

# REPORT

## 4<sup>th</sup> INDIA FORUM ON CHINA @ GOA

100 YEARS OF CPC & CHINA'S FUTURE

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ORGANISED BY

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IN COOPERATION WITH  
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## FULL REPORT OF 4<sup>th</sup> IFC

The Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), Delhi and the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) organised the 4th India Forum on China (IFC) in cooperation with Goa University to explore the theme 'CPC at 100 and China's Future' on 3-4 December 2021 at Goa. The Keynote Address was delivered by **Prof. Rana Mitter**, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, University of Oxford, on 'How New is China's New Era under Xi Jinping'. The conference was organised in hybrid mode and it included seven engaging sessions with over forty eminent speakers from across the globe. The forum discussed themes of contemporary relevance about China such as National Rejuvenation: Sustaining Authoritarian Legitimacy; Power-Projection in the Indo-Pacific; Cultural and Intellectual Traditions; Great Power Competition; China's Developmental Aspirations; Decoding China's Regional Ambitions; and Communist Party of China (CPC) at 100.

### Inaugural Session



In the inaugural session, **Amb. Ashok K. Kantha**, Director, ICS, delivered the Chair's remarks, discussing the importance of having a platform where speakers can engage in a free and frank manner for informal discussions. He explained how the structure of this forum and its carefully crafted sessions reinforce the dynamic nature of conversations. In the last two years, under the shadow of the pandemic,

China has gained considerable visibility internationally across areas such as strategic affairs, global governance, economic relations, trade and investment, and many others. Critical developments in international relations in the recent past, such as the geostrategic importance of the Indo-Pacific, formation of new geopolitical alliances and discussions about building supply chain resilience, are all intertwined with China's growing global influence. Amb. Kantha stressed that as a country aiming to expand its footprint, India's equation with China occupies a central place in India's geopolitical and economic policymaking. It is,

therefore, important for India to discern the various strands of interaction that the other major countries have with China. The 1st IFC brought together views on China's expanding geostrategic role and rising ambitions to the global platform as articulated by Xi Jinping at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. In 2018, the 2nd IFC explored the changing drivers of China's economy, and in 2019, during the 3rd IFC, the conversation took place around the theme of China and Asia's geopolitics. This year, with the pandemic as a backdrop, the IFC takes the dialogue forward on the theme 'Hundred years of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and China's future. As China celebrates the centenary of the Party, new developments that are likely to have ramifications for the world and India are seen. Last month, the sixth Plenum of the 19th Central Committee adopted the third resolution on the history of the CPC, elevating Xi Jinping to the stature of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In Xi Jinping's new era, the CPC's nature, ethos, and role has undergone a fundamental shift. The Party is firmly in control of the government, the military and increasingly the business and society in China. The country's developmental agenda and strategies are being realigned under the rubric of dual circulation and common prosperity. Xi Jinping's Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation encompasses ambitious goals to be achieved by 2035 and 2049. However, as a country that is going through multiple transitions and facing numerous challenges, China perhaps has a limited window of opportunity to achieve these goals. Amb. Kantha emphasised that the 4th IFC would explore the major trends, developments and issues relating to the CPC and China's future trajectories.

The Opening remarks by **Prof. Harilal B. Menon**, Vice-Chancellor, Goa University, Taleigao, touched upon the achievements of the CPC in the last hundred years. Prof. Menon briefly discussed the history of the CPC and explained how the CPC was founded in 1921 to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation and how, through a century of endeavours, the Party led the people to overcome the three significant challenges of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism. He emphasised that at the time of its inception, the Party had merely 50 members, but at present, the CPC is the world's largest governing party with more than 95 million members in a country of more than 1.4 billion people. Prof. Menon stressed that the Party enjoys tremendous international influence and some of the critical factors contributing to the Party's popularity include its firm leadership, its people-centred philosophy of development and socialism with Chinese characteristics. China's developmental strategy transforming China into an innovative nation was first evident in 2015 when the Made in China (MIC) 2025 program was launched. Having summed up the Party's achievements and ambitions, Prof. Menon expressed his concerns about the practicality of China's ambitions, especially in the context of innovation. He raised some crucial questions regarding China's capability to become self-reliant, its sustainability without liberalising its deeply autocratic state, and the longevity of the Chinese ruling party.



**Mr. Stephan Grabherr**, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, New Delhi, enlightened the Forum about the latest developments in Germany's domestic politics. He explained that Germany's politics had undergone significant change in the recent past with a tripartite government coming into power. With regards to China, he explained that Germany would cooperate with China in areas where it is possible; however, it will push back where required. His deductions were based on the statements on China given by Germany's new foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock. Mr. Grabherr also spoke on the BRI and the European Union's response to BRI. He explained that initially, BRI seemed fair as a connectivity initiative, but as its projects were developed, they seemed neither convincing nor fair. He then explained how the EU has taken upon itself to foster connectivity in the region with its connectivity programme launched in 2021 as the Global Gateway plan. Mr. Grabherr stressed that the plan does not intend to challenge China but aims at supporting infrastructure development around the world. Finally, he talked about multilateralism and its effectiveness in solving global challenges.

As the Inaugural session ended with views on the CPC and China's future expressed by **Mr. Peter Rimmele**, the Resident Representative to India of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. He began by stating that the India Forum on China has become a landmark event since its inception attracting leading scholars and practitioners worldwide to share their valuable insights on a country that has steadily asserted itself. He discussed how forums such as the IFC help uncover developments on the other side of the "New China Wall", which is both virtual and physical. He stressed that China has grown increasingly opaque, with the nation's domestic affairs tightly under wraps as it rises. Mr. Rimmele then shared his views on Xi Jinping as Xi's views and ideas are not only going to impact China but the rest of the world as well – in fact, "his dreams may be a nightmare for many others". He stated that Xi aspires to achieve the ultimate dream of authoritarian politics powered by new technology and economic influence that allows it to rewrite international rules according to its liking. Mr. Rimmele argued that past foreign aggressions, such as during the 'Century of Humiliation', are deeply engraved in the Chinese people's hearts and minds, and Xi is building his reign on this narrative. He ended his remarks by stating that harsh realities stand in the way of Xi's dreams and their fulfillment. These harsh realities include questions like how to stay in power; how to overcome dissidents; how to create about 12 million new jobs every year; how to maintain sufficient growth to meet these employment targets, how to address the demographic challenges of an ageing country and how to tame pollution and other problems related to the environment properly. Additionally, China is currently facing challenges, as can be seen from Germany's stand on China. He concluded by stating that history is

rife with examples of the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes since human beings are fond of freedom by nature.

The varied themes that the four speakers touched upon laid the foundation of the forum and set the tone for the deliberations for the next two days of the conference.

### **Session 1 - National Rejuvenation: Sustaining Authoritarian Legitimacy**



The First Session was titled "National Rejuvenation: Sustaining Authority and Legitimacy," and chaired by **Amb. Kishan Rana**, Emeritus Fellow, ICS; former Ambassador of India to Germany, Mauritius and Algeria. The first speaker for the session was **Amb. Shivshankar Menon**, Chairman, Advisory Board, ICS; Visiting Professor of International Relations, Ashoka University, Sonapat; former

National Security Advisor; and Foreign Secretary, Government of India. Amb. Menon spoke on 'Legitimacy and Authority in Xi's China'. The second speaker, **Ms. Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Fellow, Asia Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin spoke on "Sources of Legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party". The Last two speakers for the sessions were **Dr. Jabin T. Jacob**, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR; Adjunct Research Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi and **Mr. Ananth Krishnan**, China Correspondent, The Hindu, Hong Kong who elaborated on the topics "From PRC Foreign Policy to CPC Foreign Policy" and "CPC and the Media" respectively. The discussion was led by **Mr. Santosh Pai**, Honorary Fellow, ICS and Partner, Link Legal India Law Services, New Delhi, who summarised the main arguments of the presentations as mentioned above.

Over the past few decades, particularly the last two years, the world has witnessed notable shifts in China's political functionality and approach to world politics. The notion of establishing legitimacy through

authoritarianism has always dominated the Communist regime's approach in shaping its domestic political narrative and influencing its diplomatic dealings with other nations on the global platform. Although legitimacy is a matter of authority in an authoritarian state, every state, even the most rigid ones, needs some degree of acceptability and accountability to sustain itself. Thus, in connection to the broader context of persistence of authoritarianism in the PRC throughout history and the question of longevity of such an authoritarian political regime in today's context, the speakers dug deep into three main aspects of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) functionality – Authoritarianism, Legitimacy and Accountability. The more extensive discussion revolved around China's relentless strive to increase its legitimacy both at national and international platforms under a challenging global political scenario through three main strategies – i) enhancing its degree of acceptance in international institutions and integrating itself into the global economy, ii) intensifying CCP's performance output to set new standards for global governance and iii) finally by exercising CCP's power to legislate laws and rewriting historical narratives about Chinese exceptionalism to its advantages.

The session began by tracing the historical roots of Chinese legitimacy—the three sources of legitimacy being – individual charisma, legal-rational authority and long-established traditions and social structures. Religion never played a significant role in forming Chinese legitimacy. Unlike other traditional civilisations like – India, West Asia and much later Europe, where societies were governed by 'the rule of law', Chinese people seem to have always remained abidden by 'rule by the law'. What has been significantly shaping Chinese legitimacy since the time of imperial China is individual charisma, the performance of the authority, and the power to rewrite history as a tool to legitimise the present form of governance. While Mao worked actively to separate China from its imperial history, Xi can be observed to bolster his own and the communist party's legitimacy mainly based on China's imperial history. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the party-run state has been facing tremendous challenges concerning fulfilling its growth target and assuring its civilians of better and secured lives for future generations. Today's focus of the CCP's regime effort and propaganda has shifted towards achieving shared prosperity and other egalitarian, populist goals. Although currently, CCP does not enjoy the same degree of authority that it used to enjoy in the past, the performance legitimacy of the party remains high within China, and the party has achieved an unprecedented level of success in delivering prosperity and better lives to its people. In fact, the people of China still believe that CCP is a much better alternative compared to the democratic models and governances of the West. However, despite such a high level of legitimacy within China, the existence of substantial insecurity within the party about its authority can be noticed. It is also getting increasingly reflected in Xi's policies behind building a surveillance state.

Today CCP's regime is more monolithic and monopolistic than it has been ever before. At present, the root of the Chinese Communist Parties legitimacy lies in its performance. The communist regime is an output-based governance system in contrast to elected forms of government in democracies. Xi Jinping's path for achieving the goal of common prosperity is in contrast to that of Deng Xiaoping's reformation, which entailed the idea of common prosperity for a few first. Xi seems to be rectifying Xiaoping's policies by imposing excessive restrictions on Big-Tech firms and entertainment industries. Xi believes that in order to achieve common prosperity in a society, it is important to bridge the gap between rich and poor. Xi is adopting these populist policies in order to align the leadership of the communist party with the common people. By reasserting the authority of the party over the sectors which had been allowed greater freedom erstwhile, Xi is trying to display the superiority of the Chinese governance model in reducing the gap between rich and poor. This obsession of the CCP to control the people of China is unlikely to die down any time soon. Furthermore, given the performance-based legitimacy of CCP, the growing domestic narrative about the fragility of democratic and western governance model's performance which have been developing since the global financial crisis of 2008, is only contributing to the longevity and legitimacy of the communist party's regime. Finally, narratives such as 'the west are falling, and the east is rising' and 'preparing population of China for battle' is used by Xi to propagate an idea among the Chinese people that the distressful years are over for China. This narrative seems to be effective in sustaining the legitimacy and authority of the party regime within Chinese society.

The foreign policy is no different from foreign policies of other state actors within the international system as it too prioritises and defends its national interests, worries about its image in the international platform and understands deterrence and consequences of brinkmanship in undermining deterrence from another state. However, for a party seeking to preserve itself in power, it is only rational to prioritise regime interest over national interest. In this regard comes the importance of Xi's narrative about Chinese exceptionalism as a mechanism for the furtherance of the communist regime's legitimacy.

According to Xi, Marxism is not the reason for the sustenance of CCP's legitimacy. The continuous advances in Sinicization of Marxism which includes ceaseless adaptations to basic tenets of Marxism to China-specific realities, is the real reason behind the Party's longevity. Further, the rhetoric that the party has not only led to the prosperity of China but also Marxism to a new state of development is supporting the popular idea that CCP is unlike any other communist party in the world. Another factor that is being largely used by CCP officials to enhance its party's legitimacy domestically and on the global stage is resistance towards the West's Capitalist model of governance. This was made evident by Jinping's words about not



taking lightly the sanctimonious preaching of those who feel they have the right to lecture China. This, in turn, highlighted the dubious narrative by party leaders about the glorified five-thousand-year-old antiquity, cultural exceptionalism of Chinese civilisation and of a Chinese way or path, which is completely distinctive of Western replica attaining a just global order. Therefore, given the present domestic political trends and parties ambition to maximise its legitimacy both domestically and internationally, it is only futile to expect China to work in tandem with the existing global order.

CCP also maintains its legitimacy by using one of its most powerful agents, which is the state-run media. The two ways in which the Chinese media legitimises CCP's authority are - by popularising narratives that benefit the party at home and by sending its messages abroad in a fashion that validates CCP's legitimacy. Today, in addition to traditional media, CCP uses social media and other new media platforms to boost its legitimacy. The traditional form of control includes taming and manipulating internet algorithms by imposing selective censorship and restricting information which poses a threat to the legitimacy and credibility of the communist party. Taking down the microblogging platform Weibo, which was providing the Chinese people with information that could challenge the legitimacy of the party, is an example worth noting. Social media platforms that could have become sites of public dissent have evolved today into sites of surveillance, control and mobilising public opinion in favour of the party.

In short, the speakers, through their respective presentations, attempted to highlight the fact that China uses the law to build legitimacy in the domestic sphere and in its political transaction with other countries. CCP has the powerful tool to legislate and implement laws to whitewash parts of history that are unpleasant for China. However, given the fact that the current balance of power is shifting in favour of China, it is for the future to reveal that how China plays its part as a rule maker and how it will fit into its much-anticipated role of setting new standards for the world.

Some of the pertinent questions that were raised in this session were as follows: In the context of China today, who is the source of legitimacy? What is the role of Chinese civilisation in the context of CCP's legitimacy? What kind of challenges are confronting Xi's leadership today in terms of mass legitimacy? How is the use of morality as a source of legitimacy under Xi worked in favour of the party? Even though today's political realities pose several challenges before Xi Jinping within the Chinese system, it is nearly impossible to discern the source of those challenges unless there has been an occurrence of any event of major significance, such as the Tiananmen incident of 1989. However, it is only for the future to tell how Xi is going match the level of preceding leaders within the existing political environment.

## Session 2 - Great Power Competition



The second session was chaired by **Dr. Arvind Gupta**, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi; former Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat and former Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India. The first speaker was **Prof. Rory Medcalf**, Professor and Head of College, National Security College, the Australian National University, Canberra, and his

presentation focused on the topic "China's Indo-Pacific Ambitions and What QUAD Partners Can Do?" The second speaker was **Mr. Richard McGregor**, Senior Fellow, Lowy Institute, Sydney, and he presented on the topic, "Security Pact between Australia, the US and the UK". The third speaker was **Amb. Deepa Wadhwa**, Member, Governing Council, ICS; former Ambassador of India to Japan, Qatar, and Sweden, and she addressed the topic, "China-Japan Relations: At the Crossroads at 50?" The discussant for this session was **Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary**, Visiting Fellow, ICS; Assistant Professor, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi.

Considering China's policy decisions in the past few years, the first speaker began by terming China as an "insecure power". He stressed that it is important to understand the meaning of this "insecurity" as the world order seems to be at an inflexion point, particularly after the pandemic. There are several hotspots of tension that have appeared, and the Indo-Pacific is one of them. However, it is not the only region. With the emergence of new groups such as the QUAD and AUKUS, growing ties between Russia and China, withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan, there is an indication that the changing balance of powers is of great importance. The speaker also noted how there is an emerging ideological conflict and gave the example of the recently held 'The Summit for Democracy' where some nations were invited, and some were not. He discussed how Russia and China have been very dismissive of this summit and how they seem to be growing closer in ties. The vital question therefore is - "how do we manage this competition?"

According to the speaker, it is essential to adopt an Indo-Pacific framework to understand China's global ambitions. However, this does not disqualify the fact that there is a global reach to Chinese ambition, with a particular concentration in East Asia, specifically over the fate of Taiwan. China does not use the term "Indo-Pacific" and prefers referring to its interest in the region as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or Maritime Silk Road (MSR). However, the fact remains that "China's expanding interests and presence is an Indo-Pacific strategy with Chinese characteristics". According to the speaker, there are two interpretations to China's strategy- one, a calculated play for regional hegemony - to displace the US and gain pre-eminence in the region; and two, it is a part of an imperial ambition which includes not only protecting its commercial and economic interests but also assuring Chinese citizens that its government will provide a security footprint to back up its economic footprint. Ultimately, what both the hypotheses imply is that the domestic imperative of the CPC and its tone-deaf assertiveness abroad will lead to conflicts with the values and interests of other nations.

The session also examined the implication of AUKUS on China from an Australian perspective. The three-way security pact definitely has had an impact on Beijing because it involves military and technological transfers. While the AUKUS pact is still in its embryonic stages and will take some time to develop into something significant, it still stands as a symbol of commitment at the highest levels between the three countries. There is a focus on nuclear submarines - this is the first instance since 1958 that the US has shared this technology with anyone. The deal also encompasses technology transfer, cyber capabilities, intelligence, quantum and artificial intelligence capabilities. It was highlighted that this pact is driven by China. The speaker cited polls conducted in Australia which showed how only 16 per cent of Australians trust China to act responsibly in the world - a significant drop from 52 per cent three years ago. The sense of urgency to curtail China has only deepened with Xi Jinping's third term on the horizon.

The next speaker touched upon the bilateral relationship between China and Japan. The speaker explained how there is a realisation that normalcy exists in the relationship in the realm of trade and economy only and how the overall bilateral relationship between the two is at an all-time low due to a number of crucial factors. The Sino-Japan relationship is one that has moved from reconciliation to collaboration, to competition and now to rivalry and antagonism. In recent years, Japan has shed its preference for accommodation and has been far more forthright. In the 2021 general elections, no political party took a conciliatory line to China. This is also evident in the fact that Japan has boosted its defence budget by an extra \$6.8 billion. A new irritant to the relationship has been the warming of Japan's relations and contacts with Taiwan. This has achieved greater visibility because, for the first time since 1969, Taiwan figured in

the joint statement that was issued from the summit with the US in April. Japan has chosen to talk about Taiwan more openly, even at the risk of souring its relations with China. Japan and China are also engaged in competition for geopolitical influence in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, Japan, as the erstwhile status quo power, has not taken the waning of its strategic influence very easily. Its response has been to step up cooperation with friends and allies and seek more assurances from the US alliance. Japan has engaged in conducting an exercise with different countries. While Japan has welcomed the formation of the AUKUS, it has also expressed reservation since the pact deals with nuclear-powered submarines.

China has been a central player in the evolution of the concept of the free and open Indo-Pacific and the structuring of the Quad. While the Chinese response to the Quad has been bellicose, and interestingly, it has manifested in exercises with countries such as Russia. The speaker drew attention to the recent joint Chinese and Russian naval exercise, in which a flotilla comprising of ten warships completed a near circle around Japan's main island. Japan is trying to increase its influence to counter BRI through an initiative called "Partnership for quality infrastructure". Japan also dominates the Asian Development Bank (ADB), but it has not joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). While militarily and diplomatically, Sino-Japan ties have been tense, the Japanese have compartmentalised political and economic relations quite effectively with China. The speaker reflected on the upward trend of Japan's economic relationship with China and mentioned that China had replaced the US as Japan's leading export destination. Various factors such as geographical proximity, economic interdependence and common cultural moorings make a compelling case for continued engagement.

The discussant for the session touched upon some central themes such as the violent nature of great power competition, increase in the defence budgets of both Japan and Australia and its implications for the region. The role of ASEAN, the rift between Australia and France and the relationship between AUKUS and Quad were some of the important questions that were raised during the discussion.



### Session 3 - Cultural and Intellectual Traditions



The third session of the IFC was titled "Cultural and Intellectual Traditions", and it was chaired by **Dr. Frank Pieke**, Professor of Modern China Studies, Leiden University. The first speaker was **Dr. David Ownby**, Professor, Department of History, University of Montreal, Quebec, speaking on the theme of "China's Rise and China's Thought World". The second was **Amb. Sujan Chinoy**,

Director General, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP- IDSA), New Delhi, and former Ambassador of India to Japan, Mexico and Republic of Marshall Islands discussing the topic "Impact of Chinese History on Politics". The third speaker was **Dr. Sabaree Mitra**, Honorary Fellow, ICS and Professor, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), who spoke on the topic "Project *Kulture*: Where is the CPC Headed?". The final speaker was **Dr. Hemant Adlakha**, Vice-Chairman and Honorary Fellow, ICS; Associate Professor, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), who addressed the topic "CPC One Hundred Years Trajectory: From 'Sinification of Marxism' to 'Marxism Xinified'".

The first speaker presented insights gained from "Reading the China Dream Project", which aims to gather and translate works by Chinese intellectuals. Against popular belief, China does indeed have a lively and diverse intellectual world. Establishment intellectuals are ambitious and patriotic, believing in China's destined rise in the face of the decline of American-style liberal democracy. Several of these establishment intellectuals have studied in the West and have gained exposure to American intellectual traditions. This provides them with an edge over Western scholars who have lesser exposure to Chinese scholarship. One can even identify a slight pushback against the CPC and its course of actions in the international sphere in the writings of establishment intellectuals, indicating the existence of some degree of intellectual pluralism in China.

On the impact of Chinese history on politics, the speaker posited that it is important to judge the present behaviour of China through the prism of the past, which allows for cultural, civilisational, and strategic

attributes to be connected to the country's behaviour today. China has always been concerned with strategic encirclement and employs the strategy of dividing its opposition - this is evident in China's current fears of the US encircling it and its attempts to divide opponents in East and South Asia. While China is considered one of the world's oldest civilisations, it must be kept in mind that it is the Han ethnic group that constitutes a majority of its population. In this sense, China has not always been a unitary state, which existed only for a brief period of time.

Chinese geopolitical strategy today resembles a combination of one employed during the Ming and Qing eras- while the former prioritised maritime expansion, the latter focused on continental expansion. The Chinese government has also subordinated individual interests to those of the collective - another tendency that displays continuity over China's history. National humiliation has driven much of Chinese politics. The Opium War, ceding of Hong Kong, the annexation of Chinese territory by Britain and Russia, and other injustices wrought upon China have continued to inform China's regional outlook today. Furthermore, in China, history is what the Party says it is, and mistakes or guilt cannot be admitted since they can result in "losing face". The prevalence of history in China's governance is also evident in Xi Jinping being referred to as "*Xi Dada*" and later "*Xi Yeye*", which invokes Confucian culture in its emphasis on filial piety.

In the *Work Report* presented by Xi Jinping in the 2017 Party Congress, it was declared that the Party would not forget its "initial intent". This referred to the goal of invigorating the country by creating a new culture - a goal that emanated from the dissatisfaction of youth and intellectuals with the feudal social structure and Confucian cultural practices in the first half of the 20th century. The new culture was to be established through the creation of a new linguistic template and literature by rejecting the traditional way of Chinese life and building an alternate social fabric that places people in the foreground by empowering them. Culture began to be viewed through the prisms of class-consciousness and utilitarianism.

In the decades after Mao Zedong, diversity in cultural production grew, and the country saw the rise of new aesthetes, as a monolith gave way to pluralism. In the new millennium, culture was situated in the crossroads of politics and the market, alongside a pragmatic and tolerant leadership, as cultural globalisation entailed both homogenisation and diversification. Under the current administration, Xi Jinping's conservative ideals are visible in his speeches, which include the formulations of the China Dream, rejuvenation of the Chinese people and cultural confidence. This exists alongside anxiety about Chinese culture losing its Chineseness and a need to bring back culture into mainstream discourse. Chinese cultural supremacy is the narrative being chiefly employed, and all indications reveal that the utilitarian view of culture persists even today.

The final speaker for the session explored the evolutionary trajectory of the term "Sinicization of Marxism", which has varied over time contingent on political and strategic factors. Mao's Sinicization of Marxism can be viewed as the thesis of the Chinese revolution, being a reference to "the crystallisation of the process of struggles of Chinese people to save China". This term was revisited following the Sino-Soviet split and pro-capitalist ideological developments in nationalist Yugoslavia in 1948. The term "Sinification of Marxism" emerged under Deng Xiaoping and was affirmed by Jiang Zemin. In the 20th century, "Xi Jinping Thought" is at the core of Marxism in China. The official narrative is one that cannot be contested, with historical nihilism being incorporated into CPC discourse. Finally, the panel discussed Xi's drive towards common prosperity, which may have negative consequences for the economy due to the intertwining of China's political and business elite.

The panel then proceeded to discuss the prevalence of intellectual plurality in China. Chinese intellectuals who carry a positive attitude regarding China's international rise seek to connect China's present and future with the past. At the same time, there is a huge range of opinions that exists in China, with some liberal voices expressing concerns over the need to establish constitutionalism and strengthen the rule of law. The panel then discussed the notion of exceptionalism which is prevalent in the case of great powers which see themselves as culturally superior. Cultural superiority is evident in the narratives used by China today, while large parts of Chinese culture- including Marxism and the hybrid economy model- are borrowed from abroad. This sense of entitlement emerges with a sense of cultural supremacy and a nation's attainment of power in various fields. Nationalism and cultural supremacy go together in feeding the official narrative. The panel posited that China's official discourse on Marxism is nothing but an instrument of propaganda, going against the notion of workers' internationalism against imperialism, which was guiding discourse at the time of the founding of the Party.

## Keynote Address



The Keynote Address was delivered by **Prof. Rana Mitter**, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China, University of Oxford; Vice-President (Public Engagement), British Academy, London, titled "How New is China's New Era under Xi Jinping?" The session was chaired by **Prof. Alka Acharya**, Honorary Fellow and former Director, ICS; Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University,

New Delhi.

The speaker highlighted that there is a significant paradox when dealing with the question of new and old. If one tries to recapitulate instances of breaking traditions or going against shibboleths in Chinese history before the Communist Party, there is a history of rebellions and revolutions in China. But, an equally dominant ethos that we see in China, both among the liberal elite and the masses, is the strong sense of tradition. According to most analysts, this is not a paradox that has been negotiated with ease. Right from the time when the Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China (PRC), this has been an issue that has engaged Western scholars. This question of the fundamental break with a history that the PRC has represented continues to be largely ignored in post-analysis. A truly historical assessment of the revolutionary changes in China needs a historical perspective, the leitmotif of which is historical continuity. However, historical continuity should not lead to drawing facile parallels. Today, Xi Jinping is being depicted as the new emperor, inaugurating a new dynasty. Xi Jinping believes in the laws of history, and he insists that the party and the people believe in them too. The main question is how much of what Xi Jinping is doing is new and how new is it?

When China's place in the world is considered, it is in the middle of something very new. China's rise is relatively recent, but it is something important and cannot be ignored. China has made this shift very clear. In 2017, less than four years ago, Xi Jinping had released a formal statement of the new era in China with his own definition at the Party Congress. This new era coincides with the leadership of Xi Jinping personally.



Newness as such is actually not a new phenomenon, but each manifestation of newness is indeed distinctive. To understand the various facets of contemporary China, we need to look at it from the combination of the ACGT model – this includes ideas of Authoritarianism, Consumerism, Globalisation and Technology coming together to provide a historically unique combination for a large state to make its case in the world. The China that we see in 2021 is significantly unprecedented historically.

In order to gain a nuanced understanding of the various aspects of a new era, the speaker employed a historical lens coupled with a comparison of the two giants in East Asia- China and Japan. In East Asia, a variety of political and economic narratives have competed with each other, sometimes in succession and otherwise at the same time, but without a grand overarching narrative of democratisation. This appears to be the case when we look from 2021, as opposed to just 30 years ago in 1990 with the fall of the Soviet Union or the 1940s when both Europe and Asia plunged into warfare. Despite the rise of populist policies, we have not yet seen a powerful combination of anti-democratic politics and innovation, whereas, in East Asia, the sense of being authoritarian and innovative has come together as coterminous.

A crucial element of modernity is technology. A historical example that was presented was that of the emergence of Mitsubishi zero fighter aircraft and Nazi Germany's Messerschmitt during the war in the 1940s. During the Cold War era, Japanese technology was associated with a much more peaceful manifestation. This appears as a more peaceful innovation of technology. However, we now live in a different world - one in which we see the rise of an attractive, technologically enabled, innovative consumerist modernity blended strongly with authoritarianism, and that model is very distinctive to China. Huawei serves as a good example here. Therefore, the glamorous consumerist technological innovation that has become distinctive to China would be very unusual previously. The 2020s are haunted by a Chinese party-state that has such advanced technology and money that it could manage the surveillance of every building in New York! Thus, China, as a part of its newness, clearly sees the link between technological, political innovation and this link is frequently made in Chinese texts.

There are many discussions outside China, in the wider world, which talks about the uses and abuses of artificial intelligence. But, such an explicit statement of the need to use it for control, as opposed to liberation, is quite distinctive to the China of now.

It is quite interesting to note that during the 1980s, there were debates surrounding Japan's growing economic and security strength and whether or not Japan would come to challenge the United States. It is

worth looking back at those debates to understand the process of historical inquiry and the rise of modernity in East Asia.

Japan's leaders today do not speak of the new era; however, China under Xi absolutely does. It is worth looking at Japan to understand that China's new era will not last forever, and there are premonitions of what will happen to that new era in the presence of Japan. In ten years from now, China's demographic shift exacerbated by the One-Child Policy of the last 45 years will have changed; it will become older. As many as five million fewer Chinese will be in the Chinese population – the population will start shrinking and get older. If we assume that President Xi Jinping will remain in power even after his third term, by that time, issues such as climate change will also come to a head. Even if we assume that history will move in a straight line (though that hardly ever happens), the new era as defined by the CCP will probably last for a decade. Thus, the 2020s is a key decade for this new era defined by China.

An extremely crucial point highlighted by the speaker was that among all the terms used to describe Xi Jinping's China, the word "revolutionary" is never used. Nonetheless, it is observable that Xi Jinping's new era will bring more changes to not only China but the world at large than even Mao's Cultural Revolution did.

The idea of rejuvenation has become central to China's self-definition in a way that used to be stated by Japan but is now very much associated with the rise of China in the wider world. Apart from focusing on the ideals of Marxism-Leninism, the idea of "being new is central to the way in which China wants to present itself." It is worth noting that compared to the other versions of newness, because of technology, authoritarian confidence and consumerist economy, the new era is different.

This session ended with an interesting interaction with students and researchers on questions about the "newness" of China under Xi Jinping. Some of these questions dealt with the resistance of the working class in China, Xi's view about the global order and China's compliance/non-compliance with norms. China threat theory and the role of nationalism in the framework of the ACGT model were also discussed at length.

## Session 4 - China's Developmental Aspirations



The fourth session was titled "China's Developmental Aspirations", and it was chaired by **Amb. Vijay Nambiar**, Honorary Fellow at ICS and Honorary Fellow, ICS; former Ambassador/ High Commissioner of India to China, Pakistan, Algeria, Afghanistan, Malaysia and former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations. The first speaker was **Amb. Shyam Saran**, Member of the Governing Council at ICS,

Senior Fellow at Centre for Policy Research and former Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister's Special Envoy, Government of India, and he elaborated on the topic "Exploration of Xi Jinping's concept of 'Common Prosperity'". The second speaker was **Dr. Heribert Dieter**, Senior Associate, Global Issues, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin, whose address was on the topic, "The Return to Imperial Economic Thought in China: Is Xi Jinping's Dual Circulation Policy a Return to the Policies of the Past?". The third speaker was **Gen. S.L. Narasimhan**, Director General at the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies and member of the National Security Advisory Board, Government of India, who spoke on the topic titled, "China's Goals for 2035". The fourth speaker was **Mr. Ravi Bhoothalingam**, Honorary Fellow at ICS and Founder and Chairman at Manas Advisory, who spoke on the topic, "Can the CPC Turn China into an Innovation Superpower?". The discussion was led by **Mr. Manoj Kewalramani**, the Chairperson of the Indo-Pacific Research Programme, The Takshashila Institutions and a Senior Associate and Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), who summarised the entire session and asked some pertinent questions to the panellists.

China is the world's biggest economy in terms of PPP, with largely export-led growth. The CPC announced that it would double China's GNP by 2035, which sums up its developmental aspirations. The CPC is aware of the acute problems of unequal and insufficient development - that the country's innovation capacity is not matching its developmental needs. China is moving towards home-based globalisation. China introduced its dual circulation strategy to boost domestic champions and obtain access to technologies from multinational corporations. However, this transition is not easy. In the last year and a half, this model has proposed that the export share of China's GDP continues to surge while consumption share remains sluggish.

To tackle this, Xi called for a new development dynamic that would help the country pursue genuine rather than inflated GDP growth. He also called for common prosperity. The goal of common prosperity, according to Xi, was to be achieved not by raising wages but by what is called tertiary distribution, i.e. donations by businesses and wealthy individuals in China. It remains to be seen if the Chinese president will be able to alter the critical component of Chinese state capitalism, where the centre sets the growth targets and the local governments are expected to deliver. There are some pertinent questions that arise: How pervasive will Chinese innovation be, and will it come from the state sector, private firms or from universities? Will this innovation occur in a sequestered national environment, or will it continue to involve connections from the outside world? And lastly, can China become a self-sustaining innovative nation without an open democratic societal framework?

The first speaker outlined the contemporary significance of the concept of Common Prosperity. China advocates it as win-win cooperation and a way to narrow the gap between the developed and the developing. Common prosperity has an internal and external dimension. In the 1950s, the goal in China was to create an egalitarian society and liberate China from the semi-feudal and semi-colonial past. The nationalisation of the means of production pushed for and advocated a simple and frugal life. Shared poverty was advocated rather than common prosperity. With the opening up of the economy in 1978, there was a shift in perspective; the idea that the rich would bring the others up was advocated. The next four decades was a phase of unprecedented growth; state-owned enterprises continued to occupy the base, and the private sector was the engine for growth. Today, there's a glaring income gap that seems extremely incompatible with the socialist society. Xi Jinping is worried about the display of wealth and the rising influence of multinational corporations, and the concept of Common Prosperity has put the MNCs on the defensive.

The second speaker undertook a historical study of the economic policies of China and traced them to the current economic policies, especially Dual Circulation. The speaker highlighted how prioritising trade is a very recent phenomenon and that Mao developed the Chinese economy on the basis of self-development. It is the economic policy tradition that has defined China for centuries. There has always been a preference for self-reliance in China. In Imperial China, the highest class in society were scholars, farmers and then craftsmen. Traders made the lowest class, and the merchant class were seen as the ones who weakened imperial dignity. At the Salt and Iron Conference in 81 BC, it was promulgated that agriculture was the only way to advance the economy and trades and crafts were explicitly banned from contributing. Confucian scholars also went to lengths to call trading with the rest of the world useless. However, this ended with Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the 1970s, where the private sector played a more central role, and the integration of the Chinese economy with the world began. Xi Jinping's economic policies are a mix of these. Despite the high levels of global trade with China, Xi is still pursuing the concept of self-reliance. The



policies have managed to bring down exports from 31 per cent to 17 per cent between the years 2019 and 2021. China wants the world to remain dependent on China. It was opined that "autarky is good for China but not good for the world". The speaker highlighted that the world has become dependent on China to such an extent that the supply chain restructuring is decided in China. However, this is not the end of globalisation but the beginning of a new phase of globalisation.

The third speaker outlined China's economic goals for 2035, which was released in November 2020, as the 14th Five Year Plan by the CPC. One of the main tenets of the plan was to make China a strong country. It advocated the well-rounded development of the people and talked about making people more socially adequate and civil. It also spoke of how China needs to develop its cultural soft power. This is remarkably opposite to the wolf warrior diplomacy stance that China resorted to in the past - a sign that China is looking to be portrayed in a positive light. China also laid down plans to beat carbon emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060. The plan also lays down the path for modernisation of national defence and military, with targets set for full modernisation for 2035. China also plans to push for urbanisation, with 70 per cent of its population living in urban areas by 2035. However, in an effort to not let agriculture suffer due to this, the plan also lays out the process for improving agriculture through technology such as cloud forming, remote sensing and drones.

The final speaker discussed the CPC's existential question: Will China become an innovation superpower? Xi Jinping is currently working towards meeting the economic needs of the people. The speaker explained that productivity needs land, labour and capital, all of which are currently stressed due to a decrease in population and environmental degradation. Five drivers of innovation were identified by the speaker; Talent, Money, public and social support for science and technology, the governance of science, technology and innovation, and finally, China's place in the global circulation of scientific ideas. The session emphasised the last two drivers (the first three being most promising in China).

Questions that were raised during the session included: how well equipped is the party bureaucracy in advancing science and technology? In the space of science, which is competitive and collaborative, what place does China hold in the world? There is a constriction in China's ability, in terms of access to technological ideas and scientific development, as the natural inclination to suspect China will slow it down. This is the chink in the armour that can slow down the rate of scientific advancement in China.

The session was summed up by understanding the evolution of the concept of Common Prosperity and how it may not necessarily be a shift away from growth. It was acknowledged that the economic policies of China were causing some economic harm that may need to be mitigated soon. However, the takeaway from

this session was that Xi Jinping is prioritising a populist agenda over an economic agenda for the time being, and the future is still uncertain.

## Session 5 - Decoding China's Regional Ambitions



The fifth session was chaired by **Dr. Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Fellow, Asia Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and was based on "Decoding China's Regional Ambitions". **Dr. Carlo Masala**, Founding Director, Metis-Institute for Strategy and Foresight; Chair for International Politics and Co-Director, Center for Intelligence and Security Studies (CISS), Bundeswehr University, Munich, was the first speaker whose presentation was titled "US-China Competition in Asia". **Amb. Gautam Bambawale**, Adjunct Fellow, ICS; Distinguished Professor, Symbiosis International University, Pune; former Ambassador of India to China, Pakistan and Bhutan, was the second speaker whose presentation was titled "Rising Aggression in Chinese Foreign Policy: An Analysis". **Amb. Bilahari Kausikan**, Chairman, Middle East Institute, the National University of Singapore and former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Singapore, was the third speaker whose presentation was titled "China and Southeast Asia". **Dr. Andrew Small**, Senior Transatlantic Fellow, Asia Program, The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), Berlin, was the fourth speaker whose presentation was titled "Af-Pak and China". The discussant for this session was **Prof. Aparajita Gangopadhyay**, Dean and Professor, School of International and Area Studies, Goa University, Taleigao.

While discussing the US-China Competition in Asia, it becomes necessary to understand the history of this competition and why it exists; only then can one achieve a balanced understanding of the competition that might develop in the coming years. The US administration's strategy in dealing with China was explored in-depth, beginning with the Clinton administration. During that time, the idea was that China as a rising economic power should be integrated into the international system and socialised to become a responsible stakeholder. Joseph Nye, who was at that time the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security

Affairs and wrote on the theory of international relations, was guided by the idea that institutions do have an influence on the behaviour, interests and calculus of states. This idea was used by the Clinton administration to bring China into the international system. If socialisation failed, Plan B was a realistic balance of power – if China did not become a responsible stakeholder, then the US was going to delay its rise in the region. The Bush administration's focus on the War on Terror led China to use this strategic vacuum to accelerate its own rise as a great power in Asia. Under Obama, there was the pivot to Asia, but it never really took place in the way the Obama administration would have desired. The Trump administration declared China as the primary challenge to the US. There were attempts to challenge China in the region militarily, but it was more about economic decoupling. Currently, the Biden administration has an interesting twist on China. He has offered China dialogue on strategic stability and also made a vital remark about cooperating with China to fight climate change. However, at the same time, he also attempts to balance power in the region. Thus, Biden is reaching out to China in two areas- climate change and strategic stability. The speaker adopted a structural framework to analyse China's rise. It was noted that regional preponderance is essential in order to achieve global hegemony. Therefore, there is no surprise that we live in a time of great power rivalry.

There is a rising curve of aggression in China's foreign policy and its international behaviour. In the last few years, we have seen China's behaviour becoming more aggressive and assertive. Some examples of this are - Chinese aggression on Indian borders since 2020 and its willingness to violate a number of agreements that were signed between the two nations to maintain peace and tranquillity by amassing troops in huge numbers; Chinese military build-up in the South China Sea and Senkaku/ Diayudao islands; economic coercion vis-à-vis Australia; its wolf-warrior diplomacy and violation of Taiwan's air-defence identification zone.

There is no doubt that under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China has adopted aggressive policies. While Xi is taking greater risks in international behaviour and international policy, this is not distinctive to him alone. We should note the role of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, under whose leadership Chinese behaviour took on a more aggressive tone. The example of the Anti-Satellite Test serves as a good example in this regard.

The theoretical framework of structural realism is extremely useful in understanding China's behaviour. The theory of structural realism states that every country will try to protect itself and improve its security by amassing power, both economic and military. While it has become the second-largest economic power in the world, it is subsequently trying to accumulate military strength – in terms of military hardware and restructuring its armed forces. The theory of structural realism also states that the existing hegemon will not tolerate a peer competitor. The existing hegemon, the US, as we can see, will not tolerate a peer competitor.

Beijing's macro goals are explicit in the narrative of humiliation, rejuvenation and realising the Chinese Dream. Xi has used this narrative much more consistently than any of his predecessors. The party under his leadership has been more successful than the previous leaders in reversing the humiliation that the nation has undergone since the 19th century. China's re-emergence as a major international actor is an undeniable economic and geopolitical fact. In Xi's version, it is intended to not just appeal to the Chinese Communist Party supporters, but to all Chinese, by which he refers to the Chinese race. Internally, this narrative has been highly successful, with most of the Chinese citizens belonging to the dominating Han ethnicity. Externally, it resonates with the ethics and mentality of many overseas Chinese, including in Southeast Asia. However, not every Chinese and certainly not all Chinese living in the Southeast Asian nations would agree with what Xi envisions for them.

While China's re-emergence as a major regional and global actor is undeniable, Beijing is nevertheless unlikely to realise her ambitions in their entirety because of internal contradictions which will be hard to overcome.

According to one speaker, the BRI is a collection of projects wrapped in a slogan rather than a coherent strategy, but one cannot deny the grandiosity of the initiative. The realisation of all these projects is doubtful. While China is the choice of many Southeast Asian nations with regard to infrastructure, American investment is still greater than China, Japan and South Korea combined. A new compact is now emerging under the slogan of common prosperity - slow but more equitable growth in conjunction with tighter party control, stronger party discipline and strict adherence to the Xi Jinping thought.

The next speaker focused on two broad themes – China's relationship with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US in the region and the value of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the China-Pakistan relationship. China has been careful in developing its relationship with Afghanistan. It has seen Afghanistan from a threat prism. While China has invested in a few projects, they have stalled. China stepped in when there was an impending US withdrawal, and it played a notable role in reconciliation talks. However, China has kept clear limitations with regards to elements of its involvement; for example, the Afghan government pushed for cross-border infrastructure with CPEC, and China seemed disinterested in this. China has always wanted to maintain a buffer zone with Afghanistan through the Wakhan corridor. China is also concerned that this is the end of the long window (which had begun since 9/11) that had bogged down the US in this region.

The speaker was of the view that most fundamentals in the China-Pakistan relationship do not actually change much. In Pakistan's case, China is supportive of a stable Pakistan with a stable economy. Apart from the economic perspective, China considered CPEC as a vehicle for strengthening the China-Pakistan

relationship. CPEC has been understood by the Chinese as a showcase for the larger BRI initiative, and its success in Pakistan is not only been seen as a success for the concept but also a model for the other developing nations to follow. However, since 2017, various factors such as political instability in Pakistan, security concerns and corruption have essentially stopped the emergence of any new projects under CPEC.

The discussant for the session highlighted certain important themes that were covered in the session, such as the role of the Chinese diaspora in the Southeast Asian region and its contribution to Chinese power projection; whether China will be able to leverage its investments in the Southeast Asian region; and China's changing relationship with Afghanistan.

### Session 6 - Power-Projection in the Indo-Pacific



The sixth session was chaired by **Dr. Arvind Gupta**, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi; former Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat and former Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India, and were titled "Power-Projection in the Indo-Pacific". The first speaker was **Prof. David Arase**, Resident Professor of International Politics, School of

Advanced International Studies(SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Nanjing, whose presentation was titled "'Struggle' in Xi Jinping Thought on Foreign Policy". The second speaker was **Amb. Anil Wadhwa**, former Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Ambassador of India to Italy, Thailand, Poland and Oman speaking on "China's Future Actions in the Indo-Pacific: A Prognosis". The third speaker was **Prof. C. Raja Mohan**, Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, speaking on "China's Maritime Geopolitics". The discussant for this session was **Amb. Sujan Chinoy**, Director General, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi; former Ambassador of India to Japan, Mexico and Republic of Marshall Islands.



The Indo-Pacific is emerging as a region of great power rivalries. It is essential to discuss both the maritime and military dimensions of this competition. The speaker noted that the major strand of thinking which has emerged in the conference is that China is an insecure power, and it is a power in a hurry. The military modernisation that has been carried out by China is truly remarkable, particularly that of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). The speaker also noted some of the major developments that have taken place in the Indo-Pacific. Namely, the emergence of QUAD and the AUKUS as significant groups, the increase in Japan's defence budget and the growing interest of the European countries in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, the Indo-Pacific is a continuously evolving and uncertain region.

The next speaker noted that President Xi Jinping has "brought the Maoist spirit of struggle back to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology and practice", with one version of his speeches mentioning the word "struggle" thirty-five times. It is important to note that under Xi, the concept of struggle has been illuminated from a historical perspective while focusing on the importance of the party and their use of "gun" that depends on political purpose and practice. In formalising the aspects of the struggle, the speaker mentions the political contradictions that have continued after socialism was established. The speaker elaborated upon the difference in the formulation of struggle in the post-Mao CCP and concentrated on "full-spectrum struggle". Xi has "revived struggle in Maoist idea with violent confrontation as a core concept in advancing Marxism." Xi's approach is more institutionalised, rational and scientific than Mao's, and foreign policy has been brought under party ideology.

The implications of China emerging as the first country to field a nuclear-capable hypersonic glide vehicle, its economic and military presence in the Indian Ocean and the Maritime Silk Road were also highlighted. The manifestation of these implications led the speaker to focus on sub-theatres that encompass the South China Sea, South Pacific, South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. All these sub-theatres entail specific advantages and supply Beijing with various opportunities and prospects. Different groupings of countries are working on "challenges in shared domains" and interoperability in a bid to counter Chinese hegemony. The speaker spoke about China's gains, including the local balance of power and its economic integration as well as acquiring the ability to take punitive actions against its adversaries.

The next speaker focused on China's approach to power projection, operational aspects of power projection and reaction to China's power projection, particularly by India. China's power projection is driven by the protection of its interests that has been characterised through the development of its navy. The speaker highlighted that once a nation has global interests, a global military footprint becomes important. The role of military diplomacy is important as it becomes crucial to make other countries "receptive to military presence" for the purposes of power projection, including through alliance-like relationships. The

inevitability of alliance-like relationships and structures for China was also emphasised, whether it is done "bilaterally, plurilaterally or multilaterally".

There has been an evolution in the perception of China's power projection capabilities in the West. This also rationalises the political will that has led to the erection of frameworks such as the QUAD and AUKUS that will "increase deterrence against Chinese actions" and the endeavour by countries to build countervailing capabilities and alliances albeit temporary ones. The speaker also underscored the resultant "militarisation of the periphery".

The discussant focused on great power projection in the Indo-Pacific, the difference between the Asia-Pacific and the Indo-Pacific, the QUAD and Malabar and the significance of the subsurface capabilities of China and the Chinese concept of extra-regional powers. The Q&A saw questions being put forth on the effects of China-Pakistan-Iran "troika" on the Indo-Pacific, Chinese hierarchy, China's alienation triggered by hegemonic intents, sustainability of Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) efforts, future prospects of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the trilateral between Russia, China and India.

## Session 7 – CPC at 100



The seventh session was titled 'CPC at 100' and was chaired by **Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty**, Distinguished Professor, Council of Social Development, New Delhi. **Prof. Arthur Ding**, Professor Emeritus, Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, National Chengchi University, Taipei, was the first speaker, and his presentation was titled 'CCP versus China'. The second presentation was made by **Prof. Bruce Dickson**, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Chair, Department of Political Science, Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington DC and the title of his presentation was 'China's Leninist Revival'. The third presentation was made by **Amb. Vijay Gokhale**, Distinguished Professor, Symbiosis International University, Pune and former Foreign Secretary and former Ambassador of India to China. His

presentation was titled 'Communist Party of China, 1980-2020: Evolution and What It Might Mean for Its Future'. **Prof. Frank Pieke**, Professor of Modern China Studies, Leiden University, was the final speaker, and his topic was titled 'Superpower China and the CCP as a Global Force'. The lead discussant for the session was **Dr. Bhim Subba**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad.

The session began with a discussion on the CPC's history, highlighting that the history of CPC is not as nationalistic as it is generally described. CPC's history was discussed with a focus on nationalism and its interconnectedness with the development of the party. The discussion also revolved around CPC's association with organisations that go against its nationalism narrative today. It was pointed out that CPC's first party congress in 1921 was sponsored by Communist International (CI), and a year later, CPC decided to join CI as a branch and accepted the CI's leadership over the CPC. The CI provided the majority of resources to the CPC, including cash, jewellery and opium. In June 1923, CPC and KMT (Kuomintang) joined forces which was also the first CPC-KMT cooperation. But in the 1930s, there was a growing sentiment of nationalism in China which, along with differences of opinion between CPC and CI, led to CPC terminating its ties with CI as it wanted to get rid of foreign influence to gain political power.

CPC's tendency to keep its resources reserved in the face of Japanese aggression was also a focus of the discussion. The expansion of CPC forces and building up bases in areas under Japanese control was also discussed at length. The speaker pointed out that the CPC deployed seventy per cent of the party's resources for its own development, twenty per cent for compromise and the remaining ten per cent for resisting Japanese forces.

Moving the discussion forward, CPC's Leninist characteristics were discussed as that is the key to understanding most aspects of politics in China and the relationship between state and society. It was pointed out that many Leninist characteristics in the party, both internal and external in nature, have been revived, such as selective recruitment and its shift of focus on whom the party admits. There has been a decline in the acceptance rate of applicants in the Xi era. However, the rate of acceptance for people with a college degree has increased. Workers and farmers who were the traditional mass base for the party no longer occupy the primary focus. Ban on factions has become prominent since the launch of the anti-corruption campaign, along with strong internal discipline and indoctrination. Externally, the party has a monopoly on the political organisation in the country. CPC also has the power to decide what other organisations are allowed to exist in the country.

Government oversight was also emphasised as the CPC appoints officials to all key positions in the government. CPC monitors the implementation of policies as well as the society as a whole which is aided by party organisations in all sectors of the society and economy. In 1999, less than one per cent of the private enterprises had party organisations, but by the end of the Hu Jintao era in 2012, the number grew to 54 per cent. In 2017, during the Xi era, over 73 per cent of private enterprises had party cells. The data substantiates the argument that there is a clear effort to integrate the party into the private sector, which is responsible for most job creation, tax revenue and economic growth. The speaker highlighted the dual approach towards NGOs - the ones dealing with job training, environmental education and other things that promote the party's agenda are promoted while a more repressive approach is adopted towards the ones that advocate political rights, labour rights and women's rights etc. It was argued that the role of digital monitoring had supplemented the traditional aspects of party building. Earlier party branches were more of a tool for logistical support, but now they monitor what's going on in their respective areas. Arguments put forward by the speaker suggested that the party's increased authoritarian role did not begin in the Xi Jinping era. It began before he came to power, but the pace was accelerated under his rule. Far from withering away, the CPC seems to be firmly in power as it revives selected features of Leninism that does not necessarily mean returning to Mao's approach of leadership.

Referring to the historical resolution passed in the 6th Plenum recently, it was suggested that there had been a power shift within the party, as was the case in the first two historical resolutions of 1945 and 1981. Despite being a historical issue, the focus was essentially on what the achievements were after the 18th congress. The speaker highlighted that among the 13 accomplishments that were listed since the 18th congress, the first was upholding the party's overall leadership. This finds an explanation in the fact that Xi took power in a dangerous time in the party's history with the dilution of ideology, massive corruption and factionalism and PLA's separation from the party. In a sense, Xi had no choice but to reassert central leadership. Hence, he reintroduced ideology as a core line with terms such as political purity, the mass line, struggle etc., being popularised. He introduced new regulations for party cadres and restored the party's control over the PLA. The amount of control being exercised over the security forces is perhaps unprecedented. While corruption and purges are nothing new in the party, this is of the largest scale since Mao. It was argued that the party comes before the nation in its foreign policy. With regards to foreign policy, Xi Jinping thought endorses the supremacy of the party's authority and centralised leadership over external work. The speaker also emphasised that the idea of collective responsibility is ending because personal loyalty to Xi is now being emphasised within the party. For instance, the two safeguards policy ensures safeguarding the central committee and safeguarding Xi Jinping as the core.

While discussing the CPC's overseas influence, the speaker noted that China's soft power and hard power strategies to achieve global prominence is not fabricated or misrepresented. CPC's party-building effort abroad is not harmless and should be contained. However, it should not be treated as an existential threat. The party's organisational capacity abroad does not only impinge on foreign countries as external entities but targets even Chinese enclaves abroad. The speaker emphasised that the CPC's organisational power is not a concerted strength to rule the world or make the world socialist or autocratic. The speaker argued that as Chinese actors are increasingly present abroad, and as China constitutes a growing slice of the world economy, the CPC is faced with challenges compelling it to extend its reach and extend its influence abroad. The global reach of the CPC is thus an evolving response to the requirement of China's globalisation, China's global power and the competition between great powers.

During the Q&A session, the party work abroad was discussed. It was underlined that overseas party work particularly focuses on party members who work abroad for state-owned enterprises in large scale projects and Chinese students who study abroad on government scholarships as they are seen as foreign extensions of China's domestic economy and society and are therefore a part of the system.

The party committees of universities and companies in China are required to involve their members abroad as far as possible in their activities and, if possible, to organise activities abroad for them. But the party activities abroad are presented as part of a company's or bank's corporate culture and team building. Among Chinese students too, party activities are carried out under other guises in order to avoid arousing suspicion. It was argued that as far as overseas party building is concerned, the party is learning by doing, and its overseas activities are rife with inconsistencies and vary vastly between countries. The party's ambition is not only to bring Chinese individuals and institutions under control but also to integrate them into a global Chinese nation that unifies its territorial and extraterritorial parts.



## Valedictory Session



The valedictory session was chaired by **Amb. Ashok K. Kantha**, Director, ICS and former Ambassador of India to China. He also made the closing remarks for the event. **Mr. Peter Rimmele**, Resident Representative to India, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, New Delhi and Professor **Aparajita Gangopadhyay**, Dean and Professor, School of International and Area Studies, Goa University, delivered their remarks in the Valedictory session. **Dr.**

**Rityusha Mani Tiwary**, Visiting Fellow, ICS and Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, summed up the deliberations of the conference.

Mr. Peter Rimmele highlighted that the 4th IFC was fascinating and full of insights. China not being transparent in its actions makes such insights necessary for the world and especially for India. He noted that a lot of topics were discussed in the forum, which was necessary given the fact that China itself is a topic of many variations. He pointed out that the policies used by China are intended to stabilise the rule of the CPC and keep it in power. He believes that a very likely scenario is the development of a bipolar world, and India's non-aligned stance may not be the best option. He concluded by thanking all the participants, ICS and Goa university on behalf of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Prof. Aparajita Gangopadhyay, in her remarks, narrated how the association of ICS with Goa University began and the progress in China studies that Goa university has seen, including the introduction of an optional course on China. She expressed her intention of making Goa university a place where China studies can be pursued and also a permanent venue for the India Forum on China for many more years to come.

Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary presented a compendious summary of the event in which she presented all the major strands of deliberations held across sessions. The event, through its sessions, assessed the expanding visibility of China internationally in strategic affairs, global governance, economic relations, trade and investment, defence, research and innovation.

The German perspective was also presented in the forum in the backdrop of the new tripartite government and Germany's responsibility in the international arena. It was underlined that there is an increasingly opaque understanding of China in terms of its domestic affairs, which is defined by authoritarianism and a foreign policy that adopts the language of existential threat and the Cold war.

While summing up, Dr.Tiwary noted that the Forum dealt with a plethora of topics. While the external ramifications of CPC at regional and global levels were discussed, the domestic challenges confronting the CPC were also taken up to some extent. She expressed her hope that the Forum had laid grounds for further research and exploration around issues such as surveillance, privacy, people's access to the state, social and popular movements etc., which will further help in understanding China.

Amb. Ashok K. Kantha, in his closing remarks, highlighted that the theme of the Forum was indeed very vast, and some of the issues could not be discussed in detail, but he hoped to continue deliberations on them in the future. He pointed out that as CPC marks its 100 years, it has much to celebrate in terms of performance, which is reflected in the changes China has brought about, especially during the period of reform and opening up. Amb. Kantha also emphasised that changes in China are still underway in the new era of Xi Jinping, which was reflected in the 6th Plenum recently, which elevated Xi's position further. He noted that in order to be on par with Mao and Deng, Xi needs to deliver. It was pointed out that China today is at multiple inflexion points, but due to the great degree of opacity, it is yet to be seen where China is headed. China is going through a transitional phase economically where dual circulation is being pushed forward, and it is to be seen how it will impact the growth prospects of China. Politically, there remains a factional contestation within the CPC, which is also a black box.

He noted that China's aggressive behaviour under Xi is counterintuitive because it has alienated many countries in the process at a time when great power competition is increasingly becoming sharpened. Faced with many challenges, China continues to hold an aggressive stance in pursuit of its core interests. He pointed out that it is uncertain whether attrition of Chinese power will be seen in the future as some believe that currently, China is peaking.

He concluded by thanking colleagues at ICS, Goa university and KAS for contributing towards the successful organising of the Forum.

# PICTURE GALLERY

















