

It's important to make all citizens of the world aware of the need to double- and triple-check information, because some of it is malicious and has toxic objectives

Gaïdz Minassian

country remains a vulnerable democracy, where it is difficult to resist disinformation: *'Social networks are used extensively by our fellow citizens. What's more, most of them trust everything they see or hear. Conspiracy theories really came into their own during the COVID-19 crisis. Because people weren't aware of the risks, we suffered a high mortality rate'*. She also pointed out that, in her country, most of the information channels come from Serbia, where the media broadcast Russian propaganda. *'That's why it's important to make all citizens of the world aware of the need to double- and triple-check information, because some of it is malicious and has toxic objectives'*. Frédéric Charillon added a nuance: *'We need to be demanding about sources while remaining vigilant, without falling into paranoia and thinking that everything is a conspiracy'*.

This critical spirit is undermined just about everywhere, not least because of the useless information that overwhelms us. Nancy Snow also emphasised the predominance of individualism, with influencers seeking, above all else, to have as many

followers as possible as a means of becoming famous. *'I think we would have a lot to learn from more collective cultures, to find a happy medium in the way we establish our social contract,'* she asserted.

Gaïdz Minassian then turned the debate to wars of influence. Frédéric Charillon cited the example of the war in Ukraine, which he sees as totally anachronistic: *'Although Vladimir Putin's Russia had established a system of influence that was working rather well, with diplomacy that spoke to everyone in the Middle East, and had regained a foothold in some Central and Eastern European countries, he tried to gamble. However, the last major military interventions around the world ended*



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in fiascos, while at the same time, the influence strategies of Qatar and China were proving their worth', he pointed out. He noted that in the Ukrainian war, Russia chose to use both force and psychological weapons. The Western camp, on the other hand, has opted not to enter the war directly but to activate its networks and sanctions. *'We don't yet know the outcome, but I think this clash of methods will lead to a unique approach to conflict, combining the right mix of force and influence'*, concluded Frédéric Charillon.



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DEBATE

INDIA: A NEW GLOBAL SUPERPOWER?

28 September, 4:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. – Azur Room



Christophe Jaffrelet and Archana Chaudhary

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India, a non-aligned power

Philippe Le Corre initiated the debate by highlighting the ambivalent position of Narendra Modi's India, a major economic power that is both a member of the G20 and the Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), which is caught in the middle of the Sino-American confrontation.

'Give us another fifty years, there's no question of us being a premature superpower,' replied Deng Xiaoping to Hen-

MODERATOR:

Philippe Le Corre, university lecturer and researcher at Asia Society France

SPEAKERS:

Archana Chaudhary, Indian journalist

Christophe Jaffrelet, political scientist specialised in the Indian subcontinent

Raja Mohan, Indian academic, journalist and foreign policy analyst

India must, above all, learn to use its size to maintain its economic growth

Raja Mohan

ry Kissinger in the 1990s, when the American diplomat told him that China would soon become the second world power. It was with this anecdote that Indian academic Raja Mohan began the discussion regarding India's place on the world stage. As the fifth economic power, capable of developing a space programme while the average annual income *per capita* doesn't exceed \$2,000, India must, above all, learn to use its size to maintain its economic growth, the largest in the world today, and strengthen its position, he explained. While relations between India and the Western powers have been complex throughout the 20th century, the subcontinent has ma-



Philippe Le Corre

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If the Franco-Indian relationship is so important for New Delhi, it is because France maintains a certain Gaullist autonomy vis-à-vis Washington

Christophe Jaffrelot

naged to build successful relationships with the United States and Europe in the 21st century. For the Indian academic, the multilateral institutions born out of the fall of the USSR have largely disintegrated due to Sino-American rivalry, which redefines the rules of globalisation and pushes States to form more specific coalitions of interest, like Brics or Aukus (Australia, United States and United Kingdom).

For political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot, the expansion of the Brics group on the

initiative of China, as well as the notable absence of Xi Jinping at the G20 summit, very probably indicate a turning point towards a re-bipolarisation of the world. However, India, which is historically non-aligned, does not want a bipolar world and is instead trying to maintain a certain plurilateralism, i.e., an ability to make agreements without making alliances, in order to avoid having to choose between China and the United States. Since Modi came to power, Indian power has stood out for its national populism, its ethnic democracy and its electoral authoritarianism, noted the French specialist. Like other populist regimes such as those in Hungary, Brazil or Israel, Modi is first and foremost the spokesperson for a majority, the Hindus - in a democracy where other citizens are no longer represented by the institutions and are victims of lynching and ghettoisation - and maintains an electoral system skewed by wealth inequalities, with his party having the crucial support of the economic and media oligarchy. *'Should the 28 opposition parties form a coalition in the elections in Spring of 2024, in the hope of overthrowing the Indian leader, Jaffrelot pointed out that, even in the event of victory, the opposition will probably not be able to return India to its former multiculturalism, so strong is Hindu nationalism today.'*

Indian journalist, Archana Chaudhary was keen to point out that debate is a fundamental element of Indian culture and that no one governs this country without constant support from the population. As the world's leading economy in terms of growth, she added, India can now claim to be moving beyond its backroom status and at least partially replacing China as the world's factory. As the second-largest English-speaking nation and a huge reservoir of new scientists, India has many opportunities to seize, particularly when it comes to global warming. All that remains is to know which direction will be taken.

In light of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and its geopolitical consequences, Raja Mohan

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affirmed that India has chosen its foreign policy orientation: thanks to the Chinese position, it remains non-aligned and has been able to forge unprecedented ties with the West. Moreover, for the Indian academic, this strategic choice is reciprocal, as the Western powers cannot do without New Delhi. If India has long had a special relationship with the Soviets and then the Russians, this was only due to the West's refusal to supply them with weapons. But today, Modi has initiated a process of attracting capital, mainly French, British and American, to develop an Indian defence industry.

Although Christophe Jaffrelot also stated his belief that the West has chosen India, by investing massively to counterbalance the Chinese threat, according to him, by abstaining from UN resolutions condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India isn't really choosing the West. According to this political scientist, it is more appropriate to speak of a rapid and significant rapprochement, with a view to remaining faithful to this heritage of non-alignment, of partnerships without alliances. Furthermore, if the Franco-Indian relationship, illustrated by the arrival of the head of the Indian government in Paris on 14 July 2023, is so important for New Delhi, it is, in particular, because France maintains a certain Gaullist autonomy vis-à-vis Washington.



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Beyond economic questions, Archana Chaudhary was keen to add that India is one of the most affected countries by the climate crisis and that there is a strong awareness of this issue in all strata of society. Without there being any concrete results to date, India has managed to impose clarity on this subject during diplomatic summits like the G20 or the COPs, and is trying to raise specific funds to resolve these problems.

Raja Mohan then took the opportunity to emphasise that most of India's promises, made during these multilateral meetings, have not been kept and some countries are even backtracking on their commitments. For the academic, the solution for global warming is above all technological. *'We need to change the energy-economy equation,'* he insisted. The global balance of power has brought India closer to the West, and there is a real need to create an international governance structure that compensates for the relative decline in the influence of Western powers. We must find agreements with each partner and this is the trajectory that India has taken today.