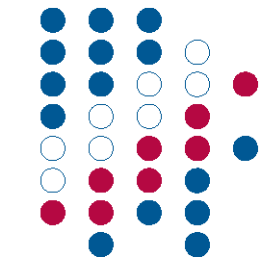

Will India Emerge as an Eastern or Western Power?

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Annual Lecture
Center for the Advanced Study of India
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***Introduction by Dr. Devesh Kapur
(Director, Center for the Advanced Study of India)***

Good evening and welcome. My name is Devesh Kapur, and I'm the director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India. It's a great privilege and pleasure to welcome you all to the Center's annual lecture. Twenty years back, I think it's fair to say that it would have been hard to generate much interest in India; whereas right now, it's hard to dampen some of the hype that surrounds the emergence of India. But I think that it is probably fair to say that the rise of China and India pose some of the most severe challenges that the international system will face, and it is both a great personal privilege and pleasure to have with us Kishore Mahbubani, who will speak on this topic. Before turning it over to Ambassador Mahbubani, we have the chairman of our International Advisory Board, Marshall Bouton, who is the president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. Many of you know him; he was executive vice president of the Asia Society and he is a longtime scholar of India. Welcome, Marshall.

(Applause.)

***Introduction by Dr. Marshall Bouton
(President of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs)***

Thank you. Well, before indulging in the pleasure of introducing my good friend Kishore Mahbubani, I want first to say that on behalf of the entire advisory board for the Center for the Advanced Study of India at the University of Pennsylvania, how pleased we are to have Devesh Kapur as the director of the Center. This is an institution that I believe is unique in our country and that has enormous potential. Its creation and founding was due to the extraordinary vision and energies of Francine Frankel, and it is now in wonderful hands with Devesh's arrival at Penn and his taking on this key role. So I know on behalf of all of us who care about this relationship, we're just thrilled that Devesh is with us now.

I want to take the occasion also to introduce the ambassador of the Republic of India to the United States, Ronen Sen—please stand up for those who don't know you already. Ronen, as you all know, has been a bit busy for the last couple of years, midwifing the reincarnation of the relationship between the United States and India. It has been an extraordinary period as Devesh noted. We all, especially those of us who have been hanging around this relationship for a good while, keep pinching ourselves and asking if this is real because it has gone from strength to strength in its transformation. Not that it is without challenges and potential detours—though we hope not retreats. So that is the subject in part of the talk we will have.

And I also want to introduce Rebecca Bushnell, who is the dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Penn. She has been a wonderful supporter of CASI through this transition; especially we're very grateful to Rebecca for her time and energy.

I've had the privilege and the pleasure of knowing Kishore Mahbubani for at least twenty years, though I know there are others in the audience who have known him a lot longer. This is an extraordinarily rare human being. In the ways that all of you know, he is an extraordinary combination of a gifted diplomat (which is the role in which many of us know him), of an innovative policymaker on behalf of his government and on behalf of the world community in the roles he has played in the United Nations during some very key periods—and this is the rarest part of the combination—a truly original thinker.

Kishore served in the Singapore Foreign Service for twenty-three years. During that period he served twice as permanent representative of Singapore to the United Nations, and during the second of those terms he had particular charge for Singapore's role in the Security Council. He was permanent secretary in the foreign ministry of the government of Singapore from 1993 to 1998, but that's just the bio. He is the author of these extraordinary books that we all know about—his book *Can Asians Think?*, which typically grabs you from the title page, and more recently his book *Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust Between America and the World*. All of this comes together in his mix of extraordinary intellectual curiosity, a true vision for how nations and the international community should conduct themselves in a period of very rapid change, and a great human warmth and ability to relate to people as individuals in very remarkable ways.

I want to tell you a small story that for me has always represented all that I believe about Kishore Mahbubani. Early on in Kishore and my relationship, my wife and I took our two sons to a movie house over on Third Avenue. It was a weekend, and this was before Kishore had met his wife. He was kind of hanging loose in Manhattan, and we found ourselves next to each other in the movie line at this small theatre. We chatted in the line and we went on to the theatre and we sat down together five or six rows back. In front of us there was a group of people who apparently had stayed on from the previous showing of the film. That was fine, no problem, we weren't concerned about that. But for some reason that I never did quite figure out, a couple of the people in this small group in front of us turned around and started saying quite nasty things to my children—they were then maybe fifteen and twelve or something like that. And we had a little bit of a contretemps develop. So after this went on for a few minutes, Kishore leaned forward very quietly and spoke in a tone of voice I couldn't hear to one of the people sitting in front of us and about three minutes later they all got up and left. And I said, "Kishore, what did you do? What brilliant diplomatic phrases did you use? Your powers of persuasion are amazing, because these people were clearly intent on a confrontation with us." He said, "I offered them fifty bucks to leave the theatre." Please welcome Kishore Mahbubani.

(Applause.)

Will India Emerge as an Eastern or Western Power?

Remarks by Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani

I must say, that's a very dangerous start for this evening. I am now tempted to give each of you fifty dollars. But thank you Marshall, for that very generous introduction. Of course, after that it all goes downhill. One can never live up to the kind of billing that Marshall gives to his friends.

There is a tradition in America that you begin a speech with a joke. In Asia unfortunately you begin with apologies. And I actually want to begin with three apologies, and they are quite genuine ones. My first apology is, especially speaking in a place called the Center for the Advanced Study of India in front of all these eminent Indian scholars, that I am not an expert on India. I should be very honest and upfront about that. I visited India, I'm ethnically an Indian, I suppose I qualify as an NRI (nonresident Indian) since my mother was born in India, but I'm not a scholar on India. Before I begin, I must emphasize that. My second apology is for the discomfort that I may cause you all by my comments. When Devesh called me and said he'd like me to speak here, I immediately asked myself what was an interesting topic on which I could speak. The topic I came up with was the question of whether India will emerge as an Eastern or Western Power. I quickly discovered that in addressing this topic I may have to say things which are actually very uncomfortable. So I want to apologize in advance for causing you any discomfort by my comments. The third apology is that I hope that you do not expect a definitive answer to this question from me. I am going to be talking about something that is clearly evolving. I will present my own thoughts frankly on this subject, but this is a work in progress. However, I hope that as a result of the discussion tonight, we can really begin to answer this question more fully.

But even before I begin asking the question, let me first of all address the immediate challenge—that is, whether the question is legitimate enough. Is it fair to ask whether India will emerge as Eastern or Western? Some people say, “Oh, Kishore, of course India will emerge Eastern”; others say, “Of course Western.” My answer is that India is the third great Asian power to emerge. The first was Japan, the second China, and now the third is India. When Japan emerged, it clearly decided that there was only one route to go—it had to join the Western club, and it was very clear about that. China made no pretensions to go in that direction. So another way of phrasing the question is: as India emerges, will it behave more like Japan or more like China?

However, having said that, in trying to answer the question “Will India emerge as an Eastern or Western Power?” I also realize that the many other questions are contained in that one central issue. I have found at least three. The first question is: What is the nature of the era in which we are living today? Is it a Western era or an Eastern era? That is one question I will try to address. The second issue that we can debate is the terms themselves, whether “Western” and “Eastern” are very clearly distinct and separate. The third facet is the nature of Indian civilization. I am going to address these three issues in the hope of answering the larger question of how India will emerge.

Now, let me begin by talking about the current era in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

One way of illustrating where we are today is to compare ourselves with the world one hundred, one hundred and fifty years ago, because that is when Asian societies began to change. Take for example, the environment in which Japan emerged from the Meiji Reformation in 1868. One of the great Meiji reformers was Yukichi Fukuzawa. In trying to explain why Japan had to change he said, “Our immediate policy therefore should be to lose no time in waiting for the enlightenment of our neighboring countries in order to join them in developing Asia, but rather” [and he meant Japan], “we should depart from their ranks and cast our lot with the civilized countries of the West.” He then added, “We should deal with the Asian countries exactly as the Westerners do.” In saying these words, Fukuzawa showed total disdain for Asia.

But you know, he was not the only one who believed that the only way forward was to emulate the West. Let me quote an example of a Chinese reformer, in some ways even better known than Yukichi Fukuzawa, Sun Yat Sen the first great Chinese reformer. In trying to analyze why China was weak, Sun Yat Sen said, “We, the modern people of China, are all useless. But if in the future we use Western civilization as the model, we can easily turn weakness into strength and the old into the new.” Again, Asians were looking up to the West as the great civilization. Let me quote what Nehru said as a younger man. He said, “The search for the sources of India’s strength and for her deterioration and decay is long and intricate, yet the recent causes of that decay are obvious enough. She fell behind in the march of technique, and Europe which had long been backward in many matters, took the lead in technical progress and then went ahead.” Now I’m going to quote just one more figure, and after I read to you the quote I’ll explain why I’m emphasizing these quotes. The other great historical figure in the early twentieth century was Kemal Atatürk, who ruled Turkey from 1923 to 1938, and as you know, Atatürk was absolutely convinced that a modern secular Western state was the only way for Turkey to move forward. He sometimes expressed his views very graphically. I have a quote about why the Turks should change the way they dress. He argued, “The fez set upon our heads as a sign of ignorance, fanaticism, obstacle to progress, and attaining a contemporary level of civilization. It is necessary to abolish the use of the fez and adopt in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world.”

Now why do I read out all these quotes? Because they show that one hundred years ago, it was very clear in what era we were living. The era was a Western era: the West was powerful, it was dominant, the Asian countries felt weak and powerless, and therefore decided that the only way forward for them was to in one way or another join the West. That was one hundred years ago; now the question is, Where are we today? What exactly is the nature of the era we are living in now? I found it very difficult to find a clear and simple answer to this question for many reasons.

The first is that the West itself is not clear about the nature of the era in which we are living. Indeed, I would say there is as much confusion in the West about the nature of this era as there is in the minds of the rest. I suspect that in their heart of hearts, subconsciously, many in the West still continue to believe that Western civilization is the best and most successful civilization in the world. None would express the sense of superiority as boldly as D.H. Lawrence did in 1923. When comparing the West and India, he said “I became more and more surprised to see how far higher, in reality, our European civilizations stands than the East, Indian, and Persian, ever dreamed of. This fraud of looking up to them, this wretched worship of Tagore attitude is

disgusting.” Isn’t that amazing? Sometimes as I read this quote, I think, “My God, today, nobody would ever say such a thing.” We live in such times of political correctness that even if they believe it, they won’t say it. But here is D.H. Lawrence saying it.

But to be fair, there is every reason for the West to feel superior. When you look in terms of economic performance, in political arrangements, in social safety nets, in education and learning, and in critical fields of science and technology, the West is still far ahead. Each year Westerners win most of the Nobel prizes and the rest win very few. And it is also a fact that for the past few centuries, Western decision makers have essentially determined the course of human history. Here I will quote a Western historian, J.M. Roberts, and I want to quote him because I think he expresses very clearly and very succinctly how history has moved in the last few centuries. He says, “It seems reasonable to expect agreement that the course of ‘modern history’ has been increasingly dominated by first the Europeans, and then the Western civilization which was its successor. By ‘dominated’ I mean two things were going on. One was that the history of the rest of the globe was changed forever and irreversibly by the actions of the men of the West: The other was that it changed in a particular direction, it was overwhelmingly a matter of other cultures taking up Western ideas, goals, and values, and not the reverse.” So you can see in his description of history, the West decides and the rest follow.

But today just ask yourself whether it is still the case that history is dominated by “the men of the West”; is it still a one-way street? My sense is that today in the West, many instead of feeling dominance and strength, have actually begun to feel very insecure, both in their daily lives and in their sense of the future. And what is remarkable - I can say this in Manhattan since I was here on 9/11 – is that there is one man sitting in a cave in Afghanistan who has unleashed much of this insecurity that bedevils the West. We know that a few young English Muslims aggravated it even further with the attacks in London. And last month, when I was taking a short flight from Newark to Milwaukee, I found that my saline solution, hair gel, shampoo, shaving cream, and Colgate toothpaste had to be confiscated because they were threats to security. That’s a vivid illustration of how times have changed, how insecure you can be in the greatest and strongest civilization.

But terrorism is not the only threat that people feel. I suppose in the room here you will understand, you all know who Lou Dobbs is. He has convinced many Americans that outsourcing to India is the next big threat to America. Paradoxically, on the way here I was reading a book on India which said that many small and medium-sized companies in America had never heard of outsourcing before Lou Dobbs. Now, thanks to Lou Dobbs, they have heard of outsourcing and now they’re going to India. So maybe you can thank Lou Dobbs. I could give other examples, but I think the change in the relativity between the West and the rest is not just in the material realm, a change in the relativity has occurred also in the moral realm. You may remember that in the great Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union, the West emphasized that the fundamental difference between the West and the Soviet Union was not just in the material and military spheres, but it was also in the moral sphere. The Western values of democracy, human rights, and freedom represented the highest values of humanity. As you know, Ronald Reagan in his brilliant fashion said that the Soviet Union was the evil empire and we are the good ones. Very clear, moral, black and white distinction, and when the Cold War

ended, there was this great sense of conviction in the West that this vindicated that the best of the West had the best moral values.

The man who captured this best was Francis Fukuyama in his essay, “The End of History.” He argued, “The triumph of the West, of the Western idea is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” And in that passage he beautifully describes how in a sense Western civilization represents a peak and what the rest have to do now is to come and join the West at the peak. By the way, he was not the only one who made such a claim. The historian, who I quoted earlier, J.M. Roberts, said “Paradoxically, we may now be entering the age of the West’s greatest triumph, not over state structures and economic relationships, but over the minds and hearts of all men. Perhaps they are all Westerners now.” He means that the rest of the world may have also become Westerners.

I believe that these very enormously confident statements about the role of the West, about the future of the West, could have been made ten or fifteen years ago and would have been received positively in the West, and would not have been resisted among the rest. But I think in the year 2006, we have come a long way since the end of the Cold War, and it’s actually quite hard to make these same statements today and have them be equally acceptable to the rest of the world. My main point here is that something fundamental has changed in the way that the world looks at the West. I’m still trying to understand what the sources of these changes are, for there are several factors that have led to these changed perceptions.

First on the material front, there is now a growing awareness that the Western societies will no longer be the most successful societies in terms of material development. If the Goldman Sachs BRICs study is reasonably accurate, in the year 2050 out of the four largest economies, three will be Asian: number one China, number two the United States, number three India, and number four Japan. According to their predictions, three out of four major economies will be Asian and not Western. And I think it’s hard to express the same kind of triumphant statements if they don’t rest on superior economic performance. But as I emphasized earlier, the material dimension is only one part of it. There’s also the moral dimension, and the question of whether it is still true that the West is in many ways superior to the rest. This is where I have to say some uncomfortable things. But let me explain why I’m doing this again.

Often when I come to these meetings, I wish I didn’t have to say these things; however, if I want to fulfill my role well in terms of explaining how the rest of the world sees these things, I have to express them. I hope that in hearing the message, you will not kill the messenger. I’m going to quote someone who should be a widely respected figure in the Western world. That is the head of Amnesty International, Irene Khan. In 2005 she said, “Guantanamo is the gulag of our times.” Following this statement by the head of Amnesty International, two possible things could have happened. There could have been a huge rush of denials from the West saying “Guantanamo is not a gulag.” Or, if the statement was true, then there should have been a chorus of voices arguing that Guantanamo had to stop. But apart from a brief and few flutters of regret, nothing really happened. The gulag continued, and was greeted by loud silence in the West. I can tell you

that this silence of the West in response to this statement has had a near metaphysical impact on the rest. There has been a profound shift in how the leading Asian and other minds now view the West. Instead of seeing the West as a paragon of virtue, they now see an emperor with no moral clothing and many are dismayed by Western double standards, criticizing gulags elsewhere but refusing to condemn Guantanamo.

Even more amazingly, a leading Western journal, *The Economist*, once actually made an effort to justify the principle of double standards, in response not to Guantanamo but the killings in Uzbekistan in 2005. *The Economist* said, “But doesn’t the West ignore equally grizzly abuses in Chechnya as the killings in Uzbekistan?” *The Economist* goes on to say “Yes, but there it can at least be argued that friendship with Russia is in its vital interest, friendship with Uzbekistan is not.” It’s a fair point to make that the West has big interests in Russia, and small interests in Uzbekistan. But, if you accept the principle of double standards and if you say that it is okay to ignore your moral values if you have interests in some countries, then you lose the capacity to criticize China in Sudan. Because China says, “Excuse me, I have vital interests in Sudan.” You also lose the capacity to criticize either ASEAN or India in Myanmar (or Burma as you say) because ASEAN and India has vital interests in Burma. So once you move down that slippery slope, you can no longer claim to have a higher moral standing.

Now let me emphasize one point. The West is not alone in having double standards. All governments—and I will say this since I’m no longer a government official, and since I’m no longer a diplomat, Marshall, I’m now practicing how to be undiplomatic—all governments have double standards. All. But none pretend to be as virtuous as those of the West, and in a world which is becoming ever-more rich with information, with rising levels of education around the globe, double standards are become more transparent.

So what is the big consequence of this? The big consequence of this, and I see this as a big problem for the world, is that there’s a very sharp divide in the way the West is viewed by those living in the West and how the West is viewed by the rest. And that divide unfortunately is getting sharper by the day. If this divide becomes sharper, then it changes the whole nature of world history because we have been living for the last 200 to 300 years with a very clear idea of which was the strongest, the most dominant, and also the most respected civilization. Now if you move to a situation where the one civilization is no longer seen to be the most respected civilization, then it changes the course of world history and influences others.

Now that was my response to the first question about the nature of the era in which we are living. Now let me move to a much more difficult question: is there really a sharp divide within the West and the East? Do they, in a sense, exist in completely different compartments, or are they linked to each other? And here I am going to quote someone whom I hope will be seen as not anti-Western in any way, someone in fact who is highly regarded in both the East and the West, and this is the Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen. I recently read his book, *The Argumentative Indian*, in preparing myself for this talk. I found that several times in the book he emphasized that the Western claims that the West is inherently different or superior is something that needs to be challenged. I’m going to quote him so you get a sense of what he’s trying to say. “There have, for example, been frequent declarations that non-Western civilizations typically lack a tradition of analytical and skeptical reasoning and are thus distant from what is sometimes called

“Western rationality.” Similar comments have been made about Western liberalism, Western ideas of right and justice, and generally about Western values. Indeed there are many supporters of the claim (articulated by Gertrude Himmelfarb with admirable explicitness) that ideas of “justice,” “right,” “reason,” and “love of humanity” are predominantly, perhaps even uniquely, Western values.” But what Amartya Sen goes on to say in his essay is that in the area of values, there is no sharp division. He argues that some of the so-called “Western values” can trace their origins to the East. He says, “A good example is the Emperor Ashoka in India, who during the third century BC covered the country with inscriptions on stone tablets about good behavior and wise governance including a demand for basic freedoms for all – indeed, he did not exclude women and slaves as Aristotle did.”

In the same essay, Sen discusses the sharp divide between Islam and the West, clearly the one we are troubled with now, and the current belief in the West is that Islam is a naturally intolerant civilization. Amartya Sen says “We are left wondering what could have led Maimonides (a Jewish rabbi, physician and philosopher in Spain and Egypt during the Middle Ages), as he fled the persecution of Jews in Spain in the twelfth century, to seek shelter in Emperor Saladin’s Egypt. And why Maimonides, in fact, get support as well as an honored position at the court of the Muslim emperor who fought valiantly for Islam in the Crusades?”

Now I’m going to quote just one more passage from Amartya Sen because one of the greatest contributions that the West has made is the development of the modern secular state. Amartya Sen says that perhaps the conception of a modern secular state existed in other civilizations, too, saying “It is worth recalling Akbar’s pronouncements of four hundred years ago on the need for religious neutrality on the part of the state, we can identify the foundations of a non-denominational, secular state which had yet to be born in India, or for that matter anywhere else. Thus, Akbar’s reasoned conclusions, codified during 1591 and 1592, had universal implications.” Sen points out at that time Europe was still suffering under the Inquisition.

Why am I quoting Amartya Sen on Ashoka and Akbar? I’m using it to make a point that perhaps when the West begins to believe that these values of freedom, of rationality, may indeed be found in other civilizations, then the divide between the West and the East may not be that sharp. It is then possible that we can in a sense be both.

Now I’m going turn to my last part. I’m going to try and make three possible predictions for the future. Let me quote an old Arab proverb which says, “He who speaks about the future lies even when he tells the truth.” I’m going to begin in a strange area. I begin with the unusual area of the nature of clothing because of a decision that Japan made. When Japan emerged, as I said earlier, it decided it had to become completely Western and to do this it decided to dress completely as the West did. Even today, if you have to present your credentials in Tokyo as an ambassador, you have to wear the 19th century European clothing. The 19th century European rituals are best preserved today in Japan.

This attachment to the West is very profound, and I discovered it only a few months ago. In June 2006, when I was in Tokyo—this is a true story--I joined a fashion parade and literally walked down the catwalk. It was for a good cause—the Japanese Ministry of Environment was trying to encourage Japanese men to dress down in summer so that companies could increase the

temperature, not use as much air conditioning, and therefore consume less energy and prevent global warming. I walked down the same catwalk as Prime Minister Abe, though he was not the prime minister yet, and a few others—half of the Japanese cabinet walked on the catwalk. What was interesting is that they all decided to dress down, and the way that they decided to dress down was that they all wore suits and just took their ties off. And I was stunned. After the show there was a press conference, and at the press conference—and by the way, I was wearing a *batik* outfit, Indonesian *batik*—so the obvious question I asked was, “Why is it that in the year 2006, about 150 years after the Meiji Restoration, could the Japanese still not conceive of the possibility of wearing Asian clothing?” It’s remarkable. That’s how deep the commitment is that they have to be part of the West.

So my first prediction about India is that Indians, unlike the Japanese, are going to wear less rather than more Western clothing. I think clothing is important because it helps to define your identity. Try to imagine Gandhi or Nehru without trademark Indian clothing. Incidentally, I wrote a paragraph on saris, and I predicted that more and more Indian women will wear saris. When I showed this paragraph to my friends, I got a flurry of emails saying that it is not true that all Indian women wear saris, that in many states in India they don’t wear them. Then, when I described my experiences as a young boy helping my mother to tie her sari, holding the pleats while she adjusted the sari, I talked about the six-yard sari. Then someone said “Excuse me, there are not only six-yard saris, there are nine-yard saris in the South.” I quickly discovered the sari is actually a very complex business in India. But that’s my first prediction, and you can see that when you go to India to some extent, and that’s an indication of the directions.

My second prediction, and this is the one where I have to go back into the area of pain and not pleasure, is that I think there’s a kind of magical place that the West had in the global imagination. I can say this with some conviction because when I was born in Singapore in 1948, Singapore was a British colony, and when I went to school in grade one, one of the things I remember vividly is carrying the Union Jack and waving it whenever a British prince or royal family member would come to Singapore. I had lived under British colonial rule and I know how powerful, how strong the domination of the West was at that time, and I even found a remarkable quote by Mahatma Gandhi who said, “The British Empire existed for the welfare of the world.” I haven’t found the context in which he said it, it seems quite remarkable that Mahatma Gandhi would praise the British Empire, but he did. And of course, fifteen years ago, you had V.S. Naipaul saying that the West represents “universal civilization” and he could write it then and expect the rest of the world to accept that.

Today that instinctive belief that the West is in a sense almost definitely superior in every sense is disappearing. The global imagination is changing, and because the global imagination is changing, as India or other Asian powers emerge today, the impulse to join the West will be less. That indeed in some ways each will discover their own identities even more. But what I find surprising is how few people in the West have noticed that this is happening, and I have tried to ask myself why this is the case. I discovered that most Western opinions are generated by a small group of Western pundits, whether they are in *The New York Times* or *The Financial Times*, *The Economist*, or *The Wall Street Journal*. They have a conversation with each other, and in that conversation they say, “This is how the world is, this is what the world thinks.” But while there was once a time when what they said actually represented the views of 6.3 billion

people, today increasingly their views represent the views of 700 or 800 million people who live in the West. The world outside is changing and evolving, and that big shift hasn't been fully understood yet.

My third and final prediction is that if indeed there's going to be a growing detachment between the West and the rest then you need to find bridge builders between these two groups. Certainly, between the West and Islam, some enormous amount of bridge building needs to be done. One of the roles that India can conceivably play in the future is to be a bridge builder between different civilizations, and the reason why India might be uniquely qualified to do this is that India is one society where you can be a Buddhist or Hindu or Muslim or Christian and not feel that you are very different. Indeed, the most remarkable feature of India today is that while the majority of the population is Hindu, the president is a Muslim, the prime minister is a Sikh, and the leader of the most powerful party is an Italian Catholic. Now, in which other country could this happen?

So there is a unique capacity for tolerance that exists in India that I think will enable India to be the bridge builder. I'll just give one more example. Clearly, the world is troubled by the issue of Iran, and the attitude of America and the West is "How do we contain Iran?" But India, which remembers its long history and connection to Iran, will say, "How do we engage Iran?" That's a different impulse, different from the dominant Western impulse.

I hope, in that sense, I have ended my talk on an optimistic note, making you believe that perhaps India will play an extremely positive role in the decades to come.
Thank you. I'm happy to take some questions.

(Applause)

Question and Answer Period

Q: In many ways the Chinese attribute their success to Confucian philosophy and they don't really look at it as Western technology and adopting Western methods that are responsible for their economic success. You quoted Akbar and others, but do you see a similar evolution in India happening?

KM: I think the Chinese would acknowledge that the main reason for their success, the main reason why China has finally woken up after three centuries of underperformance or frankly very bad performance, is because they took the ideas of a Scottish man called Adam Smith and applied it. Why it took them two-hundred years to pick up these ideas is a great mystery of Chinese civilization, and I'm sure Chinese historians will ask that question. They have to admit that in the areas of economics, in the area of science and technology; undoubtedly all the ideas they have are Western ideas. These are not Chinese ideas, and they'll be honest enough to admit it. But the big difference between China and Japan is that the Chinese have never even in the darkest days lost their cultural confidence in themselves, and so they have always known that Chinese civilization is strong and that it will recover and become strong again. They were never—I presume this is a historical fact—they were never as deeply colonized as India was in any sort of way. Whereas India went through 200 years of British rule, the Chinese didn't have that experience, so there is in that sense a very big difference between the Chinese experience and the Indian experience.

The reason why they are going back to Confucianism nowadays is partly a natural rediscovery of the past, just as the West did in a sense. The current history of Western civilization is that it sprouted in Greek and Roman times, fell asleep for one-thousand years, woke up again in the fifteenth century. Nothing happened between the year 500 and 1500. But the whole Islamic contribution in terms of maintaining the science, the learning, the philosophy of Western civilization, that has to be put together in one continuous thread too, and that's how history will be rewritten again in the years to come. In the same way, the Chinese who lost much of their history because of the troubles of the last two-hundred years are rediscovering it. At the same time, to be completely candid, it's also politically useful for the Chinese Communist party, which is now trying to find new sources of legitimacy for itself because it is really very politically difficult to run the country in the name of a Communist party when in fact you are the most capitalist country in the world.

Q: I have an observation, a statement, and a question. My observation is that when we were trying to endow the CASI chair, I had the great fortune of discussing this with Kishore at his house in Singapore. I took his advice when he said go ahead, and I'm delighted to announce that he was one of the first individual contributors to the establishment of the Center for Advanced Study of India at the University of Pennsylvania. The second is a statement. I read his book, *Can Asians Think?* and I came to the conclusion he took Singapore out of the Asian map. Now the question. I didn't really get a conclusion from "Is India going to turn East or West?" What do you think is going to be the radical change of the geopolitical situation between India, China, Russia, and Pakistan?

KM: I deliberately avoided the geopolitical dimension because the geopolitical dimension changes very quickly. Look at India and the United States for example. I remember twenty

years ago if you came to Washington, DC and tried to suggest that there could be a natural partnership with India and the United States, there would have been tremendous resistance. Since Henry Kissinger is a friend of mine I can say he could never see any natural relationship with India and the United States. But then geopolitics change. So it's very dangerous to make predictions about the future on the basis of geopolitics. I think far more fundamental are the long-term interests, as well as the natural instincts of the people. Here one of the good things that is happening in Asia is that there is a conviction on the part of many Asian countries that they have wasted two-hundred years in trying to catch up and join the modern world. I mean, the reason I wrote the book *Can Asians Think?* is because I always say: If you Asians are so smart, why is it one-thousand years ago you were here, Europe was here, North America hadn't been discovered; one-thousand years later North America is here, Europe is here, and you are still here? You can't be that smart, right, if you do that? But now they finally realize that this is the moment to catch up and succeed. Now if that's the fundamental impulse, clearly none of them want to get involved in conflicts or rivalries of any kind.

China is making an enormous effort to reach out and share its prosperity with all its neighbors. The number one trading partner for Japan today is China, the number one trading partner for Korea is China, the number one trading partner for many Southeast Asian states is China. For India Sino-Indian trade has blossomed tremendously from a few hundred million dollars to almost \$20 billion this year. Now with that being the underlying trend, I don't see the Chinese reverting to their old ways of trying to play off Pakistan against India. It doesn't serve their interest. I haven't seen the story that you mentioned, and I would be very surprised if they did that because the Chinese have come to accept, as in some ways the United States has come to accept, that India is going to be a major power. I think the Chinese stake in India is so much larger than their stake in Pakistan. The story may be true, but I find it difficult to believe that they will do that.

Q: First a comment and then a question. Recently I was at a panel discussion where they were talking about the future of the United Nations and somebody asked who would be the best candidate for the secretary-general if another election was taking place, and your name came up three times. I'm not sure if you want that job or not. India likes to think itself in terms of a global power or one of the major global powers, and recently made two attempts in that direction, one to secure a seat in the Security Council, and two, having failed there, to get their candidate elected as the secretary-general. Both of them did not succeed. What do you think is happening here? Is the Indian government misreading their role or is some other force at play?

KM: For your question about India and the United Nations, actually it's a good way of illustrating how much the world has changed. If you look at the power structures of the world, it's amazing how they represent a picture of the past and not a picture of the future. Part of the problem here, and here again I'm sorry I'm going to politically painful grounds, is that the West finds it difficult to accept that its going to give up its domination of the world. I give you a few simple examples. This is the year 2006, the world's fastest growing economies – it's a fact, and as I mentioned the largest economies will also be Asian. Yet to become the head of the IMF, you have to be a European, to become the head of the World Bank you have to be an American. The 3.5 billion Asians don't qualify. I mean, that's absurd. But it represents in some ways a fossilization of the power structure of the past. That's only one example.

The UN Security Council is another one. It's a very obvious one. It represents the victors of World War II and if it carries on that way, the danger is that the Security Council will lose its legitimacy. I actually accept the principle of permanent membership and I think if you want to have a stable world order it's important that all the major powers become stakeholders in the global system. The way you make them stakeholders in the global system is by giving them a seat at the table and say "okay, you want to be a stakeholder, you sit with us, and you decide what's the solution to these problems; you have to make a contribution, too." But if you preserve these clubs and have these clubs represent the past, and you know this applies to other organizations in terms of voting rights and so on and so forth, then you're going to have a problem in the world, and this is why in a sense you need to have a huge change of mindset in the West. My final point about the UN is that I'm a great believer in the UN, and I see the UN not as a sunset organization, but as a sunrise organization, one that will be needed more and more in the years to come. For it to be the sunrise organization it has to change, it has to adapt to the times, because if it doesn't, then you become irrelevant.

Q: Let me offer a different view and get a reaction. Is it possible that we are all just overreacting? If you turn the clock back to thirty-three years ago, the Soviet Union was an alternative pole perhaps, comparable to Islam in some ways, you had the Mai Lai disaster which was comparable to Guantanamo, you had a president of the United States who effectively almost had been impeached, and that too passed, and the West maintained a position of leadership for several decades back at a similar position. Is it conceivable that this too shall pass and perhaps pass quickly?

KM: Yes, that's actually a very good question. I tell my Asian friends that the biggest danger they face is Asian triumphalism. Asian countries will take at least thirty to forty years more, at least. They haven't arrived yet. China has got to make this tremendous transformation of its political system. It is not going to be easy. It's going to be very difficult, very painful. Indeed along the way it's quite conceivable that China may well stumble, and I think it's also true of the other countries. Even India can stumble once or twice in its effort to get there, like other countries did. But they say you cannot make predictions about the future except in one dimension. If you can measure the amount of snow that's fallen in the Himalayas, if you have enough information you can predict the level of floods in the Ganges six months later because there's a correlation between the amount of snow that has fallen and the flood levels in the Ganges. Now a lot of snow has fallen on Asia already. The huge transformation in Asia is that the number of young people in Asia are the largest in the world. Europe literally has very few young people, and India has this huge demographic pool of young people. That's one fact. That's a fact, it's a concrete reality.

The second concrete reality is that this young generation is the most confident young generation of Asians seen in centuries. They believe tomorrow will be better than today. They believe that tomorrow is theirs, and that shift in mindset motivates you in a dramatic fashion. I think this explains fundamentally the tremendous energy you see in both China and India and the other Asian countries, too. I haven't spoken of Korea, I haven't spoken of Vietnam, but whatever I am saying about China and India actually applies to many other Asian countries, too. So those realities have already arrived and the consequences are that there will be a natural shift of

economic power. There is a British historian Angus Madison, who has already shown that from the year 1 to the year 1820, for eighteen centuries, the two largest economies of the world were always China and India. They went down to the lowest point in 1950, and since then they've been climbing back to where they were in 1820 to become the largest economies of the world. There's a natural trend in that direction, so I would say that in some ways the last two-hundred to three-hundred years in a sense of Western domination is rather unusual. For such a small group of people to dominate such a large part of the planet, that was unusual. I can say this because I'm an ethnic Indian: it is one of the great historical mysteries how it is that 300 million ancestors of mine could be ruled by 100,000 Englishmen. Is that conceivable today? Can it happen today? It cannot. The world has changed. That's one example. So enough changes have happened to make me say no, you will not go back to where we were.

Q: As to the question is India going to be Eastern or Western, do we think of Western as a stationary, imperialistic, colonial power? The West has changed a lot where there have been actions recently. I see the elections of yesterday, there's a lot of disapproval of what the West did unilaterally in part of the world, and the West has also become very multicultural. Do you see a fusion rather than just India becoming East or West?

KM: Actually I'm very glad you used the word fusion because in the book that Sreedhar mentioned, *Can Asians Think?*, I did speak about the future that I see for more across the Pacific and also frankly in India too. I do see a fusion of civilizations happening, and if you ask me where my bias is in that sense, I agree with you that the West is also going to change, but for the West to change it's also going to change its mindset. This is why I give the examples. When you are reluctant to allow Asians into decision-making positions and you think they're not good enough, that reflects an old mindset. And the irony as you know in America, look at this room, look at the success of Asians, especially Indians in America, and you realize how open and inclusive America is and how open and inclusive Western civilization can be. But now you need to apply that, to take that openness and inclusiveness and apply that to the global order. That step requires you giving up some seats. You can do it domestically, now can you do it globally. That's the big shift.

Q: I have first a light observation and then a more serious question. On the topic of the sari, if Sanjay Kapur, the head of Satyapaul, which some people in this room will know is a very trendy sari chain, has his way, many people beyond the Indian population will be wearing saris. He has opened a store in Singapore as you probably know, is opening one in Dubai and London and the US is next on the list, so perhaps the sartorial trend will start moving in the opposite direction along with some of the others you've talked about this evening.

On a more serious note, in terms of the moral dimension, in which the West has suffered a loss, especially the United States in the wake of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib and other sorts of sad excesses, I have been very struck by something that I think is emerging in India in conversations that I've had with business leaders and social leaders over the last year. I think it is very interesting to look at the politics of inclusion that you were just talking about and the necessity of inclusiveness in the institutions of global order. India has been one of the champions of pushing for that, whether it's in the WTO or the United Nations. Across the board India has been a leader of the nonaligned movement in previous decades, but domestically the politics of

inclusion and a paradigm of inclusion have become very current in India. I can't tell you the number of leading CEOs that I have spoken to recently who have talked about the importance of equity and of making sure that India's economic takeoff includes all of the population. As Mukesh Ambani said to me, we have to do something that no one in the world has been able to do, and that is to grow equitably. I've heard this over and over again and I just wondered if you could comment on whether Asia is really the center of gravity as the world moves toward Asia materially, and what is the possibility of coming up with something that goes past Fukuyama's final moment of history of Western liberalism in some kind of a new model that includes capitalism in some way but differently?

KM: I'm very glad to hear that the saris are spreading globally so one of my predictions will come true. But your second point actually is a very important one. Sometimes I have to ask myself the very painful question of whether I am Western or Eastern. I don't know the answer to that question. There is so much of me that is so Western, and there is so much of me that is so Eastern. For example, when I do my writing, I lock myself up in the room and I put on the old songs that Mohammad Rafi used to sing in the sixties and seventies, my childhood songs. There you are in Singapore listening to Mohammad Rafi songs and writing an essay, and that's an example of where identity questions enter.

But the good news is that the great values of Western civilization, the enormous regard for human self-worth, the idea that every individual matters, are being adopted. Incidentally one reason why China and India are thriving today is because finally the Chinese and Indians also came to realize that the people at the very bottom are resources and not burdens. That's a Western idea that has been captured by China and India. So many of the great Western values I believe should become universal values, but for them to become the universal values, the West must stop portraying them as Western values, the West should say that these are human values and we are all working together to defend not Western civilization but human civilization. Once the West speaks in that way, then I think it can be done, then the differences will disappear.

Devesh Kapur: Thank you, Kishore, we'll come to an end on that optimistic note.

(Applause)