

13th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES

SPECIAL THEME:

CHINA AT CROSSROADS: NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLITICS,
ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

ORGANIZED BY:

Institute of Chinese Studies
&
IIT Madras China Studies Centre

 #13thAICCS

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REPORT

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Jointly organized by

Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi (ICS) And

Indian Institute of Technology Madras China Studies Centre

28 -30 January 2021

The **All India Conference of China Studies** – an annual flagship event of the **Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi**, was jointly organized this time with the **IIT Madras China Studies Centre**, in the **virtual mode from 28-30 January 2021**. The principal objective of the AICCS is to spread interest in and strengthen research on China and East Asian Studies in India. IIT Madras China Studies Centre is proud to co-host the 13th AICCS with the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi (ICS). Each conference has a special theme and this year's theme was focused on **“China at Crossroads: New Directions in Politics, Environment and Economy”**.

INAUGURAL SESSION:

The inaugural session, on 28th January 2021, began with the co-convener's introduction to the conference theme, and how the overall participation by way of papers and themes included for discussion in this year's conference incorporated research agendas covering the study of society, economy, institutional reforms, environment, beyond elite-politics and foreign policy of China. This was followed by **Ambassador Ashok K. Kantha, Director of the ICS**, formally delivering the Welcome Remarks. Amb. Kantha noted that since its inception in 2006, the AICCS has developed into an annual gathering , bringing together China scholars from all over India. He also noted that the AICCS is a great opportunity for a new generation of China studies scholars to think innovatively about India -China relations.

The next speaker, **Professor Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director of IIT Madras**, delivered the Opening Remarks wherein he highlighted the importance of having more study and research on

China, and also spoke about how the IIT Madras China Studies Centre was conceived as a platform to encourage cross-disciplinary research on India and China, especially for domains such as technology.

Professor Sreemati Chakrabarti, Convener of the 13th AICCS and Vice Chairperson, ICS, shared her gratitude to all those who made the conference possible, and stated that the main aim of the AICCS is to take China studies to the rest of the country. She thanked the Ministry of External Affairs for extending its support.

The highlight of the Inaugural Session was the Keynote Address given by Honorable Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India who stressed that in order to stabilize India- China relations, the relationship should be based on “three mutual grounds— mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests”. He proposed eight principles to handle ties with China, which were under exceptional stress following the events of last year and recent tensions along the border. The inaugural session was concluded by the **Vote of Thanks delivered by the co-convener** thanking the esteemed panel of guests and audience members.

SPECIAL PANEL SESSION 1 – METHODS IN CHINA STUDIES RESEARCH

The panellists for the session included **Professor Kamal Sheel, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, Professor William Callahan, Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Professor Avijit Banerjee, Professor and Head, Department of Chinese Language & Culture (Cheena Bhawan) and Dr. Usha Chandran, Assistant Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, JNU. This panel was chaired by Professor Rana Mitter, Professor of History and Politics of Modern China, University of Oxford, Oxford.**

Professor Kamal Sheel, spoke about the importance of archival records as sources of drawing historical narratives and drew attention to the prolific mass literature in vernacular languages and regional sources of knowledge which the scholarly community should make use of for their research – **especially to bring out unknown china stories hidden in regional knowledge systems.** Prof William A. Callahan, Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) discussed the importance of using Visual Methods for China Studies research highlighting the shift from warfare to map-fare by explicit reference to, what he termed as the U-shaped line in the South China Sea portrayed by China in maps

exported to the rest of the world, and used as a watermark in passports.

Prof Avijit Banerjee, Professor and Head, Department of Chinese Language & Culture (Cheema Bhawan), spoke on the rising importance of the study of Chinese language as an international language and stressed on the need for more initiatives to support researchers with opportunities to learn the language. The final speaker on the special panel session was Dr. Usha Chandran, Assistant Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, JNU who spoke on social relations in the Chinese society as an example of an ‘Ideal type’, laying out the **sociological considerations of studying Chinese society**.

THEMATIC PANEL I: POLITICS OF ECOLOGY IN THE PRC

The panel was chaired by Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi, Professor & Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of International Relations, South Asian University, Delhi.

The first speaker, **Ms. Shagufta Yasmin, Ph.D. Scholar, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi** focused on ‘China’s Environmental Diplomacy moving towards Authoritarian Environmentalism’. The second speaker, **Ms. Saloni Sharma, Ph.D. Scholar, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi**, focused on the concept of China’s Ecological Civilization and how Covid-19 has been a tipping point for environmental consciousness. In his paper on ‘New Media Activism and Politics of Ecology in the People’s Republic of China’, the third speaker **Dr. Justin Joseph, Assistant Professor (Politics), School of Liberal Arts, Hindustan University, Chennai**, discussed how ordinary people are using new media for activism and protests on environmental issues, social media platforms such as weibo and wechat are developing as a new form of engagement with power structures. The final speaker, **Dr. Sriram Natrajan, Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi**, presented a paper on Urban Agriculture, Food Security and Urban Food Systems focusing on the context of technology driven agriculture in China. Dr Manish Kumar, Assistant Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, offered his views as a discussant following which the session was summed up by the chair, Prof Sanjay Chaturvedi, stressing on ‘Good ecology as being good economy’.

DAY – 2, 29 January 2021

SPECIAL PANEL II: REDUCING DEPENDENCY IN ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA

This special panel was moderated by Mr. Santosh Pai, Honorary Fellow and Treasurer, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. The panellists included Mr. Sanjay Chadha, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Amb. (Dr) Mohan Kumar, Chairperson, Research & Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), Professor of Diplomatic Practice, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Dr. Ajit Ranade, Group Executive President & Chief Economist, Aditya Birla Group, Mumbai Prof. Amita Batra, Professor of Economics & Chairperson, Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi.

The session was steered by Mr. Santosh Pai in a Q&A format where panelists had the opportunity to respond to questions on India's economic dependency on China. Mr. Sanjay Chadha mentioned how access to the Chinese market has always been in great demand. Ambassador Mohan Kumar contended that trade between two countries was less likely to abate conflict and how engaging in positive trade in the backdrop of the political fallout between the between two countries was not desirable. Dr Ajit Ranade made a case for a long-term view – arguing that if India needed to reduce its poverty rate and improve the growth rate, it cannot shy away from engaging in trade with the world. He also said that if India was going to stay out of RCEP, it was going to lose. The final speaker Professor Amita Batra, highlighted that India could not remain obsessed with bilateral deficit alone and stressed on the need to increase competitiveness in the manufacturing sector.

THEMATIC PANEL II: SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION ISSUES IN THE PRC

Prof. Ramu Manivannan, Head, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras, Chennai, was the moderator for this panel. The first speaker, Ms. Shruti Jargad, Graduate Student, Yenching Academy of Peking University, Beijing, presented a

paper on “Residents’ Committees in China”, explaining it using political and sociological theories while also comparing residents’ committees of Maoist Era with those in post-economic reform era. **Prateeksha Tiwari, M.Phil Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi**, presented a paper on ‘Covid-19 and Online Learning in Rural China’ where “School’s out, but class’s on” and went on to explain the difficulties faced by the students in rural China touching upon mental health issues as well arising from shutdown of schools. The final speaker of the session, **Mr. Snehal Ajit Ulman, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi**, presented a paper on ‘Changing Political Visions and Struggles’ in China with comparative insights into the rise of Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping’s rise and his visions and goals as a ruler. **The discussant of the panel Dr. Bhim Subba, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, School of Social Science, University of Hyderabad**, made useful interventions giving suggestions and pointing out the areas of improvement for each of the speakers. Professor Ramu Manivannan moderated a lively Q&A offering his own views on the presentations.

THEMATIC PANEL III: OUTREACH AND MULTILATERALISM: FOREIGN POLICY AND CHALLENGES

The Moderator was Prof. W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar, Advisor, Centre for Public Policy Research, Kochi & former Professor of International Relations & Strategic Studies, Department of Political Science, Madras Christian College, who laid out the theme - Chinese outreach as a smart power and a soft power. The first presentation was made in absentia - Shruti Jargad read out an abstract presentation, titled, ‘Going Beyond the United Nations: How China is Engaging in Building Peace in Myanmar?’ for **Ms. Jayshree Borah, Ph.D. Scholar, School of International Relations and Public Administration, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai**, who was unable to attend. **Shubhda Gurung, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Chinese & South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi**, presented a paper on ‘Tertiary-level Education Exchanges between India and China’, highlighting improved exchange of education between Indian and Chinese universities using the ‘push and pull’ theoretical framework. The next paper by **Mr. Shivi Sanyam, Advocate, Rahul Suryavanshi, Economics Undergraduate; Mr Yash Johri, lawyer**, discussed the Brahmaputra river and its geographical importance and the need for India to build an international coalition to bring the Chinese delegation to accepting procedures based on international statutes. The last speaker of the session, was **Dr. Saheli Bose, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Seth Anandram Jaipuria College (University of Calcutta), Kolkata**, presented a

paper discussing how India's distancing from the 'Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could impact the gains from the Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor. The discussant for the session **Dr Avinash Godbole, Assistant Professor, Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities, O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat**, commented extensively on the papers presented and offered views on research areas that could be further developed by the presenters. Dr. Lawrence Prabhakar closed the session after moderating the Q&A.

SPECIAL PANEL III: URBANIZATION IN CHINA

Moderated by Dr. Partha Mukhopadhyay, Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi, the panel comprised Prof. Mark W. Frazier, Professor of Politics, The New School of Social Research; Co-Director, India China Institute, The New School, New York, Prof. Juan Du, Faculty of Architecture, Hong Kong University, Hong Kong, Dr. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Cultural Anthropologist and Artist, Co- Founder, Handshake 302 in Shenzhen, and Dr. Solomon Benjamin, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, Chennai.

Prof. Mark W. Frazier, compared India and China with reference to urban studies as a domain while also focusing on institutions in India and China. Dr. Juan Du, made a presentation on demystifying Shenzhen city challenging the view that Shenzhen was a recent story – and making a case for it as a historical city. The third speaker for the session was Dr. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Cultural Anthropologist and Artist, shared her experience of staying in Shenzhen and also broached issues of migrant workers during the pandemic. The final speaker for the day was Dr. Solomon Benjamin, spoke on 'China Bazaars' and explained how technologies get embedded to spaces and how transnational spaces often get created under the radar of formal bilateral exchanges. The presentations were followed by a Q&A session.

Day Three: Saturday, 30 January 2021

SPECIAL PANEL IV - ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE GOALS AND STRATEGIES OF CHINA, INDIA AND THE WEST: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

This special panel was chaired by Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Honorary Fellow and former Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi; This panel comprised Ambassador Shyam Saran, Member, Governing Council, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi; Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi; Prof. Varaprasad S. Dolla, Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Dr. Rajiv Ranjan, Assistant Professor at Shanghai University, and Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies. Ambassador Shyam Saran, discussed China's approach to climate change, as the largest coal producing country, and India's position with respect to events in China. He suggested India should develop its own strategy regarding climate change, particularly, on coal and renewable energy. The next speaker was Prof. Varaprasad S. Dolla who spoke on 'Greening the Chinese economy and environment' highlighting the contrasting 'glittering cities' with the choking industrial centers, and bringing out the current trajectory of China in greening its economy and environment through technological solutions, environmentalism as a movement, and leadership approaches towards environment security. The final speaker of the session was Dr. Rajiv Ranjan, who presented a paper titled 'China's Carbon Neutrality Pledge: A Game Changer in Global Governance', with a comparison of how the West and China are handling carbon neutrality and an elaboration of the Tsinghua model.

SPECIAL PANEL V: CHINA STUDIES IN INDIA

The panel was chaired by Professor Madhavi Thampi, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. The panellists were Prof. Tansen Sen, Professor of History and Director of the Center for Global Asia, NYU Shanghai, Dr. Sonika Gupta, Associate Prof at Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology and Dr. G. Venkat Raman, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Management – Indore. The panellists discussed the state of China Studies from different vantage points. The session was based on free-flowing conversations on the importance of scholars studying China beyond a bilateral lens, as Dr. Sonika pointed out, and the importance of language training. Dr Venkat

pointed out the dualism in our approach to China drawing on the example of the pharma sector and supply of API and non-acceptance when it comes to APPS from China. He pointed out that only by understanding China could all issues between the countries be better dealt with. Prof. Tansen Sen concurred with both the speakers and their views on this question and offered that there should be ways developed to study China from an Indian perspective and not from Western or American perspective alone. The Chair opened up the floor to Q&A and closed the session with the recommendation of broadening China studies in multidisciplinary tracks and the possibility of mentoring from senior scholars for better peer-reviewed publications as part of formative training of the younger scholars.

THEMATIC PANEL V: POLITICAL ECONOMY CHALLENGES IN CHINESE ECONOMIC POLICY

This panel was Chaired by Prof. Rajat Kathuria, Director and Chief Executive, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), Delhi.

Ms. Shubhi Bhandari, independent researcher, presented a paper co-authored with Mr. Santosh Pai, Honorary Fellow & Treasurer, Institute of Chinese Studies probing FDI Trends in post- Covid era and the possibilities of Indian paradiplomacy gaining from China's loss. **Dr. Khanindra Das, Assistant Professor, at Birla Institute of Management Technology,** assessed economic interdependence since COVID-19, between China and South Asian countries stressing on the importance of fair competition being pursued by countries, instead of geo- political considerations. **Dr. Radha Raghurampatruni, Associate Professor, at GITAM** presented an empirical analysis of trade performance between China and the BRICS Regional Group. **Dr. Nalin Kumar, Associate Professor, Presidency University, Bengaluru; presented a paper co-authored with Dr. Malini Tantri, Assistant Professor, ISEC, Bengaluru; Dr. Varadurga Bhat, Assistant Professor, Christ University** on 'Trade Irritants and Non-Tariff Measures between India and China', which followed a descriptive approach and revealed that trade facilitation in the true spirit (more inclusive) had to be activated by both sides – and suggested the need for co-evolution of institutions to deal with non-tariff barriers. The discussant: **Dr. Arindam Banerjee, Associate Professor in Economics, at Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD),** pointed to the breaking down of the free trade consensus in recent years and offered individual comments to each presenter.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

The conference ended with the valedictory session Chaired by **Prof Patricia Uberoi, Chairperson and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi**, who recorded her formal gratitude for the conference co-hosts – the IIT Madras China Studies Centre and the Co-convenor, Dr Joe Thomas Karackattu for the efforts that made the conference a success. This was followed by the **Convener’s (Prof Sreemati Chakrabarti) remarks**, following which the ‘Report of the Conference’ was briefly introduced by Dr Joe Thomas Karackattu. **Prof. Avijit Banerjee, Professor & Head, Department of Chinese Language & Culture (Cheena Bhavana), Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan** also extended a warm welcome to delegates of the 14th AICCS, which his institution would be hosting. The session closed with the formal vote of thanks recorded by the Co-Convenor, Dr Joe Thomas Karackattu thanking the wonderful audience for their enthusiastic participation at the 13th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES. He noted that the conference had a record audience for any AICCS. Gratitude was also recorded for all resource persons - Chairs/Discussants/Panelists at the 13th All India Conference of China Studies, and the core team at IIT Madras and ICS that made it possible, viz: Anagha, Ashna, Athira, Chandni, Navaneeth & Ramnath (from IIT Madras) ; Adveetya Kachiar, Samanvya Singh Hooda , Col KK Venkatraman, Preksha Shree Chhetri and Reeja Nair (from ICS, Delhi) as also the Advisors/ mentors: Prof. Patricia Uberoi , Prof. Sreemati Chakrabarti, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Prof. Alka Acharya, Prof. Sabaree Mitra, Dr. Bhim Subba, Prof. Hemant Adlakha, Mr. Santosh Pai, Dr. Solomon J Benjamin, Dr. Madhurima Nundy & Amb. Ashok K. Kantha.
