

## 'India and China should avoid confrontational relationship'

Indrani Bagchi, TNN, Jan 16, 2011, 10.25am IST

NEW DELHI: This is the time for [India](#) to follow the advice [Deng Xiaoping](#) gave to a generation of Chinese "bide our time and build up our capabilities" or "yield on small things for the larger gain" says [Kishore Mahbubani](#), prominent Asian thinker and diplomat.

Talking to The Times of India, during a recent visit to [New Delhi](#), Mahbubani said since India was on its third decade of growth it was necessary to "avoid geo-political antagonism" and concentrate on its development. "Time is on your side."

India and China, he said, should try to avoid getting into a confrontational relationship and take a long-term view of the relationship. In any case, China, he stressed, doesn't spend its time thinking about India. "They don't understand the impact they have in India." There will be "incidents" between India and China, he said. "But India has to pick its battles. India should not let incidents drive its relations with China."

Drawing a comparison with the US, he said US power has peaked and is in a decline. "Therefore, its incumbent on the US to deal with its challenges now. That's not the case with India." In 20 years, Mahbubani argued, India will be much stronger to deal with its [geo-political challenges](#).

China, Mahbubani conceded, had made some spectacular mistakes last year, particularly in the neighbourhood, which had set the backs up of all its key neighbours, India included. "Some say it's a greater presence of the PLA influencing decision-making in Beijing," but the reason is still unclear. Its also not clear that [China](#) has learnt from its mistakes.

China, he maintained, may not be getting more democratic, but its certainly getting more pluralistic. "There are now many more voices being heard in China. So talk to China. Explain India's position."

Mahbubani also believes India should send many more young Indians to China, to their top universities. "Your young people will get a very different view of China," he argued.

China, he said, continues to be very suspicious of the western world. [Beijing](#) believes events like the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) are efforts by the west to undermine the growth of China.

"After all, China is the only country in the world where a Nobel Peace Prize winner is in prison. Not even [Myanmar](#) or [Iran](#) has imprisoned theirs," he said.

China is convinced, he said, the west (read US) holds China's political system to be its Achilles heel. They're equally determined that they will not allow their system to be destabilized, and they don't want their country to become another North Korea.

"They have a far more difficult job than the Indian government. Indian governments earn their legitimacy every 5 years. The Chinese have to do it every day. Therefore, their continued economic growth matters so much to them."

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