

Nalin Surie: Valedictory, ICS, 10 November 2019 at OPJGU Sonapat

At the outset, my gratitude to Prof. Raj Kumar, VC OPJGU for inviting me to deliver the valedictory address at this very important Conference. The University also deserves a special word of appreciation for recognising so early in its establishment the need to study international relations as a separate subject and in a holistic manner. This example needs to be replicated in universities and institutions all over India.

My congratulations to Ambassador Ashok Kantha, Prof. Sreemati Chakrabarti (S.C.) and all others who have put together this 12th All India Conference of China Studies. This is a flagship event of the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and deserves high praise. By organising these conferences, ICS is providing yeoman service in the effort to popularise and encourage the study of different facets of China in universities, colleges, think tanks and other institutions in India. It is an effort to underline the importance of the detailed study and understanding of China in India. What can be more important than knowing your biggest neighbour better; a neighbour that is arguably the second most powerful individual nation in the world today. It is also a country along with which India can define the future direction and destiny of Asia and the world.

But, I must rewind from this fast forward mode!

We have just heard a comprehensive report on the conference proceedings from Prof. S.C., Vice Chair of ICS. Your discussions have pivoted on the main theme of the conference on Law, Governance & Society in China. This in fact is the issue that has, understandably,

been uppermost in the minds of the top leadership of the CPC for some time now.

You have also covered, subjects ranging from a comparative study of India & China in global affairs to China's history, foreign policy, domestic politics, society and culture. There has also been an examination of the bilateral relations between our two countries.

The special panel on fieldwork experiences, which I attended earlier this morning, has given me much food for thought and introspection.

The broad span of issues covered is most commendable and I would like to congratulate all those who have presented papers and the discussants for their painstaking research and analysis. The outcome of your deliberations will be of great value not only to the academic community but also to think tanks and the government.

I am also hopeful that all of you, when you return to your institutions will encourage your friends and colleagues to study and understand China in greater depth and not be dependent on third country scholars and the media, both national and international, for information and views on China. India must have its distinct perspective and approach to China based on an objective and hard headed understanding of its own national, developmental and security interests and requirements. Your work and the outcome of such conferences plays an important role in helping formulate our approaches and policies towards China on different issues. The deeper your research and the more objective your analysis, the more difficult it will be for policy makers to ignore your advice.

What I am going to say next is redundant for this audience but I will say it regardless. The study of China in all its aspects be it historical, societal, cultural, economic, political, military and aspirational is still

inadequate in our country. So too learning the language. I would urge you all to encourage others to do so. Why? Because, one of our most critical foreign, security and developmental relationships is with China.

Let me for the sake of illustration make five points in the above context:

China is our largest neighbour with whom we have an unsettled boundary and other important outstanding problems including sharing of water resources. We also offer alternative ideological models of political governance.

We are the two most populous countries in the world, both on the rise and with the ability to cooperatively reshape, with other partners, the international political, economic and geo-strategic order and make it genuinely multilateral, equitable and multipolar.

#China is already the second largest economy and trading power in the world with a military capability that can either be a force for prosperity or fractious domination

#In spite of their enviable progress, China & India remain developing countries with enormous developmental requirements and problems that are both similar in nature and scale. No other country in the world compares. Our experiences are relevant for each other.

&# Our two countries can cooperate or compete; help reorder the international order inherited since World War 2 and make it more equitable or get involved in cutting each other to size and again becoming pawns in the games of others. The direction we both choose should be one where cooperation takes the lead. Frictions though will not go away and will need to be managed by building trust, enhancing dialogue and developing the relationship not just

top down but also bottom up. The latter is a criticality scholars and analysts like you can help build.

The list can go on. The question really is whether China is actually willing to partner India. Recent events suggest a mixed picture. How do for instance the Mahabalipuram Informal Summit and Chinese reaction to Article 370 gel? The search for answers can take us in different directions but there is a clear indication of China's future world view in the State Council White Paper(W.P.) of 29/09/2019 which I am sure you have all read. It articulates the vision of "China and the World in the New Era". It projects a very confident China but also identifies challenges and concerns, both domestic and external.

The W.P. and the Communique issued after the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee of the 19th Party Congress held in late October this year provide the means to undertake an assessment of China's problems, strengths, aspirations, concerns, fears and abilities both current and intended/projected. That W.P. also raises many questions and doubts about Chinese sincerity in the principles they espouse. ICS will no doubt be undertaking a detailed assessment of the W.P. and subsequent developments. Views of participants in this conference on this will no doubt be useful.

It is a happy omen that the next, 13th, ICS All India Conference of China Studies will be held at the China Study Centre of IIT, Madras. I have had the privilege of having had some interaction with that Centre, its faculty and students. I had also addressed the students of IIT, Madras on 28/01/2016 in a lecture organised by their Extra Mural Lectures Team. The decision of IIT, Madras to have a separate China Study Centre demonstrates far sight and vision and its faculty deserve a special word of praise. China's advances in S&T and technology development are well established. AI, IOT, Quantum

Computing, Robotics etc are at the heart of China's Made in China 2025 plans. Perhaps the focus at the 13th Conference could be on S&T developments in China.

You have all had a long, productive and thought provoking Conference and I do not wish to stand any further between you and a well earned Sunday. It remains for me to once again thank the OPJGU, its VC and my friend and colleague Amb. Ashok Kantha Director ICS for honouring me by asking me to deliver this valedictory address. Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not also specifically thank my young friend and China scholar, Dr. Avinash Godbole, Asst. Prof. OPJGU and Co-Convenor of this important Conference. Avinash and I have worked together on China at the ICWA and I greatly respect and value his expertise on China.

Finally, my congratulations to all the participants and organisers of this 12th All India Conference of China Studies. Yours is a labour of commitment that deserves a special word of praise.

Thank You.

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