in Pakistan and Afghanistan and need for instituting appropriate measures to counter international terrorism were discussed. Discussion was frank, free and lively. The Chinese side was quite open and forthcoming during the discussion.

General Impressions

The visit was well conducted, with red carpet laid out. Maj Gen Liu Pei (Retd), Vice Chairman CISS and Col Jiang Weiqing, Senior Research Fellow, CISS accompanied the delegation throughout. The attitude was positive and contentious issues were discussed by both sides calmly. Both sides put across their views with logic and conviction.

The emergence of India's economy is being recognised by China albeit grudgingly, both countries maintaining an annual growth of around 9-10 per cent. At the same time, we should not get carried away by the \$ 60 billion Sino-Indian annual trade, which is heavily skewed in favour of China and small compared to her annual trade of \$150 billion with a country like Germany. Besides, Taiwan is one of the largest trading partners of China and yet China is focused on annexing Taiwan.

The Chinese side was acutely protective of Pakistan / ISI. However, our bringing out the safety of Chinese workers in Pakistan / POK, was well appreciated by them. Simultaneous narrative of double standards of the US against terrorism and the Chinese dealing with Islamic insurgency in Xinjiang only through development, indicated Chinese resolve to continue with the art of ambiguity.

Increased Chinese presence in the IOR appears inevitable, even though their stance is that they do not believe in use of force. They were still referring to Arunachal Pradesh as Southern Tibet and were critical of Dalai Lama's continued stay in India. They were highly critical of Indian media, which they felt was anti China.

The Chinese gave a clear impression that China had already become a global player, and a strong power, and would like to adopt appropriate measures for mapping out China's big power strategy.

***Major General YK Gera (Retd)** is Consultant (Research) at USI. He retired from the Army in April 1993 as CSO Central Command. He was Deputy Director & Editor at USI from Jan 1997-Apr 2007.

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