

Book Launch and Discussion:
India Versus China: Why They Are Not Friends
Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

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CSEP Research Foundation

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Shivshankar Menon – Distinguished Fellow, CSEP, and Former National Security Advisor.
(Chair)

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Tanvi Madan – Director, The India Project, and Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Jabin Jacob – Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar University

Antara Ghosal Singh – Research Associate, CSEP

Moderator:

Constantino Xavier – Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies at CSEP and Non-Resident Fellow, Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution.

For more details on the event:

<https://csep.org/xoHth6h>

The following is an edited and revised transcript from the event. It has been generated by human transcribers and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding video for the original version.

PROCEEDINGS

Constantino Xavier: Good evening to everyone in India and Asia. Good morning or afternoon to those joining us from other parts of the world. My name is Constantino Xavier, I'm a Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress, CSEP, in New Delhi. Together with ambassador Shivshankar Menon who's a Distinguished Fellow at CSEP. It's a great pleasure to host you all today for this book seminar on Professor Kanti Bajpai's new book; *India Versus China: Why They Are Not Friends*. This is published by juggernauts in India. Special thanks to Shivshankar who kindly gave us first dibs on having a proper public panel discussion on this fine book. I'll promise I won't take too much of your time, but I just wanted to quickly introduce a really wonderful set of speakers and welcome them from different parts of the world. First of all, guilty for bringing us here, Professor Kanti Bajpai with his fine book, he's the director of the Centre on Asia and Globalization, and the Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, at the National University of Singapore. Prior to this, professor Bajpai was also teaching at Oxford University and Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. Welcome, Kanti, you're joining us from Singapore.

Kanti Bajpai: Thank you, yes.

Constantino Xavier: Dr. Tanvi Madan, she's a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Program, and Director of The India Project at the Brookings Institution, in Washington DC. Tanvi is also the author of a wonderful recent book that I think will help us to understand this India-China relationship today; the fateful triangle, how China shaped U.S-India relations during the cold war. Tanvi, we actually have two copies of your book, but none here with me otherwise, I would show it off. But welcome, Tanvi, from DC.

Tanvi Madan: Thank you, Tino.

Constantino Xavier: Welcome, good to see you. Professor Jabin Jacob, he's an associate professor at the department of International Relations and Governance Studies at Shiv Nadar University and Adjunct Research Fellow at the National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi. Jabin, I believe you're joining us from Delhi or Noida. Welcome.

Jabin Jacob: Thank you, Tino, pleased to be here. I look forward to the discussion.

Constantino Xavier: Great. And our in-house China expert with Ambassador Menon, Antara Ghosal Singh. She's a Research Associate at CSEP. She's a graduate from Tsinghua University in Beijing, The School of Public Policy and Management. She was also a Chinese Language Fellow at the National Central University of Taiwan. Welcome Antara.

Antara Singh: Thank you, Tino, pleasure to be here.

Constantino Xavier: Great. And let me introduce our chair, delighted that Ambassador Menon honoured us with kicking off this discussion and leading it here today. Ambassador Menon is a Distinguished Fellow at CSEP as I mentioned before. He served as the National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of India between 2010 and 2014. Also, as Foreign Secretary of

India. In his career in India's Foreign Service, he headed India's missions to China, Pakistan, Israel, and Sri Lanka. And we just recently launched his fine book, that I suspect will also help us to understand the India-China relationship today, *India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past, Present*. Ambassador Menon, thank you so much for leading this session today. Over to you.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Tino, thank you very much. I'm really looking forward to this discussion and to chairing it, because I hope to learn a lot. I must begin by thanking Kanti for giving us a wonderful reason to meet and discuss India-China relations. I mean, this is an amazing book. From my point of view, it's very rare that you get a book which makes sense, is coherent, is academically rigorous, and yet, is also readable and accessible. And that is really, quite an achievement. I can't think of very many books like this. So, what I thought we try and do, is to first ask Kanti to tell us why he wrote the book, tell the audience a little bit about the book. And then, I'd turn to the three discussants to tell us what they think. I have a few questions of my own, which I'd like to ask since I enjoyed the book so much, and then, open it up to the audience. So, over to you, Kanti, to tell us about the book and why you wrote it.

Kanti Bajpai: Shankar, thanks very much. Thanks also to CSEP and its management and leadership. Nice to see old friends here, and several people on the panel of course, as well. Very kind of Tanvi to wake up early in the morning in Washington DC to join us. On the book, let me just begin by saying why I wrote it. I mean, I think to be very honest, Juggernaut Books were a juggernaut, and they kind of, pushed me into doing it. I think, Chiki realized that there was room for a book that appeal to a general audience, but combined, as Shankar said very kindly, an element of academic kind of rigor. And all I mean by rigor is, no great theory or anything like that, but just to work through things fairly systematically, and as clearly as possible, and lay out some assumptions and so forth. So, I think that was the objective. At a time, obviously, Juggernaut got hold of me about a year ago almost, now, right in the midst of, of course, the 2020 crisis, in Eastern Dadar.

And so, I think it came from that; a general feeling that an accessible, and relatively short book was needed. And, you know, events seem to precipitate the urgency of doing it. So, this book was written actually, in three months, and finished in November of last year. And then production delayed it somewhat, but that's normal. The book really has four major parts, which I organized in four Ps, Perceptions, Perimeters, Partnerships, and Power. And so, I'll just say a couple of words about each of those P's, to give you a sense of what the book does. The first P, and I put it right at the front of the book, because I thought it was so important, is the issue of mutual perceptions between India and China. And the broad thesis in that chapter is that, starting from a position of mutual respect, and particularly Chinese respect for India via the Buddhist relationship, it moved gradually to a position of growing disdain, particularly on the Chinese side by about the 19th century. And on the Indian side, as well, of course, there's been a certain amount of racism and disdain as well. And so, that's the broad thesis there.

I mean, it's a huge, big wash, as it were over culture and history, from the arrival of sort of, Buddhism in China, right through to the present time. So, at the end of the chapter, I also show some data. By the way, this is a completely synthetic book. So, it just draws on a very good work that's already out there. I make no pretence at gathering new data or new research. But it ends up this chapter by showing that, right up to the present, I mean, the sense of disdain

on both sides, or cultural discomfort or looking down one's noses at each other. I mean, that's continued and is probably particularly marked on the Chinese side, I think, at the elite level, most of all. The second P, is Perimeter. So, this is really, of course, the border issue. So, there's no getting away from that as being a major reason why the two countries are in kind of, cycles of conflict. And there also includes Tibet, because it's very hard to talk about, it seemed to me, the border issue, without discussing Tibet. And that's very true on the Chinese side, it's also true, I think, on the Indian side as a result.

And so, what I thought was interesting as I looked at the perimeter issue from 1949, to the present is, you can see, kind of, two cycles that moved from some attempted cooperation in the 40s and 50s, particularly, border discussions intermittently carried out in various ways to, of course, then, peaking in the war of 1962, you come to conflict. And likewise, thereafter, well, very soon after the war ended, attempts to reach out from Delhi to Beijing, particularly, to start another process of cooperation, that really in a sense, extends all the way up to, let's say, peaking in the Ladakh conflict of last year. So, you get to very long cycles of from cooperation to conflict. And in that, of course, the status of Tibet is a very big story, I think, very much so until the 1962 war, but not absent thereafter. And we'll probably talk about that a bit more, and I think there's already a question on the Dalai Lama and Tibet in the chat function. And the third P, is Partnership.

So, it did seem to me that, which is I think, fairly natural that you would have to set India-China relations in a larger context of world politics. And so, the Partnerships chapter is about how India and China really have never been on the same side strategically; they've never been strategic partners. But here too, I saw two cycles of movement from a kind of, one might say, a convergence, a certain degree of strategic convergence, which was almost like a diplomatic Entente, to rivalry, and then, to a Cold War rivalry. And so, this happens from '49, to the end of the Cold War. And from the end of the Cold War, you get, again, a second cycle of an Entente with the Americans being rampant in the world. China and India, somewhat uneasy with the dominance of the Americans. And then it moves gradually, particularly by about, well, after the nuclear test of 1998, 1999, and then, into the nuclear talks between India and the US, you get a distancing of India and China again, as India gets closer to the United States. And it's, I would say today, that we're back into a kind of, almost Cold War rivalry as the United States-China rivalry really becomes more severe and with the Ladakh problem, India has shifted much closer to the United States, perhaps closer than ever before since 1949.

And so, I think there's an implication of the fact that they've never been on the same side, which is that, there isn't a kind of social capital or diplomatic capital to draw on, where they were on the same side, and they consulted and worked with each other at the highest levels, in the civilian authority, in military authorities, amongst the highest-level politicians. They don't have that to draw on, it seems to me, to get over periods of conflict and disagreement. And the last P, and then I'll just stop there is, of course, an estimation of the power balance between them. And by that, I mean comprehensive national power, military power, economic power, and soft power. And there, what we see is a much more linear story of India and China being more or less, on equal terms up to about, I would say, even the late 60s, early 70s, or even some people say the early 80s. And then, you get a real opening up of the gap,

particularly, economically. And I think we're all familiar with the fact that China's GDP today is probably about five times India's size, per capita income is about four times India's. And what's worrying, I think there, is that, while there have been periods where India has outpaced growth, very few years, in the 60, 70 years since China began to give us those figures.

The fact is that building on a much bigger base, if Chinese and Indian growth rates are about the same, then, the gap is actually going to grow. But one of the interesting points in that chapter is that, notwithstanding Chinese military superiority and various weapon systems, in fact, India, if it plays its military cards right, can hold the Chinese and partly geography. And partly, if you're nimble footed in your strategy, I think, India is still in a position, both in the maritime domain, but also in the mountains to hold the Chinese. One aspect of this chapter that has drawn quite a lot of attention has been my contention that China outpaces India in soft power, which, I think a lot of people have felt that India had the soft power gain over the Chinese, but looking at some data from the Lowy Institute in Australia, and you know, just kind of my own travels to China or talking to people in other regions of other societies, you get a sense, really, that even on the soft power, notwithstanding India's democracy and kind of, open society, it's really China that scores even there by some factors. I mean, it's very hard to estimate these things, but I think the book argues that case and I'm prepared to be shown that that's wrong.

But I think that chapter does show that if you add up the three, it doesn't look good for India. The gap is very big and probably growing. And so, these are four reasons why India and China really aren't friends. And you could say a social scientists say, "Oh, that's overdetermination". Any one of these might explain why they're not friends. When you have all four of them, I mean, it seems to me that quite difficult to bridge the gap between the two countries in terms of diplomacy and in terms of their feelings about each other. So, let me just stop there.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Kanti, thank you very much for that. I think you're being very modest when you say it's a synthetic book, because if nothing else, you've given us a conceptual frame to actually think about India-China relations; in the past, the present. And I was going to ask you later, what of the future? Because it does sound quite pessimistic. It's one thing to say why they are not friends, but will they never be friends? Because these are pretty structural, all four P's. And it's difficult to see them changing, at least, in the foreseeable future. But I'll maybe, bother you with that after we've heard what the others have to say. I'll turn now to Tanvi Madan. Tanvi, the floor is yours.

Tanvi Madan: Thank you, Ambassador Menon. And also, thank you to Rakesh Mohan, Vicra Mehta, Tino Xavier, and all the team at CSEP, it's always wonderful to participate in a CSEP event. Congratulations also to Professor Bajpai for this book. There's a reason I woke up very early to be at this event. What I thought I'd do is kind of, draw some of the crucial points that I thought that struck me from the book, and then pose some questions and perhaps, some complications towards the end. I think, you know, in some ways, books are very much a product of their times. And 15 to 18 years ago, you saw a slew of books with kind of, a sense of optimism about the China-India relationship with canticles, kind of, the *Chindia*, *Chindia* labeling, in particularly the mid-2000s. There were two aspects to this; one, was kind of, these comparisons of China and India. And you often saw this on the covers of the economists with

two tigers, for example. And or you saw it in the kind of, Asia for Asian sort of China-India corps, starting to cooperate including in multilateral organizations, etc. And you saw this kind of sense of optimism.

Today, as all of you know, we're nowhere near that sense of optimism, in fact, quite far away from it. And Kanti's book is really reflective of that sense of a China-India relationship where differences are, at best, as the book suggests, going to be managed rather than resolved or even set aside as they have been, as the theory of the case was that they could be for a number of years there. The book is really a timely, useful and accessible assessment, which, among other things, points out of how much of a blip China in *Chindia* phases have really been in the relationship and half of much of their history since 1947 and 1949, respectively. The two countries could have been, even if not at opposite ends, but had a series of divergences. And I think this is a particularly useful reminder for many outside India who think of Delhi's view of "China's a challenge" as a fairly recent phenomenon.

In fact, some even just trace it back to **Doklam**. And I think, as Kanti outlines in his book, his book doesn't get into the kind of, nitty gritty of the developments in the relationship of each one of the, kind of, dynamics the bilateral, regional and global differences that the two countries have, or where they have kind of the nitty gritty of cooperation. But it does clearly delineate kind of, this conceptual framing, as Ambassador Menon says of the four key-drivers of conflict. And I think it also does a good job of showing how intertwined they are, how they interact with each other, in some ways, how cumulative they can be, which it does pose a challenge. Let me say a few things about kind of, each of the chapters which struck me and I think that it is worth spending some time. The chapter on Perceptions provides a good glimpse of, kind of, in some ways, the two diametrically opposite views that each in each side, the public's have of each other. And it's kind of, you could say this broadly ranges between dislike and disdain to some amount of admiration, kind of, as all civilizations for example, or in India's case of seeing China achieve phenomenal economic growth.

Although Kanti does point out that it is the negative views that do tend to prevail overall. I think the chapter also reminded me of something Susan Shock wrote about, which is The Asymmetry of Perceptions. The China just looms larger in the Indian mindset than India does for China. And I think in some ways, this is kind of, akin to but opposite of the India-Pakistan dynamic. The second driver that Kanti outlines is the perimeter, which outlines the boundary dispute, the approach to it that both countries have taken militarily. But also, importantly Tibet, which I think Kanti very importantly, points out is intimately connected to the boundary dispute for both sides, but particularly for Beijing. And I think the chapter helps answer a question that you often hear, particularly outside the two countries, and you've heard this over the last year and a half, is, "Why do India and China care so much about these border areas?", "Why are they fighting over this barren land in the middle of nowhere at these great heights in cold temperature?" I think the other chapter that I found quite striking was the chapter on Partnerships, which I think makes two or three crucial and important points. One is that the China-India bilateral didn't exist and doesn't exist independently, but was shaped by the global environment and particularly, the two countries relationships with but also there

with Moscow and Washington, but particularly kind of US-Russia, US-Soviet relations as well, which as Kanti says, has had a conditioning effect even on China-India relationship.

The second, I think, important point that the chapter makes is that contrary to China and India's own triumphalist narratives, they didn't deal with their challenges external or internal via self-reliance, but actively pursued and use partnerships, and what I like to call, alignments, with these, kind of, major powers. And I think the third important point the chapter makes is that, in India's case, its alignments were driven from the beginning, and there have been multiple, as Kanti points out, by need to balance Chinese power. I think, finally, the chapter on power asymmetry is chock full of information. But I think it also makes a good point about taking a nuanced view of numbers. With Kanti offering a portion about either side assuming an advantage, automatic advantage from certain factoids. So, for instance, that the broader power gap, military power gap, does not mean that China has an advantage on the border, or on the opposite side, assuming the fact that the PLA hasn't fought a war since 1979 would automatically translate into military ineffectiveness.

Let me now just note a few questions with regards to, at least, three of these four chapters. Partly because we know a lot more today than we did even 10 years ago about some of these drivers, in addition to the long list of books you'll find in the bibliography, I'd also suggest kind of, supplementing this book with publications by **Ananth Krishnan, Sergey Radchenko, Zorawar Daulet Singh, Oriana Mastro, Swapna Nayudu, Lorenz Luthi, [Arne Westad, 22:43]** **has written books** on China. China's decision making for example, about the war, Harry Harding and Francine Frankel's excellent edited volume on the US-China-Indian track, trying not to mention Jabin and Antara's work as well. Based on a lot of these kind of contemporary readings that we have, I'd say on the perceptions, I think one of the things is, the chapter captures popular and elite perceptions outside government, but it doesn't really cover policymakers' perceptions. And even though these aren't entirely disconnected, it's often the case that these are not the same. And I think that's been true in the past, it's definitely true today, the conversation in government is not necessarily the same one that is reflected by the conversation outside.

I think the second thing that is an interesting question is, Kanti notes the lack of awareness that China and India often have of each other causes problems. But would more awareness really result in more positive views? As he raises in other parts of the book, as connectivity and communications have improved between the two sides, the relationship has actually become more strained. And I think this is important, because it suggests, as you know, many recommend improving knowledge of China, one should be realistic about what that can achieve, and what the purpose is. It's not that it will resolve issues or the problems will disappear, but that it will give people a better understanding of a country that is India's main rival, and that is important in of itself. Let me just say that on the power asymmetry, and we can have a longer discussion about the hard power, but I do want to mention the soft power debate that Kanti's book has really kind of, struck up. And as Kanti argues, the gap between China and India is quite large, and he argues it's in favour of China.

I think the argument is quite dependent on looking at the input side; that is, what China is putting in, is trying to do. But if you look at the surveys and polls that focus on outputs, how

many countries actually feel about China, you don't get the same view. The ICS Poll, the Institute of Southeast-Asian Studies Poll, more Southeast Asians have confidence in India than China. Now, you can say, okay, that's a small sample or it's a small difference. But if you look at who has no confidence in China versus India, that's even larger. And a number of in that poll show that these participants in the service, thinking China has the greatest political and economic influence, yes. But large majorities have major concerns about the fact. A majority have difficulties with the fact that China has so much influence. And you see similar sentiments, reflected in polls of Europeans, South Koreans, Japanese, Australians, that while China might be making these more efforts, it's not necessarily delivering in terms of results and stock perceptions of both China and Xi Jinping have actually hardened over time.

I think the book also outlines soft powers; the ability to influence countries to behave in a certain manner. But China's not often doing this to the power attraction, but through the use of hard power, whether for persuasion or coercion. I would make two additional points, one, on partnerships and one, I'll end with a question and kind of, about a fifth P and whether Kanti should have added that separately. In terms of partnership, I think one question I have is, well, I understand Kanti looking at the US and the Soviet Union or Russia, I actually think it's quite important, because this is not a quadrangle or a quadrilateral, it's really a Pentagon, which is Pakistan. And China-Pakistan relations since the 60s and that deepening, has really affected India's perceptions of China, as well as kind of, the power asymmetries and a whole lot of other things and adding to those divergences, I think that India has. Second, I think, in terms of partnerships, that historic dynamics; what we know, thanks to the archives, complicates the more traditional timeline of assessment the book offers.

The book correctly notes, for example, the interconnection between how India's and China's relationships with the US shape their relationship. I'd add to that, how much India's perception of the Soviet Union and Sino-Soviet dynamics and its India's over dependence on Moscow shaped its decision making, vis-à-vis, Beijing and Washington. You see this for instance, in terms of the 1980s, where Rajiv Gandhi's decision is partly effect to put a rapprochement with China is up partly affected by the fact, as Kanti outlines in the book, that Gorbachev had reached out for a rapprochement with China as well. Second, I think, the Indian Entente with China that Kanti talks about in the book. I think, Delhi's perspective is less targeted against the US in these Ententes as Kanti argues, more kind of issue-based alignment. And I mentioned this because we're talking about such issue-based alignment again, so this was not about against the US, but really on issues often related to sovereignty, for example.

Finally, I think there's a much more complex picture on historic picture of us relations with India and China. The book suggests that US-India cooperation with regard to China, was historically a brief period between 1959 and '62. We now know this was actually a longer period between 1956, '57 and right through about 1969, 1970. Strategic cooperation didn't fade away after 1962, it's in fact, after 1962, that US and India signed a defence agreement that essentially calls for mutual consultation in the event of a Chinese attack on India. It was US assistance during the 1965 War, when the US won China off against intervening in the India-Pakistan war. Intelligence cooperation between the two intelligence communities, not just operational cooperation, but also, U-2's taking off from India, the US helping India

establish the Aviation Research Centre, not to mention the special frontier ports that Kanti does talk about, along with a lot of economic aid, which was the explicit goal of not letting India fall to China. I'll end with a question about whether the book should have added that fifth P, and the one that I would put in broadly as, is Politics.

Why do I say this? Because I think of how intertwined the subject has become with kind of, decision-making and distinct from perception. Jabin might be able to talk about this better, it is his AOR, but the fact for example, that even decision making on something like a boundary dispute. Why would Beijing for instance, make what you could argue are tactical gains for a strategic loss in the case of some of the decision-making, vis-à-vis, the 2020 boundary crisis? Can we really explain that without thinking about where boundary issues and sovereignty issues feed into the Chinese leadership's idea of what they sell as where they gain the legitimacy with their public, their sense of regime and security, and how that plays into their decision making on foreign policymaking? You could argue a similar thing on the Indian side, but I think it's much more stock on the Chinese side, vis-à-vis, all the assertiveness that we've seen over the last couple of years. And sorry for taking a little more time, but the book really did, I think, elicit this kind of really deep reading that I at least, went through. I have seven pages of notes.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Tanvi, thank you very much. As you can see, Kanti, the book has not just served the general purpose that you mentioned. And thank you also Tanvi especially for mentioning internal politics, because I too, I feel very strongly that pivotal moments in the India-China relationship, sort of, '59, '62, '86, '89 and again, 2017, 2020. It's the internal politics of both China and India, which have been a major driver of where we, and some of the choices otherwise are inexplicably, quite frankly. But thank you for pointing to that. Kanti, I'll come back to you at the end after the discussants. The floor is yours now, Jabin.

Jabin Jacob: Thank you, Ambassador Menon. Let me also begin by thanking also, CSEP for this invitation, and congratulating Professor Bajpai for what I think is a magisterial synthesis. It's timed perfectly and its value will last a very long time. It's a volume that is both accessible and shown of jargon. And for that, itself, I think much, much thanks is due. And it's already quite the hit going by the number of times it's been revealed in the Indian press, makes all our jobs much harder in terms of coming up with something new to say, or even by way of criticism. But here goes anyway. I'm actually most fascinated by the chapter on Perceptions, and because of our time limit, I'm going to try and stick to that and maybe relate other parts of the book to this particular section. You know, the fact of the matter is that, neither in India nor in China does what ordinary people think matter to the elites.

China concluded and broke agreements with India, irrespective of what its people thought about India, right? Irrespective of the positive or negative news the Chinese might have had about India. Indian negotiated and continues to pursue negotiations with the Chinese irrespective of what its own people say or think. So, as fascinating as this chapter, and as important as this chapter on perceptions is to our understanding, it's the deeper realities of the bilateral relationship that I'm equally fascinated by. It's just fascinating how adept the two governments are, at usually ignoring and sometimes, playing up – China more than India, public opinion and perceptions as a factor that affects policy in the relationship. You know,

and here, I like to think a little bit more about two expressions that Kanti used about racism and disdain that ordinary Chinese have.

Now, this might be true up to a point, but I think we need to, sort of, relook these expressions. I mean, certainly with respect to the wiggers, with respect to Africans, then maybe to an extent, with the Tibetans as well, we have what we call Classical Racism from the Chinese. But with respect to Indians and India, I mean, yes, there is behaviour that we might consider offensive. And you know, as a student in Taiwan, which also has a cynic culture, I faced a lot of this. But there's this is beautiful example of the crusader traveling through China and you know, people would never guess that he was Indian. And same thing happened to me several times. It was and endlessly entertaining exercise to get people to guess where you're from. When all your life, you've grown up thinking, as plain as plain can be, that you are Indian. But there is, I think, a blank space, in general perception of India, among ordinary Chinese.

Now, this is being increasingly fuelled with, I think, negative and deliberative opinion about Indians. And I would say this, perhaps happens a little more since about 2015. But more than this, I think it's the perceptions of the elites that really matter. And I would say more than racism or disdain, these confrontations, these perceptions are actually political. Precisely, the result of a comprehension among Chinese elites, that India is a pure civilization currently in decline, and a pure political power, potentially a competitor. So, what you can describe as racism is a state-sponsor stuff – like that video we saw during the rounds during Dhokla, right? But I think we have to be very careful about giving the Chinese really too much of a pass, you know, by assuming that this is just ignorance or racism. I think you call this, Cognitive Dissonance later in the book.

What I would say is that Chinese elite engage in something one might call strategic racism, or a more strategic disdain or strategic in any case. You can blame it on the Chinese being racist, and uninformed or whatever, rather than on the reality, which is that, there's a cold, hard, structural calculation that the Chinese take when dealing with India. For example, you say that the Chinese have symbolically denied India recognition as a great power by not talking about India's permanent membership on the UN Security Council. You give this example from this nuclear workshop that you attended in Shanghai in 1998, where, the Chinese is simply a blank when India and China have spoken up in the same breath. But you know, we face this all the time at multiple BRI Conferences, and I wouldn't say the Chinese put-downs of India are entirely innocent. There has never been a time and especially not today, when Chinese scholars have not been alive to the political Zeitgeist, you know, they have not been conscious of the political imperative. They are not ignorant of realities. And India's distancing capabilities with China, the power asymmetry, the fourth P in your book, is not the only reality. China's inability to convert that gap into actual long-term results, as I think, we might have seen in Ladakh last year, is also equally a reality, which somehow the Chinese are unable to deal with.

And so, trying to over-interpret maybe some of these responses, is perhaps doing ourselves a disservice. To say that, for example, as you said, during the exam, you know, that or even in the latest instance, that it's a local commander's initiative that sets up a particular incident at the LSE. I mean, how is this even possible for army that functions as a political concept? And I think this is all related to a key point that you make later in the book, which is that neither

political leadership, at least since Nehru or Mao, have had the ability or the courage to handle nationalist domestic opinion. So, both countries, and especially in India, you prefer to make up for your shortcomings by interpreting the other's actions as mysterious, inscrutable in the basis possible manner, and anything but as rational, cold and calculating with self-interest at co. To take off from Kanti's point about the importance of internal politics, and Ambassador Menon's point about internal politics, I think, you know, the worldview section is particularly fascinating. And the juxtaposition in just a space of a few pages of traditional Indian and Chinese views is quite useful. But what I like to ask is, to question the contention that it is hard to imagine India as being a conqueror in relation to China, you know? I mean, the **BJP's notion of Akhand Bharat**, for example, is already conceptually there.

Tibet is a part of India's cultural space, not just for the BJP, but also for Nehru. And that is in itself, enough for the Chinese to be on edge. And I completely agree, actually, with the broad point about soft power. In fact, there was this comment made by Professor Surjit Mansingh many, many years ago about American perceptions of India and China. And she said that the Americans are so happy with whatever little they are able to achieve, because they don't expect much from China. But with India, because expectations are so high, the dominant perception is always disappointment at how little they have been able to achieve. And I think this speaks very much to the idea of soft power, or the use of soft power, or the difference in soft power between India and China.

Finally, I'd like to highlight just one shortcoming, and I think it's a rather big one, which is, that the works and views of scholars of China and India itself are almost completely missing from these pages. You know, the work of from the Institute of Chinese studies, IDSA, ICW, even JNU, you know? Practically, none of this is available. I think Chandra Krishna's current affiliation in India is ICS, and you mentioned Giri Deshingkar. But one has to acknowledge that Indian scholars have gotten China right, perhaps more often than the Americans have. I mean, the Americans wouldn't be in the sorry parts with China right now if they had gotten China right, right? So, it's probably not right to say, for example, that there is no notable academic and policy expertise on the other country in India. Also, not right, I think to say that there is very little information about Indian perceptions towards China in the 18th, or the 19th, or the early 20th centuries. You know, Tanvi gave us a list of modern writings, but, you know, I would like to give you a list of past writings from this period, or examining this period. I mean, Madhavi Thampi's work on Indian-China 1800 to 1949, or a work edited volume on India and China and colonial world, other excellent, lovely, co-authored volume with Shalini Saksena of Mumbai University on China, and the making of Bombay.

I mean, this is all fantastic work, just beautiful, extremely perceptive biography or biographical account of the Indian soldier that others think who was in the British employ against the boxers in China. Chin Main Terah Mas, Thirteen Months in China, this has just been translated by Professor Kamal Sheel, BHU. So, I mean, there is plenty of work, and perhaps as Tanvi suggested, maybe an admixture of these additional books can be added. Last point, I think, again, coming back to the internal point, I think at one point, you make the claim that China is today a republican power with a communist past, and I think that's assuredly not the case. The president of China is the least important of Xi Jinping's titles. China is today, in many ways,

much more Marxist, much more Stalinist than it has ever been. And I think understanding this fundamental reality will be crucial to understanding how we go about China polysemic. There's these internal dynamics, I think, Ambassador Menon also referred to it. And the books that by Amit Dasgupta and Lawrence that you refer to in your works, I think, gives you a good example of how the internal dynamics in China affected the 1962 conflict. So yeah, let me conclude by one final point, which is, I hope that Juggernaut, because it has an Hindi press, will also think of bringing out this book in Hindi because this book certainly deserves to be read by a much wider audience than just English-speaking audiences in India. Thank you so much.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Jabin, thank you for that really detailed response to the book. I leave it to continue to answer these points that you've made. But since you did mention a Hindi edition, and we're talking to Juggernaut, I would say please put an index in future editions. Yeah, I know, it tempts people into the daily read, which is to look for their own name and the index, but that's not the point. It's also useful to scholars. Antara, the floor is yours.

Antara Singh: Thank you, Ambassador Menon. My compliments to Professor Bajpai for his new book, which could not have come at a more appropriate time other than this, taking forward and adding new momentum to the ever so engaging India versus China debate. Personally, I enjoyed reading the book and learned so much from it. My co-panellists, Dr. Tanvi Madan and Professor Jabin Jacob have already done a wonderful job discussing and critiquing various important aspects of the book, leaving very little for me to add on. However, from my side, I would just like to make one small observation. I agree with Professor Bajpai's analysis that mutual perception plays a very important role in China-India relations, particularly Chinese's public sentiment towards India. I would not say that it is simply negative about India, I could rather argue that it is a bit polarized, you know? So, on one hand, as Professor argues that, India is often projected as an underdeveloped country that there is problems like persistent poverty, caste and ethnic conflicts, various roadblocks to economic development and political chaos under the name of democracy.

You can also see a more nationalistic analysis on India, which will project India not as a country, but as a geographical region, a British imperialist construct, whose disintegration and reshaping is communist China's historic mission. While on one hand there is so much of negativity towards India, on the other hand, there is also widespread insecurity within Chinese society over the issue of India's rise, you know? So, will India surpass China in the future? Can Indian economy overtake China's economy in the long run? Can India supplement China in the global supply chain? Will India lobby with other world powers to displace or isolate China at the global bodies? Is it going to be a race between the hare and the tortoise? These are some of the questions that figure constantly in Chinese discussions on India. In fact, some Chinese analysts would even argue that, though India's rise may not be as spectacular as China's, but still, it is the best among all other developing countries. So, they say that India's rise story is somewhat subdued under the shadow of China – a little underappreciated by the international community.

I mean, I also see some genuine efforts being made by some individuals, scholars, strategists in China to understand India more objectively. In this regard, I would like to refer to a recent

interview by Ambassador Yuan Nansheng, former Consul General in Mumbai, and now with the Chinese think tank CICIR. There, he brings attention to issues like how India, despite being economically inferior to China, and having what they call a capitalist system, manages to have almost free health care, free education, free entertainment, and a robust reservation system, and various other pro-poor or pro-marginalize social policies instead of indulging in a race for World Class cities or picture-perfect countryside, which has been the trend in China in the past several years. So, I think in China, there's a whole range of opinions and views on India, some, of course, are negative, some are positive, but the trend is certainly to have a more objective, more balanced understanding of India as China-India relation becomes more and more important, even in the Chinese strategic imagination. So, I'll stop at that. And once again, compliments to Professor Bajpai for this wonderful book.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Antara, thank you very much for that. Kanti, I turn to you, you know, when you write a book, at least in my experience, there's a moment when you get near the end or at the end, when you wonder who's ever going to read this book. And then suddenly, you discover the people have read it and ask you all these impossible questions. I think you've seen how carefully your book has been read. So, I leave it to you to respond to what the discussants have said.

Kanti Bajpai: Okay, thank you very much. And thanks to all three for really perceptive probing comments, and they really got me thinking, jokingly, I was thinking to myself that maybe I need to already rewrite the book in some respects, and that's a scary talk as much for the readers expect from me. But I think there were a lot of good points, but probably, let me say one thing generally about the book. I mean, it had to be written very quickly, so, that was the Juggernaut mandate, and I didn't have much choice there. So, I think, I mean, I do take the point that there's a lot of scholarship that you won't see featured in the bibliography. Actually, my publisher didn't want a bibliography at all and as few notes as possible, but, you know, academics, we can't quite accept that sort of stricture. But on a more serious level, I mean, I think that's right, that there is an enormous amount of scholarship on partnerships, on perceptions. On the power, I think we've probably got quite a bit more literature and measures, and I tried to deal with some of the more prominent sets of facts and figures and so on.

So, yes, for sure, I mean, I think the book had to be very tight. It was supposed to be a 50,000-word book, it's about 75, 80,000. But even that was not quite what Juggernaut wanted, it's not quite the book they ever imagined, I think. So, I think the general point about better coverage of the literature, but it really wasn't feasible, I think, and not being quite a China specialist, I think I might have just drowned in all that scholarship and detail. And what I set out to do was write an imperfect book, but one that would, I mean, elicit the kinds of questions and even objections and really make, and then to some extent, just to provoke people to think. So, it's not a book I think that really wanted to be a definitive work. I mean, Tanvi's massive book is that kind of book. But this was more a provocation and a sort of a quick attempt to intervene, and at a time when there was a lot of interest in the issue.

So, let me just say that about the kind of lacuna in the book that in relation to a very fine work in India and outside of India as well. And I think I pick up on two or three points that some of

which cut across the points of view. I mean, I think everyone's made the point that the book seems to be a bit light on the issue of politics, particularly the domestic politics that seemed to affect all of these things. Well, politics, you know, Jabin says, affects even the issue of perceptions, because the perceptions don't just bubble up naturally from below somewhere, or through Chinese and Indian society, particularly in China. Our perceptions are moulded and used for political purposes. So, they're very strategic. I think Tanvi also raised the point about politics, internal politics, and how it's affected decisions. And bad Chinese politics has pushed it towards, you know, a kind of a more tact view of dealing with India. And as a result, the Chinese have lost the bigger strategic picture and possibility with India. And I think even Antara makes the point that, there are different views within China on India. And when one view prevails, either in decision-making, or even more publicly, there's something probably political going on there, that some schools of thought or views are squashed or subdued, and others are allowed to flourish, and do and affect policymaking.

So, I think I take that point, and that could have been the fifth P. But I think probably it's a P that runs through all the other P's. I do think that overall, domestic politics is important in both countries. And I mean, if you think about the issue of Tibet, obviously, right from the start. I mean, that's an enormous domestic political issue, which impacts on the border problem. But it is an enormous internal issue, and it continues to be. I mean, I think there's a question later in the chat function about Tibet, and the Dalai Lama. And I mean, clearly, Chinese worries about the integration of Tibet remains very, very important. And I think my instinct is, I mean, I'm not enough of a specialist to say, but I think my instinct is that, a lot is driven by Tibet. Not everything, but a lot is driven by continuing to feel that India, along with other paths could play a role that would be very uncomfortable, particularly as we go into this transition, as it were, you know, with the Dalai Lama getting older, I hope he lives a long time, but time will come. And I think that moment will have to be handled very carefully in both countries. But it does raise the issue of how China has seemingly, perhaps, not got its politics right, with respect to Tibet, therefore, the relationship with India is always a difficult one.

I think the other point about the politics playing into the relationship is that, I mean, there is a kind of, and I agree with that, and I think here and there in the book, but perhaps not underlined as much as the three of you have made the point on. That, there is a kind of, unease in China about India. I think all of you pretty much said that. There is a sneaking kind of, feeling that India maybe this Luan nation, chaotic and all of that, but worried to get its act together, it would be a real competitor. I mean, we know that in population terms for instance, that India may open up a gap of 300 to 400 million people on China in 20, 30 years from now. And a story I tell at the beginning of the book about this conference I was in, where some poor Indian students said something to the effect that, "Well, India will pass China in terms of population". And there's a Chinese lady, a very nice woman, but she was shocked and immediately interrupted to say that that was impossible; that China could not be behind India on anything.

And in that same conference, I have a story about a very nice Chinese professor, very sober measured man sitting next to me, and when there was a comparison of nuclear weapons with, you know, the Chinese being compared to the French or the British, and then somebody had

the temerity to mention the Indian Nuclear Weapons Program. And this professor was very, I mean, genuinely, sincerely, he couldn't fathom how India could be talked about in the same breath as China on nuclear issue. So, I repeat these stories only to show that I need to underline what you've said, which is, there is a politics here, there's a kind of, cultural politics of unease that India might actually catch up Sunday. While at the same time, there's this kind of disdain, "Oh, India is so chaotic. It never will". But I think there's this fear that at a moment, it might get its act together, and then, the issue will be joined between these two great civilizations. So, I take the point of that, yeah, that probably isn't cantered enough or made enough of it in the book. I agree with that point. I think on the larger issue that can be raised, I think about the American partnerships, that I kind of, slough it off a bit and said there was only two, three years of from '59 to '62 that they were partners.

But, of course, I mean, I think you're absolutely right that from quite early, there was the idea that India would be a kind of, balancer to China, and the United States had to invest in it. And I just replay of course, you know, the kinds of stuff that Kennedy and others were saying about, we have to make sure that India wins the competition with China. And actually, some of the stuff that Tanvi just pointed out, I didn't know that well. So, thank you for that on many lines of partnership that continued. I mean, of course, the biggest element of that was, you know, the kind of development aid I suppose that the United States through multilateral or bilateral means gave to India, and there was always a strategic purpose there. So, I think the book probably does underplay that. But again, you know, questions of space and focus, probably made me underplay that part of it. I think we know much more about the depth and scope of the partnership now than we did then. And I think, surely your book, which I'm sorry, I just didn't get enough of a chance to read at that time, it was on my list, but Juggernaut had me into meeting deadlines, but I'm sure there's a fabulous story that you tell about India-US cooperation in those times much more deeply. I'll just stop there. So, there must be other questions, and I'll come back on other things.

Shivshankar Menon: Thanks a lot. I think before we, since we're running out of time, maybe I'll start channelling audience questions. This one is for, actually or maybe this should be answered by Tanvi. "How much is the American influence responsible for the current India-China, as you call it, rivalry". The flip side of what Kanti was just saying actually.

Kanti Bajpai: I'm happy to cede this too Tanvi.

Tanvi Madan: Sure. You know, I think to one extent, and Kanti makes this point about kind of, as I said about conditioning effect, but and I might be paraphrasing this, but it's a good line in Kanti's Partnership chapter which is these alignments that China and India have had are both cause and effect. But I will say, and you will often see this particularly a point that Beijing tries to say that, "Look, this is all..." and I've brought these in a number of China-India discussions when Americans aren't in the room, "Oh, you know, we don't really have any problems. It's either the US causing them or if you just stop your relationship with the US, it'll all be fine". But if you think about it, and I think the book makes this point quite well, which is that the fundamental issues aren't about the US and Soviet Union. At least for India, these are about differences with China. The boundary dispute wasn't caused by the US, it wasn't even kind of, in the picture.

And now, if you look at it, and again, Kanti makes this point in the book. You can solve the boundary dispute tomorrow, the competition aren't going away, because you have the series of bilateral differences; whether it's the sharing of the Brahmaputra waters, whether it is economic differences and frictions, technology differences, and the use of economic influence and other kinds of influence, or its regional difference, not just the China-Pakistan relationship, but China's the overlapping periphery problem with China's increasing influence in India's neighbourhood. And I think there's fundamental broader point, which you could say, has little more to do with kind of, China's view of the US. But this idea of China keeping India, hindering at best and harming at worst, India's global ambitions and interests, through both the partnership with Pakistan, but also with its behaviour in kind of, international organizations. And I think this does bring the point that, yes, there are, and you could argue that this might be the case in China's decision-making last year; we just don't know enough about the reasoning or I do, which is that China is seeing India through a competition with US prism, and that is shaping its decisions. Is the US actively kind of, causing these problems? I think it suits the US that India and China have divergences, but it's a Goldilocks view, it is not in US interest for India and China to go to war for various reasons, including it will call upon them to make certain choices.

Now, they made a choice last year, but I do think these are problems that are about China and India. And yes, they are these conditioning effects. And I think within the space of competition, I will say it just adds one point about where there's a US dimension, but again, it's about China-India. It's this point about ideology. For all the kind of, dismissiveness of India and disdain and disorganized chaotic country, China clearly sees India as a challenge. Otherwise, why spend so much time on trying to stop it from going towards the US or challenging the fact. Now, you could argue that one aspect of this as Ambassador Menon and Shyam Saran, and Vijay Gokhale pointed out that if India succeeds as a democracy, that fundamentally is an ideological challenge to China, right? Or you can submit the module political point, including in relation to the quad. But there's also the point of, is it such a disorganized, chaotic country, how has it managed to hold China at the border and inflict casualties? How do you sell that to a public after you've told them that this is a country that really doesn't matter and is not that Chinese? So, I think these are fundamental problems that, yes, are very much conditioned by these partnerships. But they are about China and India, and I think Beijing actually makes a mistake sometimes by seeing it through a US prism, either deliberately, or maybe they fundamentally believe that, but I think they're mistaking in that place.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Tanvi. Thank you very much. Which leads us logically to the next question, which I think is primarily for Kanti, but for anybody else who would like to chip in as well. "Will the four P's preclude any future cooperation or an amelioration of the relationship between India and China? And if they do manage that, what are the potential areas of cooperation between them?" I think the book is fairly pessimistic about it, but Kanti, the floor is yours.

Kanti Bajpai: Yeah, I think the book is pessimistic. I mean, for a very long time, when I did write on India-China issues, I was more optimistic. I mean, just a few years ago, I edited a book where I talked about a kind of, Cold Peace, which is the title of a nice book as well. But I think,

writing this book, I became more pessimistic. And it just seems, as someone said on the panel, very structure of the problem and that carries over into the strategic partnerships issue. India being weaker, needs a balancer against China and the Chinese play a different game; they don't really need to balance against India, they don't need a partner to balance against Indian power. And so, it's a funny relationship. By saying that, I don't mean that it's India that's driving the problem in the quadrilateral of powers, because of its constant search for alignment. But it does mean that it's a very difficult set of relationships. And at this juncture, I'm happy to hand over to the rest of the panellists.

I mean, you have a situation where the Chinese and the Americans are fighting a cold war, and you know, the Russians have more or less thrown in their lot with the Chinese, though not altogether. And India has been shoved increasingly probably further than they wanted to go towards the Americans. It's very hard to see how that would change in the near future, given the disparities of bar between India and China, and these four issues that divide them. The only other thing to say is that, yeah, there is cooperation, I know, in regional and multilateral settings on things like, from time to time, climate change, or on issues of sovereignty that Tanvi pointed out, where both countries take a hard view of sovereignty, and are allergic to things like RTP, and humanitarian intervention and so on. On I think the fear of protectionism in certain countries in the Western world is a common worry, and how the West sometimes, uses institutions for its own good and is not truly multilateral. But those are areas where they converge. But I don't think, you know, they don't spill over into the bilateral positively. And that's the problem, I think, you know? And so, I see the quad being quite difficult to change and to see cooperation emerging between India and China, partly as a result of the quad itself.

Shivshankar Menon: Anyone else? Yes, Jabin.

Jabin Jacob: Yeah. Just quickly, I mean, I think I agree with the pessimistic outlook, but I also want to sort of, underline that, you know, even the past 70 years, both China and India have seen such massive upheavals which have led to rapid policy turnarounds. And I think, you know, just to take the case of India-China relations, I mean, if you look at 1988, Rajiv Gandhi was there, it came out of nowhere, in a manner of speaking, I mean, you establish one beachhead, then, you have the 2005 – I'm not saying that there wasn't preparation for it, but I'm saying that for the rest of the world looking, it came out of literally, nowhere. Then also in 2005, agreement on political parameters and guiding principles. I mean, I think from the moment we signed it, we knew that this wasn't really going to be followed, but it is like the Liverpoolians pinning Gulliver down. I mean, these things matter. And I think perhaps it looks sort of difficult right now, but there will be opportunity, then, frankly, the interesting part is that it is India that has the capacity to make use of those opportunities when they come. For all our weakness, for all the gap in capacities of power, it is India as a weaker power, perhaps, that we'll be able to do it. I mean, fundamentally, the problem is, I think, to take on from what Tanvi was saying, the Chinese are in a very weird situation where they cannot be seen as showing India agency. It has to always be a China-US conflict, because otherwise, their entire narrative at home would collapse. And that makes it interesting and full of possibilities for us. Of course, the Americans, possibilities for Americans as well. So yeah, I mean, I'd say interesting times, not in the Chinese sense, of course.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you. I can't resist saying that if the Chinese had such disdain for India, they wouldn't need to put so much effort into their relationship with Pakistan, transferring nuclear weapons, doing all kinds of things. They wouldn't have to do what they did in 2020 in Ladakh. I mean, there's a whole, actually. So, it seems to me, the more they try and convey this disdain, the more seriously they actually take us. So, I watched their actions, not what they say, for a real insight into how policymakers are seeing it. I think perceptions are very important. But in the Chinese case, it's the perceptions of a very small circle of people. That the problem of course with the future is that frankly, we all extrapolate from what we have, and we know the future is never a direct straight line extrapolation. I mean, our whole experience shows us how Shema once said, "History proceeds in a story manner", meaning in a spiral. But there are discontinuities and change. I have a question from Bester Mehrotra saying, "Trust lies at the core of any friendship. While there's no trust between India and China, how can there be any friendship then? Chinese have violated every agreement and every understanding with them since 1950 to date, including on de-escalation in Ladakh recently. Who wants to take that on?"

Kanti Bajpai: Yeah, I think I mean, I'll just say a couple of words, but it'd be nice to hear from Antara as well on this perhaps. It becomes a bit tautological in the argument, I mean, I said in the book that China and India didn't cooperate on the border better or in other spheres because they don't trust each other. But of course, you know, you could reverse it and say, because they don't trust each other, they don't cooperate. So, the argument tends to be a bit circular. But I mean, tautological arguments can be interesting, because they force you to ask, "Well, why don't they trust each other?" I mean, in this case, and I think, there again, we come back to some cultural, social, political issues, and also, geopolitical issues. I mean, I said that in the book that they don't trust each other, partly because they were never allies. I mean, they worked briefly during World War II, if you like, because they fought on the same side, but never thereafter. But, you know, in a sense, historically, they don't have a very rich, I would say, long historical, diplomatic history. I mean, there's Buddhism and the pilgrimages, and there's trade, and there's people movement, and they knew each other in third regions, but the great centres of power, the Indian empires, historically, and the Chinese, not sure that they had an enormous amount of diplomatic traffic.

So, you know, there's isn't again, that kind of rich diplomatic history which they can draw unto, to understand each other better and build trust. I think, also that, matters of political style in the Perimeters chapter, you can see how narrow as to kind of, a liberal politician, and I mean, liberal in a political sense, his legal background. He looked at borders, and these kinds of issues in a quite a forensic way, and he took a very conservative view of the borders. I mean, you look at treaties and customary sort of, understandings going back. but Mao and Zhou Enlai , I mean,, they were revolutionaries. They took very strategic views of these kinds of questions. And so, you know, there's the kind of inability at a political cultural level to kind of comprehend each other. And if you can't, then, you can't decipher what the other is doing. I mean, for communists, all this stuff, institution, liberal institutions, and so on, admire their illusion that the bourgeoisie uses to get its way and to stay in power.

So, the more narrow and India talk about legalities, I mean, for communists, this is like, “Oh, you're just trying to pull the wool over our eyes”. And I think we're on the Indian side, this very strategic perspective, sometimes the Chinese could be very hardnosed, other times, they seem to be much softer, because they're playing a strategic game or a tactical game sometimes. And for the Indian side, they were looking for consistency, and you proceed with the facts and the historical facts and the legal facts, and so on. So again, you know, it's hard to build up trust when you're playing, your vocabularies are so different. **Shivshankar Menon:** Please turn off your mic, everyone else. Kanti, I've lost you.

Kanti Bajpai: Yeah. So, I just wanted to end on that point, that there's a combination of, I think, political culture, different leadership styles and values, and of course, the absence of, kind of, long diplomatic history of contact between the great centres of their political authority. And so, I think one can build an argument about why there isn't trust without getting tautological about it.

Shivshankar Menon: Right, right. I think, because we never entered into each other's political and security caucus, and when we did, we didn't have the agency or not very much. So yeah. There's a question here, maybe for Antara. “Can China's behaviour be explained by its misperceptions about itself as the new global hegemon?” by this version of history that she tells herself, of China's global primacy, etc, which I don't think everybody else accepts this version. In fact, the book summarizes **[Zhang Weiwei- 1:13:58]** summary of this triumphalist China. Can that explain China's behaviour, Antara?

Antara Singh: Thank you, sir. I would like to address this question together with another important question that that comes up many times in the course of the book, and that is, “Why should China concede anything to India, since it is a much bigger part, it has a massive veto in India on all accounts? I understand that power differential is a very important aspect defining China-India relations. And presently, the issue dominates any and every discussion on China and India, both within India and outside India. And I can also see the issue being played up very big by the Chinese propaganda outlets like the Global Times where probably, every article on India would end up with a sentence saying, “Oh, Chinese economy is five times that of India's and India dare not confront China or China doesn't even consider India as a worthy enemy”, and so on and so forth, in a similar kind of, assertions. But interestingly, when I look at China's internal debates and discussions on India, I find it part asymmetry narrative to be strange and missing.

When I look at, say, Chinese journal articles or publications by Chinese think tanks, interviews, commentaries by Chinese scholars or Indian experts, I realized that the focus within China is much less on the power differential, and much more on the value that a good China-India relation can deliver to China, and how best China can solicit that cooperation from India. And cooperation with India is not a passing trend in China, it is a strategic goal mandated by the highest level by the National Congress. Of course, there are differences in opinion in how to go about this cooperation with China. So, some would argue that China needs to induce India into cooperation by preferably offering non-core economic incentives, while others would say that China should use its strength advantage against India to force it to cooperate like it did in the Calgon clash. But regardless of the differences in methods, there is little doubt in China

about the significance of the value of India-China relationship to China and China's global diplomacy.

So, what cooperation does China seek from India and what value can a good China-India relationship provide to China or China's global strategy? First of all, China requires India's help to cope up with the US, free and open Indo-Pacific strategy, or at least to make it less harmful to Chinese interests. And why particularly India because India is one country, which is not a US ally. So, it has room to manoeuvre. You know, if India joins actively, then Indo-Pacific becomes reality. And if it doesn't, then you know, again, it takes a backseat. So, that's why there is huge interest within China to reach out to India on Indo-Pacific issue. Secondly, although it is strategically underplayed, India remains at the heart of, or at the core of China's two oceans strategy, which is meant to open up a dedicated Indian Ocean exit for China under the Belt and Road initiative to overcome the Malacca dilemma and also, what they call the Island Chain strategy in the South and East China sea. On the economic front, Chinese are really concerned that if geo-economics fail between China and India, it will only be geopolitics governing China-India relations, leaving very little room to China for any kind of manoeuvre, you know? And finally, we should also not discount how good relations with India benefits China in having peace and stability in its western frontier and allows Beijing to keep its entire focus on the best resources for its intensifying rivalry with the United States and its allies.

So, coming back to the question that comes up many times in the book that, "Why should China concede anything to India?" I think if we look at China-India relations only through the prism of power differential, then, of course, China has no need to concede anything to India and India has no option but to tolerate and assertive and insensitive China. But when we consider the importance of this relationship to China and India's growing role as what they say, a major determinant of Chinese foreign policy, then, we can have a very different picture altogether, a very different equation between these two countries. So yeah, that's what I wanted to just add.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you. Antara, thank you very much. Two last quick questions. Somebody has asked, "China's still India's largest trading partner, despite the numbers going down slightly. Where do you see this economic relationship going?" And China became our number one trading partner last year, despite what happened on the border. Yeah, where does this go? Where does it lead us? Maybe Jabin or Kanti.

Kanti Bajpai: Jabin, go ahead.

Jabin Jacob: Okay. Look, I don't see why the two cannot coexist. I mean, there are two tracks essentially, we cannot walk out of, or decouple entirely from an economic partnership with the Chinese. But there are things that we need to do where, you know, national security, and perhaps, competitive advantages of cutting-edge frontier technologies or industries meet. I think they are already doing the right things by keeping Chinese 5G out, banning Chinese apps and so on. So, I think this will continue. It's not that the Chinese aren't going to be able to recover from the US even though they want to. Now, like I said before, I think it's up to us to be able to leverage those opportunities that we have and look at it in a more positive manner. I mean, where would we have gotten our API if not from China?

Shivshankar Menon: Want to add anything, Kanti?

Kanti Bajpai: I agree with that, so, I don't have much to add.

Shivshankar Menon: One last, quick ground then. How much of this will change if Xi Jinping goes? Kanti? Politics question in a nutshell.

Kanti Bajpai: Yeah. I mean, it could be that if he isn't replaced by someone who has the kind of control and so on that he has, that the situation might be worse with China, that you may have all kinds of different groups and factions and agencies that cannot be brought together to pursue certain line of policy, including cooperation with India. And we may see a lot of noise in the system and a greater uncertainty. Xi Jinping has become the kind of, you know, the most powerful leader since Mao, I mean, we may very well see a decision to pull back from that after him, and to have more collective leadership and so on. So, whether collective leadership becomes a noisy system, and they're not able to exert control enough, then, that may not be good for the India-China relationship. And on the other hand, a very powerful Xi Jinping has, I think, clearly not been an easy customer to deal with either. So, to me, if it moves towards a more collective leadership, that's a good one, then, that might be the perfect for India, you know? You don't have an overbearing Xi Jinping.

On the other extreme, you don't have a collective leadership that just can't exert any control and deliver on anything. But a good business-like, well organized, collective leadership. If it transits to that, then, I think that would be good for India, but I'm not enough of a China specialist to say much beyond that. But one last thing I'll say is, in India-China relationships now, I always looked at Tibet. And if you want to say anything about where it's going to go, please look at what's happening in Tibet and China's dealing with it.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you. I'll come back to you, Kanti for final word. But let me just go to Tanvi, if you want to answer this question or say something at the end.

Tanvi Madan: I won't answer this one, I suspect Jabin and Antara will have more insights of things today, but I will say this point about, "Can China and India be friends or corporate?" I think we should be realistic about whatever engagement down the line, which is, Indian policymakers, when they have had this idea of kind of friendship as the objective, they've gone wrong. We're not going to be friends; it's about being neighbours. And I think this is something Manohar Parrikar I remember had this analogy about how you deal with neighbours. And that is something I think to keep in mind, which then feeds into this point about trust that was asked earlier. I think it's not just an abstract concept. We do see it if for example, you even thinking about signing confidence building measures agreements, and you cannot trust that the other side is going to stick to them as has been the case since last year and a half, then, that means something very different.

Or if, and some of this is deliberate or you can say that China's actively gone against them. Others are its interest changes, its capabilities change, you know, not sending troops abroad, saying that they probably meant it when they said it, this changes over time. But I think what it means for India is, being realistic about what the objective of cooperation or engagement with China is, which is, it's not friendship; it is coexistence with a neighbour, and I'm taking

advantage of the relationship for India's own interests. And second, when you are thinking about creating these measures, it should proceed from the assumption and they should be designed around the fact that there isn't trust. And so, emphasize the verification part, whether that's at the border or in other domains, and make sure you have a backup plan.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Tanvi. Jabin, you want to answer the question or not, up to you. But any final words?

Jabin Jacob: Yeah. I think, overall, I'd say that India-China relationship, it doesn't really matter so much the leadership. I mean, it's not as if the boundary dispute is about to be resolved, even with the collective leadership of a good sort, that can't be mentioned. But I would like to say that, you know, things are never as good as they appear to be. I mean, especially in the last few years, I think that's one of the lessons that, when we pander to egos and individuals and undermine institutions on our side, I think, that's always bad news for the India-China relationship. I think that's the point that needs to be underlined. Second, I see opportunity, opportunity, opportunity. I mean, in every crisis with China, I think we've actually managed to come up better, because simply, we have been able to face up to that crisis. My fear today is that we are trying to run away from facing up to the crisis. And I think that is, again, a big challenge, not just for us academics, but also for policymakers, for the bureaucracy, for the military, in general. So, I'm not so much concerned about what's going on in China itself, I'm concerned about our responses, our institutions, our fundamentals when we think and look at China. And I think that needs to be underlined, ad nauseum, perhaps. Thank you.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you. Yes, book actually ends with the right question, actually; "How desperately do Indians want to be powerful?" A lot of it is that. Antara, last word before I go back to Kanti.

Antara Singh: Yes. As a concluding remark, I would like to say that China India relations follow a pattern marked by alternate episodes of camaraderie, conflict, hope, and despair. So, I think this trend is going to continue as long as I can see. So, I'll end with that. Thanks.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you. Thank you, Antara. Kanti, you brought us here. Thank you for giving us this wonderful book, and this wonderful excuse to have a really good discussion. I thought we covered a lot of ground. Short, some confusion, but that's natural, that only shows that we're being honest. But thank you for this. What would you like to say right before we end?

Kanti Bajpai: Well, just to thank, of course, CSEP for this opportunity, and fellow panellists to get fantastic feedback and critique in the discussion much further actually, than the book does. I think, just on the book, as a final word, I'll just say that something that was mentioned, and just to echo it, which is that, I think, if there was a deeper objective of the book, it is that we in India, we have to look this relationship very calmly in the eye. We can't run away from these four P's, one could add another couple of P's. So, the aim of the book was a little bit to hit people between the eye and force us to think. I don't think the book gets everything right, but it does force us to think, look at this relationship very calmly, and clearly. Then, I think it will have done something.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Kanti. Thank you very much. And it only remains for me to thank all the panellists for not only what you've said, but for actually adding to certainly my knowledge here. I will hand this over back to Constantino Xavier for the last, last word.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Ambassador Menon. Kanti, I think you've hit us between the eyes really hard, all of us. So, thank you for bringing up this book. You have wide following among generations of scholars on Indian foreign policy, India-China, India-Asia relations. So, thank you for bringing this book to CSEP, and I can just reinforce, I think, the point made about a possible Hindi translation. And may I extend the burden on translators, I'd also like to see Ambassador Menon's and Dr. Madan's book in Hindi and all three of your books in Mandarin. I think that would be also an interesting challenge I put out there. Thank you Tanvi, Jabin, Antara, wonderful to have you; you've always been great colleagues and friends of CSEP and hopefully we can continue collaborating on more of this research. Some of the work at CSEP that we're doing under Ambassador Menon's guidance on China, China-South Asia in particular, project that we've benefited from your inputs. And last but not least, Ambassador Menon, thank you so much for guiding us here today, leading this discussion, moderating it.

I can think of no one better to have done this. In fact, so good that I may have lost my job as a moderator at CSEP. And we hope to have you again in the chair for future sessions. But in particular, for your encouragement also, for the work we do with CSEP. On China, on the neighbourhood, I think the times are changing for the better in India, and we're getting a wonderful, I think, combination of different scholars, practitioners, former practitioners, in your case, Ambassador Menon, that have really pushed us to do better more historically, analytically and critically with the freedom of the mind to re-engage with many of these usually quite charged, your logical questions, I think we're looking at them more objectively. So, thank you all, and do join us again for future events at CSEP and stay well, stay healthy. Thank you.

Kanti Bajpai: Thank you all.