

## REPORT ON C3S – CCAS - NMF EVENT AT CHENNAI (FEB 23, 2018)

A national seminar on “Evolving Dynamics of India-China Power play: Interests, Insights and Inferences” was jointly organized by the Chennai Centre for China Studies, Centre for China Analysis and Strategy (CCAS), and the National Maritime Foundation on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2018 at INS Adyar, Chennai.

There were three sessions in the seminar:

- a) Session 1: Launch of two books, “*Xi Jinping’s China*” and “*Cadres of Tibet*”, both authored by Mr. Jayadeva Ranade, President of CCAS. The books were reviewed by Ambassador M. Ganapathi and Col. R. Hariharan respectively followed by an interaction and a Question & Answer Session.
- b) Session 2: Presentation of papers by Mr. Abhishek Darbey (CCAS), Mr. Sundeep Kumar (C3S), Ms. Namrata Hasija (CCAS), and Col. R. Hariharan (C3S).
- c) Session 3: Presentation of papers by Ms. Apa Lhamo (CCAS), Mr. Jayadeva Ranade (CCAS), and Cmde R.S. Vasani (C3S/NMF).
- d) This was followed by a brief interaction and concluding remarks by Mr. M.R. Sivaraman IAS (Retd.)

### SESSION 1-BOOK LAUNCH

After the welcome address by Cmde R. S. Vasani, Mr. Jayadeva Ranade gave a brief introduction of his books and what motivated him to write the books. Pointing out that the title and design of the cover of ‘Xi Jinping’s China’ had been finalized in October 2017, Mr Ranade said the period covered was essentially the first tenure of Xi Jinping. He said the Chinese leader’s personality and politics he has pursued become more important as he begins a second term having been given more authority and power. “*Xi Jinping’s China*”, he said, emphasises the personal linkages between the prominent personalities who influence China’s internal politics and events and give an insight as to how they devise policy. The book selects and explains key developments of the past five years since Xi Jinping was appointed to China’s three top posts and how these have contributed to the steady hardening of the Chinese State.

Introducing the ‘Cadres of Tibet’, he said there is similar focus on personalities of the cadres governing Tibet and the book includes biographical sketches of important cadres that are very difficult to get. Persons studying Tibet would know that very little by way of biographic detail on cadres is available in China and even less so on those serving in the Tibet Autonomous Region. He disclosed that the information had been collected from diverse sources, many who could not be named, and has perhaps been put together in this format for the first time. He described it as probably the first book of its kind.

Ambassador M. Ganapathi reviewed “*Xi Jinping’s China*” and said the book brings out various facets of personality of Xi Jinping, clearly the uncontested leader of China. He said

the book clearly mentions the importance of the Party and deals with the power play, power conflicts between leaders, economic developments, the Party's control on media etc. In terms of foreign policy, the book has included developments in Tibet, bilateral relations, Sino-Pak relations, issues of sovereignty and territorial issues and the Belt and Road Initiative. He described it as book full of important and difficult to get detail which is a 'must read' for persons interested in China.

Colonel (Retd) R. Hariharan, VSM spoke on the 'Cadres of Tibet', which he has reviewed. Saying that Tibet is very important for India and it is not studied adequately, he said he has spent many years in high altitude areas and the North East and realises the importance of Tibet. Highlighting the importance of the information in the book, he said he is confident that the information in the book is not available even in government agencies. He singled it out as a major contribution to the study of Tibet.

## **SESSION 2-Geo-political/strategic Developments & Response**

The session was chaired by Mr. Jayadeva Ranade and the panellists were Mr. Abhishek Darbey, Mr. Sundeep Kumar.S, Ms Namrata Hasija and Col. R. Hariharan VSM (Retd.).

The title of Mr. Abhishek Darbey's paper was 'China's BRI in Africa and Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)'. He mentioned China's large scale projects in Africa including railways, roadways and the seven sea ports, one of which is Djibouti. He emphasized Djibouti's economic and strategic importance and said all these ports will play a big role in connecting the African Coastal regions and other major land-locked trading centers to manufacturing hubs. He also mentioned China's investment in the Suez Canal corridor. According to Mr. Darbey, OBOR is not only about Eurasia, but also to a significant extent about Africa. He highlighted the importance of the Belt and Road Forum held in China in April 2017 and participation of Chinese SOEs in all infrastructure projects. Mr. Darbey also discussed the Asia- Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) which, he claimed, could be deemed a counter by India and Japan to China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR), as it will be a sea corridor linking Africa with India and other countries of South-East Asia and Oceania.

Mr. Sundeep Kumar's paper was titled 'Significance of Chabahar & INSTC (International North South Transport Corridor)' and he gave a brief introduction of Chabahar port in Iran and highlighted its importance for India's Afghanistan policy as Afghanistan is a landlocked state and depends on Pakistan for sea trade. He also talked about INSTC and its importance for India. He said INSTC is a significant channel for India as it will bolster trade with energy-rich Eurasia and Central Asian countries. Mr Sundeep Kumar also touched on how US policies toward Iran can affect India's future plans with other stakeholders. He drew attention to China's influence in the Iranian nuclear deal and its relations with Iran.

In her paper on 'BRI Projects: Reality & Projections', Ms Namrata Hasija said the BRI is a comprehensive Chinese strategy to mask its hegemonic foreign policy goals and security policies. She talked about the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), its military connotations including giving easy access for Chinese submarines to the Indian Ocean Region which comes under India's region of influence and how the CPEC has reduced

the prospects of India joining the BRI. She explained that the BRI is a business venture since the party getting the maximum profit is China with 89% BRI projects being built by Chinese companies. She mentioned that China has established BRI courts in China with headquarters in Beijing and asked why BRI courts are proposed when local courts and international arbitration centers are well equipped to handle contractual disputes. She said reality is very different from rhetoric and China's Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious regional and global project that it has attempted to sell as a global public good.

Col. R. Hariharan spoke on 'China's Geostrategic power play in India's East'. He spoke of China's enhanced strategic influence across the globe, in the UN and other international forums. He mentioned Xi Jinping's New Year speech in which Xi Jinping talked about realizing the 'China Dream' and how the Belt and Road Initiative is central to Xi Jinping's China Dream. He said the BRI should not be seen in isolation as it is China's strategic move to provide an alternative leadership to the world. He talked about the CPEC and its rapid progress and pointed to China's growing influence in Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar and how it can be detrimental for India.

### **SESSION 3-Internal Dynamics, Soft Power & Maritime Security**

This session was chaired by Col. R. Hariharan and the participants were Ms Apa Lhamo, Mr Jayadeva Ranade, Cmde R. S. Vasan.

The title of Ms Apa Lhamo's paper was 'China's Tibet Policy after the 2008 Uprising'. After explaining the historical background of the 2008 uprising, she said that the unrest came as quite a shock for the Chinese government as they assumed that the decades of generous investment and economic development by the government would have replaced the Tibetan people's resentment against Beijing. She then the stricter security strategy implemented by the Chinese government like tight military control, police recruitment, patriotic education, patriotic campaigns, monastery/temple management and cadres, appeasement, dense network of police surveillance etc.

Mr. Jayadeva Ranade spoke on 'Xi Jinping's Power Base'. Mr. Ranade started with Xi Jinping's appointment to China's three top posts of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (CC), Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and President of China at the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, which took place simultaneously for the first time in 30 years, and how it helped Xi Jinping consolidate his power. The CCP's Sixth Plenum in October 2016 further enhanced Xi Jinping's authority when it designated him as the 'core' of the leadership. Mentioning that Xi Jinping today holds more formal posts than any other leader in the CCP's history, he said that Xi Jinping had succeeded in bringing his own people into the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee. His position has been further consolidated and he will now push for achieving the China Dream and BRI by the target dates thereby putting India under greater pressure.

The title of Cmde R. S. Vasan's paper was 'Indian Ocean as a fulcrum for security & stability in the Indo-Pacific region'. He discussed the emergence of the Indian Ocean as an important

arena for power play in this century, given its historical precedent for connecting continents and facilitating movement of trade, culture and ideas. After consolidating its gains in the South China Sea, China is looking to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean. In this context, Cmde Vasan discussed the role of the MSR in connecting ports across continents, and in the investment of surplus funds in the destination countries. Cdre Vasan said that Hambantota has given the Chinese a strong foothold in the Indian Ocean, while Gwadar will aid China in overcoming its dependency on the Straits of Malacca. He mentioned AAGC as an alternative to MSR and a quadrilateral relation between US, Japan, India and Australia.

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