

FOCAL POINT SEMINAR SERIES

The Irrelevance of India's Rise as a Military Power

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Abstract: In the past the “rise” of a state to great power status invariably included a military component, and there has been much anticipation of India’s emergence as a state that has (and uses) military power in the service of important national interests. This is a somewhat simplistic view of what is happening: its military power is crippled because of domestic constraints, the difficulty of organizational reform, and there are still inhibitions about using force beyond India’s borders (except for relatively trivial UN sponsored peacekeeping activities). India’s three major military challenges, China, Pakistan, and domestic insurgencies, cannot be dealt with by military power. In the case of the first two, nuclear deterrence transforms India-China and India-Pakistan relations. In the case of domestic insurgencies, their roots are in social dislocation and the disparities that threaten India’s coherence as a nation-state.

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