

Report on the academic visit of delegates from China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) Beijing to ICS on 13 June 2018

Delegates from China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) included Mr. Yuan Peng Vice President of CICIR, Mr. Hu Shisheng Director of Institute of South and Southeast Asian and Oceanian Studies, Mr. Li Yan Deputy Director of Institute of American Studies, Mr. Jia Chunyang Assistant Research Professor at Institute of American Studies CICIR, and Mr. Zhang Shujian, Assistant Research Professor at Institute of South and Southeast Asian and Oceanian Studies. Whereas members from ICS were Director Ashok Kantha, Chairperson Patricia Uberoi, Vice-Chairperson Sreemati Chakrabarti, Assistant Director Aravind Yelery, Ambassador Deepa Wadhwa, Santosh Pai, Madhurima Nundy, Nirmola Sharma, Veda Vaidyanathan and Bhim Subba.

The meeting commenced after a brief introduction from all the members and the discussion further took place focusing on three chief agenda, i.e., first, India-China relations in broader context in light of the Xi-Modi informal meet in Wuhan, second, developments on the Korean Peninsula after the Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore and third, domestic developments in India.

Discussing India-China relations under the light of the Xi-Modi informal meet in Wuhan

Mr. Hu Shisheng initiated the discussion focusing on the speech of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Shangri La and his new Indo-Pacific architecture definition. Mr. Hu appreciated the new identity provided by the Indian leader and stated that it will further enhance the India-China relations. He further addressed the Wuhan Meet and how it will prove to be a stepping stone for India-China relation entering into a new era. It will lead to India and China assuming new identities as emerging powers in the Indo-Pacific. He further explained India-China relation with the example of two cars moving forward in the same destination but different lanes. He said that India and China being different ought to move forward in different lanes, and through cooperation and sensitivity towards each other both can avoid traditional and nontraditional obstacles. Mr. Hu emphasized upon both countries being “mirror” to each

other through which they can learn and introspect. India and China being populous countries required constant progress and to avoid situations like Doklam in future. Giving rest to his approach towards the discussion Mr. Hu said that being neighbors there will be differences but it is important to resolve the underlying issues of border, trade, Tibet etc. through cooperation.

Responding to Mr. Hu Shisheng's assessment, Director Ashok Kantha said that he shares his views and optimism. He further said that leaders of both the countries have met fourteen times and have made conscious efforts to enhance the relations which is a step forward in strengthening India-China relations. Further, Director Ashok Kantha said it is vital to recognize and address the structural problems to avoid conflicts. There is a need to address the differences which have accumulated over the years and those differences need to be managed. Imbalance in trade needs to be addressed and both countries need to look forward to a sustainable economic engagement. Speaking on the boundary disputes, Director Ashok Kantha said that boundary settlement requires strategic priority and there has been no visible progress in the direction in the last decade which has further fueled pessimism on both sides of the border. On this, Ambassador Deepa Wadhwa pointed towards the need to reduce the bilateral difference such that India and China can work together with ease.

Further, Vice-Chairperson Sreemati Chakrabarti raised a question about the significance of an informal summit compared to formal ones, to which Mr. Hu answered that informal summits allow more space for bilateral talks on multiple topics plus provide more clarity and time whereas, formal summits are conducted under a particular framework which leaves less room for innovative or out of the frame discussion. He also said that this is becoming a political fashion and shall become common practice near future. On the question of collaboration in the extended neighborhood, the cooperation and developmental projects in Afghanistan and Myanmar were discussed along with their viability.

Discussing developments in the Korean Peninsula after the Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore

Discussion on developments in the Korean Peninsula started with a question by Chairperson Uberoi about how Trump's unpredictability affects the strategic thinking and planning to which Mr. Peng answered saying that it is not necessary to react to Trump and he remains a common

challenge to all. He further said that it is required to continue and maintain the traditional channels of communication and trade as old establishments in the US are to stay whereas the rise of Trump is a temporary phenomenon.

Focusing on the recent developments in Korean Peninsula Mr. Peng started with elaborating on the history of the region from 1950's onward, then the 1994 Framework agreement to the 2002 Axis of the Evil declaration and 2005 Six-Party Talks. He said that attempts for reconciliation failed due to nuances in domestic politics in the US and former President Obama's policy of "strategic patience". It is believed that President Trump's aim was to portray himself better than his predecessors and thus he approached China for help. China being equally against North Korea's accumulation of nukes and concerned about the war in Korea decided to help. However, Chairman Kim remained reluctant until 2016 for any meeting and continued testing the ballistic missiles. In his recent talks with Trump, Kim was looking for something in between reduction of nuclear weapons and personal survival. However, he became hesitant after John Bolton advocated the "Libya model."

To put an end to this Kim Jong Un, met President Xi Jinping in China twice before heading for Singapore summit. He also met President Moon in the Korean De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) in order to prepare for the summit. These meetings clearly point towards the significance of China in the whole affair, moreover, it can also be observed through the aircraft diplomacy as Kim Jong Un headed to Singapore in an Air China aircraft. The unfolding of events in Singapore went in coherence with Chinese foreign policy regarding North Korea- a "freeze for freeze" program under which denuclearization will go together with peace accord and security mechanism. This, however, was in contrast to what the US wanted to pursue.

Director Ashok Kantha then asked how the denuclearisation is assessed by US, North Korea, and China as it is perceived they all have a different stand on denuclearisation. Mr. Hu answered that denuclearization of North Korea basically has to do with cease in the creation of more nukes. However, for the US it was Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Denuclearisation (CVID) and for China, it lies somewhere between hundred percent nuclear disarmament and a slow step by step process. However, for now, Trump only has the promise of denuclearization and halt on production and testing of more Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), moreover, he is least interested in the regime change in North Korea.

Discussing Domestic Developments in India

Director Ashok Kantha initiated the discussion on domestic developments in India by focusing on the upcoming 2019 election in India. He mentioned the special chemistry shared between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the future of India- China relations. He also mentioned that India's perception regarding China has been consistent among all political parties which have always engaged with caution and the basic template has remained unchanged.

Further, there was a discussion about the need for China to invest in India such that it will enhance trade and provide employment. To this, Mr. Hu asked about possible ways to create job opportunities in India. Mr. Santosh Pai explained that Chinese investment in India is crucial for employment opportunities in India as earlier the jobs were export-driven, however, at present, there are new domestic consumption and the e-commerce market will give a boost to the economy. He also said that manufacturing in India should be taken into consideration. Director Ashok Kantha then took over and said that China should be seen as visibly contributing in India. From India, as a destination for exports, the shift should take place where manufacturing occurs in India. He also mentioned that the cheap imports from China hollow out the Indian economy and business. India is a giant telecom market and manufacturing projects will benefit both India and China. To this, Mr. Hu questioned if the building capacity shift will affect Indian business? Director Ashok Kantha answered that it will be opposite of what is said as it will open more opportunities for both India and China. Assistant Director Aravind Yelery pointed out that capacity building will bolster job opportunities for young talent in India in the field of automation. Also, India is self-sustained agro-production but there is a gap in export due to political factors rather than economic factors. He further concluded by briefing how India can learn from Japan.