

Conference

**'Mutual Trust and Cooperation between China and India
Chinese Studies in India and Indian Studies in China'**

4-5 MAY 2015

Institute of South Asian Studies,
Sichuan University, Chengdu, China

Organised by

Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Chengdu and
Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), Delhi

A Report

SUMMARY

The conference titled 'Mutual Trust and Cooperation between China and India: Chinese Studies in India and Indian Studies in China' was held from 4th to 5th May 2015 at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Sichuan University, Chengdu, China. It was organised by the ISAS in collaboration with the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), Delhi.

The conference on 5 May 2015 had four sessions, including the opening session. There were 10 themes in total, namely, 'Sino- Indian Bilateral Relations', 'Foreign Policy', 'Politics', 'Media and Communication', 'Economy', 'Science and Technology', 'Society and Social Affairs', 'Language and Literature', 'Culture and Religion' and 'Military Affairs'. The conference proceedings will culminate in a publication.

OPENING SESSION

Prof Li Tao, Executive Director, ISAS, Sichuan University, introduced the 'major delegates' of the Conference. **Prof Luo Zhongshu**, Deputy Executive Director, CPC, Sichuan University Committee delivered the welcome remarks. **Prof Alka Acharya**, Director, ICS, delivered the opening remarks. In Prof Acharya's words, the problem in India-China relations is not about lack of understanding, but lack of information. A stocktaking exercise has become relevant and one must reclaim the scholarship of eminent scholars from the past.

Prof Yan Xuetong, Dean, Institute of Modern International Relations, gave a lecture on 'Sino-Indian Cooperation: Its Implications for International Order'. Among others, he argued that focus should be on developing cooperation rather than on merely building trust. Having said that, he agreed that lack of mutual understanding was a major hindrance. For example, in the case of OBOR, the Indian side has many questions and Chinese government also 'probably did not clearly explain'. He discussed US' containment of China and how it would be fruitless as China is different from North Korea or Iran. In this context, he called

for regional cooperation between India and China that is not limited to the bilateral level.

Discussion

Ambassador Kishan Rana, Honorary Fellow, ICS agreed that US-China relations is a great example of cooperation without trust. **Zhang Guihong**, Executive Director, UN Studies Center, Fudan University, argued that while it is good to discuss these issues and come up with new ideas, all bilateral relations are different in nature. He differed with Yan by arguing that without trust, the relations cannot be sustainable. **Qiu Yonghui**, Institute of World Religion, CASS, agreed with Zhang that India-China relations have unique characteristics. **A participant** commented that with changing times there is a need for developing a new theory of international cooperation.

SESSION I

Prof Li Jian, Vice President, China West Normal University (CWNU) chaired the session and **Prof Qiu Yonghui**, Institute of World Religion, CASS, was the discussant.

Sino-Indian Bilateral Relations

Ambassador Kishan Rana, Honorary Fellow, ICS spoke on the topic, 'Sino-Indian Bilateral Relations: Research in India'. Among others, he called for a widening of perspective on China studies in India, for example in the field of diplomacy.

Prof Zhang Guihong, Executive Director, UN Studies Center, Fudan University, spoke on the topic, 'Sino-Indian Bilateral Relations: Research in China'. In his view, the border dispute and Tibet issue are the major irritants in the bilateral relationship. He urged the scholars to carry out more micro-level empirical studies by which areas of cooperation could be increased.

Foreign Policy

Ambassador Kishan Rana spoke on 'Indian Researchers studying China's Foreign Policy'. He mentioned that studies on International Relations and China have not developed enough in India and where it has, area studies is pursued separately from Chinese language.

Prof Zhang Li, ISAS, spoke on 'China Studies and Perceptions of India's Diplomacy and Foreign Relations'. Among the many relevant points, he felt that India uses soft power and public diplomacy to amplify national interests and enhance its influence in global and regional affairs. He concluded by asking a question: Does the Modi government embrace a more assertive and more confident diplomatic and security policy?

Politics

Dr T G Suresh, Associate Professor, CPS, SSS, JNU, spoke on 'Disciplinary history of Chinese politics in India: An Introduction'. He discussed the making of Chinese studies in India since the inception of the PRC and analysed the evolution of different methodological perspectives. The first effort began with the scholarly collective associated with the ICS in the mid-1960s. The following two phases identified coincided with the development of political science as a discipline in India in the mid-1970s and transformation of Chinese economy in the mid-1990s.

Dr Dai Yonghong, ISAS, Sichuan University, spoke on 'Indian Politics: Studies in China' and its orientation, direction and the main problems that are associated with it. He revealed that China's studies on Japan and Russia are more as compared to India. The study of Indian politics is carried out mainly by scholars working in Chinese embassies.

Media and Communication

Colonel Ajai Shukla, independent Magazine and Newspaper Columnist, spoke on 'Chinese Media and communication: Research in India'. He argued that assessing the effect of media reporting on Sino-Indian bilateral relations is a complex undertaking. Notwithstanding the structural divergence, there is growing understanding amongst political elites in Beijing and New Delhi that the animosity engendered by negative reporting presents a significant threat to bilateral relations.

Prof Yin Xi'nan, ISAS, focused on English media. He commented that since 2009, the narratives on China have been distorted. Civilizational or geo-civilisational image of China has given place to geo-political/geo-economic image. People to people, especially youth, cultural dialogue, cooperation is necessary. Need to publish positive ideas of political statesmen in the media, need more journalists, and more books need to be translated especially, cultural histories.

Discussion

Prof. Qiu Yonghui, as the discussant, emphasized the need for carrying out broad-based research. She stated that India is China's west and there is a need to learn from India. She emphasized the need to go back to our traditional thought and philosophy. Like the other speakers, she too urged for more research which should be both macro and micro; qualitative as well as quantitative in nature.

Ravi Bhoothalingam, Honorary Fellow, ICS, emphasised the need to increase student exchanges exponentially, who would live with families in respective countries. **Avijit Banerjee** informed that there are two Confucius Institutes and there are student exchanges from Bihar and West Bengal already taking place.

SESSION II

The session was chaired by **Prof Jiang Jingkui**, South Asian Studies Center, Peking University and **Dr T G Suresh** was the discussant.

Economy

Dr Aravind Yelery, Associate Fellow, ICS, spoke on 'Indian Studies on Chinese Economy'. Early Indian analyses of Chinese economy, according to him, were geared towards exploring the contrasting patterns of economic development and policy measures. In the following decades, Indian scholars were selective in their variables largely owing to political-economic reasons.

Prof Wen Fude, ISAS, Sichuan University, spoke on 'Chinese researches into Indian Economy and Development: Some Characteristics'. In the 1950s and 60s, there was no expertise in the area. It was only with the move from agricultural to industries and the practices of Indian economic policies in the 1980s that real research began. The Chinese have sought to study and borrow from the Indian experiences in their pursuit of economic development. However, lack of training which serves as an important obstacle.

Science and Technology

Dr Varaprasad S Dolla, Associate Professor and Chair, CEAS, SIS, JNU, spoke on 'Mapping Science and Technology Studies on China in India: Contours and Challenges'. Though the Indian scholarly studies on S&T in China are few when juxtaposed to the western studies, their number has been growing in the recent past. A key challenge is with regard to the need for making a paradigm shift from studies that focus largely on either statistical analysis or on ideological approach to evolving a comprehensive understanding of S&T advancement in China, wherein the entire spectrum of S&T would be examined and delineated.

Dr Feng Ying, Associate Research Fellow, Strategic Studies Centre, Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China (ISTIC) spoke on China's research on India's Science. She stated that from 2007 onwards, China has been paying more attention to India's innovation policies (in the context of PM Modi's efforts). She focused on the cooperation between India and China in areas of high-speed rail, urbanization, water pollution, clean energy and climate change. There is scope for cooperation given the new silk road project.

Society and Social Affairs

Dr Tshering Chonzom, Associate Fellow, ICS, spoke on 'Chinese Society (with special focus on Minorities): Research in India'. A broad review of writings, events organized by major think tanks and dissertations and thesis on the subject of China's minorities reveal that there is a lop-sided interest in the Tibet issue, that too from a security and strategic studies perspective. This is owing to historical issues that currently impinge on the India-China relations. There is a lack of research on the subject of China's minorities by students of traditional social science disciplines.

Prof Zhang Shijun, Deputy Dean, School of Tourism, History and Culture, South West University for Nationalities, mentioned that many Chinese scholars are working on the Indian caste system, the tribal system, and their role in progress and prosperity. He opined that the Indian context is different from China where there are 56 ethnic minorities.

Discussion

Dr T G Suresh was the discussant for this session. He commented on how social history is lost owing to emphasis on security and strategic studies. On the issue of media agencies, **one participant** commented on the need for objective view by India. **Amb Rana** pointed to the role of diaspora as an important area of study. Further, he added the need for China to explore if it can learn something from India in handling its minority issues.

SESSION III

Ambassador Rana chaired the session and **Prof Zhang Guihong** was the Discussant.

Language and Literature

Prof Jiang Jingkui outlined the two major approaches to translations of Indian works in China. Medieval Indian texts are the priority. He remarked that the biggest challenge today is that very few young people are interested in literature and languages, which is essential for civilizational understanding.

Dr Avijit Banerjee, Associate Professor and Head, Cheena Bhavan, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, spoke on 'A review of Chinese Language & Literature Research in India'. He began by exhorting that the study of Chinese is not merely the study of a foreign language. He focused on the personalities responsible for popularizing Chinese studies in India in the literary and linguistic field, and singled out the role of Prof Tan Chung as instrumental in this field. He mentioned that Indian scholars are getting increasingly interested in translating classical Chinese texts and the writings of modern Chinese authors.

Culture and Religion

Mr Ravi Bhoothalingam, Honorary Fellow, ICS, spoke on 'Study in India of the Religion and Culture of China: Some Directions for a Brighter Future?' He drew attention to the fact about how India and China have a rich civilizational history of contacts between each other, ranging across two millennia. He suggested the harnessing of new logics to make the study of Chinese language and culture relevant, interesting and attractive.

Prof Qiu Yonghui mentioned that her organization, Institute of World Religion at the CASS is the largest institution on study of religions in the world. Since the post-liberalization period to the 1980s, Chinese scholars have translated numerous Indian texts. It should conduct research in collaboration with the

ICCR, examine relations in the sphere of politics, economics and international relations. Although India has the largest number of Muslims in the world, by 2020, Hinduism would be the largest religion in the country.

Military

General G G Dwivedi, Centre for West Asian Studies, Faculty of Social Science, AMU, spoke on 'Chinese Military Research in India: An Overview'. Given the prevailing international environment and the redefinition of the very concept of security, there has been significant surge in research pertaining to military studies. Due to the sensitive border issue, defense affairs continue to be significant in the bilateral relations between India and China. Due to numerous constraints, namely state controlled media in China, restricted access to the sources and lack of Chinese language skills, the current level of research on the Chinese military remains limited.

Dr Song Zhihui's topic was 'Indian Military: The Chinese Researches'. He mentioned that many researchers are studying the military strategy of India and its military affairs, including psychology of military affairs and maritime issues. There have also been studies comparing China and India's military strengths. There are also many research institutes working on Indian military affairs and also, many websites that focus on the issue.

Discussion

Prof Zhang Guihong commented that learning to know and understand each other is the precondition of mutual trust building. This would also help both countries towards policy making in diplomacy and security, and to know each other's strengths. Most suspicions and misunderstanding, he believed is in the military activities and transparency needs to be increased with regard to it and more contacts should be encouraged.

Concluding Session and Conference Summary

Prof Alka Acharya spoke on the topic, 'Chinese Studies in India: A Profile'. She mentioned that Chinese Studies in India is by and large pursued within the framework of Area Studies, in the broader discipline of International Relations (IR). She lamented the fact that even today, when the India-China engagement has become so comprehensive and significant; there are very few universities where Chinese Studies is taught. The situation with regard to research institutions and think tanks is even less encouraging. She argued for the need to address the situation with the utmost degree of urgency.

Prof Li Tao explained that although the study of China has been fluctuating with the changing political relations between India and China, the reforms have opened up many possibilities and opportunities. South Asian studies are now spreading beyond Beijing, to other areas such as, Sichuan, Fudan, etc. She emphasized the need for keeping an eye on the demographic challenge and the minority issue. She was of the opinion that more mutual visits and frequent exchanges of students should be encouraged.