



## Interaction with China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)

April 25 , 2019



The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) hosted a delegation from China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), Beijing. The delegation consisted of researchers from various institutes of CICIR. The following were the participants from CICIR:-

- Dr. Fu Mengzi, Vice President, CICIR
- Dr. Hu Shisheng, Director of Institute of South Asian Studies, CICIR
- Mr. Xu Xiaotian, Director of the Institute of Maritime Studies, CICIR
- Dr. Guo Chunmei, Senior Researcher of Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, CICIR
- Mr. Zhang Xinbo, Assistant Researcher of the Institute of Maritime

Studies, CICIR

- Mr. Wang Se Assistant Researcher of the Institute of South Asian Studies, CICIR.

Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, presided over the interaction. He started on by elucidating that it was vital for India and China to have good relations, and regular exchange of views is essential and regular visits should take place. The proceedings started with the Director introducing the visiting delegation to the ideas of Swami Vivekananda on which VIF is based.

On India – China cooperation, Dr. Gupta expressed his hope that there will be more cultural exchanges between the two countries. While strategic studies are making headway in both countries, cultural linkages too should be discussed in strategic studies. The floor was then opened for the visiting delegation to give their opinion and perspective on the relations between the two countries, leading to a Q&A session. The questions from the Chinese delegation were focused on India's economic growth and Indo-Pacific.



### **Economy**

The Director addressed the question on the Indian economy, citing various factors behind India's fast-paced economic growth for years to come. India's economy was on a growth path for the last five years recording GDP growth of above 7 per cent annually, this has helped in poverty reduction. The economy has undergone constant and radical since 1991. Successive governments have worked for an inclusive economic growth model which has benefitted all the states and regions of India. Reforms of the tax system in India is also another factor for accelerating India's economic growth. Earlier it was a collection of various taxes, now it is a generalised system of taxes, and these decisions are taken with consensus in the Goods and Service Taxes (GST) Council, which has stakeholders from all the States, Union Territories, and the Union Government.

### **Governance**

Next, it was elaborated that India has a welfare system providing subsidies to education, health, crop-insurance and a host of other products and services. The Government has used Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Direct Transfer Benefits which has helped in getting rid of middleman who used to breed corruption. The money is being spent on physical and social infrastructure leading to creation of social capital. An example of this would be the 'Ayushman Bharat' programme under which 500 million Indians have been given medical insurance, through public-private partnership (PPP).

### **Business Model**

Further, PPP's are an essential feature of India's political business model. The service sector is another driving force behind the Indian model. The size of India's ICT sector is 250 Billion USD. The present government is focused on getting more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which is why it has taken steps in the last five years to help improve ease of doing business propelling India's ranking from 100 to 77, a leap of 23 ranks along with consistently maintaining a high level of numbers in FDI. While the Chinese economy is slowing down, India is taking advantage of the new economic reforms and opportunities in digital economy and e-commerce to growing. Many Chinese companies' have engaged in mergers and acquisitions in India.

### **Indo-Pacific**

While addressing the question on Indo-Pacific it was explained that the concept was still evolving and is a recent phenomenon. Indians have been connected with the Pacific for centuries, and its cultural footprint in South East Asia is well documented and can be still seen in the cultures of the people there. Today, the Indian Ocean is important for energy supplies, shipping and flow of goods. China's new foreign policy initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), the Maritime Silk Road and the changes in other Asian countries with high growth rates is the proof of the fact that the time of the Indo-Pacific has arrived. How do India and China accommodate each other is an ever-evolving question. Prime Minister Modi's speech in the Shangri-La dialogue has made India's views very clear; others have their interpretation which might be overlapping.

Adding onto what the Director said, Lt. Gen Sawhney, Senior Fellow & Head of National Security and Strategic Studies, VIF, said that India has used the Indian Ocean to travel, trade, and connect with neighbours. He emphasised that Indian wanted inclusiveness and order in the region. Any change or challenge to that order will lead to problems in economic situation and security. Any new development or negative changes in our neighbourhood has a profound effect on India's sense of well-being as 70% of world's trade passes through the Indian Ocean on their respective interests and visions. It is important for India and China to have a dialogue, and any extraordinary measure or action must need a lot of thinking.

While addressing the issue of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), many of the statements from India indicate a preference for a rule-based order. This was mentioned at the Russia India China (RIC) trilateral meet. Quad should be seen as countries coming together and exchanging views; it is a forum where the countries come and share their concerns. Indo-Pacific and Quad should not be seen together as there is a lot more focus on ASEAN as far as the concept of Indo-Pacific is concerned. Quad is informal and should in no way be seen as a precursor for a military alliance between the members of the forum.

#### **Delegates' Views**

The visiting Chinese delegation was asked about China's apprehensions regarding Quad; the Chinese delegates expressed their belief that the Indo-Pacific strategy appears to be aimed at China. The Chinese would like to see a different security structure. What kind of structure is still being debated as the European Union (EU) structure cannot be followed here and as Asian values are inherently different from each other. The Chinese also believe that they are being kept out of the Western Pacific and think that there is too much expectation from ASEAN. They would like to have some kind of understanding with the United States of America (U.S.) in the Western Pacific, which seems improbable under the Trump Administration as its focus is more on enhancing military alliances against China.

#### **Conclusion**

The Director, VIF concluded the discussion by saying that India was not aligned, and is not in anyone's camp. India and China have a lot to lose if they go for open conflict. The 21st Century is Asia's century and the countries need to work towards creating enough room to accommodate each other.

#### **Event Date**

April 16, 2019

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