



16th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES (AICCS)

CONCEPT NOTE

Scholars have been watching and studying China across the world and across time, though the nature and reason of the interest may have changed as China moved through its long history. In the decades since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, numerous centres and institutes have emerged all over the world dedicated to the study and research on China. India shares geographical boundaries and boasts of civilizational contacts with China, but scholars have faced many challenges and limitations in their efforts to study and understand their largest neighbour. Nonetheless, there has been significant growth in the field, as several generations of committed scholars have dedicated themselves to research on China from an interdisciplinary and multidimensional perspective. Furthermore, in the last few decades several universities and institutions have set up special China Studies centers as well as departments of Chinese language and culture.

While much remains to be done, two aspects need particular attention: First, teaching and research with ample policy making potential needs to be strengthened and secondly, the importance of the knowledge of Chinese language in carrying out research on China must be repeatedly underscored through result-oriented methods and programs. It is encouraging to note that in recent years there is an enhanced "desire to know" China framework which is leading knowledge creation on China in India. The presence of an India-specific context of reading China is a highly desirable additional dimension to knowledge-building on China. India's location as an Asian neighbor to China offers the potential to understand China beyond ethnocentric dichotomization, even as we draw from the existing body of knowledge compiled through thousands of years of civilizational interaction.

However, it is vital to analyze the gaps and challenges evident in the way China Studies has developed in India. The dilemmas facing scholars and teachers must be addressed so that the new directions and spaces can be opened up for objective and serious research and investigation in the coming decades. It is necessary to adopt an integral approach to China Studies with the understanding that researchers can, and must, traverse disciplinary boundaries. The 16th AICCS, with cautious optimism, will build on the grounds covered in its decade and a half long journey. We will endeavour to highlight the new questions and choices facing the Indian scholarly community, explore ways to overcome the limitations and hopefully scale new heights.

Given this background, the 16th AICCS will have the following three components:

Part I: China Studies: State of the Field

- a. Global Trends in China Studies
- b. New Scholarship in China

This part will include areas such as foreign policy and strategy, economic development, domestic politics and challenges of governance, dynamics of society and culture, environmental concerns, food and energy security, etc.

Part II: New Research on China in India

In the last decade, the AICCS has witnessed a steady and significant increase in the number of enthusiastic young scholars, especially M.Phil. /Ph.D. students, wishing to share their research. An extremely welcome trend, this would greatly intensify interactions amongst themselves as also with the senior scholars of China Studies who have

set the benchmark for academic research and continue to do so through mentoring. As in recent years, it is in this section that new horizons of Indian scholarship on China would be displayed in all its diversity and originality.

Part III: Special Theme: *Social Dynamics and Political Responses in China*

Many countries across the globe are witnessing rapid transformation. Across the international and domestic spheres, this transformation has led to new socio-economic, cultural and political conditions. China too, is not untouched by these new forces. With rapid economic growth and development and dramatic technological changes, the aspirations of the Chinese people have changed from subsistence to affluence, which have altered the social, cultural and political interactions in the society. The uneven development and regional disparities have led to further divisions and chasms in Chinese society, generating different political and social responses from the people and the state alike. These contradictions were more profoundly felt during the Covid pandemic—particularly the Zero Covid policy, resulting into severe logistical and policy challenges. The economic fallout, with rising graduate unemployment, youth disenchantment and ineffective pandemic management policies, especially in Covid hotspots, have seen protests in urban spaces and in elite universities across China. At the same time, China's international image was dented when its one-party governance model, often touted as efficient and responsive, was criticised both within and outside China for its failure to check the pandemic and for misadventures in governance.

On the other hand, amid the pandemic, the 20th Congress of Communist Party of China (CPC) marked a new political development. It indicated a departure from the old norms to new era politics under Xi Jinping, legalising continuation into the third term and beyond. This Congress was certainly no routine political event, and it can be seen in terms of a prelude to how China will be steering its own course and dealing with the outside world in the changing regional and global political landscape. The domestic challenges, particularly the demographic concerns and the economic slow-down would test the new leadership under Xi Jinping and the CPC in the coming years.

The Conference will be arranged into Thematic Panels, composed of the selected abstracts/papers of individual scholars, and Special Panels, composed of selected panel proposals, (through the Call for Papers/Panels) as well as specially invited panels.

Please note, in addition to the Special Theme, individual abstracts and panel proposals on all China-related topics & themes may be submitted.

The best paper presented by a young & emerging scholar in the Thematic Panels will be selected for the [Mira Sinha Bhattacharjea Award](#), which carries a prize of Rs. 25,000/-. The selection will be made by a Committee comprising senior China scholars, on the basis of originality of the topic, methodology, argument and presentation. The selected paper will be published by ICS. Further relevant information will be posted in due course of time on the [ICS website](#).

We are confident that a large number of scholars, young and established, from institutions across India, as well as specially invited scholars of China Studies from abroad, will participate in the event and enrich and expand the knowledge resources on China.

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