



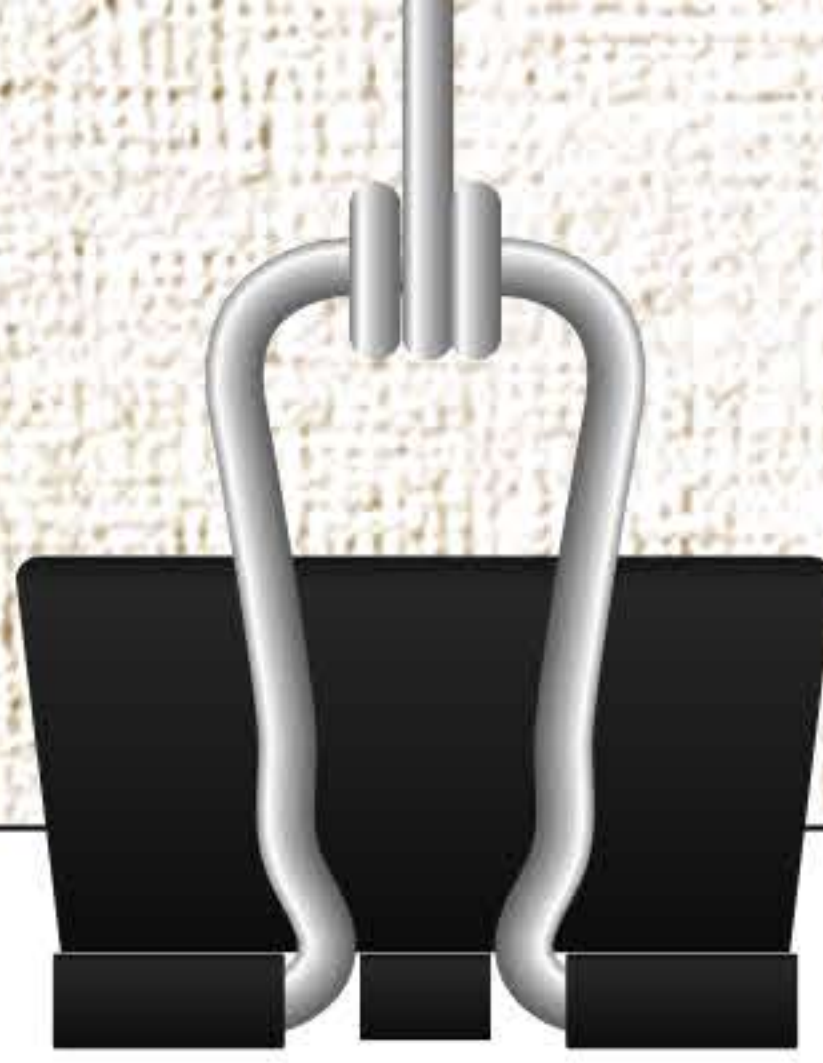
ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION ON

**THE CHENNAI SPIRIT**  
**INDIA - CHINA**  
**RELATIONS**



23 OCTOBER 2019  
INDIA HABITAT CENTRE  
NEW DELHI









## Roundtable Discussion on **The Chennai Spirit: India - China Relations**

### Inaugural Session

**Chair** **Ram Madhav**

National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party  
and Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation

**Inaugural  
Remarks**

**Hardeep Singh Puri**

Minister of State (I/C) of Ministry of Housing and  
Urban Affairs; MoS (I/C) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation &  
MoS in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India

### Session

**Chair** **Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.)**

Former Chief of Integrated Defence Staff and  
Former Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command,  
Indian Navy; Member, Board of Trustees, India Foundation

**Panelists**

**Shyam Saran**

Former Foreign Secretary, MEA, Govt of India and Member,  
Governing Council, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

**Lt Gen S. L. Narasimhan**

Director General, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies  
(CCCS), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt of India

**Brahma Chellaney**

Professor of Strategic Studies, Centre for Policy Research

**T C A Raghavan**

Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs

**Srikanth Kondapalli**

Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of  
International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University





“There were several important outcomes of 2nd Informal Summit at Mamallapuram. One important outcome is the acknowledgement that trade deficit is a serious issue and we need to address it together and come forward for a sectorial discussion. Secondly, respecting India's position on Kashmir as a bilateral issue between India & Pakistan and thus China decided not to interfere. And third and the equally important outcome is the coming forward on the issue of terrorism to state that we have to build a framework against training and financing of terror groups internationally.”

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## **Ram Madhav**

National General Secretary,  
Bharatiya Janata Party and  
Member, Board of Governors,  
India Foundation



Indian objectives were to consolidate the informal summit process, consolidate the strategic communication and laying down mechanisms for its use for crisis resolution and addressing issues like trade deficit and market access, strengthening people to people mechanism especially in view of the celebration of 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and China along with India's concerns regarding China's support to a country in India's neighborhood

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## Hardeep Singh Puri

Minister of State (I/C) of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs; Minister of State (I/C) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India





The first informal summit at Wuhan in China in April 2018 took place ten months after Doklam. The idea of informal summit was suggested by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and this was acknowledged by Chinese President Xi Jinping in Chennai during delegation level talks on 12th October 2019. Wuhan spirit has resulted in a) strategic communication between the two leaders, b) consolidation of the understanding that good relations between India and China are important for peace, progress and stability in the world, and c) Peace and tranquility on the borders is essential for good relations therefore the two sides should not let differences become disputes in this regard.

Very often Heads of State and Government want to have summit level interactions without the presence of aids. In many cases it works. In some cases, the correct calibrated assessments of the benefits of such events are not understood. But if we were to look at how much these interactions succeed in overcoming the differences, perhaps a more realistic image could be improved. What was the context in which the two sides were meeting at Mamallapuram (Chennai)? In the immediate past before Chennai there were problems and problems and challenges which included a very strident Chinese position in public post Article 370 abrogation on issues relating to human rights in J&K. A burgeoning trade deficit, Chinese perspective of difficulties for their companies such as Huawei in India and challenges for China in Hong Kong,

a slowing economy, US-China trade war, and open criticism by the US for Human Rights in Xinjiang.

If we look into context on Indian side, then Indian objectives were to consolidate the informal summit process, consolidate the strategic communication and laying down mechanisms for its use for crisis resolution and addressing issues like trade deficit and market access, strengthening people to people mechanism especially in view of the celebration of 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and China along with India's concerns regarding China's support to a country in India's neighborhood and exchange of views between Indian and Chinese leaders on global matters such as vision for Indo-Pacific and relations with US etc.

To underline the antiquity, unity, continuity, diversity and richness of India's culture, underscore historical maritime trade and cultural relations with China including Fujian where Chinese President Xi Jinping was once Governor and to showcase Tamil Nadu. Broad programs and optics, the walkabouts, cultural performances by Kalakshetra with backdrop of temples, one on one dinner on 11th Oct. 2019 and one on one tea delegation talks and lunch on 12th October 2019 chalked out to allow maximum time for leaders to talk without aides. Both leaders spent about 6 hrs one on one in addition to the delegation level talks and lunch. The feedbacks indicate, including the appreciation from the Chinese side and



officially conveyed was that visiting dignitary was overwhelmed with the reception, the rich history, culture and performance. On trade the response was positive to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's detailed exposition with graphics and data on why the trade deficit has become economically unsustainable and is also assuming politically sensitive dimensions. Chinese President spoke of taking sincere actions to reduce trade deficits and specific sectors & industries were identified including sugar, rice, pharmaceuticals etc. The External Affairs Minister of India was nominated from the Indian side for the High Level Mechanism to monitor this process along with the Chinese Vice Premier on the other side. On investment, President Xi Jinping accepted Prime Minister Modi's suggestion for channeling Chinese investment into India, identifying Indian priority sectors and exploring possibility of manufacturing partnerships in some of them. In response to Chinese President Xi Jinping's remarks for early conclusion of RCEP, while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke for the need of a balanced outcome involving goods, services and investment. On boundary questions, Special Representatives will continue efforts to seek fair and mutually acceptable settlements. Meanwhile to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas, greater engagement and mutual trust will be built between the two militaries as was suggested by President Xi Jinping. Many initiatives have been announced to promote

people to people relations and to underscore maritime, trade, historical and cultural links specially between Tamil Nadu and Fujian Province, joint research on such links, sister States and city relations, joint sailing between Tamil Nadu and Fujian by youth, scholars etc. There are going to be 70 activities (35 in each country) to mark the 70 years of diplomatic relations and marking the year 2020 as the year of India-China people to people cultural exchanges.

On international issues, views were exchanged on terrorism and radicalism. As large and diverse countries, both India and China face this challenge. On Afghanistan there were similarities in views regarding electoral and peace process for both countries to remain in close contact. On US-China trade differences, both India and China emphasized on the need to strengthen the WTO and rule-based multilateral trading system. The spirit of Chennai connect has consolidated the Wuhan spirit and has maintained the same continuity.

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### **Hardeep Singh Puri**

MoS (I/C) of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs;  
MoS (I/C) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation &  
MoS in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry,  
Government of India



“While Doklam preceded Wuhan, abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and major military exercise in Arunachal Pradesh preceded the Chennai Summit. Despite assurance from India’s External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar during his Beijing visit on the issue of Article 370, China still called for a special session of the UNSC. One has also witnessed China's reluctance to move ahead on the 2005 agreement on the border issues. How far will the bilateral relations between these two giants move that remains a big question until the border question is not addressed.”

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### **Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.)**

Former Chief of Integrated Defence Staff &  
Former Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval  
Command, Indian Navy, Member,  
Board of Trustees, India Foundation



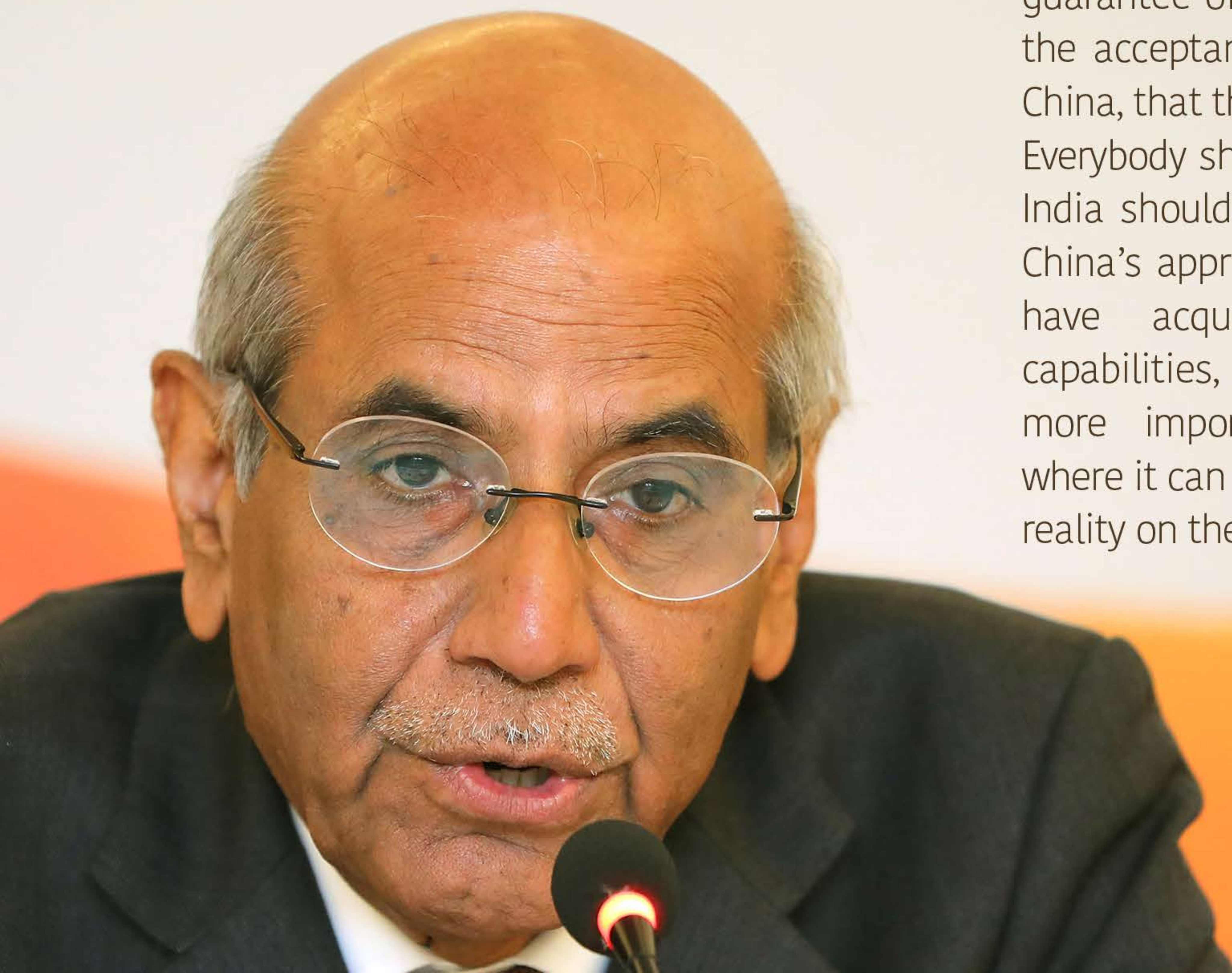


Mamallapuram Summit has given a direction to India-China relations although it may not represent a very major departure in the relationship. It is important to recognize that India - China relations are in-essence adversarial relationship.

## Shyam Saran

Former Foreign Secretary, MEA, Govt of India and Member, Governing Council, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

There is no getting away from the fact that there is a strong sense of competition and rivalry between the two countries. If we interpret China's approach then it is very much linked to how China looks upon itself, its history and civilizational attributes. There is no doubt that China believes that its natural position is to be the most dominant position certainly in Asia if not the world. China is very clear in its mind that it should be in a position where it has an effective veto over decisions which are taken by other partners in Asia and other countries should not be in a position to take decisions which China sees as inimical to its own interests. And this is not only with security issues but also with respect to economic issues. There is a very important attribute in Chinese culture where order, peace and harmony are all linked to being a hierarchical structure. This means that China does not believe in multi polarities. It does not believe that Asia should be a place which is a cluster of major powers which India believe in, so China believes that the only possible guarantee of peace and order and harmony is the acceptance by all concerned, not only by China, that there should be a hierarchical order. Everybody should know his place in that order. India should be clear in its mind as to what China's approach and belief after the Chinese have acquired the required economic capabilities, security capabilities and much more important technological capabilities, where it can translate the Chinese vision into a reality on the ground.





One of the reasons why China has an interest in forums like Informal Summits with India, at a time when no other country has this status, because there is a feeling in China that if there is any country in the world which has the potential to not only match China but perhaps also to overtake China then it is India. Whether it is due to its largeness, its population, its economic prospects in the future even if there is asymmetry in relationship, but certainly in terms of economic potential of India and technological centers of excellence that India has. China gets very surprised by what India has achieved in the science and technology field. They get shocked by what India was able to achieve with the space program. It doesn't align with their perceptions of India. There are good reasons why China is taking India seriously.

While India accepts the mechanism of informal summits, it is also in India's interest that at a time of transition where India has to overcome the asymmetry of power which exists with China. Informal summit will not be able to solve this asymmetry which India faces but it can give India the breathing space to address the major problems.

In terms of outcome, it is not important. What is important is that this summit took place. Because the background against which it took place is important, all the things that erupted in the relationship before the summit had the potential of actually derailing the relation. The fact that the two leaders found it worthwhile to spend so much time together in order to give a message to their respective systems that leaders of both countries at highest level attach a lot of importance to this relationship so both countries need to ensure that it doesn't get derail. India and China have to

manage despite differences.

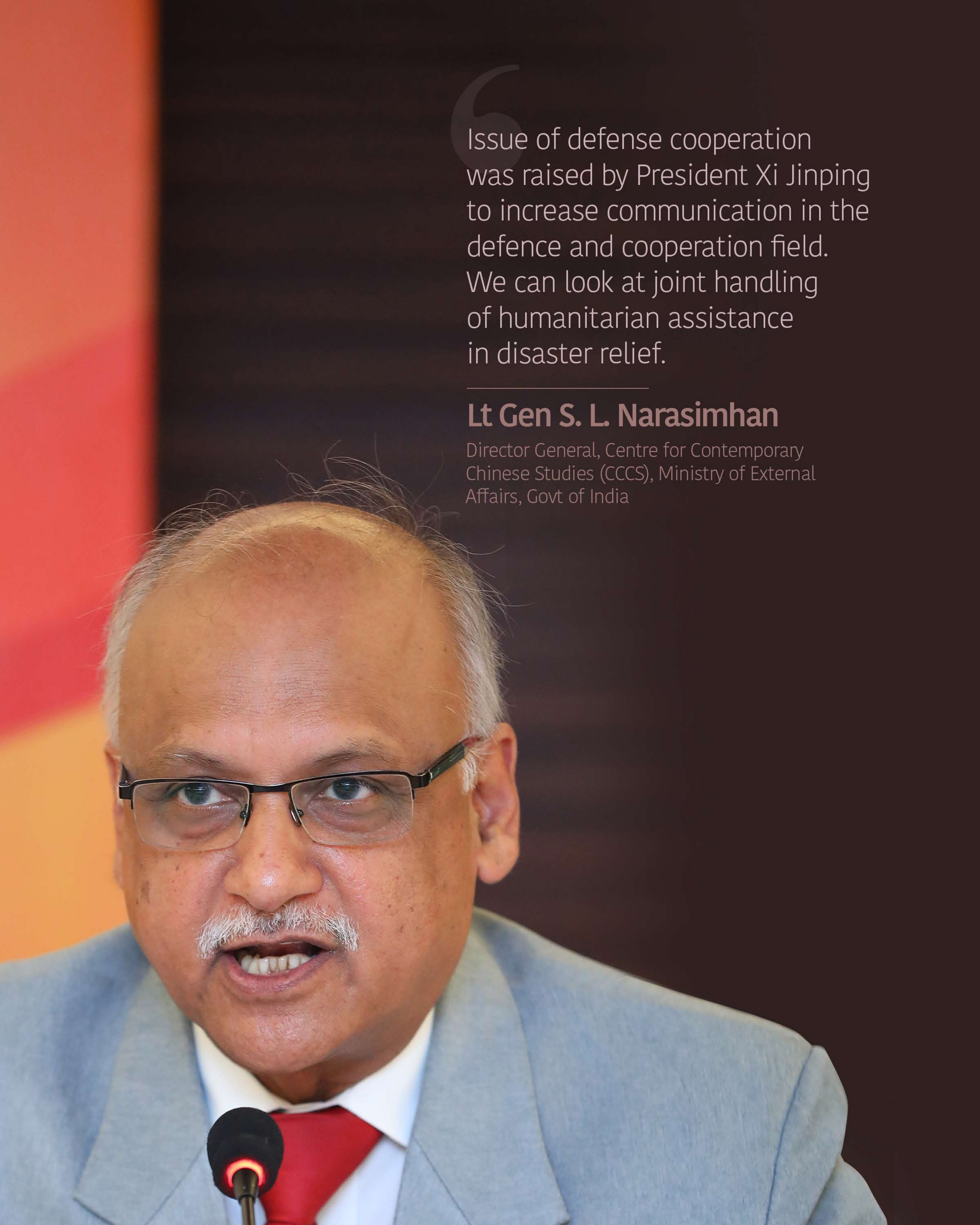
The trade issue is something we have to deal with and I believe it is important for India to be part of RCEP. India must negotiate as good a deal as possible. But at the end of the day it is a political decision. India cannot build up a stronger regional role and a global role by having an active and expansive foreign policy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the most energetic Prime Minister of India and active on the international stage. But if India is going to have a much more expansive foreign policy, greater global engagement then that role can't be sustained India is on the margins of the global economy. India has to accept the pillars of the greater role which are not just political but also economic and technological as well. The future will belong to those who are ahead in the technological curve and the globalization curve. And understanding that globalization is linked to technological advancement. Now technological advancement won't stop. We may retard the process of globalization which may result from that but we can't stop globalization. Countries which understand this will not resist globalization, countries try to make certain that they stay ahead. At the end of the day we have to make a choice and the right choice for India is to be ahead in the globalization curve. All the ingredients that are necessary for India to emerge as the big superpower in technology are all in place now. It's all a question of what decisions are taken to make that happen.

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**Shyam Saran**

Former Foreign Secretary, MEA,  
Govt of India and Member,  
Governing Council, Institute of  
Chinese Studies, New Delhi



A close-up portrait of Lt Gen S. L. Narasimhan, an elderly man with glasses and a mustache, wearing a light blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. He is speaking into a microphone. The background is dark with a red and orange vertical stripe on the left.

Issue of defense cooperation was raised by President Xi Jinping to increase communication in the defence and cooperation field. We can look at joint handling of humanitarian assistance in disaster relief.

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**Lt Gen S. L. Narasimhan**

Director General, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies (CCCS), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt of India



The informal summit is getting more and more institutionalized and the third informal summit is expected to happen next year. People to People contacts are gaining importance and confidence. Just before the summit it was announced that the visa facilitation for Chinese businessmen are going to be allowed for longer duration stay in India. India also need to improve its image as a tourism destination. India also needs to focus on capacity and capability development of exports because apart from sectors like IT, Agriculture and Pharmaceutical, there are many other sectors which need focus and development. Effective implementation of existing CBMs is also a priority. There are enough CBMs in place having commanded all formations on the Chinese front. Additional CBMs are always welcome as increase mutual trust and confidence between armed forces in the border. The problem is when one side don't adhere to those CBMs or measures. If we look at Wuhan and the strategic communication aspect the leaders talk about, we will find a change in the behavior of the Chinese troops along the borders. Notwithstanding what a month back, leave that aside, if you find on the border number of incidents, you can see a perceptible change. If this message goes down to the tactical level, automatically the CBMs will become effective. The informal summits give a little push to keep things moving forward. In the next informal summit, leaders are going to take stock of what progress has come on the discussions of the previous one and that gives a nudge to move ahead. Issue of defense cooperation was raised by President Xi Jinping to increase communication in the defence and cooperation field. We can look at joint handling of humanitarian assistance in disaster.

We found a sense of competitiveness in both the cases of Maldives and Nepal which can be avoided and cooperation can be encouraged in the future. On the training front we can increase the number of vacancies in many of the courses we have which can be non-controversial in terms of security. We can increase the visits of junior and middle level officers and interactions. We need to push for the better Chinese language capability. The frequency of Border Personnel Meetings can be increased officially. Unofficially these are happening and we can formalize them by making them monthly without raising the hackles on both the sides. Friendly sport activities would also contribute to improve relations between the forces.


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### **Lt Gen S. L. Narasimhan**

Director General, Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies (CCCS), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt of India





A man with glasses, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is speaking into a microphone. He is gesturing with his hands. The background is dark with some green light streaks.

If India is able to stabilize its troubled relationships with China, it will inject greater flexibility and maneuverability in Indian foreign policy strategies. Likewise, for China, if China is able to stabilize its relationship with India, it can prevent the formation of a broader anti-China front. There can be no anti-China front or a free and open Indo Pacific strategy without India's participation so India is critical to any anti-China military coalition.

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**Brahma Chellaney**

Professor of Strategic Studies,  
Centre for Policy Research



I contend the thesis in the fundamental sense that a power imbalance between India and China which constrains India's options, can encroach on India's interest in a way that India will not be able to do by encroaching on China's interest. First, power asymmetry is inherent in International Relations (IR). No two countries are symmetrical in economic, political, diplomatic and military resources. IR are characterized by power asymmetries. This doesn't mean that the weaker side should defer to the stronger side or feel constrained in terms of its options. An example from our own neighborhood- Pakistan's power asymmetry with India is far greater than India's power asymmetry with China. Its economy is merely 10% of the size of India, a \$300 billion economy vs a \$3 Trillion economy. Its demography is 6 times smaller yet it doesn't feel constrained. Pakistan is a country which has been systematically bleeding India since the 1980s and in recent weeks it has felt emboldened to downgrade diplomatic relations, suspend bilateral trade, cut-off transport links and postal services. Or take China in the first 35 years of PRC the power balance was weighted against China vis-à-vis India. From 1949 when PRC was founded till 1984 India's economy was larger. Only in 1985 China's economy overtook India's. In 1962 India's comprehensive national power, a term popularized by Chinese strategists was greater than China's.

In modern world history, China stands out as the most friendless rising power. China does not have a single real strategic ally other than Pakistan while North Korea is a strange ally of China. Leadership in today's world demands more than brute might and it demands things more than economic and military capabilities for example it demand the power of ideas to

galvanize others. What ideas does China offer to lead Asia or lead the world? Forget about the world even in Asia look what happening, China has the advantage of taking a long view because of its autocratic system but this autocratic system is centered on brute power. The seven principles and practices that Chinese President Xi Jinping seeks to apply internationally and that authoritarian system's weakness is apparent from the fact that China by now has alienated almost every significant power in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Even smaller powers in Asia from Vietnam, Indonesia to South Korea, are seeking to hedge the barriers and build strategic ties with the other powers in the region.

If India is able to stabilize its troubled relationships with China, it will inject greater flexibility and maneuverability in Indian foreign policy strategies. Likewise, for China, if China is able to stabilize its relationship with India, it can prevent the formation of a broader anti-China front. There can be no anti-China front or a free and open Indo Pacific strategy without India's participation so India is critical to any anti-China military coalition. However, Beijing believes that it can have its cake and eat it too i.e. it can continue with its strategy to box-in India while dissuading India to join any anti-China military alliance. The QUAD has no military dimension. It is only a consultation mechanism that has been oversold specially in India but it is only a consultation mechanism with no military dimension not even defined end goals so let's not give it a role that it doesn't have. So to achieve those objectives or being able to have its cake and eat it too, such bilateral informal summits between India and China both formal and informal as well as other bilateral mechanism are an important means to



to achieve those objectives.

Despite Doklam, Modi persisted with Wuhan representing Modi's reset 2.0. As Xi Jinping said in his opening statement in Mamallapuram, that an idea of an informal summit came from Modi and that he gladly accepted that Idea. And Mahabalipuram was Modi's reset 3.0. Now as part of the reset efforts, India has taken a number of initiatives in recent years including removing China as a country of concern in the hope of encouraging greater Chinese FDI inflow into India. Unfortunately, what India has got is not greater Chinese FDI flow but actually greater Chinese dumping of goods. Chinese FDI in India cumulatively, according to Chinese government figures is 8 billion dollars which is only a fraction of one year's trade surplus that China enjoys with India. In fact, China's annual trade surplus with India is significantly larger than India's total defense spending underscoring the extent to which India is underwriting China's hostility. In just the last 5 years, China's trade surplus with India has more than doubled from less than 2.5 billion dollars a month to about 5 billion dollars a month currently. More significant unfair trade practices which are systematically undermining Indian manufacturing. It is in this context; I think that one of the very painful decisions India has to make is on RCEP because RCEP would be a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China. Its one thing to have China on your border and it's another thing to invite China on your border to your backdoor. India focuses on Pakistan's International War of Terror but ignores the fact that China is also waging an International war, though by economic means, that economic war is inflicting greater damage on India's long term interest than by Pakistan's conventional war by Terror. It is systematically

killing Indian manufacturing and fostering increasing joblessness among the Indian youth.

China's success at Mamallapuram in making India agree to trade talks, was a major diplomatic success for Beijing. It buys China time just when China is under increasing pressure on host of issues. From ongoing process of decoupling of ties with the US to Hong Kong's Pro-democracy movement and emerging backlash against Chinese President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative. As long as China keeps India engaged in trade talks, it will protect China's access to Indian markets without India seeking to emulate the American example of slapping punitive measures including Tariffs. It goes to show China's negotiating skills to take India round and round the Mulberry bush. Similarly, the trade talks are going to go on for a number of years. They will never end and that's the purpose of China to protect its burgeoning trade surplus with India. A burgeoning trade surplus that has turned the Indian economy into a raw material appendage.

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### **Brahma Chellaney**

Professor of Strategic Studies,  
Centre for Policy Research





“The fact that asymmetry between India and China is so pervasive that we don’t factor in to our policy frameworks and analytical framework adequately. To some extent the asymmetry is disguised by a tactical parity on the military lines and certainly whatever maybe the other asymmetry between India and China, it does not translate into tactical dominance by the Chinese military.

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**T C A Raghavan**

Director General,  
Indian Council of World Affairs





China has behaved differently even when their stock of national power was limited, much lower than what it was in the 90's and subsequently. Despite being in a strategically asymmetrical relationship with India, China has behaved in a different manner. We can't compare the Chinese experience with that of India. China at the time when it was behaving differently, was going through the different phases of revolution, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution etc. It was a totally different situation then and we cannot extract comparative analysis from that and come to how India should behave today.

Pakistan despite being in a fundamentally asymmetrical relationship with India, in some senses bleeds India but it bleeds itself more. If we see what has happened to Pakistan in the last 30-35 years, there is no takeaway in terms of what should be a principle for modulating or deciding India's foreign policy behavior. Countries behave differently. The informal summit process is a welcome development and it's a very important process and we should try to preserve it in whatever way we can. When we look back in the past two-three years and see the major issue that have come up in the region, in India-China issues, the spike in tensions in J&K and so on. It is better that we have the informal summit process in place. The fact that asymmetry between India and China is so pervasive that we don't factor in to our policy frameworks and analytical framework adequately. To some extent the asymmetry is disguised by a tactical parity on the military lines and certainly whatever maybe the other asymmetry between India and China, it does not translate into tactical dominance by the Chinese military. This was really the lesson for India from Doklam that

strategic asymmetry does not lead to tactical dominance. But conversely, the absence of tactical military dominance should not blind us to the fundamental asymmetry that exists and is going to exist for a long time notwithstanding the advances we have on the space technology and other fields. Nevertheless, the fact of Chinese growth and all pervasive nature of growth and the fact that it has left us far behind, is a fundamental postulate that we have to keep in mind while dealing with China in future. Does this mean that we shouldn't try to balance all the other instruments available? The fact that we have a large neighbor which is far ahead of us in so many ways and therefore we are faced with a fundamentally asymmetry, is something that must underwrite everything we do. The other lesson from Doklam was that regardless of whatever fears there may be about the rise of China in every foreign office in the world, when it comes to an issue you are left standing alone. The same is the experience with the BRI. All other countries with their doubts and nagging fears about China have joined in and India is the only country saying No to BRI, we are standing out. Given these differences, how we manage this relationship is much more important and to that extent this informal summit process, however unusual, is something very desirable. to BRI, we are standing out. Given these differences, how we manage this relationship is much more important and to that extent this informal summit process, however unusual, is something very desirable.

The informal summit in Chennai was flanked by the visit to China by the PM of Pakistan and thereafter the Visit to Nepal by the Chinese leader. Wherever you vacate a space, China is going to move into the vacuum. A large part of



India's foreign policy is traditionally built on the architecture that it's good for us and our neighbors that we keep big powers out of the immediate environment and region. As the big power is now within the region and all the nations in the vicinity are going to be affected by the China factor. How we deal with it is really the challenge. In some cases, it is viable to embrace the change, and in other cases we must delay them, and in others we may have to resist. But the fact of our neighborhood changing fundamentally is a fact of life. China is already in and we only have to look at our experiences for this. We don't make enough efforts at the analytical level to bring these conversations together. In India today we have two separate echo chambers when it comes to dealing with China. But specifically about China and Pakistan there's one point they made that we must keep in mind. We need not accept it or buy it. We must pause over it- they say that given our relationship with China, we had to do post J&K legal and constitutional developments was the minimum we had to do to restrain Pakistan. Is China possibly a factor of restraining Pakistan? One by one the older restrains are proving to have their limitations. The US was a restraining factor. That has already changed and is going to change even more rapidly in future. Similarly, Saudi Arabia and other gulf states. We should desist viewing, relationship with China especially and many other countries through the prism of India Pakistan relations. It will be an analytical error of judgment. It's quite okay to make an example of Turkey and we must desist from applying that logic uniformly across the board. This informal summit process enables us to have a relationship with China which is insulated from all the other factors which bedevil India China relations including Pakistan. It's a valuable process which we must try to preserve.

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### T C A Raghavan

Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs





Informal meetings do send significant signals, and Mamallapuram would send those strong signals in maritime domain and our own civilizational resilience.

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**Srikanth Kondapalli**

Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies,  
School of International Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University





At a time when US-China trade war is intensifying, there are over \$350 billion tariffs announced, 20-25% even more in the coming months. Economic growth rates in China are declining. Growth rate is not a big issue but in terms of the social stability, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences suggested that for every 1% decline in growth rate there are 20 million job losses. So from 2010, 10.8% growth rate to 6.4% official figure there is roughly decline of 4%. So multiplying the earlier number there is at least 100 million jobless in China. This is at a time when India showcasing 400 million middle class and the kind of contracts, remember after the 123 Agreement there is information that about 150-million-dollar contract will be signed for Civil Nuclear program and power plants. There is also RCEP background. If we are consuming 60% of our GDP and this is a huge asset for China in terms of the visit as such, the symbolic value for Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit. There are other developments in Hong Kong and Xinjiang which have been taken up, with the US mentioning the Travel Act, and also the Human Rights related issue. There is also Tibet issue, Taiwan Travel Act, US State department visiting Taiwan in their official capacity for the first time after the three communiques were issued between US and China. If you were in China, you will feel that there are several problems surrounding you and you don't need another problem which the HimVijay will pose for China. So dousing this is an imperative for China, in order to come to India and stabilize relations with India.

The informal summit is nothing new. For example, there is the Camp David Accord. In West Asia before which brought in nearly 2-3 decades of Peace till the ISIS and others came

about followed with US military actions in Iraq, Syria and other. Camp David provided for a kind of stability in regional stability in West Asian region. Likewise, we have also the informal summit between Xi Jinping and Obama in 2013. It did bring in some kind of stability till the Obama administration, no tariff related issues, and no currency related issues were raised in the same intensity as in the Trump administration. Trump himself had an informal meeting with Xi Jinping and the funniest thing during that time was announcement by Trump about launch of 65 missiles in Syria. Therefore, Informal meetings do send significant signals, and Mamallapuram would send those strong signals in maritime domain and our own civilizational resilience. If a communist party leader says that he is representing Chinese civilization at a time many monasteries have been destroyed and on the other hand you have many renovations by Archaeological Survey of India, far away in Cambodia, Laos and other places, there is a huge difference in signaling by both the leaders. Of course in Xian where the big Pagoda monastery is located, PM Modi visited that place in the 2015 visit. So there was also Chinese showcasing the civilization. Informal Summits do send important signals. It is the equilibrium that Chennai informal summit had sent across. PM Manmohan Singh in the Council for Foreign Relations speech in 2009 in September and October mentioned that China is aiming for low level equilibrium in South Asia, meaning that it was supplying arms to South Asian Countries, doing FTA agreements with countries like Pakistan etc. The Chennai meeting resulted in that kind of notional equilibrium between India and China. This is in sharp contrast with the asymmetry in power relations. You can still have an equilibrium even



in stages of high levels of asymmetry in power relations. If Kim Jong Un can bring in Trump to Singapore, and Hanoi and if he can bring Trump to DMZ with a \$50 Bn GDP figure in comparison to \$18 trillion GDP figure of US then this is a lesson. What China is signaling is that with a purposive action, it can really send signals of resolve and overcome asymmetry in power relations. Doklam indicated purposeful action. Uri surgical strike and Balakot Air strike in PoK indicated purposeful action by the political leadership. So signaling can also be sent through informal summits at a time when China is bogged down with various other problems. So the problems that China has are multitudinous. In this context Chinese President Xi Jinping needs a Chennai meeting as he doesn't want to open another front in the South Western region. There is also a signaling that HimVijay sends, even though it has been conceptualized several months and years before. Then there is a signaling that comes about in terms of this informal summit meeting. The third aspect is in terms of Crisis management. We do have border issues, issues in Kashmir, in fact last year there are two major transgressions in the fishtails in Arunachal Pradesh and one in Ladakh. But these were resolved in the CBMs that we have in place since 1993. This informal summit also acts as a crisis management between any two rising countries which is essential in terms of stability in relations which is again essential for their economic prosperity. So what has been achieved in Chennai? The guide for us is what Wuhan had indicated. In Wuhan 5 issues were covered for about 10 hrs. of discussion between the leaders. One is strategic communication which still prevails in Chennai. Six hrs. of talks between the two leaders. Second is border

stability because we have not seen any Doklam kind of incident since August 2017. Third, they discussed about trade deficit only incremental improvement in this regard. One MoU on Non-basmati rice import from India has been signed, 29 Cancer curing drugs from India and fourth is the hydrological data exchanges on Brahmaputra and other rivers. In terms of tangible outcomes, we only have these three agreements between India and China as part of Wuhan. We are too close to Chennai so it's difficult for us to say what's been achieved here. But signaling is also very important. In terms of intangibles the message from Chennai is very important. Another issue that was discussed in Wuhan was Afghanistan i.e. joint economic projects in Afghanistan was not repeated in Chennai partly because the US had discontinued the discussions on the Taliban and the withdrawal. But in terms of intangibles there is a clear signaling which is necessary as two rising powers in Asia. The joint statement mentions simultaneously rising countries. In order to provide stability, Chennai Summit was a much required summit meeting.

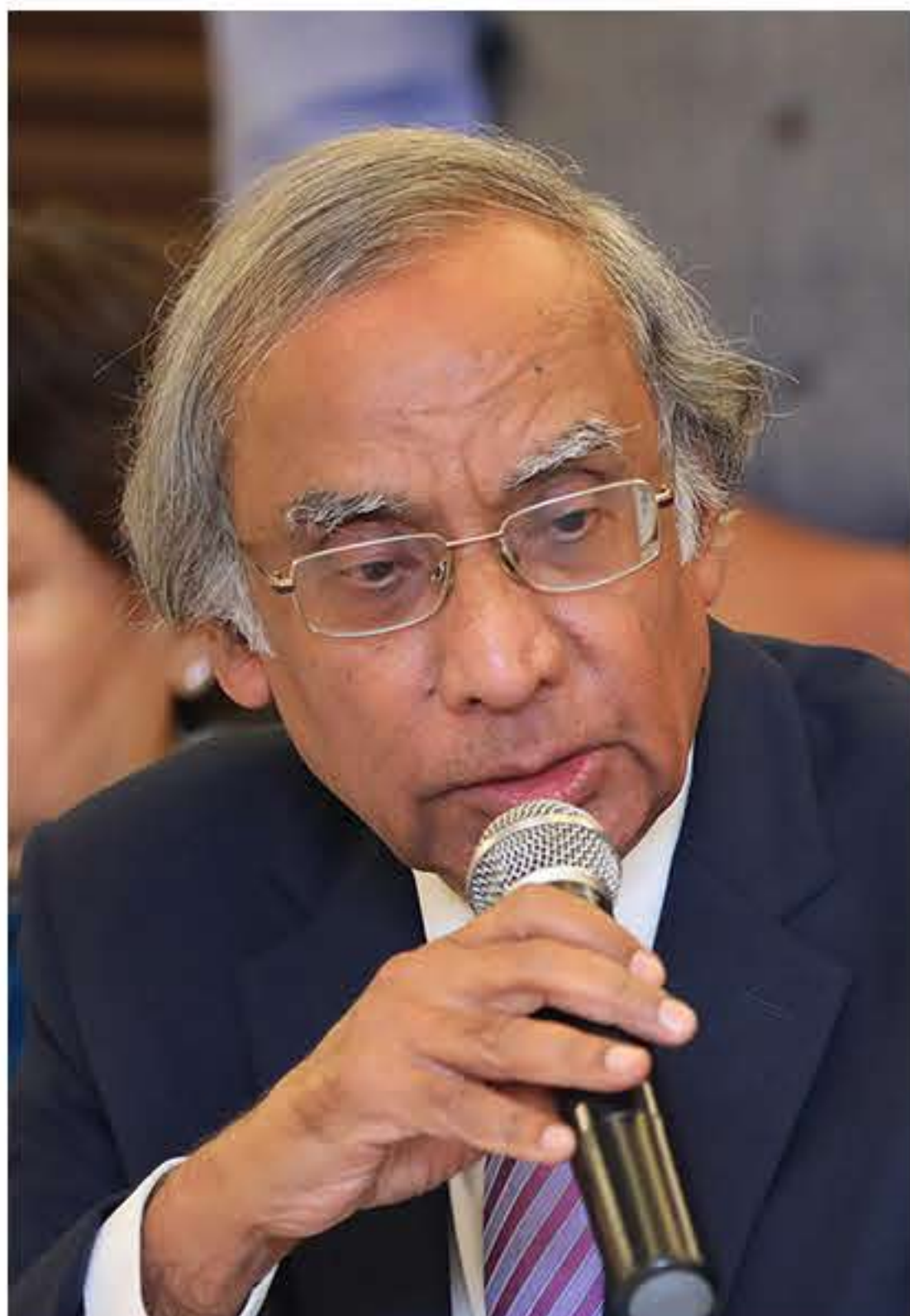
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### **Srikanth Kondapalli**

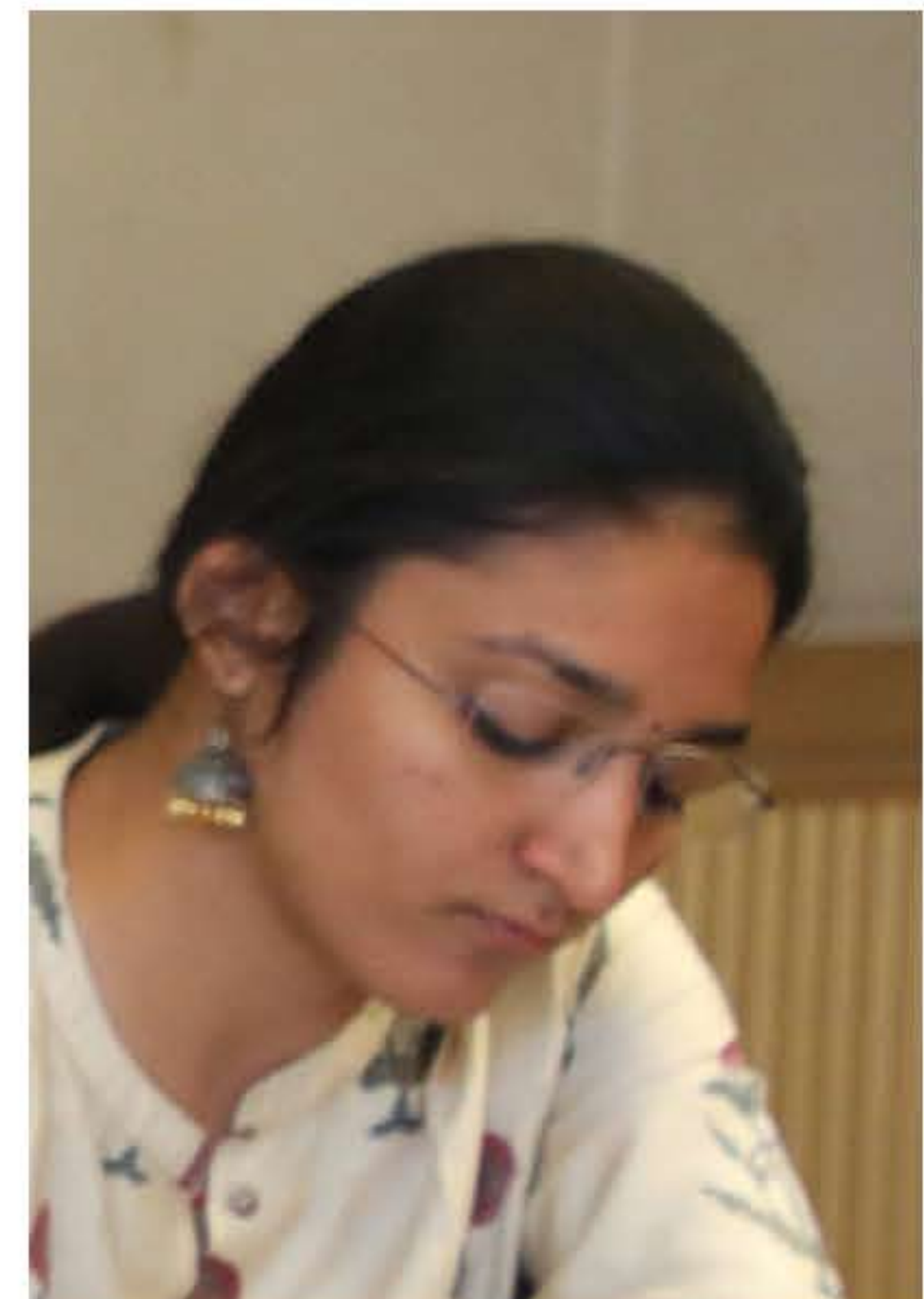
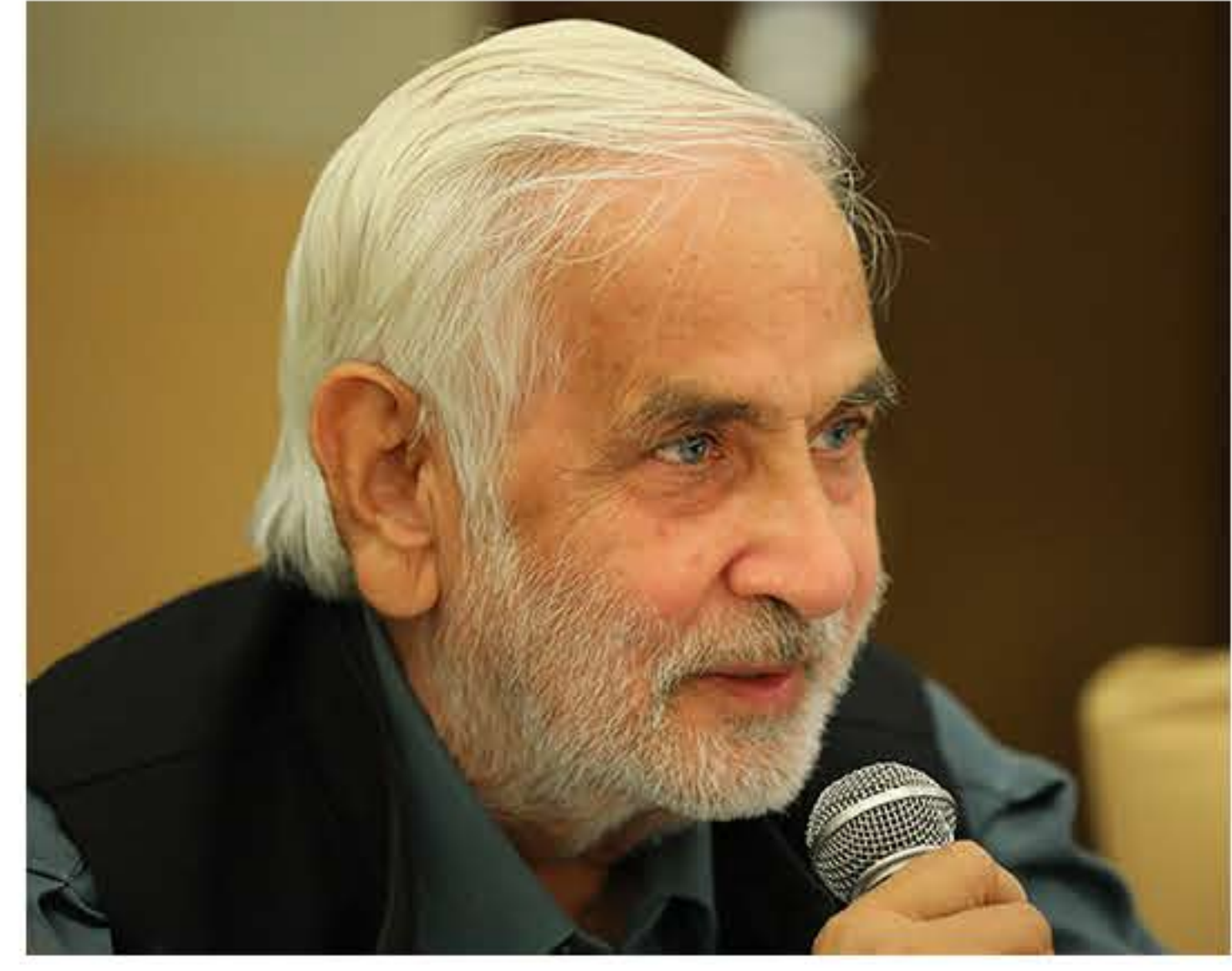
Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies,  
School of International Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University















J-1 & H-1, GROUND FLOOR  
UPASANA BUILDING, 1 HAILEY ROAD, NEW DELHI - 110001  
PHONE: 011-41654836 | 011-43012351, EMAIL: mail@indiafoundation.in