

REPORT

12th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES

jointly organized by

Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi (ICS)

and

O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana (JGU)

at

JGU Campus, Sonipat, Haryana

8-10 November 2019

The 12th All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) – an annual flagship event of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi (ICS) – was jointly organized by the ICS and O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana (JGU), and held at the JGU campus on 8-10 November 2019. The principal objective of the AICCS is to spread interest in and strengthen research on China and East Asian Studies in India; it promotes active networking among scholars and raises awareness about the research and study on China in India. Each conference has a special theme. The special theme of the 12th AICCS was **‘Law, Governance and Society in China’**.

INAUGURAL SESSION:

The inaugural session, on 8 November 2019, set the tone of the conference. It began with Ambassador Ashok K. Kantha, Director of the ICS, giving the welcome address. In his address, Amb. Kantha spoke of how the ICS had grown over the years in stature and complexity and believed that the speciality of the AICCS was it being a travelling conference, hosted at a different university each year with an objective of promoting China studies. He mentioned that year 2019 was especially significant, as ICS was celebrating its 50th anniversary - in these 50 years, ICS had carved out a niche for itself, creating a platform for meaningful discourse. He mentioned some of the major accomplishments of ICS, such as *China Report* – its flagship journal – going into its 55th year of publication. He also spoke of this conference being a great opportunity for young scholars to not only present their views, but also hear from those who are experts in the area of China studies in the panels organized on topics such as India-China relations, security and geopolitics narratives.

The next speaker at the inaugural session was Professor C. Raj Kumar, the Vice Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU). In his opening remarks, he thanked all the dignitaries present and highlighted the many achievements of JGU – built from scratch as a philanthropic initiative of Mr. Naveen Jindal in 2009 and its growth from thereon. He covered the three important milestones in JGU's history – being awarded the highest grade 'A' by the NAAC, making debut in QS World University ranking among the top 1000 universities in the world, and being declared as an Institution of Eminence by the Government of India, which was an honour previously given to very few universities. The Vice Chancellor also spoke of discovering the checks and balances that societies can have for effective governance and to establish a rule of law – this was one of the fundamental questions the conference aimed to address in the context of China.

Professor Sreemati Chakrabarti, the Convenor of the 12th AICCS and Vice Chairperson, ICS, spoke after the Vice Chancellor. Prof. Chakrabarti thanked all those who made the conference possible, and then highlighted how the best paper presented in the conference would be eligible for the Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award, instituted in the memory of one of the founder members of the ICS and its former Director, Mira Sinha Bhattacharjea. She also spoke of ICS' partnership with different universities and institutions since 2010, in organizing the AICCS.

Prof. Mahendra Pal Singh, Chair Professor, Centre for Comparative Law, National Law University, Delhi and Former Head and Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi, gave the keynote address. Prof. Singh highlighted the role of rule of law and the Constitution in China, speaking on the amendments, revisions and replacement of the Constitution several times over the years; that it was the Constitution that provided the fundamental duties of the people, and also protected human rights in China. When speaking on the notion of rule of law, he spoke of how it had become a part of the Chinese system as much as it had been part of the Western system of governance.

After the Vice Chancellor presented mementoes to all the dignitaries on the dais, Prof. Y.S.R. Murthy, the Registrar, JGU, gave the closing remarks, wherein he thanked everyone for their efforts and contributions to make the conference possible, and also congratulated the ICS for its 50th anniversary.

SESSION 1: SPECIAL PANEL - ICS @50: THE ROAD TRAVELLED, THE ROAD FORWARD

The first session of the conference after the inaugural was a Special Panel marking the completion of 50 years of the ICS, titled 'ICS @50: The Road Travelled, The Road Forward'. The panelists for the session were Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty (Honorary Fellow and Former Director, ICS), Prof. Patricia Uberoi (Chairperson, ICS), Prof. Sreemati Chakrabarti (Vice Chairperson, ICS), and Dr. P.K. Anand, Research Associate, ICS. The panel was chaired by Amb. Kishan S. Rana, Emeritus Fellow, ICS.

Amb. Rana opened the session by discussing how the governance and diplomacy had changed its shape since 1990s in the world, specifically in China as it became much more diplomatically engaged with the world. He spoke about his book, the *Asian Diplomacy*, where he mentioned how China was changing the dynamics of politics in its favour - this could be largely seen in Asian, and even in some African countries. He believed it was time where India also needed to move towards "smart diplomacy".

Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty mentioned the fact that the world was constantly changing, and India hadn't contributed much to it, while Chinese companies are dominating the global Markets. He said "if you are driven to earn more you may commit unethical" is the case in China, where the economy is becoming increasingly driven by capitalistic economy. This is mainly the result strong party ideology of pursuit of more profit.

The next speaker, Prof. Patricia Oberoi spoke about the 21st century role of China's policy towards connectivity. She discussed with the fellow panelists on their views of Belt and Road Initiative. She also spoke on the bilateral relations of India and China and how soft media tools are becoming increasingly important in 21st century - Bollywood being one of the most well-known industry in China, significantly shaped the minds of Chinese people towards India. She also highlighted how the rising importance of Middle-Class in both the countries.

Speaking next, Prof. Sreemati Chakrabarti noted the improvement of Chinese governance and law over the years. The corruption had decreased drastically although not fully eradicated.

Dr. P.K Anand – the last speaker in the session – spoke on some of the questions and challenges relevant for scholars on China in India, highlighting the need for China scholars and academics to strike a pause in their engagements in policy making, he spoke on the need for some delinking of academia and policy. Given the skewed nature of distribution of resources in higher education in general and China studies in particular, he underlined the need for teachers to be proactive in encouraging students and ensure help in accessing sources and references.

SESSION 2: GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW IN CHINA

The session after lunch was the start of the selected papers, after a rigorous round of shortlisting through two stages of abstracts and later completed papers, began to be presented from Session 2 on the opening day of the conference. It has been the endeavor of the AICCS to provide a platform for young scholars to present their ongoing research on China and/or East Asia and get valuable feedback from eminent experts.

The first speaker, Ms. Anjali Gupta, Master's in Politics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, focussed her presentation on the challenge of refugees faced by China and their plans to address them. Pointing out that the refugees mainly came from the Middle East, Syria, and South Sudan, she placed this problem within the historical context of the Cold War and pointed out that the dynamics of the refugee crisis had evolved over a period.

In her paper on China's Social Credit programme, the second speaker, Dr. Ekta Singh, Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University, Delhi, spoke about the Rule of Law, as it presently prevailed in China. She pointed out the state's attempts to monopolize the law, and influence citizens into abiding by it. She also mentioned some important factors and problems faced in such situations, and how the government was trying to address them.

The third speaker, Ms. Mrityika Guha Sarkar, Project Assistant, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, talked about cyber warfare, and China's defensive techniques to avoid any type of cyber war. She pointed out that several important leaders had reflected on the problem and had come up with strategies.

The last speaker was Mr. Vishal Tripathi, Young Professional, NITI Aayog, New Delhi – who co-authored the paper titled 'How History Shapes the March Towards Rule of Law: Lessons from China and India' with Mr. Ieshan V. Misri, Research Associate, Citizens' Foundation for Policy Solutions – compared the rule of law in China and India, by discussing the historical roots of

Chinese and Indian laws. He mentioned the *Arthashastra* by Kautilya, and ideas of Confucius to compare the bar and bench of China and India. He also stated that the Chinese depended on morality of rule, while Indians depended on ethics and morality.

Mr. Deepanshu Mohan, Associate Professor, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana, was the Discussant for the papers, offering his insightful comments.

SESSION 3: SPECIAL PANEL - COMPARING INDIA AND CHINA IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS

This special panel was chaired by Prof. R. Sudarshan, Dean, Jindal School of Government and Public Policy. The panelists included other senior faculty from O.P. Jindal Global University: Amb. Mohan Kumar, Professor and Vice-Dean, Jindal School of International Affairs; Prof. Sreeram Sundar Chaulia, Dean, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University; Prof. (Dr.) Sreejith S.G., Vice-Dean, Jindal Global Law School; and Prof. Sudarshan himself.

Amb. Mohan Kumar speaking on 'India, China and the WTO', pointed out that India became the founding member of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) – the precursor to World Trade Organization (WTO) – and had proved to be beneficial for India in 1947. On the other hand, China had to apply to become a member of the GATT. It took a record 15 years for China to be admitted to the WTO. The main reason was that Western countries' perception that it was not a market economy and could therefore not tackle the challenges of such an economy. The Communist Party of China decided to use the reputation and benefits of securing WTO membership to go ahead with domestic reforms, so that the state's intervention would be seen as minimal. Agriculture was seen as an important sector at that time, so India and other developing countries thought mostly alike on the issue. There is a huge gap in the GDP, with China's GDP is over 14 trillion and India's around 3 trillion. Corporations were now interested in the Indian market of 200 million consumers, who have massive purchasing power. The challenge in China though is how it will negotiate with tech giants like Google, Facebook and Amazon.

Speaking on 'Chinese Foreign Assistance vis-a-vis Indian Foreign Aid: Explaining the Variation', Prof. Sreeram Chaulia spoke about the volume of foreign assistance, where China ranked higher than India, and was a bigger donor in loans, grants, and aid than both the USA and India. Most of this foreign assistance was concentrated in Africa and Latin America, with the former being the

largest cluster. In the case of India, the geographical spread was limited to mostly South Asia, while the same was limited in Africa and Latin America. The primary reason for China's large assistance was linked to its economic growth model, and its problem with over-capacity, as well as for increasing its global influence. India provided aid in terms of human resource building; for example, in Afghanistan.

The next speaker, Prof. Sreejith S.G spoke about Indian and Chinese Approaches to Global Law and Policy. China's position was informed by the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and aimed at consolidating its presence on the local and international sphere. While global law helped in protecting state interests, the Chinese approach to global law was hazy, since there was general distrust and scepticism about law. Though China showed caution to international law, the emphasis was on safeguarding their own national interest, and not normative. On the other hand, India's approach was normative and informed by its global ambitions and foreign policy. There was space for political freedom. However, both countries were ambition driven.

Prof. Sudarshan was the last speaker, and made a presentation comparing India and China's approach to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and governance. He mentioned that China didn't have any laws to regulate NGOs, but had charity laws which defined the areas in which these organizations can work. While there are laws in place in India, the number of processes had increased.

SESSION 4: GEOPOLITICS, HISTORY AND FOREIGN POLICY

The last session on Day One was a second set of selected papers. Making an Assessment of China's Diplomatic Shield of Terror Networks in Pakistan, the first speaker, Mr. Ashok Alex Luke, Assistant Professor, CMS College, Kottayam, Kerala, elaborated on the causes and concerns of China's position on Masood Azhar and its implications for India. He argued that this was an instance of Chinese hypocrisy and pointed to repercussions emanating from the region of Xinjiang.

The next panelist, Ms. Mallika Devi, Doctoral Student, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, made a presentation on how geography influenced the course of Chinese history, and speculated on the position of China as a revisionist power in the region.

The "KRA Canal as a Potential Game Changer in the Indian Ocean" was the subject of the paper of Dr. Shreya Upadhyay, India Bound. She presented a cost-benefit analysis to predict the future

of the KRA Canal in re-defining the geo-politics and security in the Indian Ocean, while also bringing in the dynamics of Thai politics.

The next speaker, Mr. Shreyas Shende, Research Assistant, Carnegie India, New Delhi, spoke on 'Deteriorating Sino-India Relations: Is Beijing responding to the Indo-US proximity?'. He talked from the policy perspective, as well as from the perspective of India's agency in reconsidering its options in a global shift of power politics. He cited from the influential work of Krishna Menon and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, and ended with the question - 'Is India just a pawn between great power politics or something larger?'

On similar lines of geo-political structuring of China's rise, was the paper by Mr. Sahil Philip, student, JGU, where he compared the BRI to the erstwhile Marshall Plan, arguing that they were the same models being applied in different times.

The final speaker, Mr. Prithish Gupta, student, JGU, spoke on 'Political Meritocracy in China- A Model to Emulate?', wherein he presented an alternative model to democratic governance, exploring the gaps in the democracy governance system, looking at an explicit cost-benefit analysis. He explored the source of meritocracy in Chinese society from the historical viewpoint to include the governance systems influenced by Confucian values, Mao-Leninist values, and the contemporary model of meritocracy.

Dr. Avinash Godbole, Assistant Professor, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, JGU, and Co-Convenor, 12th AICCS, was the Discussant for the session. He pointed that the papers brought together some interesting viewpoints of emerging trends and challenges in the new global space of Chinese growth. It shed light on the emerging identity of China from an East Asian power to a global player. All panelists spoke of the rising china while at the same time reflecting on the implications of this rise on the neighbourhood. Larger questions of whether India should bandwagon or balance China were also raised.

SPECIAL ADDRESS: Shri. V Muraleedharan, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India.

The Dinner on the first day of the conference was hosted by the Vice Chancellor, JGU. The dinner was preceded by a cultural programme by JGU students. The special guest of the evening was Shri

V. Muraleedharan, Honourable Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India. In his special address, Shri Muraleedharan focused on the relations and recent developments between India and China. He said that India and China were rising simultaneously, and also that the relations between both the countries went beyond the bi-lateral relations and had relevance in peace and stability in the South Asian region. He also spoke about both China and India's efforts in addressing challenges like climate change which would be enduring; he also highlighted in detail the state visits and informal meetings between the countries thereby improving trust and mutual understanding. Shri Muraleedharan spoke about how China had grown and become important in the world stage over the years, with deep trade association of both the countries from ancient times. He also elaborated on the intellectual transfers and mutual learnings between both the countries. He pointed out that India and China were rising simultaneously, and also that the relations between both the countries goes beyond the bi-lateral relations and has relevance in peace and stability in the South Asian region. He spoke on the establishment of a high-level mechanism to look at all issues of trade and investment, and noted the encouragement and promotion of people to people and cultural exchanges in areas like, tourism, art, academics, sport, etc.

SESSION 5: POLITICS, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The Second Day of the Conference – 9 November 2019 – began with a session of selected papers. The first speaker, Mr. Devendra Kumar Bishnoi, doctoral student, Hyderabad Central University, and who presented via Skype, spoke about the traditional symbols and how they help in shaping political legitimacy. He highlighted the tools employed by the state to cement its political legitimacy as the only legitimate party of the country by using these symbols.

The second speaker Ms. Jaya Sengar, student, JGU, spoke about the role of the internet, and how it shapes nationalism in China. She showed how the public sphere has historically always been dominated by the state, and how the state has heavily clamped down on the internet through censorship. She also delved on the theme of nationalism not being territorially limited.

The next panelist Dr. Tilak Jha, Assistant Professor, Bennett University, Greater Noida, posited the question “Can Xi be like Mao?” He spoke about how Mao started with a culture-led revolution, Deng through an economic-led revolution, and now, Xi is heading a technology-led revolution. He concluded by saying that Xi was still far from having a Mao-like persona.

Ms. Aishwarya Tiwari, student, JGU, presented on the role of social media in changing the social dynamic of China. She mentioned that the Chinese state sees social media as a threat, and

accordingly takes actions to maintain stability and order within the nation. She spoke of how this method has evolved over time and would continue to shape the social dynamic of the state.

The last speaker Mr. Justin Joseph, doctoral student, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, provided a comparative analysis of various environmental policy implementations in Xiamen and Kodaikkanal. He delved on the securitization theory of a state and called on the state to issue environmental issues as an existential threat, as per the securitization theory.

SESSION 6: SPECIAL PANEL – GEOPOLITICS OF A HIMALAYAN RIVER: CHINA, INDIA AND THE BRAHMAPUTRA

The session included papers by Dr. Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman on the prospects and challenges in the sub-regional cooperation on the Brahmaputra river basin; Dr. Medha Bisht on using the Brahmaputra and the strategic imageries to reflect on India-China Relations; Dr. Partha Jyoti Das on the need for adaptive hydro- diplomacy for effective transboundary water cooperation in South Asia around the Brahmaputra river; Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha on de-emphasizing China in deliberations on the Brahmaputra; and Ms. Ambika Viswanath on employing lessons from around the world to reflect on whether cooperation on the Brahmaputra is possible.

This session attempted to unravel the nuances of the Sino- Indian relations stressing upon the geographical as well as the political boundaries of the river Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra basin is tied with controversies regarding its ownership as an economic, ecological resource. China has also emerged in the recent past as a 'hydro-hegemon', and attempts to consolidate its power by using ecological sources. This would enable us to engage with more free-flowing notions of territorial boundaries. The container concept is challenged by geopolitical realities owing from their imbricated ecological interdependencies. Rivers should be understood as common, public goods. Till date, there have been fragmentation in data collected by either sides and they have each been wound up in their own narrow national interests. China is one of those upper riparian countries which gives water to the downstream countries like Bangladesh and India. This gives them political and economic power over these countries.

The discrepancies in communication because of the fluctuating relationship between India and China has resulted in more than one catastrophe. The dams built over the rivers in the north-

east part of India were predicted to cause a flood by the Chinese scientists. Lives could have been saved if there was ongoing communication between countries. The governments of both the countries should be transparent in their workings, to the public, as it will avoid unnecessary speculation and unwarranted hostility projected on the part of the media and public.

As an upper riparian country which gives water to the downstream countries like Bangladesh and India, China has a political and economic advantage over these countries. These governments should refrain from any sort of political disputes over the river Brahmaputra and instead think of how they can harness the water from the river to the benefit of all, especially by reworking the MoUs, and taking both parties' common interests into consideration.

However, it is crucial that both India and China depart from ethnocentric narratives, depoliticize the issue, and instead focus on building economic synergies, engaging in multilateral agreements, and moving towards a holistic, sustainable future by strengthening institutions and building capacities. Some suggestion put forth by the panel included investigating the gaps in data collection between the two countries, as well as coming up with creative and long-lasting solutions which take into account the cultural contexts of both the countries.

The panel argued that it was high time that we keep the borders of countries aside, start treating the water bodies as natural entities instead of a political statement for any country and transition towards a holistic and united future. In doing so, we must also reflect on the unique Asian ways of thinking, which call for a need to create the necessary conditions for change to occur. This would empower both the countries and help them forge stronger multilateral relations in the region.

SESSION 7: SPECIAL PANEL - THE PRESENT STATE OF INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

This special panel was chaired by ICS Director, Amb. Ashok K. Kantha. The first presentation was by Prof. Alka Acharya, Honorary Fellow, ICS and Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She spoke about the limits of diplomatic “management” with respect to the relations between India and China. She was followed by Gen S.L. Narasimhan from the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies, who reflected on Sino-Indian relations in the contemporary era. Amb. Biren Nanda, a former Consul-General in Shanghai spoke about the broad trends in India-China relations bookended by the two high profile meetings in Wuhan and Chennai. Finally, Dr G. Venkat Raman from Indian Institute of Management, Indore, spoke about the importance of economic ties, and the opportunities and challenges in strengthening them, in the bilateral Sino-Indian relationship. The general consensus was on

optimism however, there was a perception that India China relations have not progressed recently as well as expected.

SESSION 8: SPECIAL PANEL - TEACHING CHINA IN INDIA: NARRATIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN FACULTY

This special panel was chaired by Dr Anita Sharma from K.R. Mangalam University and ICS. The panelists were three foreign faculty members from O.P. Jindal Global University: Prof Aleksandra Mineeva from Jindal School of International Affairs, and Profs Wenjuan Zhang and Huang Yinghong, both from Jindal Global Law School. It comprised of short presentations on their experiences of teaching in an Indian university set-up, followed by a discussion among the panelists and audience.

SESSION 9: LAW, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The session focused on various dimensions of law, governance and development based on China as well as India, often drawing parallels between the two countries and shedding light on their strengths, weaknesses, similarities and differences.

The first speaker Mr. Debasish Chaudhuri presented a paper on ‘Reforms in Chinese Legal System: Delivering Justice or controlling Dissent?’ He opened with the poignant question: “Who is a dissident in China?,” and provided the historical context of various Chinese dynasties, and their take on managing statecraft. He talked about current laws, and how they are influenced by the Soviet system. He argued that, “since the party made the law, the party is above the law.”

The next speaker Mr. Ramnath Reghunandan spoke on the intellectual property governance and protection in China. He argued that China did not lack creativity and innovation, and it would not be accurate to say that it was not at par with the West. The paper showed how China had shifted from being resource-driven to being technology-driven.

The third paper, jointly presented by Mr. Santosh Pai and Mr. Rajesh Ghosh was on China’s new FDI law. They focused on the existing three laws of EJV 1979, WFOE 1986, and CJV 1988. They discussed about Foreign Investment Enterprises (FIEs), and their working in China’s economy. They emphasized how China has continuously made attempts to safeguard its intellectual property. They commented on the contractual relationship of Variable Interest Entities (VIEs), and how they have established themselves in China.

The following paper by Dr. Usha Chandran focused on gendered governance through the issue of the 'left-over women,' and how China regressed to solve the problem left over by the Women's liberation movement. Her paper explained how education, employment and financial independence had led to women becoming less amenable to unequal or compromised marital unions.

The final paper on 'China and India's Path to Gender-Balanced Growth' was presented by Mr. Srivatsan Manivannan (co-authored with Prof Deepanshu Mohan, who was not present). They emphasized the lack of non-masculine perspectives on economic growth, and underscored the many lapses in the unpaid care economy. They showed a clear demarcation of numbers among the individuals involved in domestic work, elder care, and childcare. They provided examples such as the Amul Cooperative in India, where male perspectives dominate, regardless of the presence of women *sarpanches*. They concluded by stating that the immense labor gap is due to the feminization and masculinization of jobs and opportunities.

As the discussant, Prof Swati Chawla gave some suggestions on making effective presentations, having a clear answer to the "so-what" question in the paper, and providing a wide breadth of scholarship about key terms in the footnotes.

SPECIAL PANEL - EAST ASIA: SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICAL NARRATIVES OF THE REGION

The session deliberated on the change afoot in East Asia, as traditional alliances are brought under pressure now that the long-standing status quo of great power politics is changing. The rise of China as a regional hegemon has served to counter the long-standing influence the US had in East Asia through South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. Due to this, regional dynamics are changing at an unforeseen pace. With the US, the strongest common thread between the East Asian middle powers, withdrawing from the region old animosities between states is coming to the forefront once again. As the region approaches this new reality, it is yet to see what the new strategies in will be as countries look inward and formulate their foreign policy agendas.

Geopolitics of the Asia Pacific is becoming increasingly important in the security architecture of international politics. Major world powers have adopted East Asia oriented policy initiatives like President Obama's 'Pivot to Asia' and Prime Minister Modi's 'Look East' Policy. With the United States, the traditional balance to China's growing might, backing out of the region, new question on how the states in region will adjust to this is brought to the forefront. It is in this context that the conversations on this special panel took place.

Dr. Titli Basu provided insight on how the retreat of the United States from the region has shaped domestic Japanese politics around the topic of remilitarization and the journey of the “normalization” of the Japanese state.

South Korea seems have taken the ebbing of US presence in the region as an opportunity to rediscover its place in the Asia Pacific, per Dr. Sandip Mishra.

Dr. Jabin Jacob pointed out that, unlike South Korea and Japan, the shift in US policy has allowed Taiwan greater strategic space. The United States’ ongoing trade dispute has created fractures between the two great powers that Taiwan can use.

The future of these middle powers, as described by Amb. Skand Tayal, craves strategic space. It is yet to be seen how they will use this space through the international collaborations they pursue.

The changing structure of great powers in the region continued to be a repeated theme throughout the speakers. They spoke at length of the waning influence of the US and its impact, and also reflected on the subsequent rise of China as the regional hegemon. A defensive against China is perhaps one of the few security objectives that unite the region’s many actors. Despite their hostility towards each other, they are all equally reliant on and vary of China’s objectives. Taiwan is battling constant Chinese encroachment into its diplomatic and cultural space, meanwhile Japan is left as the only anchor of the old order. Taiwan is hoping to bank on its democratic identity and domestic politics in Japan is gauging the viability of remilitarization to strengthen their position. South Korea, with its strained ties with the US and Japan, is trying to create a better-defined space for itself in the region.

The influence of middle powers in East Asia was also discussed in the context of the potential security alliances that the region might pursue. With uncertainties around the future of regional groupings like QUAD, there was a resounding call for a reconsidering of ASEAN, reassertion of US strength in the region, and the enforcement of relevant conventions like the UNCLOS. These would help protect the region against China’s rise as well as other major threats like North Korea which has been largely status quo-ist against South Korea’s attempts to create friendlier relations.

Some panelists and audience members were skeptical that the changes occurring were temporary and feeble. Japanese attempts to remilitarize were believed to have limited public acceptability. Therefore, the panelists diverged on whether the ways in which states were dealing with changing power structures were positive for the region. Ultimately, they all agreed that change itself is inevitable with the Chinese state taking firm hold over the Asia Pacific future.

SESSION 11: SPECIAL PANEL – FIELDWORK EXPERIENCES IN CHINA STUDIES

The Special Panel comprised of Dr. Joe Thomas Karackattu, (Assistant Professor, China Study Centre, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai), Dr. Hemant Adlakha (Honorary Fellow, ICS and Associate Professor, Centre Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi and Associate Professor at Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies JNU, Delhi, Dr Madhurima Nundy (Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi) and Dr. Veda Vaidyanathan (Research Associate at Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi)

Dr. Thomas E. Mical, Dean of Jindal School of Arts and Architecture Dean of Jindal School of Arts and Architecture, Dr. Thomas E. Mical spoke about the differentiation between being a geographer and his field which is Architectural Designing. He mentioned how most of the problems can be studied in India and China for a very simple fact that they consist of large population and present diversity. He also spoke a piece of knowledge gained at one place can help and transfer into the other parts of the world. “Every time we teach students ethnography we hit walls.” And he tries to make the students understand that they are not separate from nature, we are a part of nature that’s why it is important to study our natural surroundings.

The next speaker was Prof. Joe Thomas Karackattu Assistant Professor, China Study Centre, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (IIT, Chennai) quoted John Acton “History is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul. “one would rather feed the intellectual appetite and formative process of bilateral relations between India and China with the richness of under explored aspects of history than leave it to imagination and prejudices of some.” He did two major projects including distinctive research designs and auto ethnographic traces of culture of Kerala and China. They used narrative methods to study the past, present and the future. He mentioned how interviews were an important method of research, going further to touch upon issues of biasness of the respondents on sensitive issues like history or politics. In this light, he observed that it was preferable to conduct research through an institution or university which undertakes studies on sensitive topics. He also emphasized on improving the language and communication skills and not to restrict oneself through reliance on photocopies or textual analysis.

Dr. Hemant Adlakha, Honorary Fellow, ICS and Associate Professor, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, was the next speaker. He spoke about the variance of experiences every researcher. Therefore, the need for personal experiences through field work. He focussed on the importance of being aware of communication systems while being in the field in China, giving personal anecdotes. He also noted with appreciation, the role of city libraries – he was of the opinion that even the libraries in townships were well-organized and if good communication could be established, people generally turn out to be supportive; even helping with access to books that might be rare, and most often restricted for internal circulation.. He also underlined the need to be flexible with one’s research and be prepared to face all kinds of challenges.

Speaking next, Dr. Madhurima Nundy, Associate Fellow, ICS, shared her experiences of doing her field research on public health. She mentioned how it could be beneficial in contacting scholars and respondents beforehand, to avoid any problems. She noted that one needed to remain in touch with the respondents, thanking and updating them about how the conversations and the information emerging from them have been situated in the final writing. She also echoed the other panelists on the importance of knowing the language and enhancement of communication skills.

The last speaker was Dr. Veda Vaidyanathan, Research Associate, ICS, who spoke on studying China from non-proximate geographies, in her case, Africa. Her research involving field visits in Africa was focused on the lives of Chinese people in the continent including the stakeholders, entrepreneurs as well as university students. She mentioned how each stakeholder had a different story to tell – in her conversations on the ground, while some people wished to go back to China some others had decided to stay on.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

The Valedictory Session began with Amb. Ashok K. Kantha, the Chair of the session and Director of Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), remarking on the 12th AICCS as a successful conference consisting of discussions on a variety of issues and not just the main theme of the conference. His introduction was followed by Professor Kathleen A. Modrowski, Dean of Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities. She spoke about the various courses and opportunities that the university has to offer for the study of China, including immersion programmes with Tsinghua University amongst others. She insisted on the need to build closer relationships with Chinese

institutions and the internationalization of the curriculum. Her address was followed by Prof. Sreemati Chakrabarti, Vice-Chairperson, ICS and Convenor, 12th AICCS. Professor Chakrabarti presented the gathering with the report of the 3-day conference, illustrating the various sessions over a range of topics and described it as a deliberation of vibrancy.

Amb. Nalin Surie, Distinguished Fellow, Delhi Policy Group and Former Ambassador of India to China and Poland, and High Commissioner to United Kingdom, gave the Valedictory Address, expressing his congratulations to the organizers of the conference. He also stressed on the importance of understanding China and a bottom-up approach should be employed understand China where the role of scholars cannot be undermined. He also opined that the outcome of deliberations of the conference will have academic as well as policy relevance.

Following the Valedictory address, Dr. Joe Thomas Karackattu, Assistant Professor, China Study Centre, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, extended a warm welcome to delegates to the 13th AICCS to be held in IIT Chennai in 2020.

Dr. Avinash Godbole, Assistant Professor, School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana and Co-Convenor, 12th AICCS gave the vote of thanks and expressed his gratitude to all the organizers and volunteers on the successful completion of the conference with which the session and the conference came to an end.