



PRESENTING THE THIRD EDITION OF ORCA'S
GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON NEW SINOLOGY (GCNS) 2025
ON THE THEME OF

CHINA'S 'DREAM' FOR A NEW MANDATE OF POWER



23RD - 24TH SEPTEMBER 2025



INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (IIC), NEW DELHI



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CONCEPT NOTE

The 21st century is witnessing a historic reconfiguration of global power, marked by the rise of China and challenges to the post-Cold War liberal order. China's strategic trajectory and global posture today reflects more than material advancement—it embodies a strategic ambition to project an alternative vision of order, governance and global engagement.

The theme of this year's conference, **China's 'Dream' for a New Mandate of Power**, invites critical scrutiny of the evolving ideological, institutional and geopolitical foundations of China's contemporary statecraft under President Xi Jinping. The phrase "Mandate of Power" intentionally echoes the ancient Confucian principle of the Mandate of Heaven or *tianming* (天命), which conferred legitimacy upon rulers contingent on their ability to sustain order and deliver prosperity. In the modern context, this moral-political logic is being reimagined as a legitimating framework through which the Communist Party of China (CPC) seeks both domestic authority and international influence.

This year's conference interrogates how China is exporting a new model of global order — through state-led capitalism, infrastructure diplomacy, digital authority, controlled multilateralism—all framed under the ideological narrative of the "China Dream" (中国梦). This dream is not merely a nationalist project or a narrative of 'rejuvenation', but also a conceptual umbrella that asserts China's right to reshape the norms, hierarchies, and rules of the international system. China's assertive quest for a new mandate of power is reshaping that threshold—from territorial sovereignty conflicts in Asia to embedding its leadership in UN agencies and forging cross-continental influence through infrastructure-led statecraft. The conference will also critically examine how China's military modernization—anchored in strategic innovation, civil-military fusion, and expanding expeditionary capabilities—constitutes a central pillar of its broader mandate of power.

China's pursuit, however, is neither linear nor unchallenged. Its projection faces growing pushback across multiple frontiers: strategic contestation in the Indo-Pacific, ideological resistance from liberal democracies, structural vulnerabilities within its own economy, and increasing scrutiny from Global South actors wary of dependency and political leverage. These frictions invite a fundamental question: Is China's search for a "new mandate of power" sustainable—and if so, at what cost to the existing world order?

As the only China-focused annual conference in India rooted in both strategic studies and political sociology, GCNS embodies ORCA's intellectual mission: to craft a new vocabulary of China analysis that is theoretically rigorous, policy-relevant, and globally engaged. In 2025, GCNS aims to move beyond the binaries of cooperation versus containment and instead frame China as a complex, evolving node in a system of competing mandates. It is not merely about what China is, but what China wants to become—and what that ambition demands of the rest of the world.

This year's GCNS 2025 will follow ORCA's distinctive structure, combining Thematic Panels, Roundtables, Keynote Addresses, Experts' Dialogues and Closed-door Roundtables. This amalgamated format is ideated with the vision of promoting cross-disciplinary dialogue and enabling policy-academic synergy—hallmarks of the GCNS tradition.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: DAY 1

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM — REGISTRATION

(Open All Day)

9:00 AM - 9:10 AM — WELCOME REMARKS

by **Ms. Eerishika Pankaj**

Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi

9:10 AM - 9:20 AM — IIC WELCOME REMARKS

by **Amb. Shyam Saran**

Former Foreign Secretary of India; President, India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi

9:20 AM - 9:40 AM — OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by **Dr. Andrew Scobell**

Distinguished Fellow, United States Institute of Peace; Adjunct Professor,

Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, USA

The Mandate Reimagined: China's Strategic Thinking Behind the Architecture of its Rise

How does the “China Dream” fuse historical grievance, strategic determinism, and regime legitimacy into a comprehensive global posture? This keynote will explore how China's quest for a "new mandate of power" is animated by deeply rooted strategic-cultural logics, the political centrality of the PLA, and evolving perceptions of threat and legitimacy. Framed against the backdrop of China's civil-military fusion, assertive diplomacy and shifting threat perceptions, this keynote will assess what is the PLA's evolving role as a barometer of China's global ambitions—and its internal insecurities. The address will set the tone for the conference by weaving together ideological, strategic, and normative dimensions of China's behavior.

9:40 AM - 9:45 AM — CLOSING OF OPENING SESSION

by **Ms. Eerishika Pankaj**

Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi

9:45 AM - 10:15 AM: MORNING TEA

10:15 AM - 1:00 PM	SESSION I HOW DOES CHINA PLAN, PREPARE AND IMPLEMENT ITS VISION?
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10:15 AM – 11:25 AM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Chronopolitics with Chinese Characteristics: Strategic Patience, Acceleration and Temporal Power
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The panel investigates how the CPC manipulates temporal scales – speed, sequencing, patience and continuity – as instruments of governance and strategy. China’s rise is not just spatial/material, but temporalized through visions of historical destiny, long-term planning and strategic delay. Domestically, this is visible via vision-setting campaigns (2 Centennials, 2049 Dream), cadre promotion cycles, 5-year plans, and the staging of national rejuvenation as historical inevitability. A crucial dimension of this chronopolitics is China’s approach to rare earth supply chains which relies on restricting access and shaping industrial dependency without triggering immediate escalation. Externally, infrastructure projects with multi-decade time horizons, norm-building in slow-burning multilateral platforms and patient accumulation of influence in multiregional theaters (such as Pacific Islands and Central Asia) showcase such manifestations. Moreover, the panel explores how China practices strategic patience—delaying disputes like Taiwan and the LAC - while slowly changing ground realities using dual-use infrastructure as quiet power projection, and timing strategies to send signals to challenge its competitors. By unpacking how China governs time, this panel will reveal subtle dimensions of power: the ability to define when change happens, how fast and on whose terms.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty (Moderator)	Opening Remarks: Significance of Planning in Chinese Strategic Culture: Sign of Confidence or Hedging Against Uncertainty Closing Remarks: Challenges and Realities of Attaining Centennial Targets	Distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi
Ms. Neha Mishra	Politics of Future-Proofing Rare Earths and Scientific Planning	Associate Fellow, Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies (CAPSS), New Delhi

Dr. Bali Deepak	Bureaucratic Clockwork: How China Plans, Defers and Accelerates Governance	Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli	Chronostrategy in Military Modernization and the Art of Strategic Patience	Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Dr. Yu Hong	China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Geopolitics of Long-Term Engagements	Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore

11:25 AM - 12:10 PM	EXPERTS' DIALOGUE	Mapping China's Economic Diplomacy: Between Strategic Assertiveness and Tactical Adaptation
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This dialogue explores how China modulates its economic diplomacy based on regional power asymmetry, systemic constraints and shifting geopolitical alignments. Moreover, in the face of global economic uncertainty, China's engagements have adapted to relative power shifts and systemic pressures, with an aim to signal China's global economic leadership. Whether it is managing competitive interdependence with stronger actors like the EU and the US, or offering concessional infrastructure and recalibrating debt terms in distressed economies in the Global South, Beijing's diplomatic strategies are calibrated to secure economic interests unique to each region. A major part of China's foreign policy strategy, particularly in emerging markets, is forging economic linkages through regional forums such as CELAC and FOCAC as well as institutions like Boao Forum for Asia and SCO, which help institutionalize its economic diplomacy. This Experts' Dialogue will interrogate the duality of economics and diplomatic practice, assessing the use of incentives, conditionalities and normative messaging across regions, and will draw lessons for other states like India engaging with an increasingly adaptive China.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
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Dr. Shino Watanabe	China's strategy to navigate tariffs, sanctions and market restrictions - China's market control tactics in emerging economies of Asia, Africa and Latin America - Impact of domestic economic constraints on its external financing behavior - Role of China's development-lending architecture in securing its economic interests	Professor, Faculty of Global Studies, Sophia University, Japan
Dr. Jagannath Panda	China's use of forum diplomacy to advance foreign policy goals - Role of regional and multilateral platforms in promoting economic interests - Narratives of cooperation and sovereignty in China's diplomatic messaging - Strategic behavior in contexts of relative weakness versus superiority - Lessons for India, ASEAN and other regional actors engaging with China	Head, Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Sweden

12:10 PM- 1:00 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Invisible Architectures in the CPC Playbook: Symbols, Values and Rhetoric
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China's internal architectures of power are critical foundations of its national strength, which fuse symbolic authority, identity construction, and transnational influence. This panel discussion foregrounds how the Communist Party of China (CPC) institutionalizes the ritual aesthetics of Party authority—from congresses and parades to inspection tours and centennial commemorations—as performative tools that produce a domestically resonant narrative of legitimacy. It also unpacks how the Party emphasises identity formation through mechanisms like the Social Credit System and ideological education. It focuses on the construction of an "ideal citizen" calibrated for obedience, morality and cultural conformity. Lastly, the panel explores how Party and state institutions present China's normative and policy offerings on the global stage. Such efforts are reinforced by the Chinese diaspora and state-controlled media platforms, which disseminate carefully curated narratives of China's global role, in line with internal ideological imperatives. This panel will shed light on the operation of China's invisible power architectures and their impact on Chinese society and the world.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Rajiv Ranjan (Moderator)	<p><u>Opening Remarks:</u> Evolving Instruments of China's Domestic Legitimacy Amidst Structural Challenges</p> <p><u>Closing Remarks:</u> Implications of China's Ideological Control Tools on its Global Credibility</p>	Associate Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, Delhi University, New Delhi
Dr. Sriparna Pathak	Rituals of Power: Symbols, Speeches, and the Aesthetics of Legitimacy	Professor and the Director of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, Delhi NCR
Dr. Jacqueline Zhenru Lin	Identity, Morality and Social Credit: Shaping an Ideal Citizen with Chinese Characteristics	Research Assistant Professor, Centre for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong, China
Dr. Andrew Chubb	Vectors of Global Narratives: The Role of Party Organs, Diaspora and Media	Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

1:00 PM- 2:00 PM: Lunch

2:00 PM - 5:30 PM	<u>SESSION II</u> WHAT PATTERNS OF GLOBAL CHANGE EMERGE FROM CHINA’S RISE?
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2:00 PM - 2:35 PM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS	Mandates and Multilateralism: China’s Power Play at the United Nations
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This keynote examines how China leverages its position within the UN system—through the Security Council, peacekeeping roles, and leadership in agencies like WHO, FAO, UNESCO and ITU—to consolidate global influence and reshape international norms. It explores how Beijing challenges liberal multilateralism by embedding its political logic within global institutions, from traditional diplomacy to emerging domains like digital governance. It also invites reflection on normative contestation/agenda setting within multilateral institutions and how China has sought to reshape global governance architectures from within. The speaker will reflect on these shifts from the vantage point of India’s own multilateral diplomacy, offering insights into how rising contestations over mandates and norms are redefining the future of global order.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Amb. Ruchira Kamboj	Mandates and Multilateralism: China’s Power Play at the United Nations	Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at New York; Former Ambassador of India to Bhutan

2:35 PM - 3:40 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	India-China in the Global South and the Contest for a New Mandate
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This panel will evaluate both India and China’s evolving foreign policy approaches towards the Global South and explore how their strategic doctrines shape their political, economic and ideological engagements within the region. As both countries seek to present themselves as champions of Southern interests in a shifting global order, their policies are increasingly tested not only within proximate regions but also in more distant theatres of influence. Moving beyond simplistic binaries of great power rivalry, this panel will interrogate the strategic choices, institutional instruments, and narrative tools deployed by both states to project leadership, craft legitimacy and institutionalize their presence. At the same time, the panel also assesses the agency of Global South actors highlighting how such countries are strategizing amidst competing developmental frameworks as well as how local elites, institutions and informal networks navigate, adapt to, or contest these overtures.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Stanly Johny (Moderator)	<p><u>Opening Remarks:</u> Developing the South: India, China, and the Contest for a New Mandate</p> <p><u>Closing Remarks:</u> Consensus and Competition: The Future of India, China in the Global South</p>	International Affairs Editor, The Hindu, Chennai
Dr. Bhagya Senaratne	The Global South’s Strategy Amidst Competing Developmental Frameworks	Director of Education, Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka
Dr. Zheng Anguang	The Indo-Pacific in China's Global South Imagination: Narratives, Initiatives and Power	Professor and Director, Institute of International Studies, Nanjing University, China

Dr. Yanitha Meena Louis	Perspectives of the Global South: Navigating the Contours of India and China's Engagement in the Developing World	Analyst, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia
Amb. Ujal Singh Bhatia	India's Development Diplomacy and the Geoeconomics of its Global South Engagement	Former Ambassador of India to the WTO; Former Chairman of the WTO's Appellate Body

3:40 PM - 4:25 PM	EXPERTS' DIALOGUE	Beyond Borders, Across Waters: China's Strategic Mediation and Maritime Power Projection
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This dialogue unpacks how China’s diplomatic engagements in continental conflict zones and its maritime infrastructure expansion are part of a coherent strategy of influence projection. It explores the dual strategies through which China is reshaping its external relations: through conflict mediation diplomacy across geopolitical hotspots and the material expansion of maritime influence. The session traces how Beijing is positioning itself as a neutral peacemaker in conflicts spanning the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and Northeast Asia—mediating border disputes, civil wars and insurgencies with a carefully managed image of constructive neutrality. At the same time, China’s maritime expansion—via infrastructure development, forward deployments, and lawfare—has rendered oceans as theatres of sovereignty assertion and geoeconomic control, and has evoked multi-pronged responses from Southeast Asian countries.

The conversation critically engages with the normative, spatial, and strategic logics behind these practices. It evaluates the extent to which China's mediation efforts are genuinely stabilizing or strategically instrumentalized to gain long-term footholds, while juxtaposing these with the coercive and infrastructural mechanisms through which maritime access and authority are consolidated. Together, the dialogue highlights how China’s approach to diplomacy is no longer confined to the realm of words and treaties, but is deeply interwoven with physical geography and maritime presence.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Jennifer Staats	China's distinctive approach to third-party mediation in regional conflicts - Strategic interests behind mediation, from resources to reconstruction access - Balancing neutrality with economic and infrastructural stakes - Reputational trade-offs of China's "responsible major power" image	Senior Political Scientist and Associate Director, China Research Center, RAND Corporation, USA
Dr. Christian Schultheiss	Interlinkages between China's conflict mediation and maritime presence - Maritime infrastructure, port diplomacy, and symbolic influence in the Indo-Pacific - "Blue economic corridors" and the integration of connectivity with strategic depth - Regional responses to China's maritime assertiveness and shifting power hierarchies	Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Germany

4:25 PM - 5:30 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Power, Legitimacy and the Domestic Foundations of China's Global Strategy
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China's global ambitions are increasingly rooted in a domestic narrative of rejuvenation, innovation and strategic coherence under Xi Jinping's leadership. This panel interrogates the interplay between internal legitimacy-building and external projection of power, unpacking how the Party-State crafts and sustains China's rise through intertwined political, economic, legal and military instruments. The "China Dream" serves not only as an ideological anchor but also as a legitimizing force that binds the populace to the Party's strategic goals. Simultaneously, China is constructing digital corridors of influence that mirror by investing in submarine cables and data centres in efforts to strengthen its hold on the global digital commons. These efforts are propelled by a techno-nationalist governance model that promotes Chinese standards and cultivates 'invisible interdependencies'. At the strategic level, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) plays a crucial role in operationalizing the Party's vision through the Global Security Initiative, functioning as both a deterrent and an instrument of influence. Together, this panel discussion will

explore how China's global strategy is fundamentally underpinned by efforts to consolidate domestic authority.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Mr. Rahul Karan Reddy (Moderator)	<p><u>Opening Remarks:</u> Framing Domestic Power as the Bedrock of China's Global Strategy</p> <p><u>Closing Remarks:</u> Implications of China's Domestic Policies on its Global Ambitions</p>	Senior Research Associate, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi
Dr. Sundaram Rajasimman	Reimagining Power: The Narrative of Xi's China Dream	Lecturer, Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, China
Ms. Asha Hemrajani	Infrastructure, Actors and Global Implications of China's Digital Connectivity	Senior Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore
Dr. Anton Harder	National Unity and Power Projection: Role of Ethnic Governance in China's Diplomacy	Guest Lecturer, Department of International History, The London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
Lt. Gen. SL Narasimhan	PLA as the Strategic Enabler of the Party's Global Security Initiative	Former Director General, Centre for Contemporary China Studies; Adjunct Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai

5:30 PM - 6:00 PM : Evening Tea

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: DAY 2

***(CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION UNDER
CHATHAM HOUSE RULES - INVITE ONLY)***

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM — REGISTRATION

(Open All Day)

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

ROUNDTABLE I

**Contours of Confrontation: Forecasting India-China
Security Landscape**

Discussants (in no particular order)

- Dr. Jagannath Panda, Head, Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Sweden
- Lt. Gen. SL Narasimhan, Former Director General, Centre for Contemporary China Studies; Adjunct Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai
- Mr. Abhijit Singh, Retired naval officer and former Head, Maritime Policy Initiative, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi
- Dr. Andrew Scobell, Distinguished Fellow, United States Institute of Peace; Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, USA
- Dr. Andrew Chubb, Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University, United Kingdom
- Dr. Nisha Taneja, Professor and Lead for Trade, Investment and External Relations (TIER), Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), New Delhi
- Ms. Antara Ghosal Singh, China Fellow, Strategic Studies Programme, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

11:00 AM - 11:30 AM: MORNING TEA

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	ROUNDTABLE II	Decoding China's Strategic Posture Across Geopolitical Flashpoints
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Discussants (in no particular order)

- Prof. Sukh Deo Muni, Professor Emeritus, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Dr. Shino Watanabe, Professor, Faculty of Global Studies, Sophia University, Japan
- Dr. Stanly Johny, International Affairs Editor, The Hindu, Chennai
- Dr. Jennifer Staats, Senior Political Scientist and Associate Director, China Research Centre, RAND Corporation, USA
- Dr. Christian Schultheiss, Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Germany
- Dr. Tara Kartha, Former Director, National Security Council Secretariat, and current Director (Research), Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi
- Dr. Aleksei Zakharov, Fellow, Strategic Studies Programme, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM: LUNCH

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	ROUNDTABLE III	Minilateralism, Multipolarity, and China's Indo-Pacific Response
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Discussants (in no particular order)

- Ms. Eerishika Pankaj, Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi

- Dr. Sundaram Rajasimman, Lecturer, Sichuan International Studies University, Chongqing, China
- Dr. Yanitha Meena Louis, Analyst, Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), Malaysia
- Dr. Zheng Anguang, Professor and Director, Institute of International Studies, Nanjing University, China
- Dr. Bhagya Senaratne, Director of Education, Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Cmde. Anil Jai Singh, Senior Vice President, Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems India, and Vice President and Head, Indian Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
- Dr. Yu Hong, Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM

**ROUNDTABLE
IV**

**Consolidating Control: Party Power and
Governance Dynamics in Xi Jinping's China**

Discussants (in no particular order)

- Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli, Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Mr. Ratish Mehta, Senior Research Associate at Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi
- Ms. Asha Hemrajani, Senior Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore
- Ms. Shikha Aggarwal, Former Visiting Fellow, National Chengchi University, Taiwan
- Dr. Jacqueline Zhenru Lin, Research Assistant Professor, Centre for China Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong, China
- Mr. Rahul Karan Reddy, Senior Research Associate at Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi
- Dr. Tilak Jha, Associate Professor, Times School of Media, Bennett University, Delhi NCR

5:00 PM - 5:30 PM: EVENING TEA

5:30 PM - 6:45 PM

SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE

Evolving Dynamism of China's Trans-Himalayan
Security Strategy

Discussants (in no particular order)

- Ms. Eerishika Pankaj, Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi
- Dr. Medha Bisht, Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi
- Dr. Bali Deepak, Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Dr. Anton Harder, Guest Lecturer, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom

6:45 PM - 7:00 PM — CLOSING REMARKS

by Ms. Eerishika Pankaj,

Director, Organisation for Research on China and Asia (ORCA), New Delhi

7:00 PM ONWARDS - DINNER
