



# INDIA FORUM ON CHINA

## COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA IN THE 'NEW ERA'



26-29 NOVEMBER, 2022



# **REPORT**

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## ABOUT IFC @GOA

*The India Forum on China (IFC) @Goa, hosted by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in cooperation with Goa University, is an annual conference where eminent scholars, practitioners and policymakers from India and other countries hold in-depth deliberations on a topical theme pertaining to China in an Indian setting and keeping in mind Indian perspectives.*

The ICS, Delhi and the India Office of KAS had organized the 1<sup>st</sup> IFC @Goa at the International Centre Goa on 15–16 December 2017 in cooperation with Goa University to explore the theme ***Deciphering China's Quest for Global and Regional Leadership***. Held shortly after the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the deliberations and outcomes of the Congress informed the discussions at the Forum. Arguments pertaining to China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its efforts to fashion new institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), its growing soft power capabilities and technological prowess were examined in great detail. Additionally, China's increasingly expansive definition of its 'core interests', its expanding military capabilities, its evolving security doctrines and its assertive behaviour as well as nationalistic temperament were considered. Furthermore, an examination of the limitations and constraints faced by China in the pursuit of its regional and global aspirations were analyzed. The implications of China's readiness to offer the Chinese path as worthy of emulation by other developing countries was also discussed at the 1<sup>st</sup> IFC.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> IFC @Goa was organized from 7–9 December 2018. As 2018 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's reform and opening up, the theme of the conference was ***Changing Drivers of China's Economy***. The Forum brought together over 40 experts who offered their insights and perspectives on several sub-themes including the ramifications of the structural rebalancing of China's economy, and its implications for India and other players. Experts also

examined the question of what a confrontation with the US in the economic domain would portend for a smooth rebalancing of China's economy. The Keynote Address at the 2<sup>nd</sup> IFC @Goa was delivered by Prof. Ashwani Saith, Professor Emeritus, International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University, Rotterdam titled, "Socialism, Pioneer of Capitalism – and Global Power: The Latent Leitmotif of Chinese Development?".

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> IFC @Goa, which was organised from 5–8 December 2019, experts deliberated on the theme, ***China and Asia's Changing Geopolitics***. Sub-themes in this Forum included Asia's geopolitical changes, evolving discourse on the Indo-Pacific, Beijing's cultural diplomacy, the US-China trade war and other such topics of contemporary relevance. Discussions also focused on China's approach while dealing with the world and the role played by Xi Jinping. Additionally, some participants also brought in the domestic dimension, particularly the role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the Chinese economy. The Keynote Address at the 3<sup>rd</sup> IFC @Goa was delivered by Mr. Richard McGregor, Senior Fellow, Lowy Institute, Sydney titled, "Xi Jinping and Chinese Power".

The 4<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was organised from 3–4 December 2021. The theme of this Forum was ***CPC at 100 and China's Future***. Experts deliberated upon themes ranging from 100 years of the CPC, cultural and intellectual traditions in China to China's developmental aspirations and regional ambitions, and great power competition. The Forum reflected on the history of the CPC, the Party's growth not only in membership numbers but also in its influence over a span of 100 years. Questions related to Xi's leadership and the source of the Party-state and regime legitimacy were explored in great depth. The changing nature of Chinese foreign policy especially in the context of the Indo-Pacific was examined during the Forum. Prof. Rana Mitter, Professor of History and Politics of Modern China, University of Oxford delivered the Keynote Address titled, "How New is China's New Era under Xi Jinping".

It was only appropriate that the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa should focus on one of the most discussed and speculated-upon events of 2022 all over the world - the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China. With its far-reaching implications for Chinese politics, economics, soci-

ety and with a concomitant impact on strategic and security aspects in the neighbourhood and beyond, the theme of this Forum naturally selected itself: ***The Communist Party of China in the 'New Era'***. Organised over two days, 27–28 November 2022, the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa will witness the participation of more than 40 experts, including scholars, practitioners and policymakers from the economic, foreign policy, security and technological domains.

In keeping with our past practice, a report aimed at policymakers, media and interested public will be prepared based on the deliberations at the conference.

**The report of the previous forums can be accessed on the ICS website (<https://icsin.org/india-forum-on-china>).**

## CONCEPT NOTE

The Communist Party of China (CPC) with a membership of more than 96 million, has the distinction of being one of the largest political parties in the world. The CPC is the core actor in China's political system and with no formal opposition, any change in the Party has direct implications on the lives of the Chinese people. As China increasingly appears to be poised at the helm of global geopolitics, changes within the Party are not merely of significance to the people of China but have vital implications for the world at large. This Forum on ***The Communist Party of China in the 'New Era'*** is devoted to exploring and debating a wide variety of themes ranging from the Party's strengths and challenges, to its regional and its international role.

Over the course of two days, the six sessions of the Forum will present a nuanced and in-depth understanding of relevant aspects of the CPC and its governing ideology. In the wake of the recently concluded 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPC, the first session on ***Party Governance and Leadership*** will critically examine subjects such as elite politics within the CPC and military-civil fusion. A less-traversed subject that will be investigated in this session is the work undertaken by the Party's United Front Work Department (UFWD).

The theme of 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' has been the subject of many scholarly tomes and is perhaps one of the most deliberated upon ideological concepts in China studies since the 1980s, gathering greater traction since the advent of Xi Jinping. The session on ***Ideas and Narratives*** aims to bring the spotlight on the ideological facets of this concept by tracing its origins and contextualising its changing nature under different leaders. The role of the intelligentsia in propounding and propagating key ideological concepts is no less significant in grasping how the Communist Party locates itself vis-à-vis this important social group and how in turn the intelligentsia fulfils the ideological objectives of the CPC. Yet another important di-

mension is the steady decline in the status of workers and peasants, which has enormous implications for the ideological underpinnings of a Party claiming to be their vanguard.

As China reshapes its strategic interests from a regional to a global actor, the CPC's goals abroad take centre stage. The session on *The Party's Global Interests* untangles the CPC's global interests and policies through a discussion on topics such as the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) overseas missions and China's discourse on 'ecological civilization' in the context of its bid to take a leading role in the global combat against climate change. A larger question that undergirds the PRC's 'rise' in the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress is the question of the CPC's legitimacy in the face of growing external and internal challenges faced by the CPC. The crucial aspect is whether the internal challenges are likely to prove of greater consequence than the external ones. It is hoped this session would raise important debating points in this context.

Despite outstanding growth figures for four decades and pledges to further open-up the economy, state-market relations remain speculative and full of challenges. The wave of regulations driving China's platform economy, innovation, and revitalizing enterprises appear to be centered around the Party's interest. In addition, rectifying economic institutions in the name of governance underlines the Party's indispensable position in the economy. Slow growth also means mounting unemployment, demographic challenges, and productivity crises for the Chinese leaders. The panel, *The Party and the Economy*, explores these challenges in depth.

The strategic deployment of 'narratives' has been one of the crucial tools of the CPC's external policies. The session on *The Party's Narrative-Building Abroad* explores this theme through a study of examples of the Party's policies in regions as far apart and different as Madagascar and Ukraine. The session will also include a discussion on the CPC's approaches especially with respect to Xinjiang.

China's profile as a regional power, with great capacity to influence the events and trends in its near and extended regional theatres, is yet another aspect of the 'New Era'. Even as the dis-



course on China 'overtaking the US' is gaining ground, it is important to carefully study the nature and dimensions of China as a regional power. The final session, ***Regional Policy*** focuses on China's changing policies in the Middle East, Indo-Pacific and East Asia.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INAUGURAL SESSION

- The 5<sup>th</sup> India Forum on China @Goa (IFC @Goa) was held on November 27-28, 2022. The Conference, which witnessed a grand attendance, was organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), New Delhi, in partnership with the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and in co-operation with Goa University. The theme of the Conference was ‘**Communist Party of China in the ‘New Era’**’.
- The speakers in the **Inaugural Session** touched upon the themes and important developments emerging from the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) which had confirmed Xi Jinping’s paramount role in the party and set the seal on the ‘new era’.
- The session was chaired by **Prof. Alka Acharya**, Honorary Director, ICS, who highlighted the role, significance and impact of the CPC having transcended national borders and its implications for international relations. Introducing the six multi-disciplinary sessions of the Conference, she emphasised the importance of assessing and comprehending the ‘New Era’, the dominant paradigm in the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC), through multiple dimensions by the scholarly and policy-making communities.
- In her **Opening Remarks**, **Prof. Aparajita Gangopadhyay** welcomed the delegates on behalf of Prof. Harilal B. Menon, Vice-Chancellor, Goa University. She dwelt on how China’s profile in international relations underwent a decisive change after 1978, and how China’s model has been hailed by Party elites as an alternative to neoliberal globalisation.

- **Dr. Adrian Haack**, Director, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's India Office, in his **Welcome Remarks**, described China as “the most influential player on the global stage”, which posed a military threat to multiple countries. He described China as being ruled by an “oppressive regime” with a track record of violating human rights. However, China would play an important role in future technological transformations and its cooperation was required to deal with climate change. Commenting upon Sino-Indian relations, Dr. Haack spoke of China as “an essential trading partner for India” which “at the same time, has been taking over India’s neighbourhood in the Indian Ocean”, and violating “India’s Himalayan borders.” He referred to China as a prospering economy and pointed to the importance of trade and investment between Germany and other EU countries with the PRC. He also noted with appreciation the distinguished international participation at the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC, brought together by the Institute of Chinese Studies.
- The **Keynote Address** was delivered by **Prof. Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit**, Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She raised some extremely insightful and pertinent aspects with regard to contemporary features of the PRC and the CPC, how it was turning from a revolutionary to a ruling party and how China had become a more revisionist state in the current international order. Underscoring the fact that to understand China it was necessary to understand the CPC, she also referred to the important role played by China in the post-Covid world, which needed to be studied in the context of China’s international ambitions to become the pivot of Asia. She dubbed the CPC as the “largest transnational corporation in the world”.
- The **Vote of Thanks** was presented by **Dr. Preksha Shree Chhetri**.

### **SESSION 1**

- The first session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled, ‘**Party Governance and Leadership**’, and was chaired by **Amb. Ashok K. Kantha**.
- In his introductory remarks, Amb. Kantha commented upon developments in China, in the aftermath of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, bringing in the themes of factionalism as a

perennial feature of CPC politics and how the dismantling of Deng Xiaoping's legacy will impact policy and governance in China. He pointed to the missteps in policy-making under Xi Jinping, which include the Zero-Covid Policy, as well as over-centralisation in governance.

- The three presentations by **Dr. Bhim Subba**, **Dr. Ming-shih Shen** and **Dr. Roger Liu** explored the changes in the institutional leadership of the CPC, the rising prominence of military-civil fusion, the United Front work, and how this has been seen from the optics of Party leadership.
- **Dr. Bhim Subba** scrutinized the turnover in the Politburo, the Standing Committee of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the CPC, and also analysed the various factors that influence representation in the Party. He further examined the processes and procedures whereby Xi Jinping selected leaders within the CPC, especially in the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress.
- **Dr. Ming-shih Shen** provided a rich historical background to the emergence and development of Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) in China since the days of Mao Zedong which has been given a greater boost under Xi Jinping. Since 2017, when a dedicated unit was established within the CPC, called the 'Central Military-Civil Fusion Development Committee,' the PRC government had been providing systematic encouragement to civilian enterprises to engage in military technology research and development. However, it was extremely difficult to implement given that the US sanctions were aimed primarily at the Chinese military and there was not sufficient expertise in China in this regard.
- **Dr. Roger Liu** provided a historical context for understanding the CPC's United Front Work Department (UFW), in terms of its strategies of dividing and manipulating 'friends and enemies' and 'interference and promoting the formation of political coalitions' in target countries. He expounded on how the UFW under Xi Jinping has comprised elements of both propaganda, as well as disseminating "good stories" about

China, especially in countries where China is investing in infrastructure-building under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A significant component of UFDW has been a stress on 'one China' aimed at 'unifying Taiwanese compatriots'- domestically and overseas.

- **Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary** led the discussion for Session 1 and an important question she raised was regarding the significance of economic performance for the CPC's legitimacy and whether it was important to go beyond economic performance in the post-20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress period.

## SESSION 2

- The second session of the Conference was titled, '**Ideas and Narratives**', which effectively tailor the ideological and existential ecosystems for the Party. It was chaired by **Prof. Mumin Chen**, and included presentations by **Prof. Alka Acharya**, **Mr. Tuvia Gering** and **Dr. Anand P. Krishnan**.
- **Prof. Acharya** argued that it was necessary to pay attention to and accord due importance to understanding the ideological formulations of the CPC. The concept of the 'Primary Stage of Socialism,' had been the basis of a fundamental restructuring of China's economy, contributing to the 'rise of China'. In the 'new era,' under Xi Jinping, its *systemic* significance emerges in terms of guiding the Party to build a rich, strong and powerful *socialist* state.
- **Mr. Tuvia Gering** analysed the sources and ramifications of Xi Jinping's power within China, by exploring the role played by the intellectuals today in Chinese society, in transmitting orthodox (official) culture in a way that "offers a coherent and compelling narrative of history in order to make sense of the present and inform the future." He described General Secretary Xi of the CPC as China's "storyteller-in-chief", and how Xi Jinping is determined not to let the western narratives dominate perceptions about China but that the Chinese should narrate their own stories.

- **Dr. Anand P. Krishnan** drew attention to the fact that in the ‘new era’, the labor issue for the CPC is more of a ‘law and order problem’ requiring crisis mitigation strategies. He maintained that autonomous labour activities were not encouraged, and brought together various issues such as the emphasis on industrial stability, the declining role of farmers and workers along with a decline in their overall membership within the CPC.
- **Prof. Ravni Thakur**, who led the discussion, contextualised the role of Chinese intellectuals in the preceding years in the arenas of ideology, politics and economy.

### SESSION 3

- The third session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled, ‘**The Party’s Global Interests**’, and was chaired by **Prof. Varun Sahni**.
- The first presentation of this session by **Prof. Gudrun Wacker**, adopted the Weberian framework to ask what was ‘legitimacy’ and ‘for whom,’ and showed how different elements had contributed to the building of legitimacy of the leaders over the generations. Under Xi Jinping, she argued that there was a shift from economic ‘output-based’ legitimacy to a legitimacy based on ‘defending national interests,’ which included the rejection of western criticism of CPC’s domestic and external behaviour (debt trap, Taiwan). While Xi has made it clear that there would be no compromise on the question of Taiwan, Prof. Wacker opined that if he was unable to deliver on that promise, he had virtually “painted himself into a corner.”
- **Dr. Rajiv Ranjan**’s presentation on the PRC’s concept of ecological civilization reflected on how the Party-state projects its plans to deal with environmental concerns globally and its accountability in matters of global concern. He drew attention towards the fact that carbon neutrality will largely affect the working class in China and the enormous burdens it is likely to place on the Chinese economy. He concluded by underscoring the challenges that Chinese society will have to face as it shifts to carbon-neutral way of life.

- **Dr. Isaac Kardon**'s presentation focused on the PLA's explicit role in connecting the Party's articulation of its global interests with the PLA's strategic tasks. He stressed the nature of the PLA as a Party-Army which was not as yet postured for overseas military operations – but identified the protection of “overseas interests” as a key policy aspect. He opined that the main theatres of Chinese trade and the emphasis on combat experience may force small-scale, limited engagements. He also mentioned the emphasis on the strategic domain of maritime security, particularly the South China Sea, and Taiwan.
- The discussion, led by **Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan**, brought together the arguments of the three speakers to establish the different facets of China's challenges as also the dimensions of China's ever-increasing global footprint.

#### **SESSION 4**

- The fourth session of the Conference was titled, '**The Party and the Economy**', and it was chaired by **Prof. Seshadri Chari**.
- **Prof. Chari** introduced the theme of the session by discussing the relation between economic reforms and the role of the CPC therein, as also the structural changes in the Party in the post-Mao era. He referred to the then ongoing protests in China as an expression of greater public expectations and asked whether the elites could bring about a change in China or whether there would be another Soviet-style collapse in China.
- **Dr. Priyanka Pandit** spoke on State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and the Party's management of the economy. She underscored the significance of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress for the Chinese economy by dubbing it as the most significant event in 40 years since the 12<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1982. Dr. Pandit argued that the analytical model of state capitalism has proven to be inadequate in explaining the nuances of the state and market relations, and also discussed how the SOE reforms received a boost with the 'Made in China 2025' (MIC 2025) programme under Xi Jinping.

- **Prof. Heribert Dieter** was rather pessimistic about China's economic prospects which he described as "obscure," as he began with the question whether China had started to decline economically and what would be the implications for the CPC. He focused on two key issue areas - real estate and demography – to demonstrate that the best decades of its economic growth were behind the Chinese rise story. He pointed out that on the one hand, China was no longer as attractive as a manufacturing base, on the other, there was already a huge oversupply of real estate in China with a vacancy rate of over 20 per cent, which was exacerbated by the fact that China's population was declining sharply. He cited the example of the business community in Germany, which was increasingly sceptical about China's economic growth and their own businesses in China.
- **Prof. G. Venkat Raman** brought up a somewhat different picture as he discussed the Party-business interface in China where he focused on the recent measures taken by the Party with regard to centrally-owned enterprises or '*yangqis*'. He highlighted the fact that, according to the *Fortune 500* list of 2022, Chinese companies have overpassed the American firms. The Party-state is now controlling more than hundred business groups and financial institutions and by using a combination of hierarchical control and decentralised experiments, and with new institutional arrangements and policy solutions (making markets and innovation work better), the CPC has served as an institutional builder and policy entrepreneur in the evolution of these '*yangqis*'. This is one of the most significant outcomes of China's institutional development of SOEs in recent times.
- The discussion was led by **Dr. Aravind Yelery** who made the interesting observation that the initiative to reform did not come from within the CPC but it were the prevalent domestic conditions and external challenges that compelled the Party to carry out the economic reforms.



## SESSION 5

- The fifth session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled, '**The Party's Narrative-Building Abroad**', and was chaired by **Amb. Vijay Nambiar**. He recalled that Xi Jinping had made it clear as early as 2014 that Chinese diplomacy was marking a clear departure from Deng Xiaoping's 'low-profile' foreign policy approach and would strive to reshape the international order which is driven and dominated by the United States. He pointed out that two focus areas for change in the 'new era' were- first, to counter the central role of liberal ideology in the international order and second, to address the inequitable distribution of power in international institutions.
- **Dr. Tsung-Han Wu** explored the extremely interesting subject of the CPC's approach to the Russian Narrative on Ukraine. Pointing to the Sino-Russian statements such as "friendship without limits" and "no forbidden area of cooperation," Dr. Wu argued that they raised questions on China's ostensible commitment towards taking a neutral stand. He stressed that China and Russia had strengthened their bilateral ties and that China was taking advantage of the Ukraine war to create a cognitive impact on the Taiwan issue in the international domain.
- **Dr. Jabin T. Jacob's** presentation was based on the rationale that though not attracting much international attention, Madagascar was an important yardstick of China's increased presence in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, given that the PRC was not a "normal" state in the sense that it privileges the regime interests, meant that the 'national' interest was not exactly commensurate with the Party's interest, which was more about survival and power. Madagascar demonstrated the CPC's practice of exploiting political uncertainty and instability in economically weak and isolated countries to push agendas favourable to its own interests.
- **Dr. Chien-Yu Shih** spoke on the ethnic minorities policy in the 'new era.' He maintained that while Xi Jinping's rule began in 2012, ethnic policy reforms were carried out from 2014 onwards. Dr. Shih pointed out that the chief characteristic of the new ethnic

minorities policy, however, merely paid lip service to the autonomy of ethnic minorities and in the main were designed to encourage patriotism and allegiance to the CPC.

- The discussion was led by **Lt. Gen. S.L. Narasimhan** who suggested that it was too early to pass any final pronouncements on the ongoing protests in China.

## SESSION 6

- The final session of the Forum was titled, '**Regional Policy**', and was chaired by **Prof. Rashmi Doraiswamy**. She provided a useful historical perspective, tracing the historical importance of the Asian region from the perspectives of the Great Game of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Silk Route, which provided a complex backdrop to the present geopolitics, wherein the PRC-sponsored BRI was a revival of the old Silk Route. She commented upon Russia's responses as being motivated by the antagonistic stance of the Western powers, which would contribute to the further deepening of Russia and China relations.
- **Dr. Ümit Alperen's** presentation analysed China's Middle East policy, comparing its geopolitical interests in the region vis-à-vis its ideological interests, and brought out the transition from 2013, when China's policies broadened to encompass the political and military spheres, in addition to the economic. Notwithstanding China's newfound interest in the Middle East's regional politics, Dr. Alperen maintained that relations with East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the great powers, take priority over the Middle East.
- **Dr. Avinash Godbole** spoke on China's response to developments related to the Indo-Pacific. In his view, China's response to the idea of Indo-Pacific was twofold – political and economic, and China's foreign policy was better understood in terms of a response to structural shifts. An important aspect in this context was China's ideas of 'Asia for Asians' which reflected the PRC's ambition as a 'norm-maker.'

- **Dr. Chang Young-Hee** spoke on the PRC's changing relations with East Asia within the framework of the three pillars of Chinese diplomacy, viz., relations with developed countries, relations with neighbouring countries, and relations with developing countries. In his assessment, China would prioritise its relations with neighbouring countries and would intensify confrontation with the US in the future, while moving closer to developing countries.
- The discussion was led by **Ms. Jyoti Malhotra** who brought in the issues in China-South Asian relations in the context of the PRC's aggressive stance along its borders. She further brought in the perspective of Chinese expanding influence, including its influence over media, especially in Nepal.

### CONCLUDING SESSION

- The Concluding Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @ Goa was chaired by **Prof. Alka Acharya**.
- **Prof. B.R. Deepak** delivered the **Valedictory Address**, which made a case for Xi Jinping "denouncing" the policy paradigms of Deng Xiaoping's era, viz., 'Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones' and 'Economics in Command'. He based his argument on a set of assumptions emanating from the increasing national and international challenges faced by China, the expansion of the scope of 'people's ownership' to facilitate regulation, and on the discourse of power emanating from China. He concluded by asserting that China was not averse to conducting business with India, but firmly against granting India space on the regional or the global stage.
- The **Conference Report** was presented by **Dr. Aravind Yelery**, who summed up the two-day long conference, covering all papers and bringing out the nuances of the different arguments. He endorsed the general opinion of the participants about the high quality of the presentations and discussions, and conveyed his appreciation towards all the delegates and attendees for making the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa a success.

- In his **Closing Remarks**, **Dr. Adrian Haack** described the Conference as “a real international” event. He further added that the Conference was not “anti-China” but “purely academic”, and that it was “very constructive and reflective”. Dr. Haack congratulated the speakers, the Institute of Chinese Studies and the other organisers for making the Conference a huge success.
- **Col. K.L. Roy** gave the **Vote of Thanks** wherein he expressed the shared sentiment of deep gratitude of the organisers towards all the participants, the audience, the young volunteers of Goa University and congratulated all the people involved for superb team work and whole-hearted involvement.

## CONFERENCE REPORT

The 5<sup>th</sup> India Forum on China @Goa (IFC @Goa) was held on November 27–28, 2022. The Conference, which witnessed a grand attendance, was organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), New Delhi, in partnership with the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and in co-operation with Goa University. The theme of the Conference was ‘**Communist Party of China in the ‘New Era’**’.

### INAUGURAL SESSION

The Inaugural Session of the 5th IFC @Goa was chaired by Prof. Alka Acharya, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, and Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Prof. Acharya extended a warm welcome to all the delegates in attendance, as well as to the audience. She highlighted the importance of the IFC @Goa as an emerging platform for both Indian and international scholars to share their expertise and partake in valuable discussions on China. The theme of this year’s Conference was ‘**The Communist Party of China in the ‘New Era’**’ and the primary objective was to explore this currently dominant paradigm in the Peoples’ Republic of China (PRC), from multiple perspectives. The recently concluded 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and the significance of Xi Jinping’s rise, had major implications for the CPC, the PRC, and the world, which would be the focus of the deliberations over the next two days. Prof. Acharya also expressed her happiness at the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa reverting to offline mode.

The **Opening Remarks** for the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa were delivered by **Prof. Aparajita Gangopadhyay**, Dean and Professor, School of International and Area Studies, Goa University, Taleigao. on behalf of Prof. Harilal B. Menon, Vice-Chancellor, Goa University. She introduced the School of International and Area Studies of Goa University, and how, over the last several

years, it has been concerned with expanding the study of China. Prof. Gangopadhyay also spoke of the long association of Goa University with the Institute of Chinese Studies, and conveyed her heartfelt appreciation towards the exceptional turnout at the Conference.

Taking note of the developments in China over the last few decades, Prof. Gangopadhyay talked of how China's profile underwent a decisive change after 1978, and how China's economic model has been hailed by Party elites as an alternative to Neoliberal Globalisation. She also discussed the impact of China's transformation on the domestic front which resulted in political challenges that are visible even today. She also stressed upon China's attempts to gradually put in place alternative multilateral economic institutions, and the PRC's desire to play an active role in global governance. At the same time, China's pursuit of engendering a non-Western outlook among the developing nations of the world was also highlighted. Prof. Gangopadhyay also touched upon the debates surrounding the manner in which the CPC and Party elites view power, and what it could mean for international relations. She concluded her remarks by expressing the hope of future collaborations with the Institute of Chinese Studies.

The Director of the Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung's (KAS) India Office, **Dr. Adrian Haack** in his **Opening Remarks**, expressed his delight in partnering with the Institute of Chinese Studies in organising the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa. He described China as "the most influential player on the global stage", which was however akin to a black box, and he compared the nature of authoritarianism in China and Russia and expressed concern over the PRC's treatment of the human rights question.

Dr. Haack dwelt at length upon the relevance of China to a large number of countries across the world. While the PRC is an important economic partner globally, it continues to pose a military threat to other states. He referred to China as a prospering economy and highlighted the importance of trade and investment between Germany and other EU countries with the PRC. Further, he also highlighted China as being an important trading partner for India, but also mentioned how China was "taking over India's neighbourhood in the Indian Ocean", and

challenging India's Himalayan borders. Dr. Haack also touched upon the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and how China had not contributed positively while the world reeled under the pressure of dealing with the outbreak.

Ending his talk, Dr. Haack appreciated the international participation in the conference and congratulated the Institute of Chinese Studies for bringing together such an august gathering of delegates.

The **Keynote Address** of the Conference was delivered by **Prof. Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit**, Vice-Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. In her address to the gathering, she brought in various factors at play in China. Prof. Pandit shed light upon the political process within China, and the role of the CPC, while positing that China is turning into a "revisionist state".

Prof. Pandit stated that in the post-Covid international order, China has become a very important player. Taking into account the nature of the CPC and its 101-year long history, Prof. Pandit raised an important question regarding the Party's transition from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. Quoting a former secretary of Mao, Prof. Pandit narrated how Mao had been advised that "organisation and propaganda" were the "only two departments" that were needed by CPC. Through this, she brought out the influence of Soviet Russia during the early years of the PRC, and referred to Stalin as "one of the gurus of Mao".

Exploring "the strengths of the Party", Prof. Pandit described the CPC as a strong, unified, coherent organisation, and posited that this is integral to Xi Jinping, who sees it as "a core element" to "drive forward his agenda and policies". She reiterated her earlier question of what held the party together, and shed light upon Xi Jinping's "control over key appointments" and his efforts towards making sure that leaders in important positions are "faithful to the current leadership".

Prof. Pandit commented upon the existing propaganda apparatus including "party schools, publications and T.V. programmes". She brought out the contrast between China and the

democratic nations of the world and how the actions of Chinese citizens “are bound by whatever the Party is deciding at a particular time.” She also highlighted the “ambivalence with regard to the role of the private sector” in the economy, and pointed out that the founding members of the CCP had wanted “to get rid of it entirely” but the Party had eventually been compelled to integrate it into their developmental framework. Prof. Pandit expressed concern over Xi Jinping’s policies towards Tibet and Taiwan, and remarked how the West had been blind to the developments.

Prof. Pandit pertinently remarked that China aimed to contest the United States of America on the global stage, and to challenge the prevalent Western order. However, India and China “are the only two civilisational states to enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution” and she argued that in a post-Westphalian order, we may have to move beyond the “concept of the nation state to a civilisation state”. In the context of China’s international ambitions, she referred to China’s aim to be the pivot of Asia. Prof. Pandit concluded on the note that to understand China, one needs to understand the Communist Party.

The **Vote of Thanks** was delivered by **Dr. Preksha Shree Chhetri**, Research Associate at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi.

## SESSION 1

The First Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled ‘**Party Governance and Leadership**’. This session was chaired by **Amb. Ashok K. Kantha**, former Ambassador of India to China, and former Director, ICS. **Dr. Bhim B. Subba**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Hyderabad Central University, Hyderabad and; Visiting Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, was the first speaker of the session. His paper was titled *Interpreting Elite Politics at the 20th Party Congress*. The second speaker was **Dr. Ming-shih Shen**, Research Fellow, Director & Acting Deputy CEO, Division of National Security Research, Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taipei, who presented on the topic *The Development and Challenges of Military-Civil Fusion in China: After U.S. Sanctions*. **Dr. Roger Chi-feng Liu**,



Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences, FLAME University, Pune, was the third speaker, and he shed light upon *The Evolution of CCP's United Front Work towards Taiwan*. The discussion was led by **Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The Session began with the chair's introduction to the speakers of the session, and the importance of discussing Chinese leadership and the Party governance. Amb. Kantha highlighted the developments under Xi Jinping's leadership, especially in the aftermath of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, in particular, the perennial nature of factionalism in the PRC. He underlined the ramifications of the various policy missteps made by Xi Jinping, which included the Zero-Covid Policy. The chair also expressed his concern over the dismantling of Deng Xiaoping's legacy by Xi Jinping, and commented upon the manner in which the same would influence policy and governance in China. He also touched upon the extreme centralisation within the PRC, how Xi Jinping was accumulating power around him and the long-term effects of the same.

The first speaker, **Dr. Bhim B. Subba**, traced the turnover in the Politburo and the Central Committee of the CPC, and also dwelt on the various factors that influence representation in the party. He explored the question as to how "Xi Jinping selects leaders" within the CPC, especially in the wake of the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. Dr. Subba also analysed the nature of membership within the Party, and pointed out how elites and academicians have found their place within its folds. He also commented upon the age profile of the leaders within the Party, noting that the average age was around 52 years. Discussing the representation of women in the Party, Dr. Subba pointed out that it had not increased in the last several years, and that the same held true for the minority groups. He described their representation in the CPC as "tokenism".

Dr. Subba's presentation also shed light upon representation from the provinces, and noted that a substantial number of leaders were now emerging from Fujian, Zhejiang, and Shaanxi,

while membership from Hebei had decreased. The presentation also delved into the process of “institutional balancing” with respect to the CPC’s Politburo, commenting that it had earlier been balanced in all respects. He also referred to the educational backgrounds of the CPC members, stating that the number of members with PhDs, especially in the fields of economics and engineering, has increased. Dr. Subba thus shed light upon the outlook of the CPC, and Xi Jinping’s vision for the future.

His presentation raised several pertinent questions, particularly the issue of loyalty towards Xi Jinping or the Party. Dr. Subba’s talk afforded an insightful perspective into the functioning of the elites within the CPC.

The second speaker, **Dr. Ming-shih Shen**, brought out the historical development of Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) in China, and the challenges that MCF has faced over the years. He recalled that historically, the relationship between the “Red Army or the PLA” and the “people” had been likened to the relationship between “fish and water”.

He dwelt upon the CPC’s capabilities towards “mobilising military and social resources” through its “organisation management system” and referred to the technological advancements that China has achieved, and plans to achieve in the future. Further, he mentioned how China was pursuing “advanced military capabilities”, which include hypersonic and electromagnetic weapons. He, thus brought the focus to bear on the continuing rise of China, and its implications. He further talked about the renewed efforts towards MCF since 2017, under Xi Jinping. Dr. Shen mentioned that a “dedicated unit” was established within the CPC, called the ‘Central Military-Civil Fusion Development Committee,’ and how a concerted endeavour has been made by the CPC to involve civilian enterprises in military research. The debilitating effects of sanctions imposed by the United States upon the Chinese military establishment, hampering the CPC’s drive towards greater military-civil fusion, were also discussed briefly. The challenges to the MCF were also discussed, which included the “lack of expertise” in China needed to achieve the desired military-civil fusion.

The third speaker, **Dr. Roger Liu**, presented a fresh outlook on the CPC's United Front Works (UFW), and how it is focused on division and manipulation. He explained how the UFW comprises propaganda, as well as disseminating "good stories" about China, especially in the countries that fall under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Commenting upon the case of Taiwan, which does not form part of the BRI, Dr. Liu mentioned how a connection exists between the mainland and Taiwan, which makes infiltration through the UFW easier. Regarding Taiwan, there is also a focus on upholding the One-China Principle. Engendering and nurturing "patriotic" and "pro-unification" sentiment among the forces in Taiwan is also a key tenet assigned to the UFW, so as to facilitate the incorporation of the Taiwanese people to the mainland. Dr. Liu also drew attention to how the Overseas Chinese have become the focus of the UFW, thus emphasising its centrality in the CPC's agenda.

The lead discussant, **Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary**, added some new insights to the issues raised by the presentations, especially regarding the importance of economic performance to the CPC's legitimacy. The perspectives brought out by the speakers allowed for a lively discussion, as the other delegates as well as the audience put forth various questions, which ranged from the division of research areas (PhDs) between the social sciences and the natural sciences within the party elites; the importance of the SOEs for the CPC; and the gap between the US and China in military terms according to Taiwanese scholarly assessments.

## SESSION 2

The second session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled '**Ideas and Narratives**'. The session was chaired by **Prof. Mumin Chen**, Deputy Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center, New Delhi; Professor of International Politics, National Chung Hsing University, Taichung. **Prof. Alka Acharya**, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, was the first speaker of this session, and her paper was titled, "*Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*": A Teleological Analysis. **Mr. Tuvia Gering**, Researcher, Israel-China Policy Center, Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Tel Aviv; Non-Resident Fellow, Global China Hub, Atlantic Council,

Washington D.C., was the second speaker of the session, whose topic was *The Role of Intellectuals in Constructing China's International Discourse Power*. The third speaker was **Dr. Anand P. Krishnan**, Visiting Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and Guest Course Instructor, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, (Nov 2022-Jan 2023). His paper was titled, *Class Politics, Labour and the Party in the New Era*. In this session, the discussion was led by **Prof. Ravni Thakur**, Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi.

In his opening remarks, the chair, **Prof. Mumin Chen**, pointed to the importance of ideology in understanding the CPC and in studying Chinese politics. He recalled his experience in Beijing as a young research scholar, where he was exposed to the manner in which the Chinese interpreted the outside world, and the role that ideology played in the same.

**Prof. Alka Acharya**, the first speaker for the session also underscored the importance of the CPC's emphasis on ideological formulations, and hence the necessity of historicising and deconstructing the CPC's propositions. In most of the prominent Western writings, she pointed out, "Ideology" appears to have reverted to its "cold war usage". Tracing the developments during the post-Mao era, Prof. Acharya dwelt upon the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress where 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics became the "basis of a fundamental, far-reaching, restructuring of domestic policy that led to yet more far reaching changes in Chinese foreign policy". She stated that Mao had "introduced the concept", Deng Xiaoping "focussed on creating the material conditions" and Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao "carried on its transition into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Bringing the focus on Xi Jinping, Prof. Acharya mentioned that the "new Era" would showcase the "Chinese road to modernity", with its implication that a Chinese model does exist, and that China would "lay the foundations of Marxism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

The second speaker, **Mr. Tuvia Gering**, examined the ideas underlying Xi Jinping's power within China. Taking the viewpoint of a "narrative," and the "narrative imperatives" of the CPC, Mr. Gering labelled the General-Secretary of the CPC as China's "storyteller-in-chief" he averred that Xi Jinping's intention was to ensure that the Chinese tell their own stories, and

prevent the dominance of western perspectives when it comes to matters Chinese. Mr. Gering also argued that for Xi Jinping, the idea of China as a credible and lovable country needs to be shared with the world. Such a narrative plays an integral role in the CPC's drive towards great power status, and forms a cornerstone of the CPC's agenda.

**Dr. Anand P. Krishnan**, the third speaker of the session, explored class politics and labour in the 'new era', and underscored the fact that there has been a "precipitous decline in the status of workers" in China, over the period of the market reforms. Utilising the sociologist Joel Andreas' concept of "industrial citizenship", Dr. Krishnan spoke about how the contemporary status of labour has shifted from its original foundations to workers now merely being "hired hands" and the consistent "political disenfranchisement of labour" in China. This development is more "acute, now, in the 'new era'". Dr. Krishnan further mentioned how autonomous activities are not encouraged, and that there is an emphasis on industrial stability within the PRC. In that context he also brought in the decline of the peasants and workers in the overall membership of the CPC and the designation of leadership roles among the elites within the CPC. Dr. Krishnan concluded his presentation by stating that from the perspective of labour, China today is "less Marxist and more Leninist when it comes to discipline, command and control".

The discussion was led by **Prof. Ravni Thakur**, who added further depth to the session by shedding light upon the role of intellectuals in China over the last several years, and added greater nuance to the arguments.

### SESSION 3

The third session of the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa was titled '**The Party's Global Interests**' and was chaired by **Prof. Varun Sahni**, Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The speakers in this session were **Dr. Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Fellow, Asia Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin, whose topic was *External Challenges to CPC Legitimacy*; **Dr. Rajiv**

**Ranjan**, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, who spoke on *Ecological Civilization and The Path Towards Carbon Neutrality in China: From Political Slogans and Theoretical Construct to Global Responsibility*; and **Dr. Isaac B. Kardon**, Assistant Professor, Center for Naval Warfare Studies, US Naval War College, Newport, who presented on the topic *The People's Liberation Army: Overseas Missions after the 20th Party Congress*. The discussion was led by **Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan**, Founding Editor, *The Wire*.

In his opening remarks, the Chair talked of how developments within China engender a sombre curiosity among those outside China with regard to the impact of these developments on them. The professor also made an equivalence between understanding developments within China and understanding China's external projections. **Dr. Gudrun Wacker** focussed on the issue of legitimacy and its transformative stages, and how it played out in the context of the Party and its leadership. She posited that, in the process of reclaiming the party's legitimacy, we were witnessing a shift from "output-based legitimacy" to a "different type of legitimacy", which would be driven by the need to "defend China's interests" and that there is no room for alternative voices and perspectives.

Dr. Wacker further commented upon the criticism faced by China from the outside world, and how there was an effort underway to build a tool box to deflect such criticism, especially from the West. Dr. Wacker also touched upon the recent visit to Taiwan by US Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and the implications of the same within and without China. Further, she spoke about China's interests in Africa, and mentioned how China holds positions of relevance in all UN organisations

The second speaker, **Dr. Rajiv Ranjan**, presented a fresh perspective on the notion of carbon neutrality in China. He started his talk with an emphasis on how "everything in China begins with a slogan", noting that the concept of "ecological civilisation" also began in the same manner, with the responsibility of giving a "pronounced manifestation of the concept" falling upon academics and policymakers in China. Dr. Ranjan examined the change in terminology

from “ecological Marxism” to “ecological civilisation”, which he stated was due to the CPC’s need to shift the focus from the “economic and environmental disaster” borne out of the “capitalist mode of production”, in China’s development. He highlighted the manner in which the Communist Party projects its plans globally and exhibits its accountability in matters of global concern.

Dr. Ranjan spoke of how efforts towards carbon neutrality will affect the working class in China. He also talked about the burden it would place on the Chinese economy, as well as on Chinese society as China undergoes the shifts to a carbon neutral life. He further referred to the CPC’s efforts towards bringing in a Chinese way of defining the issues and Chinese characteristics into the task of achieving sustainable development.

**Dr. Isaac B. Kardon** was the third speaker of the session, and his presentation explored the role of the PLA beyond the boundaries of the PRC. He stressed upon the need to think of the “practical implications” and scenarios that may play out especially in the Indian Ocean Region, where one might “expect to see more PLA forces”. Dr. Kardon dwelt upon how the PLA’s “lack of combat” and “practical experience” weighs heavily on the PLA leadership, and that it could be surmised that they are “looking for ways to demonstrate some of their capability”, but not necessarily through war. In that context, he pointed out that the “external security environment” or the “strategic environment” of China was discussed extensively by the “new 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress leadership”.

Dr. Kardon referred to the PLA’s emphasis on the strategic domain of maritime security, particularly the South China Sea, and Taiwan and an obvious “appetite” for more confrontations with the US, in China. The PRC’s emerging role as a global military power, implied that China’s maritime footprint would only increase over time, from the Taiwan Straits, the South and East China Seas, to the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The discussion was led by **Mr. Siddharth Varadarajan**, who summed up the points and arguments made by the three speakers in an adept manner.

## SESSION 4

The fourth session was on ‘**The Party and The Economy**’ and was chaired by **Prof. Seshadri Chari**, Chairman, China Study Centre, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Manipal. **Dr. Priyanka Pandit**, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR, was the first speaker and her paper was titled *SOEs and the Party's Management of the Economy*. The second presentation was made by **Prof. Heribert Dieter**, Senior Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin, and Adjunct Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. His presentation was titled *China's Obscure Economic Prospects: Implications for the CPC*. The third presentation was made by **Prof. G. Venkat Raman**, Professor, Humanities & Social Sciences Area, Indian Institute of Management Indore, and Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and was titled *Party-Business Interface in China: Governance with Chinese Characteristics*. The lead discussant for the session was **Dr. Aravind Yelery**, Senior Research Fellow, Peking University, Beijing/ Shenzhen; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The chair, **Prof. Seshadri Chari**, opened the session with an exposition on the relationship between economic reforms and the role of the Party. He raised questions regarding the capability of the CPC in the process of restructuring of the Party organisation and the State Owned Enterprises. He brought in the aspect of political change in China and deliberated on the implications of China's economic slowdown, were it to follow the same trajectory as that of the former Soviet Union.

**Dr. Priyanka Pandit**, began by providing an overview of the differences between the “ideological and political direction” of the economy, tracing the shifts in policy from the 12th Party Congress in 1982 to the 20<sup>th</sup>, in 2022. Dr. Pandit argued that the “dissipation of State-Market tensions” with the two “complementing each other” was not unique to China, but was a feature which could be seen in many developing countries. Defining SOEs as the “building blocks of the socio-economic life” in China, Dr. Pandit traced their development from the



1930s when both the CPC and the KMT stressed on State monopoly of resources, the roots of which could be found in Imperial China. She noted that the State enterprises gained “centre stage” in 1949 owing to the socioeconomic construction process; “the visible hand of the State mobilised the invisible hand of the market”. A “new phase” began in 1986, and China's preparations to apply for the membership to the WTO, was “utilised as the justification for SOE Reform”. The period between 1990s and 2000s was described as following the CPC's “guerrilla-style policy-making” where decentralisation within the centralised framework took place.

Dr. Pandit concluded that while Xi Jinping's ‘Made in China, 2025’ policy has boosted SOE reforms, it is also quite apparent that both the anti-corruption campaign and the simultaneous strengthening of the Party Committees within the SOEs, has clearly curtailed their role.

The second presentation by **Prof. Heribert Dieter** dealt with the question 'has the Chinese economy started to decline?' by focusing on the demographic trends and the challenges arising from the real estate sector. Describing the housing price crisis as a “home-grown problem”, the speaker highlighted the role of the Party's policies in producing the economic challenges. He linked the problems related to an ageing population with the lack of domestic demand in the property market. When combined with the problem of oversupply of real estate property, it constituted a “toxic mixture” for the Chinese economy. Prof. Dieter noted that China is no longer an attractive manufacturing hub for European companies, which are looking for alternatives such as India. Such a trend, he emphasised, would weaken the legitimacy of the CPC. Stating that China's “economic decline has begun”, Prof. Dieter predicted that in the near future China would begin to “mirror Japan but would be much poorer”, which would also significantly affect its ability to “conduct conflicts”.

The third speaker, **Prof. G. Venkat Raman**, focused on the role of the Party's control of the big SOE conglomerates or *Yangqi*, which has witnessed a distinct shift from ‘government-enterprise separation’ to a more direct and forceful role of the Party in their decision-making. Under Xi, these *Yangqis* can be more appropriately described as ‘CPC Inc.’ rather than ‘China Inc.’ Prof. Venkat highlighted three modes of party intervention. First, the CPC has developed a

feedback process of the three Es: Explore, Experiment, and Expand. Second, the CPC has used its nomenklatura system to ensure the rotation of leaders in crucial leadership positions, and curb any scope for potential “departmentalism.” Third, through the party organs like CCDI, the Party has engaged in building massive ‘mobilization capacity’. For instance, in 2020 alone, the CPC ordered 7,597 rectification campaigns for 42 firms. Prof. Venkat Raman pointed out that in attempting to establish a vice-like grip on the enterprises, the CPC’s objectives were to prepare the *Yangqis* to implement the ‘go global’ strategy; transform them into formidable competitors in the domestic and international markets; and institutionalize the Party’s role in the SOEs.

The lead discussant **Dr. Aravind Yelery** commented on how the presentations had brought out the dichotomous nature of Party control of the economy as well as the challenges and opportunities that it produces for the CPC and how it can be used to analyse the functioning of the State-Market relations in China in particular and developing nations in general. Questions from the floor pertained to the future trajectory of the role of the leadership in the Chinese economy; the differences between Party’s decision-making bodies and the State Council and the weakening of the latter under Xi Jinping. There were also queries relating to the link between political stability and economic growth, the nature of the challenge from the huge Non-Performing Assets, the differences in trends of demographic changes owing to an ageing population in Japan and China as well as the role of the State in the Evergrande real estate crisis.

## SESSION 5

The fifth session titled ‘**The Party’s Narrative-Building Abroad**’ was chaired by **Amb. Vijay Nambiar**, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Ambassador/High Commissioner of India to China, Pakistan and other countries. **Dr. Tsung-han Wu**, Assistant Research Fellow, Division of Cyber Security and Decision Making Simulation, Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taipei made the first presentation titled, *The CPC’s Approach to the Russian Narrative on the Ukraine Invasion*. The second presentation was made

by **Dr. Jabin T. Jacob**, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR, and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. His presentation was titled *The CPC's Foreign Policy: Promoting the China Model in Madagascar*. The third presentation was made by **Dr. Chien-yu Shih**, Associate Research Fellow, Division of National Security Research, Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taipei and was titled *Ethnic Minorities Policy in the New Era: Xinjiang as an Illustration*. The lead discussant for the session was **Lt. Gen. S. L. Narasimhan**, Director General, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, New Delhi; Member, National Security Advisory Board, Government of India.

**Amb. Vijay Nambiar** opened the session by remarking on the shift in the discourse of Chinese foreign policy from Deng Xiaoping's low profile to Xi Jinping's emphasis on not only challenging the Western liberal ideology and hence American exceptionalism, but also advancing a case for adopting Chinese wisdom and solutions. There are also increasing calls for changes in the global institutions where China finds itself to be at a disadvantage as compared to Western nations and increasingly, new initiatives such as the Global Security Initiative, are being put forth by Beijing. The attempts to strike a balance between Land and Sea, Security and Economic Diplomacy as well as Hard and Soft power; the role and impact of the Pandemic as well as the goals and limits of China's leadership efforts were discussed. The question of whether Xi Jinping would escalate the Taiwan issue or continue to maintain strategic patience was put forth.

The first speaker, **Dr. Tsung-han Wu**, traced the development of China-Russia relations from 1992 after the fall of the Soviet Union till 2022, pointing out that the present era was characterised by the closest ties between the two nations. Dr Wu highlighted the role of the Chinese state media in promoting the Russian view of the war as being a product of Western hegemony and NATO expansionism, which disregarded Russia's core sovereign concerns. He stated that the Chinese media also projected the view that the PRC's cooperation with Moscow has been used as an opportunity to pressurise Taiwan. The speaker linked the question of why China supports Russia despite its economic interests in Ukraine to the broader goal of

“delegitimising Taiwanese society” and the United States through the narrative that the United States is not likely to help Taiwan when it comes to unification with China. Chinese celebrities in Ukraine were also used by the Chinese government to further promote the narrative of how the Chinese government helped the Chinese and Taiwanese people during the Russia-Ukraine War. The Chinese State media actively “echoed the Russian narrative” through the portrayal of the Russia-Ukraine War as a conflict not with Ukraine but between Russia and the United States and NATO, to defend “core values” such as sovereignty on which both Xi and Putin share similar ideas. The Chinese media also took up the conspiracy theories circulating in Russia which claimed the presence of bio research labs in Ukraine where the United States allegedly researched about “a highly dangerous virus”. This narrative was used to trace the origin of the virus to the United States and defend the Chinese government’s Zero Covid Policy.

The second speaker, **Dr. Jabin T. Jacob**, began with making a distinction between the “regime’s interests” of survival (with reference to the CPC), and the State’s “national interests” in the realm of foreign policy and argued that the former took precedence. His paper examined the CPC’s attempts at ‘narrative building’ in Madagascar, the fourth largest island in the world. The Party’s role in exploiting political instability and economic weaknesses of countries so as to push forward an agenda favourable to it, was analysed with several examples of economic aid and investments, tourism, the role of the Chinese diplomatic mission, emphasis on adoption of legislations favouring the bilateral ties in the host country and most importantly, people to people contacts, particularly with the intelligentsia, through friendship associations, dinners hosted by the Chinese embassy, media interactions by Chinese diplomatic staff such as newspaper editorials, Confucius Institutes and language training exchanges. The readiness of the Chinese to sponsor “pet projects” as desired by the host nation’s leadership through huge investments was also brought out. With respect to changes, Dr. Jacob highlighted the “cultural confidence” reflected in the 20th Party Congress Report, which stands in sharp contrast to the Mao era policies. He noted that under Xi, China has stepped up its role of “promoting its economic model” and convincing developing nations to “try it out”. Such attempts, noted Dr. Jacob, lend credence to the view that China does not want to “play the second fiddle” anymore and desires to take the lead.

The third speaker, **Dr. Chien-yu Shih**, discussed the shifts in the Party's policy towards ethnic minorities, with respect to Xinjiang, by identifying three cliques within the Party: the First generation, termed as the “Ethnic Regional Autonomy Clique”, favoured ethnic regional autonomy; the Second generation clique, termed as the “National Construction Clique”, which combined ethnic regional autonomy with political engineering thus favouring National construction and integration over autonomy as well as a third clique, which has never been described, focused on economic flexibility but political rigidity. The speaker highlighted how since 2014, the policy under Xi Jinping has seen an amalgamation of the second and third cliques and the waning of the first clique, with the former gaining a central role. It was emphasised how the current focus of the Chinese leadership, in the context of “making the Chinese nation”, lays stress on “assimilation”. The speaker also highlighted the human rights abuses in Xinjiang and in his estimation, a well-defined policy could surface by the next year.

In his response to the papers, the lead discussant, **Lt. Gen. S.L. Narasimhan**, particularly highlighted the significance of the enhancement in Sino-Russian ties since the Ukraine war and how it helped in understanding China's foreign policy trajectory. A lively Q&A session followed which focused on the advantages that the Chinese leadership gets from its narrative building in Madagascar and the credibility of the Chinese position on the Russia-Ukraine war among other nations in the world. Some participants also identified other strategies of the Party's narrative-building, which involved the use of several Chinese associations such as Buddhist Association of China and Friendship Associations to attracting students and teachers to their universities.

Dr. Wu noted that the Party's narrative building in the case of the Russian-Ukraine War has not only aimed at supporting Russia but also at “devaluing” the legitimacy of the NATO member countries and the United States. Addressing the question on the “quid pro quo” the Chinese leaders get out of the narrative building in the case of Madagascar, Dr. Jacob noted that such narratives “strengthen the rule of the Party”, “massage its ego” as well as garner support for its

“pet projects” with ready economic aid provided to the host countries for the projects they desire.

## SESSION 6

The sixth session titled ‘**Regional Policy**’ was chaired by **Prof. Rashmi Doraiswamy**, Professor, MMAJ Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The first presentation was made by **Dr. Ümit Alperen**, Assistant Professor, Süleyman Demirel University, Department of International Relations, Isparta-Turkey, Senior Researcher, Ankara Policy Center, Ankara and was titled *China's Middle East Policy: Geopolitical Interests vs. Ideological Interests*. The second presentation was made by **Dr. Avinash Godbole**, Associate Professor & Assistant Academic Dean, Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities, OP Jindal Global University, Sonipat. His presentation was titled *China's Response to the Indo-Pacific*. The third presentation was made by **Dr. Chang Young-Hee**, Research Professor, Sungkyun Institute of China Studies, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul and it was titled *PRC's Changing Relations with East Asian Countries: From Security-Interest-Identity Perspectives*. The lead discussant for the session was **Ms. Jyoti Malhotra**, Senior Consulting Editor, *ThePrint*.

In her opening remarks, **Prof. Rashmi Doraiswamy** elaborated on the dynamic nature of the larger Asian region and how alliances span different regions and yet do not deter nations belonging to one alliance from cooperating with nations of another alliance. Russia's increasing role in the region was highlighted, which comes into sharper relief in the context of the western countries increasingly adopting a very strong stance against it. The chair also pointed out how newer dynamics such as the Belt and Road Initiative, were reshaping the region.

The first presentation by **Dr. Ümit Alperen** focused on China's foreign policy in the Middle East, a region ridden with political, ethnic and religious conflicts. China's increasing footprint in the region is reflected in the shift from its initial focus on investments, to the announcement of a ‘comprehensive foreign policy’ in 2013, which has sought to maintain the “intra-regional

balance between Israel, Iran and the Arab states while keeping away from the chronic turmoil of the region". This was reflected in the fact that the Chinese have demonstrated "no inclination" to resolve the Palestinian issue so far. With respect to Sino-Iran relations, Dr. Alperen pointed out that though Chinese foreign policy is critical of Western sanctions against the Iranian nuclear programme, it does not intend to engage in any confrontation with the US over Tehran and rather prefers an "Iran-Israel-Arab Balance of Power". He concluded by raising the question whether China would be able to fulfil its commitments under the 25 year deal with Iran, without altering the balance of power?

The importance of fostering relations with the Middle Eastern nations, particularly the US allies amidst a declining American influence in the region, for garnering support for the PRC's policies with respect to Taiwan and Uyghurs was described as "hitting two birds with a single stone". The role of the smaller states in the region in balancing power relations between a declining United States and the enhanced Chinese presence was also examined.

The second presentation by **Dr. Avinash Godbole** focused on China's response to the developments in the Indo-Pacific, which have been understood by the PRC as attempts to curtail China's rise and impose a US-hegemonic order. The liberal democratic order and the narrative of openness and inclusiveness in the Indo-Pacific was highlighted as a major challenges to China, which the speaker noted, would continue to be countered with the narrative of Chinese style democracy being the broadest of all political systems. The distinction between the terms 'Indo-Pacific' and 'Asia-Pacific' was also noted. The role concepts such as the 'Community of Shared Destiny' and 'Neighbourhood Diplomacy' under Xi Jinping, were an attempt to build a narrative directed against the presence and role of the Western powers in Asian affairs. Dr. Godbole put forth two questions for further deliberation: did a military response from China become more prominent at its strongest or weakest point and secondly, was there was a need for India to change its narrative of emphasising 'inclusivity' in a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The third presentation by **Dr. Chang Young-Hee**, focused on China's role in East Asia, noting that the rhetoric of China's hard-line criticism of Western double standards and hegemonism spring not from its strength but the deep seated vulnerabilities and fears of collapse embedded in the CPC-led One-Party system. The speaker pointed out that in the face of the growing geopolitical relevance of the Korean Peninsula for both the US and China, it was highly likely that China would continue to attach more relevance to the North Korean values which would distance it from South Korea, in order to push for a China-led order. Dr. Chang argued that Xi was likely to pursue strategic patience on the Taiwan issue as a way of “re-legitimising himself”, particularly in view of the negative fallout of the 2019 pro-democracy Hong Kong protests.

The Q&A session saw a vibrant discussion led by **Ms. Jyoti Malhotra**, who highlighted the increasing Chinese influence in South Asia but also the growing local discontent against Chinese investments and other projects, which often result in displacement of people and the dispossession of their land. Questions related to Saudi Arabia's proximity to China, to which Dr. Alperen noted that it was the Western boycott of Mohammad Bin Salman over human rights abuses that pushed Riyadh towards China. The factors underlying China's aggression towards its neighbours particularly India and its future trajectory were also discussed and in this context Dr. Godbole noted that Beijing considers “teaching India a lesson” as a way of sending a “message to other nations” and thus asserting its power. Dr. Chang noted that while it is true that China's insecurity emerges from its One-Party System, it is also true that the “US hegemonic supremacy has hurt the economy and security” of its allies in the region which would have wider repercussions for not just the Korean peninsula but also the neighbouring countries.

### **CONCLUDING SESSION**

The concluding session was chaired by **Prof. Alka Acharya**, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The Valedictory address was delivered by **Prof. B.R. Deepak**, Professor,



Centre for Chinese & South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, titled 'Xi Jinping's China: Denouncing the Era of "Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones"'. **Dr. Aravind Yelery**, Co-Convener, 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa; Senior Research Fellow, Peking University, Beijing/Shenzhen; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi presented the Conference report. The Concluding remarks were delivered by **Dr. Adrian Haack**, Director, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, New Delhi and **Col. K.L. Roy** Research Affiliate, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, delivered the vote of thanks.

In his Valedictory Address, **Prof. B.R. Deepak** highlighted the deviation of the Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping from the norm that had characterised the Deng Xiaoping era, viz, 'crossing a river by feeling the stones.' This he said was being denounced by the CPC, and the 'stones' that the Party leadership had decided to avoid are the norms defined by the West. There was a growing realisation within the leadership that "the Chinese bridge is better than the stones they have felt for all these years". Prof. Deepak emphasised on the prevalent notion among the CPC that the Party's command has been compromised during the Reform era by the leadership who failed to inherit the 'red gene' and hence, the growing emphasis that no one would be allowed to compromise the Party's theoretical direction, system and culture. The threat of a political and economic coup by his detractors has prompted the Xi regime to tighten its control and rule in a top-down fashion. A still strong though faltering economy with bad finances and depreciation of the Renminbi, growing domestic discontent particularly in university spaces over the Zero Covid policy and the Chinese style democracy as well as the growing social inequalities were identified as the major challenges.

The speaker explicated on a range of issues including China's growing domestic and international challenges; the goal of expanding people's ownership and achieving the two centenary goals; building alternatives such as the Community of Shared Destiny so as to denounce the West on developmental aspects. On relations with India, Prof Deepak believed, that though China would not be averse to do business with New Delhi, it would continue to deny it space on a regional and global level.

In the Conference Report, **Dr. Aravind Yelery** emphasised how deep levels of deliberation concerned with sustaining Party rule precede any decision made by the CPC. By presenting a nuanced summary of each session of the Conference, Dr. Yelery expressed his admiration for the vast and enriching discussions that the Conference entailed with respect to the ideological and existential ecosystem of the Party, particularly with the active participation of young and established scholars alike. By highlighting the rise of the East and decline of the West as a new premise of historical materialism, Dr. Yelery summarised the key takeaways from the Conference and put forth the question if the coming years would prove to be a 'new 1982' in Chinese politics with the possibility of the fall of the Xi faction.

In his closing remarks, **Dr. Adrian Haack** stated that the Conference was not just a highly constructive and reflective platform but proved to be a truly international academic forum which saw the participation of scholars from different regions of the world and from different academic fields, enriching the discussion on the “black box” that is China, with a wide range of perspectives spanning historical, economic, political, military and other aspects. Dr. Haack also pointed to the need for “reconfiguration of terminologies” to better reflect regional perspectives.

**Prof. Alka Acharya** emphasised the need to reflect upon and examine whether scholars in India had access to adequate resources and institutional support, as also the right attitudes and mindsets to embark on a serious, in-depth research on China. She expressed the hope that the IFC @Goa would continue to encourage China scholars to engage and interact with each other, and promote multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary scholarship on China, which was the need of the hour.

On behalf of the ICS, **Col. K.L. Roy** expressed his thanks to the two highly renowned organizations, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung & Goa University for partnering with the ICS in organizing the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa. All three institutions teamed up with complete synergy from the very beginning and facilitated the smooth planning and conduct of the conference. He acknowledged the positive and spirited keynote address by Prof. Santishree Pandit, Vice

Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and the thought-provoking Valedictory remarks of Prof B.R. Deepak as providing an excellent start and end to the conference. He also thanked all the speakers and participants for sharing the wealth of their scholarship and insights, which not only promoted greater understanding but also led to lively and animated debates.

He further expressed his appreciation for the excellent participation from various establishments of the Armed Forces including Defence Services Staff College Wellington, Naval War College, Goa, College of Defence Management, Secunderabad & HQ Integrated Defence Staff, New Delhi, and expressed the hope that this association and academic engagement will flourish in the future as well.

He concluded by acknowledging the efforts of all ICS and KAS staff and colleagues as also the young volunteers from Goa University, who worked very hard in the background to make the conference an extremely memorable one.

#### **MEDIA COVERAGE**

The proceedings at the 5<sup>th</sup> IFC @Goa received coverage in both traditional and social media. Updates with regard to the various sessions of the Conference were posted across ICS' social media handles on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

The Conference was covered by two leading Indian media houses, and articles titled, '[Why China's protests against Zero Covid won't challenge Xi Jinping yet](#)' on 05 Dec 2022, and '[Ladakh stand-off is a signal to India against infrastructure construction in 'disputed territory'. says expert](#)' on 25 Dec 2022, were published by *ThePrint* and *The Hindu*, respectively.

## IMAGE GALLERY













## INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE



The Institute of Chinese Studies (estd. 1969), New Delhi, is an institution engaged in and committed to interdisciplinary research on China. Apart from the annual All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS), the Institute undertakes various collaborative research programs and multilateral initiatives with prominent institutions in India and abroad, and brings together leading and upcoming scholars through multiple fora. Among its many legacies, it has been conducting the iconic Wednesday Seminar for over 50 years and publishes *China Report*, a double-blind peer-reviewed quarterly journal on China and East Asia, currently in its 58<sup>th</sup> year of publication.



The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is a German foundation established in 1955, with its headquarters at Sankt Augustin near Bonn, and also in Berlin. Through political education and counselling, the foundation campaigns worldwide for peace, freedom and justice. Its principal aim is to preserve and promote liberal democracy and strengthen international dialogue. The KAS India Office was established more than 50 years ago and it has been working with Indian partner institutions such as Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), The Energy Research Institute (TERI) and the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS).



**Goa University** was established under the Goa University Act of 1984 (Act No. 7 of 1984) and commenced operations on 1 June 1985. The University provides higher education in the Indian state of Goa. Over the past 30 years, the University has steadily expanded its reach, both in terms of the number of affiliated colleges - professional and general education numbering to 56, as well as the diversity of courses offered. These colleges offer various courses leading to a degree at graduate, post-graduate level. 12 of them are also recognized as research centres to offer Ph.D. programmes. The University has 26 Departments and 2 Centres offering 33 programmes leading to Master's degree, 21 programmes leading to M.Phil. Degree and 25 programmes leading to Ph.D. degree in various disciplines. In addition, 9 research institutions in various disciplines situated in the state of Goa are also recognised for research programmes leading to Ph.D. degree by the University.