

VICHAAR, a Panel Discussion on Foreign Policies,
Organized by Informal Discussion Group NLUO

This report captures a one day program of panel discussion and interactive dialogue on India's Foreign Policy which took place on 25th March, 2017 in National Law University Odisha.

The event brought together three eminent personalities Ambassador Lalit Mansingh, Mr. Deba R Mohanty and Professor G.V.C Naidu to address the current geo-political situation of India and also to share their insightful views on China's rise, both economically and militarily, and its efforts to increase its commercial and diplomatic influence throughout Eurasia; India's rise, and its own efforts to work with South and Southeast Asia; and how China's – Pakistan axis threatens India's geopolitical landscape.

The event began with the opening remarks of the panelist and continued with interactive panel discussion. It concluded with the question answers sessions wherein students have posed some mind boggling questions however all the three panelist have answered them satisfactorily.

Opening Speeches

Ambassador Lalit Mansingh

Opening the discussion Ambassador Lalit Mansingh highlighted that China is India's tomorrow threat as it is much ahead of India in military power; it has bigger armed forces, more and better nuclear warheads, also its alliance with Pakistan could prove detrimental for India. One of the most interesting points he made during the discussion was that Pakistan now is devolving into a lesser challenge given that it is a "derived power", that is most of its heft – economic and political – is derived from China. Pakistan has been given military and nuclear arms support by China in the past besides economic support. China also seems to be challenging India at every turn which is worrisome said Mr. Mansingh. The reference was to China blocking an Indian move to gain a seat in the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

The present Government has adopted a more assertive stance towards China, especially over the past two years, forming trilateral partnerships with the US and Japan, with Australia and Japan, and with the US and Australia.

He said that “India has done well in facing recent flux in geo-politics and India’s diplomacy is smart and nibble.”

When asked about impact of President Trump’s policies on India he replied on a positive note that Indo-U.S relationships have survived Democratic and Republican changes. He said that he have full confidence that under the Trump Government, this relationship will continue.

Prof. GVC Naidu

He majorly discussed about the India’s engagement with East Asia through Look East Policy and also the evolution of Look East Policy to Act East Policy. He calls this policy comprehensive and multi-dimensional enclosing in its folds political, strategic and economic aspects. Although this policy has gradually been expanded to the larger East Asian region, ASEAN has remained at the heart of this policy. The Act East policy by the Modi government is an endeavour to further expand and qualitatively upgrade the relationship with East Asia in general and Southeast Asia. The reasons are to increase the connectivity so that India becomes a part of regional economic dynamism and use cultural and other attributes to enhance its potential. He believes that with India’s expanding economic and strategic stakes and profound shifts that East Asia is witnessing, India’s engagement with and involvement in the region will likely to grow rapidly in the coming years which would be beneficial for India’s economic growth as more investment will come and the level of employment will increase.

Mr. Deba R Mohanty

His speech revolved around that India has the potential to become a great power if it could enhance its economic and military power and maintain relative socio political stability.

On why India should possess nuclear arms he said that currently India is facing threats from its two neighbours Pakistan and China who have more and better warheads therefore India has to fasten its nuclear arsenal in such a way that even if it has lower numbers but the sophistication of that arsenal would ensure that India do not go for a nuclear war.

He opined that India can enhance its military production and capability by improving its management and increasing its defense budget.

He noted that maritime security apart from the nuclear and conventional realm has actually graduated to non-conventional realm like sea piracy etc where India has already demonstrated its expertise in managing criminal and sea pirating activities across the coast of Africa.