



Conference on

India, China and the emergence of post-war post-colonial Asia, 1945-50

(Organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, **Friday, March 17, 2017**)

March 2017 will mark the 70th anniversary of the first post-war conference of Asian countries, the Asian Relations Conference, which was held in New Delhi, India, against a background of political turmoil occasioned by the end of World War II, the start of the Cold War and the upsurge in the process of decolonization in Asia. These processes were to greatly impact the development of relations between India and China, two of the largest countries in Asia both of which were on the cusp of momentous changes. The objective of this Conference is to take a close look at a very crucial but relatively understudied period in the development of India-China relations, in the context of the larger developments taking place in Asia and the world at that time. On the one hand, the Asian Relations Conference and its stated objectives appeared to be a culmination of the anti-imperialist and Asian solidarity discourse that had permeated India-China relations in the 1920s, 30s and early 40s. On the other hand, it took place in radically changed geopolitical circumstances. The defeat of Japanese imperialism and the imminent withdrawal of British power from South Asia had created a power vacuum in the region of Asia. At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, China, as the only Asian among the victorious Allied powers, appeared to be in the best position to fill this vacuum and emerge as the leading Asian power. However, by the time the ARC was held, matters had changed significantly. China was caught up in a civil war and the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek was under increasingly severe pressure from the Chinese communists. In India, an Interim Government had been formed to oversee the transition to independence, and its leader Jawaharlal Nehru lost no time in taking the initiative to convene the first conference of Asian countries and peoples. His opening speech made clear his understanding of the central role that India would play in the emerging Asia. The ARC not only stirred up the embers of rivalry over Asian leadership between India and China, but its proceedings also brought to light the anxiety felt by some other Asian countries over the possibility of India-China domination of Asia.

Issues of territoriality, borders and sovereignty, which were to bedevil India-China relations in later years, also came to the fore in this period. Foremost among these was Tibet, its status and its relationship with China and India. The decision to invite a delegation from Tibet to participate separately in the ARC was deeply resented by China. Despite this, India and China sought to upgrade and manage their diplomatic relations in this period of great complexity marked by the rapidly changing political situation in China and the violent upheaval of Partition in India. Throughout all this, trade and the movement of people

between India and China continued in a relatively unrestricted fashion compared to subsequent decades, although both came under increasing pressure. Overall, this short period is of great significance as it was a time of considerable flux in India-China relations, in which ardent notes of Asian solidarity and cooperation were juxtaposed with hard-nosed calculations of national interest and big power rivalry.

Participants in this Conference are requested to address one or more of these or related issues in their papers. Proposed themes for sessions are:

- Asian regionalism and Asian leadership
- Territoriality and sovereignty
- Managing bilateral relations and diplomacy
- Trade and movement of people

Important dates for participants:

Confirmation of participation with tentative title of presentation: by **April 15, 2016**

Sending of abstract (150 words): by **July 15, 2016**

Receipt of soft copy of full text of draft paper: by **January 15, 2017**

The Institute of Chinese Studies intends to publish the revised and finalized papers of the Conference.

Hospitality during the Conference and for two nights in Delhi will be provided by the organisers.

Contact details:

Dr. Madhavi Thampi

Email: madhavi_thampi@yahoo.com

Phone: +91-9312948636, +91-7676648636