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CCSEAS Holds International Conference on “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route: Opportunities and Challenges”

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The ‘Belt and Road’ concept is rooted in history as there existed an overland Silk Route and a Maritime Silk Road (MSR) that connected China to countries across Asia, Africa and Europe through land and sea. The concept of ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ (SREB) and MSR was floated by Chinese President Xi Jinping at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan in September 2013 and during his visit to Indonesia in October 2013 respectively. Undoubtedly, the economic connectivity is the heart of the matter for which Chinese President Xi Jinping also announced the establishment of a Silk Road Fund with 40 billion US dollars to support infrastructure investments in countries involved; however, the notion is equally significant strategically as it will imply common security or security dilemmas at regional and trans-regional levels.

sync with China’s foreign policy goals or an antidote to the US foreign policy goals like ‘pivot to Asia’ or ‘Trans Pacific Partnership’ (TPP)? Or, is China challenging the US hegemony and rewriting the rules of geopolitical architecture?

In the background of such a debate, the Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi organized the first ever two day international conference on “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route: Opportunities and Challenges” on 27-28 March 2015 in Convention Hall of the University.



Inaugural Session of the Conference

The conference ran into seven academic sessions focusing on the ongoing discourse on the SREB and MSR and touched upon a whole range of issues including security, interconnectivity, economic integration, people to people exchanges and cross cultural synthesis, and tourism etc.

Over 25 papers were presented during the proceedings by academicians from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA), Goa University, Delhi University, Nalanda University, Manipal University, Madras Christian College, Peking University, Sichuan University, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), and Hainan Institute for World.



From left to right: Prof. Prasenjit Sen, Amb. Le Yucheng, Sh. Tarun Vijay, Prof. Girijesh Pant and Dr. H Adlakha

Should security analysts and skeptics see these initiatives as part of ‘strategic encirclement’ of India, and club it with China’s similar but smaller initiatives such as China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the prospective Trans-Himalayan Economic Zone of Cooperation with Nepal and Bhutan, and the BCIM Economic Corridor that connects India’s northeast to China’s southwest, Bangladesh and Myanmar? Is there a way out when the maritime ambitions of these two giants are soaring amidst overlapping interests in Asia-pacific? And also whether such initiatives are in

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Watch (HIWW). Besides many eminent academicians and diplomats chaired the sessions

Prof Prof. Prasenjit Sen, Rector JNU opened the seminar with a Welcome note followed by introductory remarks by the Chairperson, Prof. Hemant Adlakha and Prof. B. R. Deepak, the seminar convener. Inaugural session was chaired by Shri. Tarun Vijay, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), President, Parliamentary Group on India China Friendship. The keynote address was delivered by the Prof. Girijesh Pant, Former Dean SIS and VC Doon University. Special inaugural address was delivered by H. E. Ambassador Le Yucheng, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the P.R.C to the Republic of India.

CCSEAS Celebrates Spring Festival 2015

The Chinese Spring Festival organized by CCSEAS and supported by the embassy of the PRC was held successfully on March 4-5 2015. The function was attended by HE Ambassador Le Yucheng, Vice Chancellor JNU Prof. S.K Sopory, Rector Sudha Pai, Dean SLL&CS Prof. Vaishna Narang, Chairperson CCSEAS Prof. Hemant Adlakha, Cultural Counselor, Zhang Zhihong, Education secretary Ai Longfei and other officers and members of the PRC embassy in India. Manju Hara and Dr. Usha Chandran, Assistant professors at CCSEAS took initiative in organizing the students to put together a very colorful performance.

CCSEAS Spring Festival 2015 in images



Ambassador Le Yucheng delivering his speech (courtesy CRI)

The Centre planned two days activities; on 4th the students organized a quiz on China and a speech competition at undergraduate level; debate competition for MA students. A special lecture as is the convention of the centre was delivered by Mr. Zhang Zhuhong, Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of China in India.



(Images courtesy CRI)

Faculty Focus

CCSES panelists in “Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route: Opportunities and Challenges” conference

Four CCSEAS faculty – Prof. P Mukherji, Prof. S. Mitra, Prof. B R Deepak and Dr. H. Adlakha presented papers in the International Conference on Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Route, organized by Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, JNU in JNU Convention Centre on 26-27 March 2015. Title of the papers presented were, “The Northern and Southern Silk Routes in the Perspective of Imperial China’s Geopolitical Strategy and its Role as a Catalyst for Cultural Amalgamation”; “Religious Tourism in BCIM Countries: Prospects and Challenges”; “21st Century Maritime Silk Route (MSR): Historicity, Converging/Conflicting Interests and Responses”; and “China’s Xi Style *Yidaiyilu* diplomacy: Understanding Doubts and misgivings from within “respectively.

Articles in Journals/web

Deepak, B R “Belt and Road Action Plan: Choices for India” in www.indiawrites.com April 5, 2015 <http://www.indiawrites.org/diplomacy/belt-and-road-action-plan-choices-for-india/>

Deepak, B R “Next Phase of the US pivot to Asia: Responses from China. Chennai Centre for China Studies

C3S Paper No. 0087/ 2015, April 17, 2015 <http://www.c3sindia.org/economyandtrade/4975>

Student Focus

Monika Sharma of BA Hons. Final Year won First prize in the preliminary round of 2nd Bridge Competition

Monika Sharma of B.A. Hons Chinese Final Year won first prize in the preliminary round of 2nd Bridge Competition held on 10th May 2015 in VIT Vellore Year, thus qualifying for the finals rounds in China in coming months.



Monika Sharma receiving the prize

CCSEAS Library moved to SLL&CS New Building

With concerted efforts from CCSEAS students, especially Aragya and his team, the CCSEAS library from Room No. 35 old building was relocated to Library Hall of the SLL&CS New Building.



Shifting books in suitcases

CCSEAS China Perspective

Minister Counselor of Chinese Embassy in India, Mr. Yao Jing at CCSEAS

At the invitation of CCSEAS, Mr Yao Jing, Minister Counselor & DCM, Embassy of the P R China, New Delhi, delivered a lecture titled “China’s World View Under Xi Jinping” on 22nd of April, 2015.

Dispelling the Western and global misperception about Chinese political system, Mr Yao Jing argued that Chinese political system is legitimate as it traces its route back to ancient times (BC 200 when the first Chinese unified political system was set up during the Qin Dynasty), also because this is a system traditionally based on the concept of people first, which values meritocratic administrators. He substantiated his arguments by pointing out that when Xi Jinping became Chinese President in 2012, although he was not chosen through a nation-wide voting process, but was chosen because of his rich experience of governance accumulated over a period of time as he ascended from the grass-root level as a chairman of village committee up in the hierarchy to eventually rise to the highest level of governance in China.

He argued that the one-Party system in China, with Communist Party of China (CPC) at the helm of affairs, is a system which is the most suitable for the Chinese national conditions, a proof of which, he pointed out, could be found in the Chinese experience throughout the Chinese history. Historically, when China was governed by local governments, it could never become a strong unified country comparable to the present day China, which has a centralized government. Moreover, the CPC is improving intra-Party democracy. After President Xi came to the helm of affairs, he has primarily focused on three aspects: (i) intra-party healthy competition within CPC and anti-corruption drive; (ii) enhancement of the role of the CPPCC; (iii) improving coordination between various departments and controlling various interest groups.

Talking about the perceived lack of political reforms in China including sluggish pace of democratization, Mr. Yao Jing explained that it is difficult to understand Chinese model of political reforms from the Western prism of political science, as Chinese political reforms pursues a path specific to China, which is people’s dictatorship, different from what is termed as “dictatorship” in the West. The contribution made by such a political system towards the society and nation has far surpassed that of the so called “Western countries with advanced political system”. Since the reforms and opening up, during the last 3-4 decades, Chinese people have witnessed tremendous

improvement in their standard of living and the country has witnessed a rapid economic growth.

Mr. Yao Jing emphasized that political and administrative reforms/transformation has also taken place in China. After the new government took office, budget and supervision of government’s functioning, including that of the local government, which was earlier managed at the local level, has now been transferred to the central government. Earlier there existed a lack of coordination between different departments both at the local and central government and a conflict of interest between various department, which has been sorted out with establishment of various Leading Groups such as Leading Group on Comprehensive Reforms, etc. It has helped realize better coordination between various departments.

Talking about President Xi Jinping’s diplomacy, DCM underlined that the most striking feature of Xi Jinping’s diplomacy is self-confidence (i.e., confidence in Chinese path of development). As can be seen, President Xi Jinping’s diplomatic activities are more frequent as compared to that of his predecessors Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin. Another feature of Xi Jinping’s diplomacy is emphasis on strengthening relations with the neighboring countries. Finally, while Western countries have developed a global order and monetary system suitable for their interest, which may not be equally conducive for Chinese/developing worlds’ interest, we (China) are engaged in developing system/institutions which will be conducive to our own interest and solve our own problems. Such initiatives are Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and BRICS etc. He said, if the US tries to encircle and pressurize China in Asia Pacific, the South China Sea and East China Sea, through its ‘rebalancing strategy’, then China has to adopt the strategy of enhancing cooperation with the countries on the “outer periphery” (outside of Asia Pacific region), such as African countries and European countries, and the answer could be found in ‘Belt and Road’ initiative of President Xi.

He added that though people talk about assertiveness of Xi Jinping, such assertiveness however is not aimed at the neighbors, with whom China wants to forge win-win cooperation. Speaking about the strong chemistry between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi, he pointed out that the two leaders have strong personality in common. Talking about Modi’s decisiveness, he mentioned that while the two foreign ministries were working to finalize President Xi Jinping’s itinerary for his India visit, Modi decided a week before the actual visit that President Xi Jinping will visit Ahmadabad. He concluded by recollecting that in China’s Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs last year, although he was not required to talk about Modi, Xi

Jinping still talked a lot about his impression about Modi and his visit to India. (*Report of Dr. C Usha*)

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