

Press Release: Roundtable on “China: An International Perspective” with Prof. Zhou Rong, Editor of the Chinese Guangming Daily and Mr. Mu Zongcong, Pakistan Bureau Chief of the Chinese People’s Daily, on September 19, 2012

China is ready to face challenges to its peaceful rise, Chinese experts

ISLAMABAD: “China does not want war, but it does not fear war either,” said Prof. Zhou Rong of the Chinese Guangming Daily here on Wednesday. He was speaking at a roundtable discussion organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) on “China: An International Perspective” along with Mr. Mu Zongcong, Pakistan Bureau Chief of the Chinese People’s Daily.

Talking about the recent tension with Japan over the status of the disputed Diaoyu Island, Prof. Zhou claimed that the island and its adjacent islets were historically part of China. He added that despite coming under Japanese control after the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the Japanese were obliged to return all such territories to China pursuant to the spirit of Cairo Declaration of 1943 and Postdam Proclamation of 1945. According to Prof. Zhou, the islands were instead given under the trusteeship of the U.S. under the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951, which the Chinese never accepted.

Prof. Zhou said that China had always attached great importance to its relations with Japan and that the people of both countries would suffer because of any confrontation over the issue of Diaoyu Island. He urged Japan to put this issue in the context of the broad contours of the cordial bilateral relations between the two countries and their common economic interests. He maintained that China was determined to protect, what he called, the Chinese sovereignty over islands. He was hopeful, however, that the dispute would be resolved amicably between the two countries. He further argued that U.S. could be involved in stirring up such maritime disputes for China, and added that China would need to demonstrate that it would respond to such tactics with resolve.

Mr. Mu Zongcong called the dispute a legacy of World War II, and added that the U.S. had interest in the island because it is very close to China. He was of the view that the U.S. wanted to challenge peaceful rise of China. He further said that the U.S. was not only afraid of China’s growing power but also the potential challenge it posed to its dominance in the world economic order. Prof. Zhou argued that some of the neighboring countries try to take undue advantage of Chinese policy of peaceful rise and, thus, they sometimes tend to cross the red-lines. He added though that U.S. policy of containing China might not necessarily lead to war. Prof. Zhou saw obvious contradictions in Indo-U.S. partnership. He was of the view that an independent pursuit of foreign policy on the part of India was likely to get in the way of its relations with the U.S. “India wants to be a regional United States, therefore, it can only play a partial role for the U.S.,” said Prof. Zhou. Mr. Mu maintained that China needed to further enhance its good relations with all neighboring countries and also needed to help them economically in times of need. He added, however, that China still viewed itself as a developing country with large economic gaps to fill domestically, which was making it more inward-looking.

The roundtable was widely attended by researchers from IRS.