



# INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES

## **India Becoming a Threat in Chinese Imagination**

**Chair:** Patricia Uberoi

**Speaker:** Hemant Adlakha

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**Seminar Room, ICS**

Prof. Hemant Adlakha began his lecture by stating that he intended to assess this topic not from a foreign policy point of view, but rather look at how the Chinese foreign policy discourse originates from within China's political discourse in Beijing. Prof. Adlakha's lecture was based on an in-depth reading of the Chinese materials and his discussions with some of the Chinese experts based in China. Prof. Adlakha noted that there was a substantial volume of literature coming out from Beijing on the given topic and that these were being written more by China's strategic affairs experts than the experts on South Asia or India. Moreover, these opinions are not just limited to materials relating to India or India-China relations but they can be found in various other materials related to important international affairs' issues.

He then went on to illustrate the background and the origins of such opinion among the Chinese circles. He made an interesting reference to a conference held in December 2012 at the London School of Economics and Political Science on the theme of the Chinese foreign policy, where scholars from both within and outside China were invited. There was an emergence of a new discourse in this conference, which perceived the source of the deteriorating international security environment as not the cause of a structural change but rather a result of Beijing's erroneous diplomacy. Prof. Adlakha pointed out that this new line of thinking came out precisely during the time when China was making its move to become a world player. To elaborate this point, he referred to the inaugural address given by Xi Jinping in April 2013, at the Boao Forum. During his speech, Xi said that China is an important

member of the global family and that China and the world are interdependent on each other for stability and prosperity. This was the first time a Chinese leader had stated in such clear terms the dependence of the entire world on China.

He then went on to highlight the diminishing perception of Japan as a potential threat to China. According to Prof. Adlakha, some Chinese scholars argue that Japan is not a country that China should fear in the future. There are also some scholars in China who state that China and Japan's respective national development strategy: 'China dream' and Japan's 'normalization' respectively are aligned with each other. Sino-Japanese relation has witnessed a sudden turn around since the Xi-Abe meeting in the November 2017 APEC summit. There are scholars in both China as well as in Japan who state that China and Japan have never had had such smooth political relations in the recent past as they have in the present time. Prof. Adlakha also noted that there is a shift in the Japanese policy towards China, which is that of a balance between cooperating and checkmating China simultaneously.

Coming to his main argument regarding India being perceived as a potential threat by China in the future, Prof. Adlakha stated that some of the Chinese scholars believe that if India continues to grow at the rate it has been growing, it can come out in the open against China in the future. Most Chinese scholars state that China do not perceive any military threat or confrontation vis-à-vis the US or Japan. Many Chinese scholars however, believe that India for the recent past has been harboring the thought of challenging China militarily. Therefore, with the US threat being ruled out and Japan not being a military threat, China is more concerned about India.

He then went on to list out a few points that have come out in the Chinese writings which indicated why China was considering India as a potential threat, firstly, it is the desire being nurtured by India of going to war with China and defeating it, secondly, there are geopolitical factors such as the Doklam crisis. Thirdly, India feels that China has a very arrogant attitude towards it, fourthly, China's continuous rise is perceived as a threat by other powers in China's vicinity. Fifthly, the Chinese state that China does not have what it takes to be like the British Empire or enjoys the geographical advantage like that of Japan, hence the only option left for China is to create its own path and have its own national strategy. Sixthly, China's geopolitical clash with India especially in the context of India's opposition to OBOR is like that of a pit on your path which if you cannot avoid it then you must overcome it.

*Report prepared by Sanjeevan Pradhan, Research Intern, Institute of Chinese Studies.*

## **About the Speaker**

Hemant Adlakha is Professor of Chinese, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies (CCSEAS), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is also an Honorary Fellow, the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) Delhi. His areas of research include foreign policy debates and discourse in the P R China, modern Chinese literature, culture and cinema. His PhD dissertation was on ‘*Modernization and the State in Contemporary China: Search for a Distant Civil Society.*’ He has published articles in Chinese and in English. He is a member of International Editorial Committee, International Society for Lu Xun Studies, Seoul (ROK). His most recent publications include, ‘*Confucius*’ in *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Gale Cengage Learning, Macmillan Reference, USA; ‘Simla, McMahon Line and South Tibet: Emergent Chinese Discourse on Fears of Losing Territory to India’ in *100 Years after the Simla Conference, 2013-14*, ICS, Delhi (*Forthcoming 2018*); ‘BRICS: A Key Mechanism in Beijing's Global Governance Strategy’ in *BRICS and the Multipolar World*, to be published in 2018 from the Academy of International Studies, the Jamia Milia Islamia University, New Delhi.

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