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The 18th All India Conference of China Studies

Theme:
Rewiring Globalization—
The China Factor in Trade, Technology,
and Sustainability in a Multipolar World

October 24-26, 2025



ABOUT

ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES (AICCS)

The Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) has been organising the All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) as a flagship event since 2006. Convened annually, usually in November-December, in partnership with an institution where research and teaching in China Studies is being carried out, it is meant to generate interest in and strengthen research on China Studies in India.

In addition to a special theme each year, the conference also showcases a survey of recent scholarship in different aspects of China Studies, globally as well as in India. As a pan-Indian outreach initiative, the previous editions of AICCS have been held in Delhi (2006 & 2009), Jadavpur University (2010), Central University of Hyderabad (2011), Visva- Bharati University (2012 & 2021), IIM Kozhikode (2013), Banaras Hindu University (2014), Sikkim University (2015), University of Mumbai (2016), Goa University (2017), CHRIST University (2018), O.P. Jindal Global University (2019), IIT Madras (2021), IIT Guwahati (2022), and Central University of Hyderabad (2023).

Each year, the best paper presented by a young and emerging scholar is selected for the Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award, instituted in the memory of one of the most eminent scholars of China Studies in India. The Award carries a prize of 25,000 INR and the selected paper is published by the ICS. The selection is made by a committee comprising senior China scholars, on the basis of originality of the topic, methodology, argument and presentation.

CONCEPT NOTE

The Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), New Delhi, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management, Indore, is organising the 18th All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) from October 24-26, 2025. The AICCS has been a flagship event of the ICS since 2006. This year's special theme is 'Rewiring Globalization: The China Factor in Trade, Technology, and Sustainability in a Multipolar World'.

The AICCS embodies contemporary, emergent scholarship from universities and research institutions on Chinese studies. Convened annually in partnership with an institution engaged in research and teaching in China Studies, this premier conference continues to generate interest in and strengthen research on China Studies in India.

The conference focuses on the opportunities and challenges arising from the evolving dynamics of trade, technology, and sustainability in the global landscape. It also aims to explore how these shifts impact India's strategic and economic interests, particularly in the context of changing global power structures and interdependencies.

Over the past decade, China's integration into the global economy has influenced international trade, technology, and supply chains. Its 'Beijing Consensus' model—rooted in state-led economic strategies, targeted industrial policies, and region-specific growth—has played a key role in its rise across sectors like emerging technologies, renewable energy, and manufacturing. Initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have extended China's economic influence, reshaping supply chains and economic diplomacy. Further, China's 14th Five-Year Plan focuses on significant investments in climate change and the digital economy.

However, these developments have raised concerns globally, with issues such as trade tensions, supply chain vulnerabilities, and technological dependencies coming to the forefront. China's dominance in renewable energy has also sparked debates on sustainability and the risks of market concentration, affecting global climate goals and multilateral cooperation.

For India, these shifts present both challenges and strategic opportunities. As India charts its growth trajectory, it must address questions of economic security, technological resilience, and sustainable development amid rising global competition.

The AICCS provides a platform for scholars, policymakers, and industry leaders to assess these dynamics, offering fresh perspectives on how India can strengthen its position in the global order, build resilient supply chains, and promote sustainable growth.

The sub-themes include, but are not limited to, the following: China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy (China and Indo-Pacific, China and South-East Asia, China and South Asia, China's Economic Diplomacy); Geopolitics of Technology: The China Factor; Power Contestations in a Multipolar World: India, China and the West; Culture, Society, and Religion in China; China's Domestic Politics; Future of India-China Economic Engagement; Renewable Energy and Global Supply Chains: The China Factor in the Future of Climate Change.

PROGRAMME

DAY-1

FRIDAY, 24 OCTOBER, 2025

INAUGURAL SESSION

INAUGURAL ADDRESS



Himanshu Rai is the Director of the Indian Institute of Management Indore and a distinguished academic leader. An alumnus and doctorate from IIM Ahmedabad, he earlier served as Dean at MISB Bocconi, Mumbai, and taught at IIM Lucknow. With over eight years at Tata Steel, he discovered his passion for education and facilitating personal growth. Prof. Rai has trained over 20,000 professionals, including IAS and IFS officers, and advised the Government of India on ethics, HR strategy, and leadership. His popular courses at IIMs, such as 'Justice, Ethics and Morality', reflect his commitment to blending academic rigour with values of integrity and self-actualisation. A prolific researcher with over 30 publications, his work spans negotiation, ethical leadership, spirituality, and philosophy. A connoisseur of Sanskrit literature and philosophy, he combines tradition with contemporary management, inspiring students and professionals alike.

REMARKS



Alka Acharya is the Director of the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. She was Professor and Chairperson at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), teaching courses in Chinese foreign policy and political economy to the Masters and MPhil students and guiding doctoral research scholars since 1993, from where she superannuated in March 2025. From 2005 to 2013, she was the Editor of the journal *China Report: A Journal of East Asian Studies* and had an earlier stint as a full-time Director and Senior Fellow of the Institute of Chinese Studies, from 2014-2017. Among her works are *Crossing a Bridge of Dreams: 50 Years of India-China* (2001, co-edited); *China & India: Politics of Incremental Engagement* (2008), and most recently, *Boundaries and Borderlands: A Century after the 1914 Simla Convention* (2023, edited). She was nominated by the Indian government as a member of the India-China Eminent Persons Group (2006-2008) and was a member of the National Security Advisory Board of the Government of India for two terms, 2006-2008 and 2011-2012. Her current research focuses on India-China-Russia Trilateral Cooperation and comparing Indian and Chinese strategies of regional engagement.

WELCOME ADDRESS



G. Venkat Raman is the Convenor of the 18th AICCS. He is a Professor in the Humanities and Social Sciences area at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore and a Fulbright Fellow (2023–24) at the Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University. A trained Sinologist, he completed his PhD from the School of Government, Peking University, under the India–China Cultural Exchange Programme. He is a recipient of the Nehru Memorial fellowship and has been a postdoctoral fellow in Fudan University, Shanghai. These experiences shaped his long-standing engagement with China's state-society dynamics, political economy, and role in global governance. At IIM Indore, Venkat designs and delivers courses such as *Leading in a Multipolar World*, *Power and Dispute in Global Governance*, and *Business Ethics and CSR*. His teaching reflects his wider intellectual commitment to preparing future leaders to navigate the complexities of global politics and business in an era of strategic flux. Dr. Venkat's research interests lie at the intersection of China studies, multilateralism and the Global South, and business ethics and pedagogy. He has co-edited *Locating BRICS in the Global Order* (Routledge, 2022) and contributes commentaries on China, geopolitics, and international business to leading platforms. As a Sinologist, geopolitics observer, and teacher, Dr. Venkat combines scholarship with academic leadership and Track II engagement, with a vision to strengthen India–China dialogue and contribute to debates on trade, technology, and sustainability in a multipolar world.

VOTE OF THANKS



Aravind Yelery, Co-Convenor of the 18th AICCS. He is an Associate Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Before that, he was a Senior Research Fellow (Associate Professor Grade) at Peking University, Beijing/Shenzhen. Dr. Yelery was a Visiting Faculty at the Fudan School of Management, Shanghai; National Taiwan University, Taipei; and Taiwan MOFA Fellow (2022). Before joining PKU, he was an Associate Fellow and Assistant Director at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, India. Dr. Yelery holds a PhD in Chinese Studies with a particular interest in political economy. He has co-edited a book titled *Tailspin: The Politics of India-China Economic Relations* (London: Routledge, 2021) and recently authored *China Inc.: Between State Capitalism and Economic Statecraft* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2021).

SPECIAL PANEL-I

Current Discourses in Chinese Studies

CHAIR-CUM- DISCUSSANT



Alka Acharya

Director
Institute of Chinese Studies
New Delhi

SPEAKER



Bhim B. Subba is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Telangana. He holds a PhD from the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi. His research interests are China studies (domestic politics), comparative studies, East Asian politics, and international affairs. Concurrently, Dr. Subba is also an Adjunct Fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and book review editor for *China Report*, published by Sage.

State of the Field: Party's Internal as Political Governance

ABSTRACT

What is China's governance system? The paper explains the Party-state governance in contemporary China by focusing on the relationship between the Party-state institutional structures and policy-making processes. It argues that these dual institutional and power-sharing mechanisms *vis-à-vis* policy domains envisage a system of political governance under Xi Jinping's centralised system. The paper draws from analysing leaders' speeches and proclamations, official documents from organisation departments, recruitment and institutional restructuring, legislation, and policies. The "politics in command" strategy, structurally embedded in institutionalising reforms, from economic to cultural, social, and in conducting foreign relations, a reinvigorated Party-dominated system has usurped many erstwhile state functions, even if it was non-security or political. Conversely, the state becomes a mere cog in the Party machine as a legitimising agency. The vanguard Party's internal governance becomes the primary task of the political agenda, as the party leads everything (*dang lingdao yiqie*) and presumes to be the custodian of the state.

SPEAKER



Anushka Saxena is Staff Research Analyst, Indo-Pacific Studies Programme, The Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru. She is also a doctoral scholar at the Manipal Institute of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts, Manipal Academy of Higher Education. Her research focuses on the Chinese People's Liberation Army and its reforms, cross-Strait relations, and the India-China dynamic. She has authored papers focusing on combat preparedness in the Chinese Western Theater Command, assessing the PLA Navy's posture in the South China Sea, and decoding China's drone ecosystem. She also writes a weekly newsletter called 'Eye on China', and is programme manager for Takshashila's Network for Advanced Study of China (NASC) Fellowship. Previously, she has been affiliated in a research capacity with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Observer Research Foundation, and Centre for Social and Economic Progress, and has written commentaries for *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, *The Times of India*, and *Nikkei Asia*.

State of the Field: Decoding China's Innovation Ecosystem and Military-Industrial Complex

ABSTRACT

China's science and technology ecosystem is marked by rapid institutional transformation, a strategic push for self-reliance, robust state-led innovation, and intense global competition. The ecosystem has evolved considerably, featuring systemic reforms that deepen the integration of research, industry, and the military, with a pronounced centralisation of administrative control and an expanding regulatory and financial framework to foster targeted fields such as artificial intelligence, green technology, and advanced manufacturing. The idea of 'creative insecurity' proposed by Mark Zachary Taylor in his book *The Politics of Innovation* compellingly explains why nations or great powers like China engage in the competition to innovate. Further, global shifts in the 'Overton window' of policy-thinking from economic logic first, to strategy or security first, have incentivised the Chinese strategy of qualifying development with security. As a result, tariffs, export controls and other tools of economic weaponisation are both a boon for China's domestic protectionism and a bane for its global competitiveness. In China's overall trajectory toward technological progress, military innovation has a special space, which is brilliantly discussed in Tai Ming Cheung's primer, *Innovate to Dominate*. Geopolitical rivalries reveal how much China's adversaries have revolutionised defence technologies, and China cannot be left behind. To better achieve the goal of 'technocratising' the PLA's combat efforts, military theorists under Xi have introduced the concept of Multi-Domain Integrated Joint Operations (MDIJO; 体系联合作战) into the everyday lingo of preparing forces. The consequences of a revised military doctrine are history.

SPEAKER



Atul Kumar is a Fellow in the Strategic Studies Programme at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi. His research focuses on China's military strategy, expeditionary capabilities, and foreign policy behaviour, with particular attention to military diplomacy and regional power projection. He situates China's strategic posture within the wider Indo-Pacific security framework, offering balanced and evidence-based assessments of its implications for regional stability and the international order. Dr. Kumar has made significant contributions to academic and policy discourse on China's strategic signalling, military outreach, and defence cooperation in South Asia. Dr. Kumar received his PhD in Chinese military studies from Monash University, Melbourne, where he examined the evolution of China's Joint Warfare Doctrine, military modernisation, and civil-military integration under the Communist Party of China. He is an Associate Member of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and previously held a research appointment at the Griffith Asia Institute. He has also taught political science and international relations at Monash University and the University of Queensland. His current research investigates the internal dynamics of elite politics within China's Party-state and military establishment.

Assertive and Adaptive: Surveying Recent Scholarship on Chinese Foreign Policy

ABSTRACT

Over the past five years, Chinese foreign policy has grown simultaneously more assertive and adaptive. Beijing has adopted a sharper diplomatic approach while also pursuing quieter, institutional strategies to shape global norms. Its external behaviour is defined by intensified competition with the United States, calibrated management of its relationship with Russia and the immediate neighbourhood and expanded economic statecraft through selective Belt and Road projects, trade leverage, and technology diplomacy. China's leadership continues to emphasise the defence of sovereignty and regime security, yet scholarship reveals a more complex picture of both overreach and restraint. In this paper, the author surveys recent research and notable publications on four key themes: diplomacy, great-power rivalry, economic instruments, and multilateral engagement. These works deepen the understanding of China's evolving foreign policy posture and illuminate how scholars are reassessing the drivers, limits, and global implications of Beijing's external strategy.

SPEAKER



Anand P. Krishnan is a Fellow at the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence (SNIOE), Delhi-NCR, and an Adjunct Fellow, at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. He is also the Assistant Editor of the journal, China Report. His research interests include labour relations in China and India, industrial development in the global south, supply chains, and state-society relations. He was awarded his PhD in Chinese Studies from the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He was a Non-Resident Fellow under the China-India Scholar Leaders Initiative, of the India China Institute, The New School, New York City, from 2018-21. In 2016-17, he was a Visiting Fellow, at the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. He has also worked as a Visiting Faculty at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru.

Surveying the Chinese Political Economy in Last Five Years: Research, Scholarship, Publications

ABSTRACT

The Chinese economy has faced turbulence in the last five years, with the post-pandemic recovery being sluggish and issues like real estate crisis and youth unemployment compounding the challenges for the ruling Party-state. While interventions have included stimulus packages, efforts towards shift from an export-oriented model to domestic consumption remains a work in progress. In this context, this paper surveys the field of Chinese political economy over the last five years, with specific focus on areas like industrialisation, labour, and welfare. Beyond the top-down policy interventions by the Party-state, this paper will delve into new academic research on these issue areas and how to inform or reshape existing analyses brought forth by the scholarship. This has been undertaken by identifying select, notable publications on these three larger areas published in the last two-three years.

SPEAKER



Usha Chandran is an Assistant Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University and Honorary Fellow, at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. She holds a PhD in Chinese on Gender issues in China from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her major research interests include gender issues in China and comparison with India, interface between gender and language as well as popular culture, women's subjectivity in literature, and exploring sociological methodologies to study Chinese society. Her major publications include book chapters and journal articles in English and Chinese. Her book, *Gender Discrimination at Work in Urban China*, was published in August 2025. She is also editing a volume titled, *Gender in Language and Expression* and co-editing a volume titled, *At the Interface of Concepts and Disciplines: Studies on China's Society and Culture*.

Popular Culture in Contemporary Chinese Society: Twenty-first Century Avatar of Confucianism

ABSTRACT

Popular culture in Cultural Sociology, namely the set of practices, beliefs and broadly shared trends of social structure, are the commonly accessible cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in a society. Similar to other societies, Chinese society also carries an underlying culture. For more than two thousand years Confucianism, Buddhism as well as Taoism, largely formed the bases of social, cultural, and religious practices as well as political and intellectual engagements, in one form or another in China. However, throughout the twentieth century with the rise of liberal nationalism and the emergence of Marxism, traditional mindsets were challenged and subjected to scrutiny. Such mindsets were eventually rejected by the progressive and educated leaders of new China. With the gradual eradication of people's faith in the established order, towards the end of the century after the market took over, it is believed that they started looking back to their traditional culture, and/or outside China, to base their values and morals on. Among them Confucianism became a major rediscovery. Along with other traditional thoughts, Confucian ideas, practices, behaviours and mindset resurfaced in the twenty-first century. This paper explores the possible meanings of 'popular culture' and its influence on 'folk culture', as well as the role of 'state' in influencing it. It discusses the sociology of understanding popular culture in China by looking at the re-emergence of the Confucian idea of 'three fundamental bonds' and 'five virtues' in contemporary China, which gave birth to the modern avatar of Confucianism.



THEMATIC PANEL-I

State-business Relations & Emerging Technologies

CHAIR



Ajit Phadnis is an Associate Professor with the Humanities and Social Sciences Area at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore. His research interest lies at the intersection of politics and public policy, covering domains such as public policy, legislative politics and party politics. Prior to IIM Indore, he was a faculty with the School of Policy and Governance at Azim Premji University and completed his PhD in Public Policy at IIM Bangalore. Ajit has over fifteen years' experience in research, teaching and policy practice and has worked with the Interparliamentary Union, the Parliament of India, and Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh state governments. He has trained a diverse profile of participants ranging from corporate executives, civil servants and not-for-profit managers. He has been a Lok Sabha Fellow, a Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Research Fellow at Duke University, and a BIARI fellow at Brown University.

SPEAKER



Nimisha Kashyap is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her PhD research topic is *Fintech and Financial Inclusion of Women and the Elderly in China*, 2014-2024. She obtained her post-graduate degree in Politics with Specialisation in International Relations from the same university in 2022. In her academic journey, she has completed her Bachelor's degree in Chinese Language at the Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is proficient in Mandarin and has cleared HSK Level 4 and HSKK (Beginners). Her research interests lie in the areas of China's science and technology policy, political economy and society.

State-Business Relations in the Age of Emerging Technologies: The Case of Fintech Sector in China

ABSTRACT

Fintech, or the amalgamation of finance with technology, has led to the digitisation of finance, opening up a plethora of financial services to the masses. China has evolved into one of the world's largest fintech hubs and companies like Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent (BAT) have taken prominent roles in developing fintech applications and increasing financial inclusion in China. The growth of fintech in China has led to expansion of financial products, extension of financial inclusion and transformation of traditional financial services. This transformation has spilled to other sectors leading to

overall economic digitisation and growth. The fintech space in China has progressed in all sections like digital payments, wealth management, online lending, credit analysis, insurtech and central bank digital currency. According to the Ernst & Young Fintech Adoption Index 2019, fintech adoption in China is 87 per cent, making it the largest market in terms of fintech adoption and digital payments, and it is one of the leading sectors with an adoption rate of 95 per cent. The development of China's fintech industry can be divided into three stages: computerisation of finance (1984-2003), internetisation of finance (2004-2014), and intelligentisation of finance (2015 until today). An accommodative regulatory environment led to the rapid growth of fintech. Most of the fintech businesses were unregulated and were left to grow unconditionally in the initial years of their growth. Regulatory standards were not set until 2016 as the government found financial innovations successful in promoting financial inclusion and the industry segregated approach to regulation posed a barrier. Also, these new technologies fell into the gap between the regulated areas, thus effectively evading any regulation. The rapid upgradation of the digital infrastructure, massive investments on information and communication infrastructure and policies like "Internet Plus" and "Made in China 2025" have led to the booming of digital infrastructure. Along with digital infrastructure, the availability of good quality and affordable smartphones have led to the increase in internet and smartphone penetration rates in China. This combined achievement has led to enhanced focus on areas like artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing and blockchain, which has aided in the exponential growth of the fintech sector. The emergence of digital technology equipment manufacturers have made good quality smartphones affordable. The development of the fintech sector in China shows a contrast between both state-led and market-led development. The tussle between the two forces accurately defines the landscape of emerging technologies in China. This paper focuses on the fintech sector in China in the period 2014-2024. It looks upon the market-driven forces that led to growth of the fintech sector, the policy initiatives by the government to regulate it and the state-business interaction for the successful evolution of this sector. It elaborates the broad contours of the growth and expansion of fintech in China. Assess the interaction of state-led and market-driven forces in shaping the evolution of emerging technologies in general and fintech in particular. Finally, it analyses whether China's state-led development model presents a viable alternative to market-driven approaches for fostering the growth of emerging technologies?

SPEAKER



Ankit Surana completed his PhD from Macquarie University, Australia. He is an engineer from IIT Delhi, with a PGP (MBA) from IIM Calcutta and a Master of Research from Macquarie University. He has received the Dean's commendation for his master's thesis and was awarded the International Macquarie University Research Excellence Scholarship. His research interests include the internationalisation of digital platform firms, mainly in the Indian context. He has published papers in the Journal of World Business (ABDC-A*), International Business Review and International Marketing Review (both ABDC-A ranked). He has also received the best paper award at the INDAM 2024 conference and spotlight paper recognition at the Indian Strategy Conference in 2023. He is focusing on the impact of networks on the digital platform firm's internationalisation. Further, his future interest lies in the study of the influence of various international business dimensions, such as entry mode and location choice, on the internationalisation of digital platform firms.

Success and Failure of Indian Digital Platform Firm in China

ABSTRACT

China is always a tough market for global digital platform firms from developed countries where firms such as Uber, Google, and Amazon failed. They entered the Chinese market and invested heavily but never became dominant players due to intense competition and complex market dynamics. However, one Indian digital platform firm in the short-term hotel booking space, Oyo, despite being a late comer in the Chinese market quickly rose to prominence within eighteen months of its operation in China. They were all set to break the notion that the Chinese market presents a Chinese wall to the foreign digital platform firms. Yet, they faced the same consequences and soon after their success they went downhill and quickly collapsed and shut down their Chinese operations. This study aims to analyse the Oyo case to understand the factors which led to the success of Oyo in a hyper-competitive Chinese market and further, understand the reasons for its failures. Existing literature focuses on various cultural and institutional factors hindering new firms entering and gaining success in the Chinese market. This paper attempts to uncover how Oyo countered these challenges, in the first-place, to gain supremacy and subsequently, what were the factors which eventually led to its downfall. Alternatively, this paper asks if novel perspectives can be found, which have not been analysed in the literature thus far.

SPEAKER



Tanmoy Kundu is an Assistant Professor of Operations Management at IIM Indore. He obtained his PhD from the Department of Business Administration at the National Taiwan University, Taipei. During his doctoral studies, he received the Fellowship for the Outstanding International Doctoral Student and the prestigious PhD thesis writing grant from the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of Taiwan. He held faculty positions at IIM Bodh Gaya, IIT Jodhpur, and IMI New Delhi. He has also worked with The Logistics Institute - Asia Pacific at the National University of Singapore, leading and managing industrial research and consultancy projects related to logistics and transportation. His ongoing research focuses on a variety of topics, including e-commerce logistics, multi-modal transportation systems, humanitarian logistics, intelligent logistics, platform operations, and sustainable supply chain management. His research methods involve the application of game theory, network optimisation, and complex networks. His teaching interests are in logistics management, game theory, supply chain management, transportation systems planning, operations management, and digital platform operations. Beyond his academic pursuits, he possesses entrepreneurial acumen and has ventured into business both in India and Taiwan.

Beyond the Belt and Road: Emerging Corridors and the New Global Trade Order

ABSTRACT

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by China in 2013, has played a pivotal role in shaping global trade through expansive infrastructure development. However, as the initiative enters its second decade, alternative connectivity strategies, such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the EU's Global Gateway, and the QUAD Infrastructure Partnership, have emerged, reflecting a shift toward a more decentralised and strategically contested trade landscape. This paper proposes a conceptual framework, the 4C Corridor Assessment Framework, to evaluate the evolving dynamics of global trade corridors. The framework introduces four key dimensions: Connectivity, Credibility, Compatibility, and Control, and incorporates cross-cutting considerations of risk and technology. Specifically, the study provides a structured basis for comparing international infrastructure initiatives and identifying policy priorities. It outlines actionable areas for governments, multilateral institutions, and logistics actors to enhance corridor resilience, interoperability, and strategic alignment. By repositioning corridor analysis beyond scale and investment, the study contributes to ongoing discourse on the future of global trade connectivity in a multipolar, digitally integrated world.

SPEAKER



Nishit Kumar is an Assistant Professor (Guest) at Jamia Millia Islamia University. He holds a PhD in Chinese from Jawaharlal Nehru University, where his doctoral research, *China and the Nobel Prize: Reception and Impact of the Literature Prize to Mo Yan*, examined the intersections of literature, translation, and cultural politics. A recipient of the prestigious ICS-HYI Multi-Year Doctoral Fellowship in China Studies, he conducted research at Peking University and Harvard University. Dr. Kumar has previously served as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary China Studies (CCCS), New Delhi, where he contributed policy research on China's foreign policy. He has presented his works at leading international forums, including the AAS-in-Asia (Korea and Indonesia), American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), and Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association (PAMLA). His publications explore world literature, translation studies, and cultural politics, with recent works such as "Representation of Chinese and Indian Literature in World Literature: Through the Lens of the Nobel Prize"; "The New Culture Movement and Huaju: From an Art Form to an Agent of Change" and "Howard Goldblatt's Translations of Mo Yan's Works into English: Reader Oriented Approach". He is also a published translator of Chinese short stories into Hindi.

SPEAKER



Shanky Chandra is an Assistant Professor and Head of the Chinese Studies Department at Doon University. His research interests include modern and contemporary Chinese Science Fiction. The title of his PhD thesis was *Socio-Political and Cultural Factors in the Making of Chinese Science Fiction Writer Liu Cixin: Understanding The Three-Body Problem*. Dr. Chandra completed his BA (2011) and MA (2013) in Chinese language and literature, and MPhil (2016) in Comparative Literature (Dissertation Title: *Premchand and Lu Xun: A Comparative Analysis of Two Great Contemporaries, 1918- 1936*) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In 2013, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) awarded the Chinese Government Scholarship to Dr. Chandra for a Post-Graduate Diploma at Beijing Language and Culture University, 2013-2014. Dr. Chandra taught Chinese language and literature at St. Stephen's College (2014-2019), University of Delhi. He completed the Advance Mandarin Teacher Training Programme from National Taipei University of Education, Chinese Language Education Center, Taipei in July 2018. Recently, he spent one year at the Department of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Language and Literature at School of Chinese Language and Literature of Beijing Normal University as a senior visiting scholar under the supervision of Prof. Wu Yan (ICS-HYI Multi-Year Doctoral Fellowship in China Studies).

China's Techno-Nationalism: Strategic Policies and Technological Innovation

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the strategic policies that facilitated China's technological aspirations such as Made in China 2025, the New Generation AI Development Plan, Military-Civil Fusion, and the overarching theme of policies, such as 自立自强 or self-reliance and self-improvement. Through such policies, China has leapfrogged to the leading position in the world in areas like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and 5G/6G telecommunications. One of the critical components of this strategy is the Digital Silk Road (数字丝绸之路) which expands China's infrastructure reach over the globe digitally. Chinese tech giants, including, Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, Huawei, SenseTime, China Telecom, Qihoo 360, China Mobile, iFlytek, DeepSeek, and others, all of them work under a government regulated cyberspace and digital sovereignty regime to ensure social stability. China's control mechanisms are underpinned by the Great Firewall, data localisation policies, and cyber sovereignty laws which, collectively, create a cyberspace that is highly regulated. In addition, the use of AI-enabled surveillance contributes to what is referred to as 'surveillance capitalism,' raising international privacy and state scrutiny issues. The goal of this research is to explain the components of China's techno-nationalist model in the context of international relations. In particular, it looks into which strategic policies and governance processes shape China's advocacy, how these policies are executed within a state-corporate framework, and why these policies are significant in a world of technological decoupling, digital sovereignty and new global power structures. This paper uses a qualitative methodology which includes policy analysis, case studies, and discourse analysis to understand the impact of China's state-corporate model on its digital development. The research reviews important policy papers, official speeches, and relevant publications to analyse how China's policies affect global supply chains, trade interdependence, and geopolitical relations. China's digital governance is compared with the corresponding regulatory structures in the USA, Europe, India, and other countries using a multilateral approach. The findings of this paper indicates that China's technological rise is reshaping global power structures, with significant implications for international relations. Wider geopolitical concerns are reflected in the strategic decoupling between the economies of China and the West, especially in the areas of AI research and semiconductor supply chains. This paper also evaluates China's involvement in the Global South, where its sphere of influence is extended by digital infrastructure initiatives financed by the Digital Silk Road. The study comes to the conclusion that China's techno-nationalist paradigm is changing international governance structures in the digital age in addition to its own domestic economy. This study offers a thorough examination of China's strategic technical policies and the geopolitical ramifications of those programs.

THEMATIC PANEL-II

Society and Culture

CHAIR



Usha Chandran Assistant Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

SPEAKER



Shivender Rahul is an accomplished educator and academic leader, currently heading the Department of Humanities at Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur. With prior experience at Amity University, the British Council, and international teaching exposure at Amity's Tashkent campus, he has built expertise across diverse academic and cultural contexts. His scholarly interests include law and language, climate change and sustainability, healthcare communication, forensic linguistics, English language pedagogy, and leadership training. A prolific academic, he has presented at international conferences, published in peer-reviewed journals, translated a poetry anthology, and edited a book on climate change. Widely recognised for his engaging teaching style, he has delivered invited lectures at IITs, IIMs, global universities, and leading hospitals, integrating academic rigour with practical insights to foster critical thinking, ethical awareness, and professional growth among students and practitioners alike.

Cultural Transformation And Religious Revival in Contemporary China: Negotiating Tradition And Modernity

ABSTRACT

As China's economic transformation reshapes social structures and cultural identities, religious communities have found new spaces for expression despite institutional constraints. This tension between state control and religious revival offers critical insights into China's negotiation of modernity. This paper examines the complex interplay between cultural transformation, societal change, and religious revival in post-reform China. Since the economic liberalisation initiatives of the late 1970s, China has experienced profound socio-cultural shifts that have reconfigured traditional value systems and religious practices. This research interrogates how the forces of marketisation and globalisation have simultaneously catalysed both secularising trends and a counterbalancing resurgence of religious identity and practice. Of particular interest is the revival of traditional belief systems – including Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religious traditions

– which have experienced varying trajectories of rehabilitation following the policies of the Cultural Revolution. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in urban centers (Beijing and Shanghai) and rural contexts (Sichuan) between 2022-2024, the study employs a mixed-methods approach combining participant observation, semi-structured interviews with religious practitioners, and discourse analysis of official state pronouncements on religion. The empirical findings demonstrate that contemporary religious revival in China operates through complex negotiations between state regulation, market forces, and community-based initiatives. The Communist Party of China has transitioned from policies of outright religious suppression to a framework of "managed religious pluralism" that selectively sanctions certain expressions while constraining others. This paper contributes to theoretical debates by challenging unilinear secularisation theories, instead demonstrating how modernisation in the Chinese context has produced what scholars term "desecularisation" in specific domains. Analysis of digital religious communities reveals how believers utilise social media platforms and specialised applications to circumvent spatial limitations on religious gatherings, creating virtual communities that complement and extend traditional religious spaces. This research further problematises conventional Western dichotomies between sacred/secular and traditional/modern, revealing how Chinese practitioners construct syncretic religious identities that selectively incorporate elements from multiple traditions alongside contemporary values. This paper's findings have significant implications for understanding state-society relations in authoritarian contexts, suggesting that religious communities represent important sites of negotiated autonomy rather than simple resistance or accommodation to state power. By situating these developments within broader theoretical frameworks of post-secular society and religious modernity, this research contributes to our understanding of how religion functions in officially secular but culturally complex societies.

SPEAKER



Aleena Tennise is a doctoral scholar in International Relations (China studies) in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras. She completed her integrated master's degree in political science from the University of Hyderabad. Her research interests include migration and transportation and how mobility, infrastructure, and migration patterns influence socio-economic integration and transnational connections.

Convict Routes to the Nilgiris: An Examination of the Global History of Penal Transportation in the 19th Century

ABSTRACT

From the early modern period, states have transported convicts across the seas and lands as a deterrent, convenient, and cost-effective punitive measure. It served as an expedient means to meet labour demands, manage troublesome individuals, and facilitate the colonisation of lands perceived as uninhabited or newly claimed. This article attempts to explore a lesser-known chapter in the global history of penal transportation. It examines the integration of Chinese convict workers in the Nilgiris region of colonial South India during the mid-19th century. It makes an attempt to explore how the Chinese prisoners of war transported after the Second Anglo-Chinese War were deployed in the Nilgiris for civil works including the construction of the Lawrence School and the pioneering of cinchona and tea cultivation. Their legacy is embedded in the region's infrastructure and community memory, although it remains largely unacknowledged in the dominant historical narratives. By situating these movements within broader imperial circulations of labour and punishment, the paper argues that convict transportation functioned not merely as a penal practice but as a mechanism of globalisation that transformed peripheral colonial spaces like the Nilgiris important in the global context. Hence, the Chinese Tamil community can be read as a remnant of this history of transportation.

SPEAKER



Snigdha Konar is a Research Associate at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. She holds PhD, MPhil, MA, and BA in Chinese from the Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She was a recipient of the Chinese Government Scholarship 2015-2016 (MHRD, Government of India), completed a Certificate Course in Chinese Studies Research and a Certificate Course in Advanced Chinese at the Beijing Language and Culture University. Her research interests include modern and contemporary Chinese literature, social issues in China, human rights, and questions of gender and marginality.

Folding Beijing: A Future Innovation or a Dystopian Warning?

ABSTRACT

Hao Jingfang's *Folding Beijing* (《北京折叠》, Běijīng zhédié) envisions a future where the city is divided into three distinct spaces, each allocated specific periods within a 48-hour cycle. The city is not "three zones just walled-off" but a vast mechanical framework that contains within it three separate spaces (cities), with 80 million people residing in the same physical space. The first space accommodates 5 million residents and occupies the city for 24 hours from 6:00 AM to 6:00 AM the next day. With 25 million residents, the second space occupies 16 hours from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM. Accommodating 50 million residents, the third space occupies 8 hours from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM. The 16,254[1]-word novelette narrates the story of Lao Dao, a waste worker from the Third Space, who traverses the city and acts as a messenger for Qin Tian, a guy in the Second Space who wants a message to be delivered to his lover in the First Space in exchange for money. Crossing from one space to another is not only illegal but also punishable by imprisonment, demonstrating the rigid control of mobility and opportunity. With a master's degree in Astrophysics and a doctoral degree in Economics from Tsinghua University, Hao Jingfang has used her knowledge of the subjects in creating a fantastical setting with practical conditions of a future civilisation and also envisioned the economic reality of it. This paper argues that while the folding of the city may appear as a futuristic urban innovation that addresses overpopulation, and resource scarcity, it in fact serves as a dystopian warning against technological innovation and deepening social inequality. Drawing on theories and textual analysis, this paper contends that *Folding Beijing* critiques how technological modernisation entrenches inequality, enforces structural violence, and denies the possibility of upward mobility. The stark temporal disparity underscores how inequality is institutionalised not just in material terms but in the very experience of daily life. This temporal and spatial segregation reflects profound social stratification, with each stratum experiencing vastly different living conditions and opportunities. Rather than offering liberation or leisure, automation in the novelette becomes a looming threat that further marginalises already precarious workers. Hao Jingfang does not arrange special elements of science or imaginative plots but focuses on reflecting reality and human nature in the form of science fiction. Since the critique is made in the form of a futuristic tale, the story successfully evades censorship in China. The paper further reflects on how the English version's reception, including its Hugo Award, may have been influenced less by its literary content and more by "political correctness". The folding city may be read as an innovative solution to overpopulation, pollution, and resource scarcity, but it also entrenches social hierarchy, technological exclusion, and temporal injustice. Far from being a neutral or utopian proposal, the novelette raises urgent ethical and political questions about who benefits from ecological modernisation and automation, and who pays the price.

SPEAKER



Mallika Bora is a doctoral scholar at the Chinese Centre, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi. Her research focuses on the comparative political economy of borderlands, with particular emphasis on China and India's historical transformations, state formation, and agrarian change. She holds a BA in Political Science from Maitreyi College, University of Delhi, and an MA in Global Studies from Ambedkar University, Delhi, where she explored the political economy of Assam silk and the condition of weaving communities. Beyond academia, she has worked as a Research Assistant at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, contributing to policy analysis of the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DLRMP) through fieldwork in Tripura and Assam. She is also actively involved with Heeya Heritage World, an initiative amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities and workers in Assam.

The Revival and Transition of Folk Beliefs in Post-Reform China: A Historical and Conceptual Analysis

ABSTRACT

Although there has not been much substantial research on the overall picture, folk religions have had a significant contribution to China's political and social transition. Quoting Max Weber, "to define 'religion,' to say what it is, is not possible at the start of a presentation such as this", is applicable in this paper as the definition of folk religion becomes quite challenging to categorise it in a single framework due to its diverse and multifaceted study. To begin with, there are two terms: folk belief (*minjian xinyang*) and folk religion (*minjian zongjiao*) whose relationship is complex and difficult to draw in a line of clarity. The term belief has an indigenous origin while religion, which the government has recognised as legitimate, has more of a foreign origin. To gain a better understanding, the term 'folk beliefs' within the context of the Chinese state becomes significant where they are neither recognised nor administered by the Chinese government. Folk beliefs which lack systemic organisational structure adhere to rituals, notions about spirits and local gods related to everyday life practices. They are usually community- or clan-based consisting of the spiritual life of the local people and are markedly dissimilar to the missionary purposes of institutionalised religions. However with the coming of the modern nation state (China in this paper), folk beliefs have been deemed to be the antithesis to modern science and education along with constructing a "national cultural essence" amongst people. This paper attempts to understand Chinese folk beliefs through the lens of folk religion, the categorisation of folk religions based on conceptual tools for empirical research, its path to obtaining legitimacy, development of Chinese folklorists and the moral implications for the people whose identities have been erased and played with. Finally the study will conclude with the current approaches to contemporary folkloristic studies in China and how the question of 'minority identity' shall be dealt with against the patriarchal state controlling religions.

SPECIAL PANEL-II

Doing Business in/with China: Voices from Indian Business Leaders

CHAIR



Aravind Yelery, Co-convenor, 18th AICCS; Associate Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

SPEAKER



C.R. Raguramachandran is the CEO of AceMicromatic International, the export division of AMG, in addition to serving as the legal representative at Micromatic Machine Tools Shanghai Co., Ltd., the WOFE of Ace Micromatic Group in China. Since joining the AceMicromatic Group in 2001, Ragu has served in a broad range of positions with Micromatic India, including overseeing operations in Coimbatore and Chennai. As a member of the Core Team, he actively participated in business operations, including brand development, business expansion, and customer experience in his region of operations. In 2007, he moved on to lead AMG's operations in China, where he contributed to establishing the organisation and oversaw its steady expansion. Today, the AceMicromatic group is a well-known Indian machine tool brand in China. He additionally played a significant part in establishing a greenfield project for Pragati Machinery Zhejiang Co Ltd., to manufacture Tool Turrets and Automatic Tool Changers "In China For China" during this time. He is also an active member of the CII Core Group on China. He is currently responsible for growing the group's global business in his capacity as CEO of AceMicromatic International. Ragu has about 30 years of expertise in the machine tool industry. Prior to joining the AceMicromatic group, he held several roles with a few of India's leading machine tool manufacturers, including Electronica Group, Kirloskar Electric, PMT Machine Tools, and others.

ChiBhara(Zebra)- Contrast between China and Bharath Manufacturing Landscape

ABSTRACT

China and India stand as the foremost manufacturing powerhouses on the global stage, each showcasing unique levels of maturity, scale, and strategic direction. China has firmly positioned itself as the leading "factory of the world", marked by highly integrated supply chains, exceptional

infrastructure, and strong government-backed industrial policies. This environment enables swift production, consistent quality, and cost efficiency, especially in industries like electronics, machinery, and consumer goods. However, rising wages, trade disputes, and mounting regulatory pressures are prompting companies to explore diversification in their manufacturing strategies. India is actively enhancing its manufacturing capabilities. The nation offers competitive labor costs, a large domestic market, and robust government initiatives like Make in India and Production-Linked Incentives (PLI). India showcases considerable potential across various industries, including pharmaceuticals, automotive, textiles, and an expanding electronics sector. Nevertheless, it encounters challenges such as fragmented infrastructure, complex regulations, and supply chain integration that is less efficient compared to China. China has provided valuable insights into what India can adopt. India could make its own narrative. By studying China's swift progress, India can concentrate on strengthening its technological capabilities and cultivating a more integrated industrial ecosystem to address these challenges effectively.

SPEAKER



Ravi Shankar Bose is a technology entrepreneur with over 20 years of experience building digital solutions across India and China. He is the Co-Founder and Director of Fugumobile, a digital solutions company established in 2006, which has delivered technology-driven innovations for leading global brands. With offices in China, India, and the US, Fugumobile has been featured in IIM, Harvard Business Review, Ivey Publications, and CEIBS case studies for its role in shaping the digital and technology landscape in China. Ravi's work covers the full spectrum of digital innovation, from creating consumer-facing applications to developing enterprise systems and new technology models. He has been closely involved in projects that connect business strategy with emerging technologies, enabling organisations to adapt to shifting markets and strengthen their competitiveness. Having begun his career in China in the early 2000s, Ravi has been part of the rapid evolution of the digital economy in both China and India. This cross-border experience allows him to bring practical insights into how businesses can navigate opportunities, challenges, and partnerships in technology-driven sectors. He holds an MBA in Marketing and an engineering degree in electronics and telecommunication.

Navigating the Intersection of Digital Innovation and India-China Collaboration

ABSTRACT

The paper offers a strategic outlook forged over two decades in digital innovation. As Co-Founder of Fugumobile, a digital solutions company with a significant presence in China, Ravi has witnessed and contributed to the growth of the digital landscape. This presentation explores the intersection of digital technology, AI, and semiconductors, focusing on how these elements shape the Sino-Indian business relationship. The paper discusses the imperative of building resilient supply chains and the opportunities for collaboration in areas like AI and digital ecosystems. Drawing from experience in delivering innovative tech products for top global brands and advocating for digital growth in government and industry forums, the talk will provide actionable insights into leveraging technology to drive sustainable growth. The paper also addresses the strategic positioning required for Indian businesses to navigate this vital sector, turning bilateral complexities into catalysts for innovation. This talk aims to provide a forward-looking roadmap for Indian businesses in the global technology arena.

SPEAKER



Divay Pranav brings over fifteen years of diverse work experience across consulting, corporates, tech startups, and the Government of India. He currently heads the Electric Mobility business at Hyundai Motor India, based in Gurugram. He also serves as a mentor to startups in the sustainability and mobility sectors at NSRCEL, the entrepreneurship incubator at IIM Bangalore. Previously, Divay led the China Desk for the Make in India initiative between 2014-2020, where he engaged with 500+ Chinese companies exploring entry into the Indian market across a range of industries – smartphones, electronic components, textiles, real estate, chemicals, steel, metals, automotive, electrical equipment, capital goods, etc. His efforts resulted in twenty-two successful investment projects across nine states, unlocking approximately USD 11 billion in potential FDI and generating approximately 18,000 jobs. A sharp observer of global industrial trends, Divay has written extensively on China’s tech evolution, policy frameworks, and FDI flows. He consistently analyses market insights through a distinctive lens: “What would it take to do it in India, by an Indian firm?” – a question that drives his strategic thinking and policy engagement.

Gears of Growth: Comparing China and India's Automotive Journey

ABSTRACT

As the automobile evolves into a smartphone on wheels, driven by connected, software-defined architectures, the global auto industry is undergoing a seismic shift. This presentation explores how Chinese Auto OEMs are leveraging digital innovation to disrupt global markets and setting new benchmarks in EV and smart mobility. In contrast, this paper dives into the boardrooms and shopfloors of Indian Auto OEMs, where legacy strengths meet the urgency of transformation. What strategic pivots are underway? How are Indian players responding to the tech wave and global competition? Finally, this paper examines how China and India – two automotive powerhouses – will compete, collaborate, and co-invent over the next decade.

SPEAKER



Phani Kiran Immaneni is a graduate in Mechanical Engineering with a Master's in Business Administration. He is an experienced banker and has handled varied banking assignments in his career spanning over three decades. He spent seventeen years in China and Hong Kong and successfully set up overseas branches for two Indian banks. He started his career as a Probationary Officer with State Bank of India in 1991 and moved up the hierarchy. He was deputed to China in 2005 and was instrumental in setting up the first Indian bank in Shanghai. During his tenure, he scanned the markets, evaluated opportunities, formed partnerships and implemented strategies thus creating a franchise for the bank. Following a tenure of twenty-one years with SBI, he took on the role of Alternative Chief Executive for ICICI Bank Hong Kong in 2012 for two years. He moved to China in 2014 and was pivotal in setting up ICICI Bank Ltd. in Shanghai. He led the bank as Country Head until 2024 and steered the bank's success despite the challenges of COVID-19. He was the financial controller of the Indian Association in Shanghai, and was also associated with the CII Core Group on China.

Towards Atma Nirbhar Bharat: Building on China's Manufacturing Blueprint

ABSTRACT

Bilateral trade with China has grown consistently over the decades, making China one of the top trading partners for India. Despite COVID-19 and geopolitical issues, trade continued to grow between both countries, creating an economic interdependence and a trade deficit of USD 100 billion for India

against China last year. The transformation of China as the factory of the world was through economic reforms coupled with foreign investments and policy incentives. As India moves ahead to catch up with the lost years, it can take the cue from China to become a new factory for the world. To begin with, India has already created a business-friendly environment for the Make in India/ Atma Nirbhar Bharat scheme. This paper suggests that India should learn from China to think big, as scale is important. The country needs to bring all the states under integrated policy for execution through a single-window system, and needs to establish special economic zones (SEZs)/clusters with targeted incentives for exports, cheap finance, develop domestically sourced supply chains for critical raw materials with reduced lead times, and upskill the large and young workforce. In order to keep pace with the latest technology, manufacturing needs continuous automation through R&D to ensure an edge over competitors. For strategic sectors, there needs to be JVs with Indian companies and technology transfers.

SPECIAL PANEL-III

Tariff wars and Trade-offs: Can India and China Find Common Ground?

CHAIR



Karthikeya N. is an Associate Professor of Economics and Chair of the Research and Publication Office at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore. He is also a Fellow of the Global Labor Organization (GLO). He completed his PhD and MSc from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai. His research interests include development economics, welfare economics, and institutional economics. His current work focuses on the measurement of poverty and inequality, structural transformation, and evaluation of industrial policies in India. His research has been published in journals such as the *Review of Income and Wealth*, *Review of Development Economics*, *Journal of Institutional Economics*, and *Oxford Development Studies*.

SPEAKER



Murali K. is a Professor at the Centre for WTO Studies (CRIT, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade), a think tank which provides negotiating input to the Department of Commerce and Head of Administration for the Centre for Research in International Trade (CRIT). He has a PhD specialising in Industrial Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His PhD thesis focused on the capital market-based financing patterns of the Indian corporate sector. He has more than twenty-five years of experience in the areas of trade and development issues; domestic and international finance; market access issues in agricultural and manufacturing sectors; standards, [sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)-based measures, technical barriers to trade (TBT), private standards]; and trade, environment and sustainability challenges. Dr. Kallummall has remained concerned over the developmental impact of trade policy and backs his findings with considerable empirical research on trade agreements and India's WTO commitments.

US Tariffs and Sanctions and Other Growing Challenges: The Challenges for Sustaining Trade

ABSTRACT

The United States' position has transitioned from outright confrontation to a more nuanced – and cautiously conciliatory – tone following the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. However, the fundamental disputes persist unaddressed. Three strategic pathways that India could pursue are evident: firstly, prioritising reconciliation with the

United States; secondly, intensifying integration within the SCO and BRICS frameworks; and thirdly, adopting a hybrid approach. Each pathway would significantly influence trade relationships and geopolitical dynamics.

Disruption, Tariffs & Penalties: The United States has imposed a significant 50% tariff on Indian exports, following an extended trade disagreement and as a sanction in response to India's continued acquisition of discounted Russian oil. The sectoral repercussions notably affect the automobile, steel, electronics, gemstone, and marine product industries. Conversely, the pharmaceutical and semiconductor sectors remain unaffected. India has characterised the debate regarding double standards as the imposed penalty being "unjustified" and "irrational", emphasising that other major economies (like the EU – gas; China, a major importer of crude; the USA – rare earth; and Ukraine, a beneficiary of refined fuel from India) also import Russian goods without facing comparable measures. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS function as key strategic pillars. The SCO summit in Tianjin highlighted the evident unity among Prime Minister Modi, President Putin, and President Xi – showcasing India's growing engagement with both Russia and China within multilateral forums. Strengthening the roles of the SCO and BRICS gives India more flexibility to counter US economic pressures and to take on a leadership role in coordinating the Global South on issues like trade, energy, and finance. Furthermore, analysts note that President Trump's escalation of tariffs is accelerating India's diplomatic initiatives towards the East. Evidence of a more conciliatory US stance, transitioning from confrontational approaches to acknowledging minor setbacks: US officials now regard the tariff dispute as a resolvable matter, with Sergio Gor indicating that the two parties are "not that far apart" regarding a deal; exemplified through personal diplomacy: President Trump and Prime Minister Modi have exchanged public compliments, and US officials are highlighting a "deep friendship" while encouraging India to decrease Russian oil imports; and reflecting the Treasury's optimism: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has expressed confidence that "two great countries will resolve this issue," despite reiterating criticism of India's trade with Russia. The bottom line is that. If yes, the rhetoric from Washington has softened since the SCO meeting – shifting from punitive posturing to guarded optimism about a deal. If not, the core sticking point (India's Russian oil imports) persists, and the tariffs remain in place. For India, this presents an opportunity to leverage multilateral platforms like SCO and BRICS to strengthen bargaining power, while keeping trade talks with the US alive.

SPEAKER



Rajan Sudesh Ratna has thirty-eight years of work experience in formulating the government's trade and economic policies, and leading research and providing technical assistance to governments. Dr. Ratna holds a PhD in Economics, MPhil in Environmental Sciences and has completed an Executive Programme on Trade Policy and Negotiations from Harvard University, Boston, USA. Dr. Ratna is presently working as Deputy Head of South and South-West Office of UN ESCAP, New Delhi. Dr. Ratna is an Indian civil servant (and had worked for twenty-five years in the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, handling the formulations of India's foreign trade policy and trade negotiations in WTO and FTAs. He had also worked as Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi (2008 to 2010). He is a visiting professor at various universities in India and abroad. He has written many books and articles in peer reviewed journals. He is currently writing a paper for UNESCAP on *'Trump's reciprocal tariffs and impact on countries from South and South-West Asia'*.

India-China Economic Cooperation: Reshaping the South-South Trade

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the United States' use of reciprocal tariffs and the strategic implications for India and China. While initially India thought of benefitting from a 145% duty on China by the USA, it also contributed to a missed opportunity for deeper cooperation between the two Asian giants in responding collectively to US trade pressures. The strained bilateral relationship between India and China has hindered the potential for a unified front that could have reshaped global trade dynamics. This paper delves into the India-China trade imbalance, highlighting structural and policy-driven factors contributing to India's adverse balance of trade. These include limited market access in China for Indian goods, over-reliance on Chinese imports, and lack of diversification in India's export basket. To address this, India must enhance domestic competitiveness, invest in high-value manufacturing, and negotiate better trade terms. Post the SCO Summit, there is renewed scope for India and China to collaborate on stabilising global trade rules. By leveraging their economic weight and shared interests in multilateralism, both nations can invigorate South-South Cooperation, offering a more predictable and equitable global trade framework. This cooperation is not only strategic but essential for shaping a balanced and inclusive global economic order.

SPEAKER



Santosh Pai is a dual-qualified cross-border lawyer offering legal services to clients within the India-China corridor. His areas of interest include India-China economic ties, comparative law and policy, and cross-cultural negotiations. He holds a BA, LLB (Hons.) degree from NLSIU, Bangalore, LLM (Chinese law) from Tsinghua University, Beijing and an MBA from Vlerick University, Belgium. He has authored a chapter each in two recent books – *Decoding China: Hard Perspectives from India* (Bloomsbury India, 2025) and *China: Indian Perspectives on China's Politics, Economy, and Foreign Relations* (The Hindu Group, 2025). His manuscripts *Practical Guide on Investing in India for Chinese investors* (China Law Press, 2017), *Indian Company Law* (China Law Press, 2019), *Arbitration Law and Practice in India* (China Legal Publishing House, 2021), and *Legal Guide for Taiwanese Investors in India* (Yuan Zhao, 2023) have been translated and published in Chinese. He has co-edited *Chinese Legal System (1979-2021)*, *Historical Development and Overview* in English (EBC, 2021) and co-authored “Institutional Distances and Economic Engagement Between India and China” (*China Report*, Volume 53 Issue 2). Santosh is currently a partner at Dentons Link Legal, an Indian law firm. He is a member of CII's Core Group on China, and Treasurer and Member of the Governing Council at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Recalibration of Economic Ties with China: What, Why and How?

ABSTRACT

India's policy stance on economic ties with China has swung from one extreme to the other within the last decade and delivered mixed results. A recalibration that strikes the right balance between security and economic imperatives is needed. Bilateral concerns about growth in trade deficit and the weaponisation of imports weigh against opportunities to boost global share of manufacturing and exports. Can India blend these ingredients into positive outcomes without compromising national security? There are lessons to learn from past experiments at home and abroad, although realities of today are unprecedented. Is there sufficient trust to mark a beginning and consolidate gains with each stride?

SPEAKER



Aravind Yelery, Co-convenor, 18th AICCS; Associate Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Turning Tariffs into Opportunity? India at the Crossroads of Trade and Investment Flows

ABSTRACT

Tariffs and trade restrictions have underscored the need for India to develop economic resilience. The response, however, cannot be confined to diversification alone. It must also involve prioritising sectors, refining methods, and strengthening partnerships — both domestically and within the immediate neighbourhood — to scale up capacities. In this context, the debate on de-risking or decoupling from China must be approached with realism. Rather than seeking abrupt separation, India should explore innovative pathways to build incremental leverage, gradually reducing vulnerabilities while positioning itself for future gains. This paper examines how tariff escalations can be leveraged as an opportunity. It assesses India's potential across both short- and long-term horizons, drawing on recent US tariff measures, the varied responses from India and China, and the role of Indian policies. It further evaluates niche strategies for arbitrating industrial capacities and positioning India as a competitive player in the evolving global trade landscape.

PROGRAMME

DAY-2

SATURDAY, 25 OCTOBER, 2025

THEMATIC PANEL-III

Chinese Diplomacy & Geopolitical Rivalries

CHAIR



Bhim B. Subba Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad; and, Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

SPEAKER



Dattesh Parulekar is an Assistant Professor at the School of International and Area Studies (SIAS), Goa University. His acquired areas of specialisation include Indian foreign policy, Sino-Indian relations, strategic maritime geopolitics, Eurasian and West Asian security, and Global South affairs. He is a Visiting Faculty at various national defence institutions, viz., Naval War College, National Defence College, College of Defence Management, College of Air Warfare, Defence Services Staff College, Military Institute of Technology, Army War College, Indian Naval Academy, and Maritime Warfare Centre, among others. He also teaches Courses on India's Foreign Policy, at the Indian Institute of Management Indore. He is a Visiting Faculty at the Rashtriya Raksha University, the Asian Institute for Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu, and Non-Resident Fellow at the Middle East Institute, New Delhi. He is associated through regular academic projects, with the Kajima Institute for Peace, Japan and the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden, besides being a Distinguished Fellow at the Australia-based Indo-Pacific Studies Centre (IPSC).

China's 'Blue Economy' Framework for the Global South: The 'Indo-Pacific' in Perspective

ABSTRACT

The concept and phenomenon of 'blue economy', has been gaining attention in recent times, accentuated more so, in the wake of the pandemic. The UNDP pegs the 'blue economy' space assets at approximately USD 4 trillion, with expectations of a seven-fold monetised increase, over the next decade and more. And yet, actionable outcomes across this canvass, remain chequered, underscored by the fact that, SDG-14 "Life under Water", remains the most underwhelmingly funded of ameliorative global sustainability objectives,

which perplexes, given that, the maritime domain remains arguably the singular realm, dovetailing considerations of critical security and community beneficent empowerment, in an ostensibly mutually reinforcing proposition of sorts. China identifies the blue economy landscape hemming-in activities of port-infrastructure build, fisheries, aquaculture, marine logistics and transportation and offshore energy development, as a prime driver of economic growth, delivering on strategic capacitation at home and abroad, and levered as an effective instrument of soft power projection. The three successive editions of the China-Indian Ocean Region Forum for Blue Economy Development Cooperation, have emphasised project-based capacity building through deployment of factor productivities viz., finance, technology, and higher order skill-sets – competencies that China feeds off and levers. This paper seeks to address five dimensions, within the evolving framework of China's blue economy strategy. Firstly, it interrogates the discourse analysis that coalesces around describing China's blue economy as a 'statist project for comprehensive national modernisation', underpinned by the build-up of high-quality productive forces, steeped in tech-innovation. Secondly, the espoused ocean governance narrative of "constructing a maritime community with a shared future" is appraised against domineering propensities for "comprehensive sea control", involving, helming what traverses the oceans, and what is and resides in the oceans. Thirdly, innate Chinese forays to redefine spatiality through bridging of outer-space and deep-oceans towards transformation of these expansive places in pursuance of human emancipation, constitutes an 'opportunity enterprise', but exudes a 'mortal threat landscape' too, a 'Civ-Mil' fusion equation that is delved into. Fourthly, as Beijing gears up to actively shape and potentially frame global standards, the weaving of the gamut of blue economy activities and Maritime Silk Road projects, enables the influencing and undermining of ocean management standards and regimes, vide development-diplomacy compacts, which requires an examination. Lastly, the blue economy framework claims to foster and forge multi-stakeholder public-private participation and collaboration, an understood imperative for optimal harness of ocean wealth. The foregoing vistas of blue economy outreach, cut at the heart of Beijing's quest for global power standing through composite use of politico-diplomatic, economic, security, techno-ecology, and lawfare measures in the Global South, for strategic traction through benefaction.

SPEAKER



Khushnam P.N. is an international relations and regional security analyst with a specialisation in 'Regional Security in Iran, the US and Gulf Security'. He is based out of Bengaluru. He received his doctoral degree from the Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He worked on the topic, 'Iran and Security of the Gulf in the 1990s.' He is also working as Director of Research (Honorary) at The Indian Futures, New Delhi. At The Indian Futures, he coordinates research, and organises international seminars, distinguished lectures, book launches and symposiums in association with reputed global academic and research institutes like the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, Gulf Research Centre, Temple University, Japan and the Embassies of Israel and UAE. He has wide and varied experience of presentations in national and international seminars/webinars and is a widely published author of research papers on the theory of regional security, Gulf security, India-Gulf-West Asia relations, India-Israel Cooperation, and the Indo-Pacific and its growing geopolitical significance, and regularly writes position and opinion papers for reputed and peer-reviewed journals. His recent research focuses on the US quest for an American order in West Asia to maintain its regional and global primacy in the face of an assertive Russia, and expanding Chinese influence in West Asia and beyond.

US Gaza Policy and Trump's Proposals: A Potential Geopolitical Gain for China in West Asia

ABSTRACT

The Palestine issue is at the centre of geopolitics in West Asia. China supports legitimate Palestinian rights based on a two-state solution with 1967 borders, and with East Jerusalem as the capital. China also affirms its support for Palestine to become a full state member of the United Nations. China's Special Presidential envoy to West Asia, Zhai Jun has coordinated with leaders of the region on the subject and participated in all relevant meetings and conferences. In the UNSC, UNGA and UNHRC the Chinese have taken a clear position in favour of the resolution of the Palestine issue based on the UN Resolutions. US actions and its unconditional support to Israel, and Trump's proposals for shifting the Gazan population to Egypt and Jordan despite their rejection, and making Gaza the "Riviera of Middle East" has demolished the diplomatic facade of the long-held US credibility among its Arab partners, and created a highly unsustainable scenario for them. The threat of stopping US aid to these countries has created a huge political and diplomatic predicament. In this milieu, the Chinese pursuit of 'partnership diplomacy' with comprehensive economic engagement, military and defence cooperation which are mutually shared imperatives, and complementary to the economic visions of countries in the region, would assume added

significance. The syndrome is bound to accelerate and deepen with the growing chasm over Palestine between the US and its Arab allies. The suggestive response of Benjamin Netanyahu that Saudi Arabia can create a Palestinian state in their country as they have sufficient land has made the Saudis very uncomfortable domestically, and has undermined the Abraham Accord spirit. The proposal has set in motion a crucial strategic introspection and consideration of their long relations with the United States which has been the pivot of security, stability and regime survival. The Chinese engagement with the region, with Egypt and Saudi Arabia in particular, is the cornerstone of China's policy in the region. As the proposal is suicidal for US-Arab partners, they are trying to ensure that ceasefire sustains all the phases and that they are able to convince the US about an alternative plan under the leadership of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. China may not be the replacement but would help manage the situation. The purchase of Chinese 4.5 Generation J-10CE by Egypt, and building of its new capital by China along with growing China-Saudi Arabia relations, especially through the Jazan Industrial Cluster and Special Economic Zone, cooperation in cutting-edge technologies and AI, and synergy of BRI with economic visions would bring new momentum to Chinese geopolitical influence in this strategic region.

SPEAKER



Sanoop Sajan Koshy is a doctoral scholar in International Relations at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras. His research focuses on China's peripheral diplomacy in South Asia, and the geopolitical and economic dynamics of the Belt and Road Initiative. He was awarded the prestigious Chinese Government Scholarship (2024-25) and was an exchange scholar at Beijing Normal University, China, where he undertook Chinese language training and conducted fieldwork. During his exchange programme, he was affiliated with the Research and Project Department of the Student Association of Belt and Road Initiative (SABRI) and also worked as a Data Researcher for the Tsinghua Global Youth Development (TGYD) Journal at Tsinghua University. He has presented his research at international conferences organised by the Australian National University, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, the International Studies Association, and various national conferences in India. His recent publications include an article on China's 2025 National Security White Paper in *The Diplomat* and another on the India-China-Nepal Lipulekh Trijunction in *South Asian Voices* (Stimson Centre).

*Strategic Gains vs. Legitimacy Challenges in China's Periphery
Diplomacy: Debt Sustainability, Trade, and Influence in
South Asia's BRI Engagement*

ABSTRACT

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has reshaped South Asia's economic landscape through large-scale investments in infrastructure, trade networks, and digital connectivity. As part of China's periphery diplomacy (周边外交 - Zhōubiān wàijiāo), BRI projects in the region have deepened economic interdependence while advancing new areas for cooperation. This paper examines the trade and investment patterns within South Asian BRI partner countries, focusing on infrastructure financing, debt sustainability, and evolving trade dependencies. Using a data-driven approach, the study analyses bilateral trade flows, foreign direct investment patterns, and debt indicators in projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), where Chinese investments have surpassed US\$60 billion, the Colombo Port City project in Sri Lanka valued at approximately USD 1.4 billion, and recent railway initiatives in Nepal with investments nearing USD 5 billion. Data from World Bank reports and IMF assessments reveal that, in some cases, the external debt-to-GDP ratios of these countries have experienced moderate increases, underscoring the need for balanced financial management strategies. Findings suggest that while these projects have enhanced connectivity and economic integration, they also highlight diverse financial strategies adopted by recipient countries to balance growth with fiscal prudence. By drawing from quantitative datasets on trade balances, loan compositions, and regional supply chain shifts, this paper provides an empirical assessment of how South Asian economies are integrating into China's broader trade ecosystem. The study further explores how China's financing models ranging from concessional loans to joint venture agreements, affect long-term debt sustainability and economic resilience in South Asia. The paper situates BRI within the broader framework of China's regional diplomacy, emphasising its role in shaping South Asia's trade architecture, financial flows, and multilateral economic engagements, and presents an alternate perspective on how South Asian countries are steering economic partnerships under the BRI framework in a multipolar global order.

SPEAKER



Mayukh Mukhopadhyay is a full-time data consultant at Tata Consultancy Services, with over fifteen years of experience in designing business continuity solutions for complex digital transformation programmes at the world's oldest telecommunications company. He holds an MEngg from Jadavpur University, an MBA from IIT Kharagpur, and is currently pursuing an Executive PhD at IIM Indore under Prof. Ashish Sadh. Author of *Ethereum Smart Contract Development* (Packt UK), he has published sole-authored articles, case studies, and book reviews in journals such as *Leisure Studies*, *Quantitative Finance*, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Journal of Global Marketing*, *Soccer & Society*, *Society & Natural Resources*, and *Journal of Information Technology Teaching Cases*. An AMR Bridge Reviewer Graduate, he actively peer-reviews for international journals and conferences, while hosting his AI-assisted podcast "Revise and Resubmit - The Mayukh Show" on Spotify, YouTube, Amazon Prime Music, and Apple Podcast. He is an active Professional Member of ACM, a Professional Scrum Master I, and a Certified Solutions Architect from Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud.

Sonic Soft Power: China's Podcast Diplomacy

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how China's podcasting ecosystem serves as a strategic tool for digital entrepreneurship, branding, and soft power projection in a tightly regulated media environment. Using the Antecedents-Decisions-Outcomes (ADO) framework, it analyses how technological infrastructure, platform integration, and cultural preferences have shaped a uniquely Chinese model of podcasting. Based on content analysis and comparative benchmarking with the US and India, the study identifies key trends: entrepreneurial knowledge-sharing, emotional brand storytelling, geopolitical narrative framing, and community-building. The paper highlights tensions between intimacy and control, commercialisation and authenticity, and global reach versus local censorship. It argues that podcasts in China are not merely entertainment media, but influential instruments in shaping public opinion, consumer behavior, and global perception. As China redefines globalisation through audio storytelling, this research provides insights for scholars, policymakers, and brands navigating the future of voice-driven digital diplomacy.

THEMATIC PANEL-IV

China's Role in Regional & Global Security

CHAIR



Anand P. Krishnan Fellow, Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR; and, Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

SPEAKER



Sreshtha Chakraborty is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Studies at the School of Law, Bennett University, Greater Noida. She holds a PhD from the Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her doctoral research, India's Cultural Diplomacy with the UAE, was based on extensive fieldwork in the UAE and supported by the Indian Council for Social Science Research. She has also received her MPhil from JNU, and she has completed her MA in International Relations from Jadavpur University and holds a BA in Political Science from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. She has previously taught at OP Jindal University, and Amity Law School Noida. Her academic interests include Gulf politics, cultural diplomacy, and India's Foreign Policy, with a strong focus on qualitative and field-based research. Dr. Chakraborty has published widely in peer-reviewed journals such as *Economic and Political Weekly* and SAGE Publications, and has contributed chapters to edited volumes with Palgrave, Bloomsbury, Pentagon Press, Taylor & Francis, and Springer Nature. She is also bringing out an edited volume with Peter Lang Publishers. Alongside her academic work, she writes regularly for national newspapers and online platforms, including *The Financial Express*, *The Daily Guardian*, *Firstpost* and others.

Asian Security Roles in a Recalibrating Gulf: China, India, and Gulf Regional Architecture

ABSTRACT

The Gulf's strategic landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the United States' evolving commitment and the consequential creation of a strategic vacuum. This vacuum is increasingly being filled by Asian powers, notably China and India, which are moving beyond traditional economic and political interactions to assume a more prominent security role. This shift is not merely a quantitative increase in involvement; it represents a qualitative change, propelling these nations towards active participation in shaping the region's security architecture. Their burgeoning economies and expanding naval capabilities underscore the imperative to safeguard critical trade and energy arteries traversing the Indian Ocean,

making regional stability a strategic necessity. This paper delves into the multifaceted ramifications of China and India's potential security involvement in the Gulf's intricate stability, and scrutinises China's distinctive hedging strategy, characterised by a "zero-enemy" policy. This approach, unusual for a significant power, allows Beijing to navigate the region's complex geopolitical currents while safeguarding its substantial geoeconomic interests. This strategy's efficacy is demonstrated through China's responses to numerous Gulf crises, including US-Iran tensions and the Saudi-Iran rivalry, where it consistently prioritised partnership and non-interference, effectively distinguishing itself from traditional extraordinary power interventions. The paper examines the feasibility of a framework addressing the region's multifaceted security challenges through collective action, fostering a multilateral approach to security. The delicate interplay between competition and cooperation in Gulf-Asia relations is also critically assessed. While India and China share common interests in regional stability, their strategic rivalry, rooted in historical tensions and contemporary geopolitical calculations, presents a significant challenge. The article explores how these powers might manage their competition while contributing to a more secure and stable Gulf, emphasising the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration in maritime security and counter-piracy areas. The research employs a historical-contextual approach, examining the evolution of US engagement in the Gulf and the concurrent rise of Asian influence, thereby facilitating a nuanced understanding of the current power dynamics. Through this rigorous qualitative approach, this research aims to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the implications of evolving security architecture for regional and global stability.

SPEAKER



Vivek Y. Kelkar is an independent researcher, analyst, and columnist working at the intersection of geo-economics, geopolitics, and sustainability/climate change — topics that sit at the intersection of global risk and strategy. His work brings together rigorous inquiry with a global, systems-level understanding of political economy and risk — particularly across South Asia, the ASEAN, and China. He writes a weekly column for Moneycontrol, one of India's leading media platforms, and contributes to international publications such as Asia Times, Modern Diplomacy, The Spectator, and Founding Fuel. His research, writing and speaking span the strategic and economic dimensions of global power shifts, trade and energy transitions, and the geopolitics of climate-related systemic risk — integrating political economy with emerging trends. Mr. Kelkar is a Visiting Faculty at IIM-Indore and other prestigious academic institutions, focused on the impact of geopolitics on global strategy, and often speaks at forums and anchors discussions. He holds an MA in International Political Economy from the University of Sheffield and an MBA from Ashridge Business School.

Trade, Coercion, And Contestation: Asean's Strategic Vulnerability Amidst The US-China Rivalry

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of the escalating US–China rivalry on ASEAN, focusing on economic nationalism, strategic interdependence, and regional security. Drawing on theories of complex interdependence, weaponised interdependence and structural realism, it explores how ASEAN's deep integration with China's supply chains, the simultaneous reliance on US markets, and the weaponisation of trade amplifies ASEAN's vulnerability to US-China rivalry and coercion. China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and expanding economic footprint challenge ASEAN's strategic autonomy, while US unpredictability under Trump-era policies complicates security alignment. ASEAN's aspirations for strategic national and economic resilience hinge on hedging dual pressures within a fragmenting global trade order.

SPEAKER



Saumya Shivangi is a doctoral scholar at the Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. Her research interests lie primarily in maritime security, foreign policy, and strategic dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region, with a particular focus on India–China relations and the role of small island states such as the Maldives. She has engaged with theoretical perspectives ranging from classical realism, including Kautilya's indigenous strategic thought, to contemporary structural realism, situating her work at the intersection of traditional and modern approaches to global politics. In her doctoral research and academic projects, she has examined how great power competition shapes regional maritime strategies, infrastructure development, and blue economy policies. Her work combines qualitative research methods such as elite interviews with policy analysis, enabling her to bring grounded insights into contemporary security debates. She has contributed book reviews to reputed journals, including *International Affairs*, and has two book chapters forthcoming — one with Routledge and another with Palgrave Macmillan. She actively participates in scholarly discussions on Indo-Pacific geopolitics, regional security, and foreign policy studies. Her broader academic goal is to advance research on maritime governance and contribute to policy-oriented dialogues in territorial and maritime studies.

SPEAKER



Vaishali Raghuvanshi is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, with more than six years of teaching experience. Her research interests are South Asian mental borders, popular culture, world politics, and peace and conflict studies. She has been a recipient of the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship by JNMF and a doctoral fellowship by the Indian Council of Social Science Research for her doctoral thesis. She has been a member of the International Studies Association since 2014. She has presented her research work at various international and national conferences held in New Orleans, Baltimore, San Francisco, Bloomington (USA), Toronto (Canada), Singapore, Dhaka, and Kathmandu. She has been a TED Talk speaker on the topic “The Indo-Pak Equation: Mental Borders and the Influence of Cinema”. She has also been a speaker at Sarhad Samvad on “Conceptualisation of Mental Borders in South Asia”. Her recent publications are “Cinematic Performance as Discourse on Critical Geopolitics: The Cartographic Imaginary of India-Pakistan Relations in the Narratives of Bollywood Movies”, *Journal of Borderland Studies* Vol. 38:4., “Portraying the “Other” in Textbooks and Movies: The Mental Borders and Their Implications for India-Pakistan Relations” in *South Asia: Boundaries, Borders and Beyond* (Routledge, 2021), and “The Dialectics of mental borders in South Asia: A literary perspective” in *Re-imagining Border Studies in South Asia* (Routledge, 2020) She is a co-editor of upcoming books on *The Evolving Power Dynamics in South Asia: From Hard Power to Soft Power to Smart Power and South Asia in the Post-Pandemic World: Challenges and Opportunities* in collaboration with NIICE, Nepal. She is currently supervising four doctoral scholars working on the areas of India-Bangladesh borders relations through political fiction, India-China Relations: A case study of Ladhak, Maritime Border dispute between India and China: A case study of Maldives, and Understanding Popular Narratives of Kashmir through Bollywood in South Asia.

Theatre of India-China Strategic Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: A Case Study of the Maldives

ABSTRACT

As Douglas Johnston argues, boundary-making in the ocean is functionalist: done with an eye towards the functional usage of the maritime space itself. While borders traverse both land and sea, much study has focused on issues concerning territorial borders. However, establishing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 led to defining a ‘hard’ maritime border, protecting the sovereign interest vis-a-vis globalising trends of an international free market. Further, in 2017, the formal adoption of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ by the USA in its national security plan, after a threat perception from China, has led to increased scholarly attention towards maritime borders in international relations. Understanding the threat

perception and budding maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean can be considered a critical lens to deconstruct the trajectory of great power rivalry in the global order. This paper particularly investigates the case of the Maldives, where geopolitical tensions between the larger Asia-Pacific nations continue to rise. In light of the above discourse, this paper investigates two key questions: 1.) how are the Indian and Chinese governments expanding their tentacles in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and applying measures to balance each other's position in the region?, and 2.) how is Maldives leveraging its strategic geopolitical position amidst a transforming global order? The study also seeks to investigate how the Sino-Indian competition has constrained the scope of manoeuvring for Maldives' foreign policy. Elite interviews and discourse analysis have been done to identify key findings about the research questions. Elite interviews of experts on Maritime borders and geopolitics from India, China, and Maldives have been conducted to analyse scholarly projections relating to the India-China balancing act in the region, and discourse analysis has helped in exploring the general and particular discourse at the regional and global level about geopolitical concerns in the Indian Ocean Region.

SPECIAL PANEL-IV

Re-wiring Globalization: Trade, Technology & Sustainability China Factor in a Multipolar World

CHAIR



G. Venkat Raman, Convenor, 18th AICCS; Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Indore; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

SPEAKER



Amitendu Palit is Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics) at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. An economist by training, his expertise spans international trade and investment policy, geoeconomics, Asian connectivity, regional political economy, and the Indian economy. He is also a Senior Associate Research Fellow at the ISPI Asia Centre (Milan, Italy) and Adjunct Faculty at the Centre for WTO Studies (Delhi, India). He previously served on the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Trade and Investment. Palit has authored and edited several influential books, including *India and the Future of G20* (Bloomsbury, 2024), *Globalisation Impacts: Countries, Institutions and COVID-19* (Springer, 2022), etc. He publishes regularly in peer-reviewed journals and serves on several editorial boards as well.

Trade Fragmentation and Supply Chains: Identifying the New Dynamics between China and Global South

ABSTRACT

Global trade is increasingly fragmenting along politically aligned blocs, driven by widespread adoption of de-risking and diversification strategies. This shift has disrupted China's trade ties—particularly with the Global South—as both sides pursue new markets and networks. Recent U.S. tariffs and tech export controls have intensified this trend, especially in strategic sectors like semiconductors, critical minerals, and clean energy. This presentation examines how key supply chains are being reshaped and what these changes reveal about the evolving global trade landscape and geoeconomic power dynamics.

SPEAKER



V. Ramakrishna is Visiting Professor in the MBA and Global EMBA programmes of Indian School of Business (ISB), IIM Ahmedabad, BITS School of Management, Mahindra University School of Management, Rotman-Bocconi and China Europe International Business School (CEIBS). He was previously the Founding Dean of the School of Management, Mahindra University. He has also served on the faculties of China Europe International Business School (CEIBS), Shanghai, China (2007-2021), where he held the Chengwei Capital Chair in Entrepreneurship, and IESE Business School, Barcelona, Spain (2003-2007). He has been a Visiting Professor at the International Anti-Corruption Academy Austria, from 2013 to 2017. He has also taught at leading business schools in the US, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Hong Kong and Taiwan. He has been a facilitator on the topics of strategic negotiation, profitable growth, corporate entrepreneurship, and innovation (with a focus on business model innovation) in executive education programmes for senior managers of a number of US, European and Asian MNCs. He has also been a facilitator in the China Entrepreneurial Leadership Camp for high-growth Chinese entrepreneurs and the CEO Collaborative Forum for high-growth European entrepreneurs. His research has been published in leading academic (FT50, ABDC A* and A) and practitioner journals (*Harvard Business Review Online*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *California Management Review*) and has received more than 5,750 Google Scholar citations. He has published approximately fifty teaching case studies, most of which are available through Harvard Business School Publishing, Ivey Publishing, CEIBS Publishing and IESE Publishing. Two of his case studies are currently on the bestseller list at Harvard Business School Publishing, while a further three have won awards in international case competitions.

Technology Development in China

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the importance attached to science and technology (S&T) by the Chinese government from the time of Deng Xiaoping, and the various policies and mechanisms the Chinese government has put in place over the past four decades to ensure rapid progress and catching up with advanced economies. During the presentation, brief comparative references will be made to India's approach to S&T. Finally, conclusions are drawn with respect to the role of Chinese progress in S&T in giving rise to the perception over the last decade of China as a rival to the US, leading to restrictions on the flow of scientific knowledge from the West into China, and the possible impact of these restrictions on the future pace of Chinese progress.

SPEAKER



Birottam Dutta is currently heading the operations for CABOT Corporation in India. He has spent more than eight years in China, where he pursued his masters, and worked in the CABOT APAC headquarters thereafter. He worked in the chemical industry in China, where he got firsthand experience of how the sustainability efforts of China started and gained momentum. He is a chemical engineer by training and keenly follows the developments in China.

Navigating the Intersection of Digital Innovation and India-China Collaboration

ABSTRACT

An outcome of four decades of breakneck growth has been the adverse impact on the environment and energy security. To address these twin challenges, there has been a top-down strategic reorientation to increase clean energy, combat pollutant industries and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Leveraging its ability to build out complex industry value chains, and fueled by sustained R&D investments, the last decade has seen remarkable capacity build for solar and wind, energy storage, battery technologies and subsequent adoption as economies of scale kicked in. Policies such as Environmental Protection Law, themes like war on pollution and tightening norms gave momentum to this sustainability transition. There has also been strict enforcement of emission control technology, forced factory closures and relocation to tackle sources of pollution. All this has led to a cleanup of air and water, plateauing of fossil fuel consumption and sustained growth in clean energy. This has also led to adoption in Africa, Southeast Asia and LATAM regions. As these regions increase energy consumption, and economies of scale reduce costs in China, these emerging countries find clean energy as viable modes of energy consumption. However, several challenges remain, both internal and in the context of the Global South. China's ability to opaquely subsidise its products leads to dumping in other markets and deters domestic industry in those countries. Its overcapacity brings into question the long term health of those industries while its players prefer an export based model versus investing in those emerging markets.

SPEAKER



Smita Purushottam is a former Indian ambassador who served in Venezuela, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and the Holy See, with prior roles including Deputy Chief of Mission in Berlin, Minister (Political) in London, and economic appointments in Beijing and Brussels. Known for policy innovation, she revitalised India–Switzerland ties through high-level summits and partnerships in vocational education, environmental cooperation, and high-tech collaboration, while advancing progress on black money issues, NSG support, and attracting Swiss high-tech investments. She has held senior positions in the Ministry of External Affairs and Integrated Defence Staff, and was among the few Indian officials to anticipate the unraveling of Communist Party rule in the USSR. Academically engaged, she has been a Fellow at Harvard and attended programmes at NDU, Washington, UC San Diego, and IMD Lausanne. Her early paper “Can India Overtake China?” advocated building a strong high-tech manufacturing base and highlighted embedded technologies. As founder of SITARA, a “Do Tank”, she champions indigenous high-tech ecosystems and environmental stewardship, contributing to telecom indigenisation and broader technology-led development. She writes on high-tech industrialisation, Russia, and the US–China technology rivalry, and is proficient in Russian and French.

China's Digital Sovereignty Policy

ABSTRACT

Digital sovereignty, if consistently implemented, has the potential to profoundly transform India’s economic and technological landscape and strengthen its military resilience. This paper briefly contrasts and compares China and India’s policies and their implementation of digital sovereignty and digital industrial policy. This includes how China built its technology stack, its policy on Chinese big tech and big tech, platforms and apps, sovereign clouds, and related infrastructure. The paper then contrasts it with measures implemented in India including concessions made in the Free Trade Agreements, policy on data centres and digital flows, the enormous value being extracted by big tech from India (digital colonialism), how it impacts military and defence issues, and many related areas. This research concludes with the lessons that India can learn from other countries’ experience and recommendations for the best policy for India.

THEMATIC PANEL-V

Domestic Determinants of Foreign Policy

CHAIR



T.G. Suresh is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His academic work focuses on comparative political economy, labour processes and globalisation, and urban development in Asian cities. He has conducted research in collaboration with institutions such as the International Labour Organisation, and his works have been published by Harvard University Asia Centre, Routledge and the Oxford University Press. He has contributed to the policy debates on labour reforms, global supply chains, and China's developmental model. He is also a Fulbright-Nehru Visiting Scholar affiliated with the Mario Einaudi Centre for International Studies at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York and a visiting professor at the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow.

SPEAKER



Albin Thomas is a doctoral scholar in the International Relations (Chinese Studies) division at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras. He has an MPhil in Chinese Studies from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has published several *works in Political Studies Review*, the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Global Taiwan Institute and ORCA. He has a keen interest in Chinese foreign policy, Economic Diplomacy, Indian foreign policy, and Taiwan's external relations.

Economic Diplomacy in Xi Jinping's Foreign Policy Concepts: A Comprehensive Analysis

ABSTRACT

The transformative impact of the paramount leaders' foreign policy concepts on modern China has been widely acknowledged. China's emergence as a global power can be attributed to strategic foreign policy principles such as 'hide your strength, bide your time' and the 'pursuit of peaceful development'. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China's foreign policy has undergone significant evolution, encompassing economic diplomacy as a potent tool for advancing national interests. His foreign policy formulations and economic decisions have differed significantly from those of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. For instance, greater centralisation in all spheres is visible in the PRC than ever before. This paper examines economic diplomacy in Chinese foreign policy with particular reference to Xi Jinping's foreign policy concepts. This paper employs a qualitative approach,

utilising a blend of primary and secondary sources to conduct an in-depth analysis. Primary sources include speeches by Chinese leaders and officials, bilateral visit reports, joint statements, and official documents such as defence white papers and Party congress reports, particularly those from the 18th, 19th, and 20th Party congresses. The research reveals the economic diplomacy aspects ingrained within Xi Jinping's foreign policy concepts, notably the 'community of common destiny' and 'the new type of major-country relationship'. This study aims to decipher the unique characteristics of China's economic diplomacy as conceptualised by Xi Jinping and explore its relevance within the broader international system.

SPEAKER



Monika Kumari is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is working on social organisations and state-society relations in China. She has completed her Masters in Politics with a specialisation in International Relations from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has also studied the Chinese language at the Beijing Language and Culture University under the China Government Scholarship.

China's Ascendancy at the United Nations: Assessing its Approach Towards New Forms of Global Governance

ABSTRACT

China's importance in the United Nations has grown tremendously in the past few decades. Beijing aims to exert influence at the world body to legitimise and disseminate its foreign policy values and interests. Apart from positioning itself as the leader of the Global South, it has also been vociferous in its critiques of the United States-led international order. In the 2022 BRICS Summit Xi Jinping called for a "new type of International relations" that rejects hegemony and zero-sum thinking. As the second-largest contributor of the UN's regular budget and peacekeeping budget, China has used a combination of levers to elevate its position within the UN system. This includes funding UN departments, peacekeeping programmes and initiatives; staffing of executive-level personnel positions; voting in the UN General Assembly and the use of vetoes in the UNSC; and the use of PRC-specific discourse and language in UN documents. Until recently, China held the top position in four of the fifteen UN specialised agencies: Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). This led China-watchers to believe that the PRC was trying to change the system in its favour

from within. Traditionally more inclined towards developmental activities at the UN, the PRC now focuses more on peace and security work. Xi Jinping announced a \$1 billion fund for the 'UN peace and development trust fund', to support peace and security work. China has emphasised its preference through UNGA and garnered support from the Elected-10 members (E-10), especially the three rotating African seats (A3). Apart from their own commercial and financial relations with Africa, they also benefit from the colonial baggage of the P3 (USA, France, and the UK). While Russia shares a complex relation with China, their UNSC votes often seem to converge on issues related to human rights, humanitarian intervention, and external interference in internal matters of other states. China's image as a global power on the international front is embattled with the constraints back at home. Its economic model that had once been a matter of praise, has witnessed a slowdown. China's political stability has also been fraught with challenges emanating from corruption and internal resistance. The state has also faced accusations against its human rights policies regarding ethnic minorities. However, China has often asserted in its speeches that a country's socio-economic development and human rights practices are internal matters, and any external intervention constitutes a violation of its sovereign rights. This paper attempts to understand the growing influence of China in the International system by measuring its appeal in the UN based on the four metrics that include funding, voting patterns, appointments and staffing, and language-setting. This paper also analyses the threat-perception of Western observers who believe that China will use a stronger voice to chip away at human rights and the other value-based issues in the multilateral system to create a 'new international world-order.'

SPEAKER



Rahul Pandey is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He completed his Bachelors and Masters in Political Science (Honours) from the University of Delhi and MPhil from the Chinese Division, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. His research focuses on the domestic politics of China, especially the Communist Party of China.

Intraparty Rules and Party Buildings in Urban China

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the intraparty rules and party building in urban China between 2012 and 2024. During this period, the Communist Party of China (CPC) reviewed over 23,000 documents, including 1,178 intraparty rules and Party documents published between October 1949 and June 2012. About 59 per cent of these rules were either abolished or declared invalid, indicating a substantial shift in the party's regulatory framework. Simultaneously, new laws were introduced to standardise and unify internal regulations. Despite this comprehensive overhaul, several significant rules, initially drafted under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao, remained in effect. Xi Jinping made revisions to these rules under his leadership. As of December 2024, fifty-three major intraparty rules were still active, with two originating from Deng's era, twelve from Jiang's, and seven from Hu's, except for one, which underwent revisions under Xi's leadership. The pursuit of reform was closely intertwined with pressing demands for anticorruption measures, which were effectively addressed through extensive campaigns. The 2015 National Conference further underscored the CPC's intention to expand its influence on social organisations, emphasising the need for comprehensive coverage across China. This led to a rapid surge in NGOs with CPC party branches, from approximately 12,000 in 2008 to 79,800 in 2012 and 303,000 by 2017. These organisations collectively constituted 35.1 per cent and 61.7 per cent of all the registered social organisations. This research explores how these intraparty rule changes and intensified party-building efforts have shaped the CPC's organisational strategies in urban China. The study addresses two key questions: How have the revisions to the intraparty rules system between 2012 and 2024, under Xi Jinping's leadership, reshaped the CPC's internal governance and control over its members in urban China? How have the CPC's expanded party-building efforts in nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) contributed to its political and social influence in urban areas?

SPEAKER



Himadree Sonowal is a doctoral Scholar at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her doctoral research lies at the intersection of international relations and the anthropological study of the Chinese diaspora in the United States. Her work examines the role of Chinese American communities in shaping Sino-US relations, with a focus on how diasporic networks influence bilateral relations. As part of her fieldwork, she conducted ethnographic research in California, Boston, and New York, engaging with diverse Chinese American associations, community leaders, and professionals. Her broader academic interests include diaspora studies, migration and US-China relations.

Contextualising the People's Republic of China's Approach towards its Diaspora

ABSTRACT

China today has emerged as a key innovator in a number of fields. China's 2015 state-led industrial policy, "Made in 2025", aims to accelerate the country's high-tech manufacturing sector. Chinese companies and firms seek global market share in telecommunications, computers, technology, solar panels, high-speed railways, and satellites. However, China still lags behind the United States in robotics, artificial intelligence, and pharmaceuticals despite these advancements. The disparity in the technological sector has to do with the migration of Chinese high-talent human resources to the United States or other Western countries. As a result, the issue of brain drain has potentially impacted China's growth in the technological and innovation sector. The Chinese government has used a number of strategies to attract its diaspora and advance its technology capabilities. Central to these efforts, China employs a civilisational narrative that fosters a sense of shared identity and destiny. This is consistent with China's "Community of Common Destiny" narrative that creates a moral obligation for the diaspora to contribute to the country. By creating a feeling of community and shared purpose, China hopes to deepen its emotional connections with the diaspora. The second strategy involves technology-related innovation projects to attract its high-talent diaspora. This strategy is critical for China's broader vision of acquiring technological power. China has launched a series of talent recruitment policies, such as the Thousand Talents Program, to encourage the diaspora to fully or partially return and contribute to China's development process. These initiatives are critical to becoming a technological power in China. In 2018, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office was integrated into the United Front Work Department, which operates under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. The integration reflects the importance China places on its diaspora, further institutionalising the diaspora's role in China's development goals. This paper examines China's dual strategy of civilisational narrative and innovation-driven policies to tap its diaspora resource. By examining China's efforts, the study highlights China's approach to leveraging its diaspora and situates China's efforts within the broader picture of China's rise.

THEMATIC PANEL-VI

Resource Politics & Environmental Geopolitics

CHAIR



Alka Acharya

Director,
Institute of Chinese Studies,
New Delhi

SPEAKER



Amit Ranjan Alok is a doctoral scholar at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He holds a master's degree in international relations from JNU and an undergraduate degree from IIT Dhanbad, where he developed a strong academic foundation in analytical and technical approaches that continue to shape his interdisciplinary research. He has completed Chinese language program at Beijing Language and Culture University, China, which strengthened his proficiency in Mandarin and enabled him to engage with Chinese-language international relations scholars and developmental economists. His doctoral research focuses on China's economic reforms, labour market transformations, and its broader developmental trajectory. Amit has actively participated in academic exchanges with leading Chinese think tanks, including the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) and the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). He has actively engaged in discussions on various political and economic facets with scholars from Tsinghua University and Peking University. In addition to his academic work, he regularly contributes as a columnist, writing on China's political and economic developments for platforms such as *Australian Outlook*, *The National Interest*, and *South Asia Journal*.

China's Electro-Magnetic Grip: The Physics, Geopolitics, and Supply Chain Dominance in the Global EV Revolution

ABSTRACT

This study examines the global electric vehicle (EV) revolution as a convergence of technological innovation, sustainability goals, and geopolitics, with China as its epicentre. In 2024, China dominates the EV supply chain, accounting for over 60 per cent of global EV production and nearly 80 per cent of lithium-ion battery manufacturing. It controls over 70 per cent of lithium and 85 per cent of rare earth materials processing—crucial for batteries and motors. State-backed policies and investments, from raw material mining to final assembly, have given China a

unique leverage. This dominance has led to geopolitical tensions, prompting Western efforts like the U.S. domestic processing and resource diversification and the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act to diversify supply chains out of China. However, China's vertical integration and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) continue to reinforce its influence by securing resources and trade ties with lithium-rich nations. Scientifically, advancements in battery technology, including solid-state and sodium-ion batteries, could reshape the competitive landscape by improving energy density and charging times and reducing reliance on lithium. China's proactive investments in these technologies, led by CATL and BYD, highlight its commitment to technological leadership. The geopolitical battle for battery dominance is intensified by trade restrictions on Chinese EV manufacturers, reflecting economic and national security concerns. Drawing from the data qualitatively, this paper integrates physics, economics, and geopolitics to analyse China's strategic influence on global trade, energy security, and sustainability. As nations pursue carbon neutrality by 2050, the EV sector remains a critical arena where scientific innovation and geopolitical strategy intersect, presenting challenges and opportunities in the international EV market.

SPEAKER



Chaitanya Deshpande is a doctoral scholar at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has worked as an IBSA Fellow with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi. He has also held the position of an Assistant Professor (Liberal Arts) at JECRC University, Jaipur, and Guest Faculty at Fergusson College, Pune. The author holds an MA in Politics (With a Specialization in International Relations) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (2021 to 2023). He has also passed the UGC NET exam and qualified for a Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) in Political Science.

Water, Power, and Geopolitics: China's Hydropower Investments in South Asia

ABSTRACT

The China factor has emerged as a strong influencing force in the geopolitics of South Asia. China, with its ambitious projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, has been seeking ways to increase its stakes in the regional power dynamics. It has financed and supported numerous hydropower projects, particularly in Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, while also exploring avenues for deeper energy cooperation across the region. China has given an immense push to hydropower investments in Pakistan and Nepal in particular in recent years. It announced investments worth USD 500 million

for hydropower development in Bangladesh. China's growing hydropower footprint has been met with scrutiny, particularly from India, which views these projects through the lens of regional strategic competition. India has been building a policy response through bilateral water-sharing agreements, sponsoring hydropower development projects like Arun III in Nepal. Further, China's announcement of building the world's largest hydropower dam in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo, i.e., the Brahmaputra, has made clear that India-China rivalry over transboundary water resources and strategic influence in South Asia is intensifying. This paper critically examines China's hydropower engagement in South Asia, focusing on its strategic objectives, implementation patterns, and the regional responses it has provoked. It analyses broader patterns of Chinese hydropower investments in the region, such as China's financing of Pakistan's Karot Hydropower Project and Nepal's West Seti and Marsyangdi projects. These projects, while addressing energy deficits, often come with concerns of sovereign debt burdens and opaque contractual terms that favour Chinese firms. In Pakistan, many hydropower ventures under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are raising alarm over financial sustainability, while in Nepal, political instability has led to repeated renegotiations with China over key dam projects. This paper also assesses India's countermeasures, including strategic hydropower partnerships with Nepal to counterbalance Chinese influence. India's renewed focus on alternative financing for South Asian hydropower projects and diplomatic engagements to limit Beijing's inroads is examined. Additionally, the role of regional partnerships in mitigating the risks posed by Chinese investments is explored. By analysing China's hydropower strategy, its on-ground implementation, and the varied responses from India and affected nations, this paper provides insights into the broader implications for South Asian water security, economic sovereignty, and regional power dynamics. It argues that while Chinese hydropower investments may offer short-term economic benefits, their long-term impact raises critical strategic and environmental challenges that demand a coordinated response.

SPEAKER



Ipshta Bhattacharya is an Assistant Professor currently affiliated with the Faculty of Humanities at The Bhopal School of Social Sciences, India. She has over eight years of academic experience at leading colleges/universities in the country. Her area of research interest lies in South Asian History and Politics, International Security Studies, particularly asymmetric warfare, focusing on Europe and Asia. She has more than thirty academic research publications in her domain, which include research papers and chapters in leading journals and books. Her recent monograph, *India's Foreign Policy: Sprints and Crawls* (White Falcon Publisher), was published in September

2025. Her second monograph, *'Strategic Sentinels: India's Policy Prism in the Indo-Pacific (Flux, Friction, and Fluid Allegiances)'*, is an upcoming monograph with Springer Nature. Ipshita has deliberated as a resource person in several national conferences, seminars, and workshops, like Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, Colorado Boulder University, USA, and Dublin City University, Ireland. Apart from participating in various international conferences, she has organised several national conferences/workshops/seminars/training programmes, etc., in her specialised domain.

The Impact of China's Dominant Rare Earth Element (REE) Sector in the Global Market and the Discomfort in Global Politics

ABSTRACT

One of the major emerging fields in technology and global politics is Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and its application in technology. REEs are a group of seventeen elements that are critical ingredients for the evolution of defence equipment and electronics. While these elements are not rare to find, the extraction process is highly complex and expensive and also not environmentally friendly. Since the inception of the industrial use of REEs and with its application and utility in various fields, the geological knowledge and the production of REEs have led to contentious and controversial politics. The REEs have significant applications that make them extremely valuable to the defence and energy sectors, notably in the manufacture of energy storage, permanent magnets, catalysts, and lasers. Assessing the future trends of demand for these elements, it is highly probable to have a dramatic rise in these elements in the coming decades, particularly looking into their applications in semiconductors, wind turbine lasers, oil refining, high-temperature magnets, nuclear control rods, fibre optics, superconductors, car batteries, EV motors, etc. The importance of REE magnets for national security and military, and economic usages makes them extremely in demand in the global market. The year 2022 created discomfort for the USA when its Congressional report suggested that there are about 400 kgs of REE material, which is required in F-35 joint strike fighters, which is only produced in China. Similarly, Virginia-class submarines also require over 4 metric tons of REEs. China's dominance over abundant production of REE, which is close to 70 per cent of the global production, its state's investments, and the systematic channels of supply chain, export controls, a feeble environment regulation system, engaging low-wage labour, and exploring illegal mines and processing plants reflect a monopolistic strategy to dominate the REE market. Understanding the fact that China's REE sector produces quality standard products at reasonable prices compared to its competitors, its aggressive dominance over the REE sector will enable it to influence prices and dominate this market and the supply chains. China's

mature REE sector, its industries, and supply chains within China are highly systematised and reliable, which gives its global competitors tough competition. Given China's potential in the REE sector, the growing demand for REEs might lead to monopolistic trends and strategies by China. This paper examines the geopolitics involved in the supply chain complications, including supply chain disruptions, in the context of China and its role in the global market. Further to this, the paper also explores China's dominance in REEs' global production and how its price control strategies will be detrimental for the nascent players in the REE sector, and how far it is going to work outside the structure of the World Trade Organisation.

SPEAKER



Vishnupriya P.K. is a doctoral scholar in International Politics at the Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her research examines the political economy of big technology companies in the Global South, with a particular focus on Google and Meta in India. She is interested in understanding how these tech giants shape state market relations, influence regulatory debates, and impact questions of power relations at both national and international levels. Beyond her core research, she is keen on exploring the broader intersections of technology, geopolitics, and political economy. She is especially attentive to the role of emerging powers such as China in shaping global technology and trade architectures. Through this, she aims to contribute to discussions on how these powers navigate the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly transforming technology and trade landscape.

Chinese Dominance in Critical Mineral Resources and Geopolitics of Supply Chains

ABSTRACT

Advancement in modern technology relies on critical minerals. Lithium fuels the batteries in electric vehicles (EVs) and smartphones, cobalt handles battery stability, and rare earth metals are used to make semiconductors, electric motors, and other high-tech components. Critical minerals are essential for economic growth and national security. These are critical for success in a variety of industries, including high-tech electronics, telecommunications, transportation, and defence. Limited availability and specific geographic concentration of the extraction/processing of these resources might result in supply chain vulnerabilities and interruptions. Thus, the strategic pursuit to establish resilient supply chains for critical minerals has intensified. These minerals have emerged as cornerstones of both technological advancement, economic dominance and energy

resilience. China is positioned as a key player in international trade and technological advancement due to its dominance in global supply chains that spans over manufacturing, clean energy, heavy industries, electronics, critical minerals, and infrastructure. This paper delves into the geopolitical implications of Chinese dominance in the supply chain of critical minerals, exploring how this affects global trade and security. The initial section of the paper provides a broader focus of the dominance of China in global supply chains. It leads to the subsequent section where the importance of critical minerals is discussed. This section also examines the Chinese dominance in the critical minerals sector in specific and analyses how the access to critical minerals serves as a tool for geopolitical leverage. It assesses the impact of measures like China's export restrictions on the critical minerals supply chain and global trade and security dynamics. The paper, in its final section, analyses the different responses to this geopolitical challenge, both from the Western nations as well as from India. Being an important competitor to China in the race for geopolitical supremacy, strategies adopted by Western nations to reduce their reliance on China for critical minerals are significant. It analyses the diverse strategies the West employed to counterbalance the Chinese influence. The paper concludes with a discussion of current and potential responses of India to this crucial China factor.

THEMATIC PANEL-VII (PANEL PROPOSAL)

Pluriversal Knowledges and Sustainability: Comparing Possible Pathways of Rewiring Globalization in China and India

CHAIR



Aparna Vincent is an Assistant Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Indore. Her research interests and pedagogical practice broadly revolve around normative political theory, digital humanities, and environmental politics. Her research methodologies are anchored in the interpretative study of political discourses and practices.

PANEL PROPOSAL

The planetary polycrisis has produced a great many responses, one of which is the possible value of pluriversal knowledges in contemporary societies. Previously referred to as indigenous, local, or traditional knowledges, these have distinct epistemologies, espousing production systems that utilise sources of nature differently from those of modernist knowledges of industrialisation. Old civilisations like those of China and India have a great range and depth of experience in these knowledge systems and have variously protected and marginalised them through their policies of development in the post-revolutionary and post-colonial periods, respectively. While China has gone on to become an economic superpower, particularly as the world has moved towards 'globalisation', it is clear that a significant and systematic input needs to be adopted to respond to new developments, those of 'Rewiring Globalisation' and the 'Climate Crisis'.

The three papers in this panel will explore the pathways explored and implemented by China and India in three sectors of the economy, consistently recognised as crucial in international reports. They are health systems based on traditional medical knowledge, agro-ecological practices, and water management. Both India and China have had solid traditions of knowledge in each of them. Each paper explores how China has followed a largely modern techno-industrial frame in promoting these sectors, following this frame's norms of standardisation and commercialisation, which is primarily responsible for its international economic superpower status. India's policies have not been entirely so, hence its presence in the international market is not comparable. Yet, within India, these are sectors that have grown and acquired significance in the last two decades or so. There is increasing recognition of the need to change the terms of the international economy, and the imperative to rewire globalisation comes at least from the pressure of the climate crisis. Thus, both economies need to respond substantially to it. At the same time, it is well-known that the two are on a competitive footing with respect to the terms of trade in at least agriculture, if not in medicine and the supply chain of plants. So, a comparison of the two countries' pathways will also consider their interrelationship in these sectors. Using big data available

on these parameters for these sectors, these papers will be exploratory in nature. Offering a brief overview since the 1950s, they will outline the pathways followed by China and India over the decades since globalisation in particular and offer critical perspectives on the emerging trajectories. This line of exploration and analysis in comparing India and China is much required in the current context of international political economy. Yet, they are not common. In this sense, this panel intends to break new ground in comparative studies of India and China.

SPEAKER



Madhulika Banerjee has taught mainstream Political Science at the University of Delhi since 1985 and researched on the politics of knowledge during the same period. She has led projects on this theme, studying different pluriversal knowledge systems in India, and articles on these, along with other scholars, have appeared in peer-reviewed journals. Her own work has been on Ayurveda and her book *Power, Knowledge, Medicine: Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals at Home and in the World* published by Orient Blackswan appeared in 2009 and the *Herbal Sutra: Indian Wisdom and Wellness Through 100 Herbs* by Roli Books in 2023. She is interested in comparative politics from the vantage point of the politics of knowledge, studying different pluriversal knowledge systems.

Pluriversal Knowledges and Sustainability: A Theoretical Framework for Comparing Possible Pathways of Rewiring Globalization in China and India

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a fresh perspective on the prospect of rewiring globalisation with respect to India and China. It will argue that China and India have great potential to offer genuinely different paths to rewiring globalisation, on the basis of their rich knowledge traditions, which comprise their civilisational heritage. While both countries have adopted industrial modes of production, consumption, and distribution, with China excelling in this path, this has also implicated them in significant carbon footprints and a heavy responsibility to carve out strategies for sustainable development. With many decades of debate on this issue, however, it is clear that these strategies are not likely to be drawn from within the frame of Development as we know it. This paper explores the possibility that both India and China, great civilisations because they have a deep heritage of knowledge of sustainable production, which we call pluriversal knowledges, have as much the capacity to lead with the revitalization of these knowledges for the contemporary. It shows how this possibility has existed in the very fabric of their states and politics, their communities and entrepreneurs, and that it requires but a consolidation of this approach for it to show distinctive pathways. These pathways would be valuable not only for their own contexts but for the rest of the planet today.

SPEAKER



Devahuti Sarkar is a PhD scholar in the Department of Political Science at the University of Delhi. Her academic focus is on the politics of knowledge in agriculture within a comparative framework between India and China. Her doctoral research aims to investigate how economic policies and institutions influence community knowledge systems in the agricultural sector. China's unique economic trajectory, combined with its recent emphasis on Ecological Civilisation, offers an interesting context for comparison with India, which also has a rich history of diverse agroecological practices. This builds on her MPhil thesis, which explores agroecological interventions across India to examine plural knowledge systems that offer innovative solutions for climate change. Her main areas of expertise include political economy, climate change, and development studies.

Agro-ecological Practices as a Response to the Climate Crisis: Comparing Pathways of India and China

ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of agroecological transitions in India and China, foregrounding their respective responses to the ecological and epistemic crises induced by industrial agriculture. While the Green Revolution model promised productivity gains, it also generated socio-environmental consequences – soil degradation, agrobiodiversity loss, and the marginalisation of local knowledge systems. Drawing on insights from Science and Technology Studies (STS), political ecology, and development studies, the paper interrogates the conditions under which agroecology emerges as a scientific discipline, political project, and socio-environmental alternative. The study traces divergent agroecological trajectories. In India, agroecology has largely taken shape through civil society mobilisation and farmer-led initiatives contesting the epistemic authority of state-sponsored technocratic agriculture. In contrast, China's approach is characterised by institutional integration of agroecology within scientific and policy discourses, albeit with limited engagement with its socio-political dimensions. Through this juxtaposition, the paper elucidates how agroecological framings – either as ecological science or socio-political movement – are shaped by broader ideological, institutional, and developmental logics. In analysing contemporary policy articulations, such as India's National Mission on Natural Farming and China's discourse of "ecological civilisation," the paper argues that both countries, despite rhetorical shifts, remain entrenched in productivist paradigms. The conclusion underscores the need for a paradigmatic realignment that bridges normative commitments with robust socio-economic mechanisms to foster meaningful agroecological transformation. Agroecology, if embedded within a pluriversal epistemic and policy framework, holds the potential to reconfigure agricultural systems towards sustainability, equity, and resilience in the context of accelerating climate change.

SPEAKER



Akshay Bhambri is a PhD scholar at the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, and an Institute of Chinese Studies–Harvard-Yenching Institute Fellow. He is also a fellow at the Program on Science, Technology, and Society at the Harvard Kennedy School. Prior to spending a year at Harvard University as part of his doctoral research, he was a visiting fellow at Peking University and at National Taiwan Normal University. His doctoral thesis, titled *“After Revolution, After Colonialism: Politics of Traditional Medical Knowledge in China and India”*, explores the contestation of traditional medical knowledge with modern regimes of knowledge in China and India. His interests lie in the politics of knowledge, with a particular focus on science, technology, and medicine in China and India. Through his comparative work, he examines how science, state policies, and the market shape the authority and practice of knowledge. Beyond his dissertation, Akshay is broadly interested in the relationship between knowledge and power, and how pluriversal knowledges can be mobilized in mitigating the planetary crisis.

Retour à la Nature? (“Return to Nature”): The Making of the ‘Natural’ in Traditional Medicine

ABSTRACT

The Rousseauian dictum “Retour à la Nature” (Return to Nature) suggests eternal ideals of “purity” and “harmony with the environment”, ideals that continue to shape how “natural” is imagined today, including in popular perceptions of traditional medicines such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda. This paper asks two related questions: What does it mean for a medical system to be considered “natural”? And how is this “natural” constructed in traditional medicine itself? Focusing on TCM and Ayurveda in the context of the planetary crisis, the paper examines the epistemological, political, and economic processes that construct and transmute the “natural” in these traditional medical systems. Drawing on STS and comparative politics of knowledge theoretical frameworks, the paper analyses the portrayal of TCM and Ayurveda as timeless ecological wisdoms. TCM emerged as a 20th-century synthesis forged through political contestation in China and later integrated with biomedicine. Whereas in India, the modern form of Ayurveda reflects its colonial encounter, postcolonial nation-building, and neoliberal wellness markets. Across both contexts, “natural” emerges as an essentially contested concept to authenticate, commodify, or modernise while disembedding knowledge from local ecological and philosophical roots. The paper shows how “natural” in these medicine systems is materialised through their contestation with regulatory categories, manufacturing standards, and the reconfiguration of practices and social engagements. By interrogating both the meaning and making of the “natural”, this study reveals how TCM and Ayurveda embody the contradictions of modernity, positioned as ecological alternatives yet embedded in capitalocene imaginaries.

SPECIAL PANEL-V

China's Technological Advances & Trade Restrictions

CHAIR



Ashok K. Kantha Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi; Distinguished Fellow, Council for Strategic and Defence Research, New Delhi; and, Chair of the Core Group on China of the Confederation of Indian Industry, New Delhi.

SPEAKER



G. Venkat Raman, Convenor, 18th AICCS; Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Indore; and, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

China's Disruption of Tech Value Chains

ABSTRACT

China has strategically crafted a distinctive toolkit to leverage its critical position in global technology value chains. Its dominance in upstream and midstream stages – particularly in refining and processing key elements—gives Beijing significant leverage to consolidate, protect, and advance national interests. This position enables China to influence industries ranging from electric vehicles and batteries to solar energy and advanced machinery. In some respects, its measures parallel U.S. efforts: creating the Unreliable Entity List, targeting foreign actors deemed harmful to China's economic or security interests, mirroring Washington's security interests, and mirroring Washington's restrictive listings. Yet, beyond imitation, Beijing has developed a suite of instruments uniquely suited to its structural advantages. China can effectively constrain high-tech supply chains by exploiting chokepoints in lithium, rare earths, and other critical materials. Crucially, these trade controls are fused with industrial policy, where restrictions are paired with subsidies, standards, and domestic procurement to scale up national champions. For third countries such as India and the EU, the immediate risks lie in supply volatility, licensing uncertainties, and exposure to Chinese dominance in rare-earth magnets and EV components. In the medium term, these states must diversify midstream capacities, strengthen stockpiles, and pursue standards diplomacy to shape global industrial protocols.

SPEAKER



Antara Ghosal Singh is a Fellow at the Strategic Studies Programme at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. Her area of research includes China-India relations, the China-India-US triangle, China in South Asia, Chinese foreign policy, and China's domestic development, among others. She is a graduate from Tsinghua University, School of Public Policy and Management, People's Republic of China, and has been a Chinese language fellow at National Central University, Taiwan. Prior to ORF, she worked at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi; Delhi Policy Group; National Maritime Foundation; Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (MPIDSA), and has a list of publications in national/international peer-reviewed journals, magazines, and newspapers. Before starting her career in academics, she had worked as a journalist with the Times of India and the Deccan Chronicle Group. She is also an alumna of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. She speaks Bangla, Hindi, English, and Mandarin Chinese.

Geopolitics of Technology: Chinese Domestic Discourse

ABSTRACT

As technological innovation capabilities have become increasingly linked to national strength, wealth, and security, technological competition has emerged as the focal point of great power rivalry. Major economies in the world today are increasingly viewing science and technology as a fundamental core capability for maintaining national security, thereby focusing on technology as a key factor in reshaping their national security strategies. In this process, countries and regions are placing greater emphasis on viewing many key economic sectors, technological fields, and mineral resources from a national security perspective. In the Chinese assessment, the international competition facing the Chinese economy today comes not only from developed countries like Europe and the United States, but also from emerging developing countries with rapidly rising economies, such as India. The core of this economic competition between China and the United States, China and Europe, and China and India is the competition of scientific and technological innovation, according to Chinese observers. On one hand, the West is striving to relocate technology R&D, and production processes to or near local locations, seeking to form allied economic circles with their own governance standards and rules; on the other hand, India is seeking to capitalise on China's manufacturing advantages, including its supply chains, to evolve as a manufacturing rival to China. There is a growing consensus in China that if China's economy wants to win the competition and succeed in competing with these countries, it must take the lead in innovation. This paper, based on the study of China's internal discourse, seeks to throw light on China's overall approach to the topic of geopolitics of technology.

SPEAKER



Pranay Kotasthane is the Deputy Director of The Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru. He has co-authored three books on public policy and geopolitics. His second book, *When the Chips are Down*, deals with the geopolitics of the semiconductor industry from an Indian perspective. Pranay co-hosts a Hindi podcast called *Puliyabaazi* and teaches topics in public policy, public finance, and tech geopolitics at Takshashila's policy school. Before Takshashila, he had stints with two Fortune 500 companies working on integrated circuit design for mobile processors.

Foundational Factors Behind China's Tech Trajectory

ABSTRACT

China has rapidly emerged as a technological powerhouse, capturing global attention with new advancements and breakthroughs across multiple technology areas. This talk examines the ingredients key to China's remarkable technological rise. Specifically, it goes beyond simplistic explanations such as state capitalism and intellectual property (IP) theft, and the panelist argues that China's success is due to the combination of several fundamental factors and specific government policies. The panelist will also identify some weaknesses in the China tech stack. For India, there is scope for developing a calibrated strategy to deal with China's technology exports, investments and talent. Such a strategy would safeguard India's national interest while opportunistically leveraging China to advance India's technological interests.

PROGRAMME

DAY- 3

SUNDAY, 26 OCTOBER, 2025

THEMATIC PANEL-VIII

Technology, AI & Cyber Strategy

CHAIR



Pranay Kotasthane

Deputy Director,
The Takshashila Institution,
Bengaluru

SPEAKER



Akhilesh Kumar is a doctoral scholar in Chinese Studies at the Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. With research interests spanning science, technology and innovation driven development, his doctoral thesis focuses on the case studies of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and New Energy Vehicles (NEVs). He has published in esteemed journals such as the *BRICS Journal of Economics* and a book chapter with *Springer*. A recipient of the Belt & Road Initiative Scholarship at Sichuan University, China, Akhilesh is also a UGC NET-JRF qualified scholar with proficiency in Hindi-Urdu, English, and Chinese (Beginner), and a commitment to advancing academic discourse on China's technological and ecological policies.

Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence: A Case Study of China's AI Initiatives

ABSTRACT

Often perceived and described as a general-purpose technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) exerts a varied and differentiated impact on various aspects of life. From cybersecurity to society, and from temporal to spatial, all aspects of human life are being impacted by AI systems. This study examines the development and evolution of global governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI), with a specific case study of AI initiatives of China. The study further evaluates China's interpretation and influence on global AI governance norms, particularly through initiatives like the Global AI Governance Initiative (2024) and the Shanghai Declaration for AI (2024). By employing a qualitative research methodology, including primary documents and their textual analysis, extensive fieldwork, this paper explores China's domestic AI strategies and imperatives, its international ambitions, and its implications for global AI governance. The findings highlight China's efforts to shape the future of AI, balancing its national interests with global ethical

considerations, and they reflect China's attempt to make AI governance a test ground for its global governance initiatives. Eventually, this paper argues that there is a clear and concise politico-philosophical background of these initiatives that guided Chinese foreign policy as a general and tech-geopolitics of China as a particular.

SPEAKER



Nalinie Sharma is a doctoral scholar in Political Science at Guru Nanak Dev University, Punjab, India, and a Risk Analyst at the Indo-Pacific Studies Center (IPSC), Melbourne. Her doctoral research, *'Indo-Russian Relations Since 2014: Continuities and Changes,'* explores the evolving dynamics of bilateral ties. Previously, she was associated with the Foreign Policy Research Centre (FPRC), New Delhi. A double Gold Medalist in her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, her current research focuses on India's foreign policy, major power rivalries, and contemporary developments in international relations, including China's growing global influence. She has contributed to *The Diplomat*, *Asia Times*, *South Asia Monitor*, and *Diplomacy & Beyond Plus* and has presented her work at various national and international conferences.

The AI Contest: China's Ascendancy in a Multipolar World

ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the international system has been transitioning back toward multipolarity, albeit in a new form. This reconfigured global order is now being reshaped by a great transformation driven by the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The world is moving towards AI-multipolarity as countries worldwide engage in intense competition for dominance, recognising AI's critical role in shaping the future economic and geopolitical landscapes from a realist perspective. The US and China have emerged as front-runners in this race; they are also engaged in a techno-nationalist, zero-sum competition to secure global AI leadership. At the same time, the middle powers and geopolitical swing states are also reshaping the AI geopolitics in a multipolar world. While China enjoys several advantages, including its geoeconomic leverage in technology and growing partnerships with the Global South, which has solidified its position as a global AI powerhouse, its rise remains contested due to persistent global concerns over data privacy. This paper analyses whether China's AI ascendancy can translate into enduring global influence, arguing that success will depend on its ability to navigate strategic competition and foster meaningful partnerships to help shape a balanced AI order in a multipolar world. Against this backdrop, the study examines the dynamics of emerging AI contestation and cooperation, with a primary focus on China's AI strengths, weaknesses, and challenges it faces internationally. It also explores future prospects and offers policy recommendations. A qualitative approach, incorporating both primary and secondary sources, aims at ensuring comprehensive and robust analysis.

SPEAKER



Nistha Kumari Singh is a doctoral scholar and Dr. TMA Pai Fellow at the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal Institute of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE, Institution of Eminence), Manipal, Karnataka, India. She is also a Network for the Advancement of Technology Geopolitics (NAST) Fellow (2025–2026 Cohort) at the Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru, India. Her research interests include great power competition, U.S.–China relations, cyberspace, critical and emerging technologies, and critical infrastructure.

SPEAKER



Amrita Jash is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal Institute of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE, Institution of Eminence), Manipal, India. She holds a Ph.D. in Chinese Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Prior to MAHE, she was a Research Fellow at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi. Dr. Jash was a Pavate Fellow at the University of Cambridge and a visiting fellow under the Open Programme at Loughborough University. She has authored *Mao Zedong & China's Foreign Policy: The Man, the Mind, and Vietnam* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), *China's Japan Policy: Learning from the Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), and *The Concept of Active Defence in China's Military Strategy* (Pentagon Press, 2021). Her research interests include China's foreign policy, the People's Liberation Army, China–Japan relations, India–China relations, and the Indo-Pacific.

China's Cybersecurity Landscape: Actors, Policies and Strategic Objectives

ABSTRACT

China's cybersecurity ecosystem ranks among the top globally, driven by state subsidies and tech hubs such as Wuhan, Chengdu, and Shanghai, which rival Western counterparts. The interplay of state-owned enterprises such as China Electronic Corporation and China Electronic Technology Group Corporation and private enterprises such as Beijing Venustech, Sangfor Technologies, NSfocus, Beijing Topsec, Meiya Pico, and Antiy Labs, are at the forefront of China's cybersecurity mission of self-reliance and digital sovereignty and under state regulations. The 2022 DiDi data scandal marked a turning point, resulting in strict state intervention in cybersecurity companies, the adoption of strong data regulations against foreign exchange of data, private sector fragmentation, and growing state distrust of private firms, reflecting corporate autonomy under state control. China's rapid

growth in the cybersecurity market positions it among the top 25 globally, fueled by aggressive state subsidies and the rise of tech hubs. China's cybersecurity companies' contribution to the cybersecurity market has grown at an annual rate of 25 per cent due to digitalisation, 5G penetration, and e-commerce. China's tech hubs, such as Wuhan, Chengdu, and Shanghai, have emerged as cybersecurity clusters comparable to the Silicon Valley of the West, surpassing Russian Kaspersky and competing with the US-based Symantec. The governmental initiative efforts to strengthen China's significant internet user base and infrastructure security. It also works to mitigate financial losses caused by DDoS attacks, malware, and AI-driven cyber threats. Beijing reinforced the Cybersecurity Law (CSL) and Three-Year Action Plans to restrict cross-border data flow, further intensifying the US-China strategic competition and challenging the global norms and regulations of cybersecurity at the international level. Beijing emphasises cyber sovereignty in cyberspace, linking cybersecurity to national security. It focuses on its unique approach to internet development, implementing models and policies that differ from those of Western countries. To strengthen the objective of sovereignty in cyberspace, the government is allocating subsidies and significant budgets to upgrade cybersecurity. The primary objective of this study is to identify the various actors involved in developing China's cybersecurity landscape. This qualitative analysis is conducted through the lens of state-corporate interaction in the form of procurement and licensing, talent recruitment, regulatory control, and state strategic investment in cybersecurity. Data will be generated from various primary sources, including the Defense White Paper on Cybersecurity Industry 2017, Five-Year Plan, CSL, Three-Year Cybersecurity Plan, Made in China, and the various websites of ministries and private companies, supported by a rigorous secondary-source literature review. The research on China's cybersecurity actors, policies, and strategies offers a comprehensive analysis of its objective in cyberspace.

SPEAKER



Om Ranjan is a doctoral scholar at the School of International Cooperation, Security, and Strategic Languages, Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. His doctoral research examines Chinese strategic culture and the influence of ancient philosophies on contemporary decision-making. His broader academic interests include global governance, technology, and geopolitics. He is a recipient of the Huayu Enrichment Scholarship, awarded by the Republic of China (Taiwan), for the study of Mandarin. He also holds an A1 level (TOCFL) certification in Mandarin Chinese.

A Shift in Techno-Politics: China's Strategic Pursuit to Reshape Global Tech-Commons

ABSTRACT

The Global Tech-landscape is undergoing a significant churn, driven by the convergence of technological disruption and geopolitical competition. At the forefront of this transformation is China, whose *Made in China 2025* initiative has been a cornerstone of its strategy to dominate key high-tech sectors and re-mould the global technology commons. This paper examines how China's techno-political strategies—primarily focused on the development of artificial intelligence (AI), quantum, and advanced manufacturing—are influencing the governance of shared digital infrastructures, standards, and resources that find key to international cooperation. Through the lens of *Made in China 2025*, this paper seeks to explore China's ambition to challenge existing power norms and how it aims to reshape the rules of technological engagement in a multipolar world. Adopting an international relations (IR) framework, this paper aims to use discourse analysis of Chinese political narratives to investigate the broader implications of China's rise in techno-politics. The analysis situates China's strategies within the global geopolitical context, focusing on the intersections of technology, power, and state sovereignty. This paper aims to outline how China's pursuit of technological supremacy through *Made in China 2025* is redefining contemporary world politics and reshaping different contours of IR. It critically assesses the tension between China's state-driven innovation model and the principles of openness, inclusivity, and multilateralism that have traditionally defined the global techcommons. By examining how China is challenging Western-dominated frameworks, this paper aims to highlight the potential disruptions in global governance and the implications for international cooperation and competition.

THEMATIC PANEL-IX

China's Foreign Policy & Geopolitics in a Multipolar World

CHAIR



Parimal Maya Sudhakar is an Associate Professor at the School of Government, Dr. V D Karad MIT World Peace University, Pune. He has over 10 years of teaching experience and over 5 years of experience of working in the Development Sector. He completed his post-graduation in International Politics from Jawaharlal Nehru University. He earned his MPhil on the topic "*China's Nuclear Policy under Deng Xiaoping*" and received a PhD at JNU on "*State and Society Relations in China in the Context of Globalization.*" He is a regular commentator on politics and international relations in the popular media. He has translated Sundeep Wasalekar's book *A World Without War* into Marathi as *Yuddha Nakaranare Jag*, which is published by Rajhans Publications.

SPEAKER



Abhishek Yadav is a Research Analyst at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi. He earned his Bachelor's degree from Hindu College, University of Delhi, before pursuing higher studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he completed a Master's in Politics (International Relations), an MPhil in South Asian Studies, and a PhD in International Studies. His research interests include international migration, Türkiye's domestic politics and foreign policy, and the evolving role of China in regional and global affairs. He was a Visiting Fellow in International Relations at Sichuan University, China, from September 2017 to January 2018. Prior to joining MP-IDSA, Dr. Yadav served as a Consultant (Diaspora) at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India. He has authored a wide range of commentaries, issue briefs, policy briefs, book chapters, book reviews, and journal articles at both national and international levels, with his work engaging academic and policy audiences alike.

Critical Assessment of China-Türkiye Relations in a Shifting Global Order

ABSTRACT

This paper examines evolving China-Türkiye relations in a shifting multipolar order (2015-2025). Combining trade, investment, infrastructure, and tourism statistics with analysis of official communiqués and multilateral reports, it finds a pattern of asymmetric but adaptive interdependence: China's export dominance and multilateral financing (notably BRI/AIIB engagements) have deepened economic linkages, while Türkiye leverages its geostrategic position and mineral endowments to protect strategic autonomy. Key aspects include a widening trade deficit driven by rising

Chinese exports (including electric vehicles), selective rare-earth cooperation tempered by Türkiye's participation in the Minerals Security Partnership, and a calibrated Turkish posture on sensitive political issues such as the Uyghur question. Rather than alignment or rivalry, the relationship is best described as selective convergence and managed friction, with Ankara employing strategic hedging to expand options between Eastern engagement and enduring Western ties.

SPEAKER



Mallika Devi is a consultant in the Centre for Contemporary China Studies (CCCS) within the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), New Delhi. She holds a PhD from the Department of East Asian Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Delhi. Her doctoral research focused on '*Dynamics of Chinese National Identity and Foreign Policy 2002-2016: A Constructivist Approach*.' Previously, she taught as an assistant professor on a guest basis in the same department. In 2016, she was awarded the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) and Chinese Government Scholarship (CGS) to advance language skills.

Accelerated Deglobalization Amid US-China Strategic Rivalry

ABSTRACT

Deglobalisation is defined (in a narrow sense) as a reduced number of exchanges, whether trade, investment, technology or movement of people. Deglobalisation was already visible after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) as global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows had not reached their pre-2008s peak by 2023, global trade value grew at a much lower rate than the average growth before the GFC, global trade volume even turned negative after the GFC and the degree of integration of global value chains (GVC) have also declined since the GFC. Emergence of the US-China strategic rivalry visible since the release of the 2018 National Security Strategy (NSS) has accelerated the process of deglobalization. While other factors have also contributed to the acceleration of the deglobalization process, the focus here is only on the emergence of great power rivalry between the US and China. US-China great power rivalry in the interdependent world meant weaponizing globalization (interdependence) against the other. This can be observed in the rise of two separate but related phenomena of supply chain resilience, and industrial policy. Supply Chain resilience can be seen in emerging concepts of friendshoring, near-shoring, and reshoring, which essentially means shifting some productive capacity to nations regarded as secure and "friendly". Industrial policy is defined as the proactive use of state resources to promote the development in chosen sectors or the expansion of chosen firms that are selected as "national champions". Industrial policy believes in zero-sum forms of economic thought and has an inherent

nationalist edge. US-China great rivalry has resulted in each nation adopting a tit-for-tat industrial policy and moving further away from the market, and embracing more state intervention. For example, China introduced Made in China 2025 (MIC 2025) in 2015, which invited the 2018 National Quantum Initiative Act in the US. The main argument of the paper is that US-China strategic rivalry accelerated deglobalization. The main research question this paper tries to answer is how the US-China strategic rivalry has accelerated the deglobalization process. Two key concepts used are US-China strategic rivalry and deglobalization. The methodology for conducting the research is a qualitative one involving textual analysis and content analysis. The main contribution of the research paper is that it tries to marry two different but simultaneous processes of deglobalisation and the US-China great power rivalry, which have been immensely studied separately but efforts to see the interlinkages between the two have been few and far between

SPEAKER



Ishani Naskar is a Professor at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She has worked on Indian foreign policy issues, particularly focusing on Act East, sub-regionalism in the Indo-Pacific, and cultural diplomacy. She has delivered invited lectures at Chinese Foreign Affairs University, Washington College, USA and delivered online lectures in the Philippines and Chile. She was the SUSI Fellow sponsored by the Government of the United States. Prof. Naskar was a visiting fellow of the EU-sponsored Sinofen Project at the University of Palacky, Olomouc, Czech Republic. Prof. Naskar has been also actively involved in Track Two activities like the K2K Forum and the BIMSTEC Think-tank networks. Some of her writings include *The Impact of Settlement on Bhutanese Refugees* and *Cultural Diplomacy Strengthening the Act East Policy*; *Cultural Diplomacy: Strengthening the Act East Policy* and *Enhancing ASEAN-India Partnership in e-VBAB: Teaching International Relations through e-VBAB in ASEAN*; *Neoliberalism, Geoeconomics and the Chinese Reality: The BRI Experience in Southeast Asia*. She is the Vice President of the West Bengal Political Science Association and the editor of the journal of the West Bengal Political Science Association. She was the former editor of *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* and continues to be a member of the editorial board. She is also heading the Hariprassana Centre for India-China Cultural Studies, under the Department of International Relations.

*Interplay of Geoeconomics and Geopolitics in Asia:
How China Benefits from it*

ABSTRACT

One can very simply define geoeconomics as the interface between economics and geopolitics. It implies two things. First, it could imply geopolitical consequences of an economic development or policy and second, it could imply economic consequences of geopolitical dynamics between states, between states and non-state actors, or between non-state actors. Thus, there is a blurring of the economic and, the political and the strategic domains. At the same time, one can take note of the weakness of neoliberalism, wherein powerful players like the United States have exploited complex interdependence to 'weaponise' economics for strategic leverage. Beyond the neoliberal world, one sees China as the aspiring hegemon cultivating economic strategies as a part of its geopolitical posturing vis-à-vis the international order. Now, the narrative of the "Asian Century" further broadens the scope of the interplay between geoeconomics and geopolitics. It has facilitated the consolidation of a pan-Asian economic space. This pan-Asian space is marked by competition and cooperation. It has led to the blurring between the domestic and the international; the links established run both ways. On the one hand, the emergence of regional instruments and institutions plays a crucial role in catalysing the interface between geoeconomics and geopolitics. Thus, Asia has seen a moderate success of regional institutions yet not all fall in that category. Most important is that regional dynamics through multilateralism, which encourages regional value chains, have been responsible for consolidating the Asian economic space. On the other hand, the meteoric rise of China and its geopolitical dynamics has found expression in its economic and military policies. The One Belt, One Road Initiative is a singular example of the magnitude at which China can play a critical role in consolidating economic spaces and yet furthering its own interests. Asia, especially South and Southeast Asia (because of the geographical contiguity), displays a complex mosaic of the interplay of geopolitical and geo-economic factors, ranging from multilateralism to China's pivotal role in balancing the various stakeholders in this continent. This paper focuses on the interplay between geoeconomics and geopolitics with the help of examples of regional arrangements (for example in Southeast Asia) that may be found relevant to the discussion.

THEMATIC PANEL-X

Climate Change, Energy & Sustainable Development

CHAIR



Dattesh Parulekar

Assistant Professor,
School of International and Area Studies,
Goa University

SPEAKER



Veena Roshan Jose serves as an Assistant Professor of Law and Head (I/C) of the Centre for Environmental Law at Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU) Nagpur, where she teaches Health Laws, Medical Law & Ethics, Human Rights, Environmental Law, Forensic Science, and Medical Jurisprudence. She also holds the additional responsibility of Chief Warden (Halls of Residence- Girls). Before joining academia, she had a rich experience as a practicing advocate at the High Court of Kerala. She earned her Ph.D. in Law from the National University of Advanced Legal Studies (NUALS), Kochi, with a specialisation in Medical Law & Ethics. Holding dual specialisations for LLM in Human Rights and Environmental Law, Dr. Veena is keenly interested in the interdisciplinary approach in the fields of human rights, ethical, legal, and social aspects of healthcare. Furthermore, she lends her expertise by serving on the Institutional Ethics Committee as a Legal Expert Member, providing ethical-legal guidance and recommendations in clinical research contexts. She is also associated with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Kerala, in drafting policy documents relating to the Certification of Brain-Stem Death. She has authored the titles “Human Body as Property: Legal Dimensions” and “Legal Regulation of Medical Practice in India”, published by Thomson Reuters. She has also co-edited volumes like “Changing Dimensions of Human Rights in the Globalising World” and “Climate Change Crisis: Assessing the Actions for the Future”. Her scholarly output also includes multiple research articles and book chapters published in reputed journals and edited volumes. Dr. Veena is also a sought-after speaker, resource person, and panellist at various international and national conferences. She has delivered expert lectures and chaired sessions on topics ranging from human rights, and environmental law to climate change and medical ethics. Her engagements include expert lectures at premier institutions, such as IIMs, IITs, IIIT, IIFM, NIT, NLS Bangalore, NLU Jodhpur, GNLU Gujarat, NLU Mumbai, NUALS Kochi, DNLU Jabalpur, Government Medical Colleges, and various other universities, hospitals, and colleges, where she has trained students and healthcare professionals, participated in national policy discussions, and contributed to faculty development programs.

China's Renewable Energy Leadership: Implications For Global Supply Chains And Climate Change Mitigation

ABSTRACT

China's dominance in renewable energy technologies represents one of the most significant developments in global climate governance. As international decarbonization efforts accelerate, China's control of key supply chains for solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicle batteries raises critical questions about technological dependence, energy security, and sustainable development pathways for countries like India. This paper analyses China's emergent position within global renewable energy supply chains and its implications for international climate change mitigation efforts. Through the theoretical lens of global production networks and strategic trade theory, the research examines how China has systematically developed capabilities within clean energy value chains through a combination of industrial policy instruments, technological acquisition, and manufacturing advantages. The paper draws on field research conducted with industry stakeholders, policymakers, and academic experts to provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics. The findings indicate that while Chinese manufacturing capabilities have contributed to cost reductions in renewable technologies, this concentration has simultaneously generated vulnerabilities within global energy transition supply chains. These developments have particular significance for India, which faces the dual challenge of meeting climate commitments while reducing technological dependence. The study analyses policy responses among major economies, including India's Production Linked Incentive scheme, the United States' Inflation Reduction Act, and European initiatives, which represent varying approaches to supply chain diversification and technological sovereignty. The paper further explores the tension between decarbonisation imperatives and strategic autonomy concerns, demonstrating how climate governance frameworks remain insufficiently equipped to address the geopolitical dimensions of the energy transition. Through comparative institutional analysis, the research identifies divergent paradigms emerging between market-led versus state-directed approaches to clean energy industrial development. The findings suggest that emerging "friend-shoring" and strategic onshoring strategies may fragment the global renewable energy landscape into competing technological spheres, potentially affecting technology diffusion to developing economies. The research concludes by proposing a framework for conceptualising "sustainable security" that integrates climate mitigation objectives with supply chain resilience considerations. For India specifically, the paper suggests a balanced approach that prioritises strategic autonomy alongside climate commitments through targeted industrial policy interventions in segments where competitive advantage can be developed while leveraging international cooperation in others. This approach offers insights for policymakers navigating the complex intersection of climate change, industrial development, and geopolitical considerations.

SPEAKER



Vaishnavi is a doctoral scholar in Chinese Studies, Center of East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has completed her Master's in International Relations and Area Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her research interest lies in understanding the contemporary socio-political developments in Chinese society and unravelling the dynamics between the domestic and the foreign. Beyond this, she is also interested in understanding the complexities of other East Asian societies and the interrelations between them.

Climate Leadership in Transition: China's Engagement During the US Withdrawal Era

ABSTRACT

Trump's "America First" policy has ushered in many new labels for the power giant's approach. Skepticism, isolationism, and reductionism are some of the classifications voiced from various sides of the spectrum. While the nature of Trump's foreign policy can still be debated, what can be inferred from Trump's first presidential term is that such a foreign policy creates a vacuum in the international realm. Between 2017 and 2020, the US withdrew from the WHO and Paris Climate Agreement, left the OECD Global Minimum Tax Deal, and even blocked the appointment of judges to the WTO. Such vacuums of leadership and institutional apathy at the global level left behind by a reluctant superpower, often present an opportunity for the revisionist powers to step in and present viable contests for global leadership. One of the critical areas of contestation over leadership is in the crucial sphere of climate diplomacy. Trump not only considers climate change a 'hoax' but has also taken many steps in his current term to reiterate this position, including the withdrawal of Trump from the Paris Climate Agreement for the second time and altering funds for various climate projects around the world. Such unpredictability and inconsistency in U.S. climate policy have created openings for emerging powers to expand their influence in global climate governance. Once a reluctant actor, China, has now emerged as a responsible actor in the global climate discourse. Today, China is involved in climate diplomacy at multiple levels, on one hand, using multilateral institutions to showcase its commitments to the issue of climate change by establishing funds, acting as a mediator between the global north and global south, enunciating and abiding by new commitments and resolutions and even providing alternatives normative structures. Climate financing becomes another way through which China extends climate diplomacy. Despite being a developing country, China is involved in many voluntary financing programs supporting climate projects worldwide, that too via multiple channels including multilateral platforms, bilateral deals, and even private financing. China even leverages its technological innovations and transfers specifically in the area of green technology, including EVs, solar power,

hydropower, and so on, to strengthen its position at the climate negotiation tables. These efforts have strengthened China's position as a major contender in shaping the global climate agenda. Against this backdrop, this study critically examines China's strategic engagement with multilateral institutions — both regional and global — to position itself as a key player in climate diplomacy. Adopting an empirical approach, the paper focuses on two core dimensions: first, the alternative normative frameworks China introduces within international institutions, and second, an examination of China's climate financing mechanisms facilitated through these institutions. The study situates this analysis within the geopolitical context of Donald Trump's first presidency (2017–2021), a period marked by US disengagement from global governance structures. Thus focusing on how China leveraged this period to expand its influence on global climate governance.

SPEAKER



Noel Jackson Therattil is a lawyer, policy analyst, and Schwarzman Scholar whose work lies at the intersection of law, governance, and global affairs. His career spans political strategy, regulatory law, and climate policy, with a particular focus on China's political economy and energy transition. Noel holds a Bachelor's degree in Law, a Master's in Space and Telecommunication Law; As a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University, he earned his second Master's in Global Affairs. Building on this foundation, he continues to deepen his expertise as an aspiring Sinologist, examining China's domestic politics, global strategy, and their implications for international governance. He is currently a research analyst at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP).

SPEAKER



Mani Bhushan Kumar Jha is a climate policy expert and researcher with a Master of Public Policy from the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy in Germany. His work lies at the intersection of global governance, clean energy transition, and sustainable development, with a strong focus on the geopolitical risks surrounding critical mineral supply chains. Mani has published research on climate finance, environmental policy, and pathways for sustainable growth, contributing to the global discourse on how nations can align ambitious climate commitments with equitable and practical implementation strategies. His approach emphasizes not just the design of transformative policies, but also their real-world feasibility, ensuring that climate action remains inclusive and grounded in the needs of diverse stakeholders.

Managing Geopolitical Risks in the Clean Energy Transition

ABSTRACT

The global transition to clean energy represents the most significant energy transformation in human history, creating unprecedented geopolitical challenges centred on critical minerals. These minerals, including lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements, form the essential building blocks of renewable technologies, from solar panels to energy storage systems. As per the IEA, demand for these resources will quadruple by 2040 under sustainable development scenarios, transforming resource competition into a new arena for strategic rivalry. China's overwhelming dominance across critical mineral supply chains presents particularly acute challenges. Currently controlling over 90% of rare earth metal processing, 60 per cent of lithium refining capacity, and 73% of battery cell manufacturing, China has systematically built this position through state-owned enterprises and strategic overseas investments, committing over USD16 billion to lithium, cobalt, and nickel projects globally between 2018-2022 alone (IEA, 2024). This dominance extends beyond mining to encompass processing capabilities and manufacturing of downstream products like lithium batteries, solar PV cells, and electric vehicles (collectively China's or "new three items"). For countries like India, which remains 100 per cent import-dependent for most critical minerals including lithium, cobalt, and nickel, this strategic vulnerability threatens ambitious clean energy targets such as achieving 500 GW of renewable capacity by 2030. Despite promising domestic discoveries, such as the 5.3 million tonnes of lithium reserves in Reasi district, structural challenges persist—mineral block auctions attract sparse interest, extraction economics remain challenging compared to brine-based alternatives, and upstream domestic industries are too few to spurn domestic production. As nations pursue "de-risking" strategies to ensure energy security and prevent the weaponization of interdependent trade networks, they face difficult trade-offs in an era of heightened geopolitical tensions and economic constraints. Effective policy responses require multifaceted approaches: modernizing resource classification standards to reduce investment uncertainty, developing domestic processing capabilities, nurturing predictable market demand through end-user industries, advancing technological innovations like sodium-ion batteries, and embracing circular economy approaches such as Japan's urban mining initiatives that recover up to 95% of rare earth elements from electronic waste. International cooperation frameworks offer promising avenues forward. India's participation in the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative and the Minerals Security Partnership represents a strategic and necessary shift, though displacing entrenched Chinese supply chains remains challenging. The European Union's raw materials strategy provides instructive benchmarks — mining 10 per cent domestically, processing 40% within borders, and recycling 15 per cent by

2030 — offering a concrete blueprint that acknowledges continued import dependencies while building resilience. This strategic shift must be navigated with caution as the world stares at an emerging Thucydides trap. With global competition intensifying, the ability of countries to navigate these complex geopolitical dynamics will significantly influence their energy transition goals and strategic autonomy in an increasingly contested resource landscape. This paper examines these challenges and identifies balanced de-risking strategies that avoid zero-sum outcomes while ensuring supply chain security for the clean energy future.

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