



# INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES

## **Post-Pulwama Commentaries in the Chinese Media**

**Speaker: Hemant Adlakha**

**Venue: Seminar Room, ICWA**

**Time: 3:00 PM**

Professor Adlakha began his talk, by enlightening the audience about the importance of various media commentaries both in China and India. He emphasised that the public should focus more on different commentaries and their political significance than on the usual reporting. He argued that these commentaries narrate different perspectives and are crucial in understanding the political dynamics, especially in the case of India and China. The talk was divided in three parts.

Firstly, he explained the abstract to the audience, then he familiarized the audience with the synopsis of the subject and lastly, he concentrated his talk on the various narratives – mainly by the media houses, newspapers and different Chinese and Indian news websites.

According to Prof. Adlakha the commentaries were seen as a reflection of Chinese reaction to the Pulwama attack and of Sino-Indian relations in general. According to the media commentaries China produced two narratives, the first a defence of Pakistan and dismissal of how India reacted towards the Pakistani authorities and second, criticizing Indian government for adopting wrong and aggressive means towards Pakistan.

He also talked about the emerging debates on how China is being used as an issue in the 2019 Indian election campaigns, especially by the incumbent government. He also added that under the current Modi government the outlook towards China has become more aggressive which can be seen in the harsh criticism of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects by the Indian authorities. According to Prof. India, look at these projects as a sovereign threat which may be a mask to hide the nervousness that it feels from Chinese activities on the border.

Many of the Chinese media commentaries that he focused on highlighted the role of China in the Post-Pulwama debate. These media commentaries criticised India of dragging China in the Pulwama issue. He further elaborated on how Chinese diplomats ask why the listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist is so important to India instead of focusing on other bilateral issues. Post- Pulwama, Chinese media commentaries reflects the same sentiments often raising the question why China is being targeted for what happened in Pulwama.

Prof. Adlakha also discussed the ‘Old and the New’ problems that are present between the countries. Old problems consist of the border dispute and the issue of Dalai Lama, the new problems focus more on economic aspects like the South China Sea, India’s relations with Taiwan and Vietnam and the BRI project among others. He further discussed how China looks at India in the current international scenario. According to him China does not perceive India as a military threat but it is intimidated by the increasing pace at which India is rising in the international sphere. He especially noted that “India now has achieved a status that it can disturb China.”

The talk also focused on the role that the western media plays in the India-China debate. It highlighted the fact how the Western media often puts a wedge between the two countries and portrays China as a villain and a threat to Asian countries.

By enlightening the audience about these issues Prof. Adlakha raised the question “how well do we understand China?” when we compare our understanding to that of the West. He also talked about the ‘Sino-mania’ or ‘Sino-phobia’ that the West suffers from often miscalculating and exaggerating the Chinese activities. He emphasised that there is a major gap of knowledge in the United States about China. The whole purpose of this comparison of knowledge with the West is to question our own understanding of China – “how far we go to trace our knowledge about China?”

He highlighted the fact that India’s knowledge on Modern China does not go beyond Jawaharlal Nehru and his work. According to him Nehru perceived China as an expansionist power (this perception is still held by many in India and in the West). Thus, beyond Nehru’s work we have no authentic source to fall back on when it comes to China, irrespective of change in government, the outlook of India and Indians towards China remains the same.

At the end of the talk Prof. Adlakha raised a very important question – “how independent is Chinese Media?” According to him Chinese media is not as transparent as Indian media. However, there are diverse lobbies in China too *e.g.* in the media sphere there is a massive debate between the left and the right. He further elaborated how Chinese authorities crack down on media groups or individuals who dare to oppose or question the government. Through strict control on what commentaries media produces Chinese authorities often paint a false picture of peace and friendship with India for the public, the discussion on the Wuhan Spirit is an important example. In reality, China is quite nervous of rising India and a strong rightist leader like Narendra Modi.

In the end Prof. Adlakha concluded his talk by quoting Confucius and leaving the audience with a thought – ‘how often nations fail to understand each other leading to miscommunications and suspicion.’

The lecture headed towards its conclusion with a very interesting interaction session wherein several questions were raised by eminent experts and students.

*Report prepared by Madhvi Pokhriyal, Research Intern at Institute of Chinese Studies.*

### **Disclaimer**

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