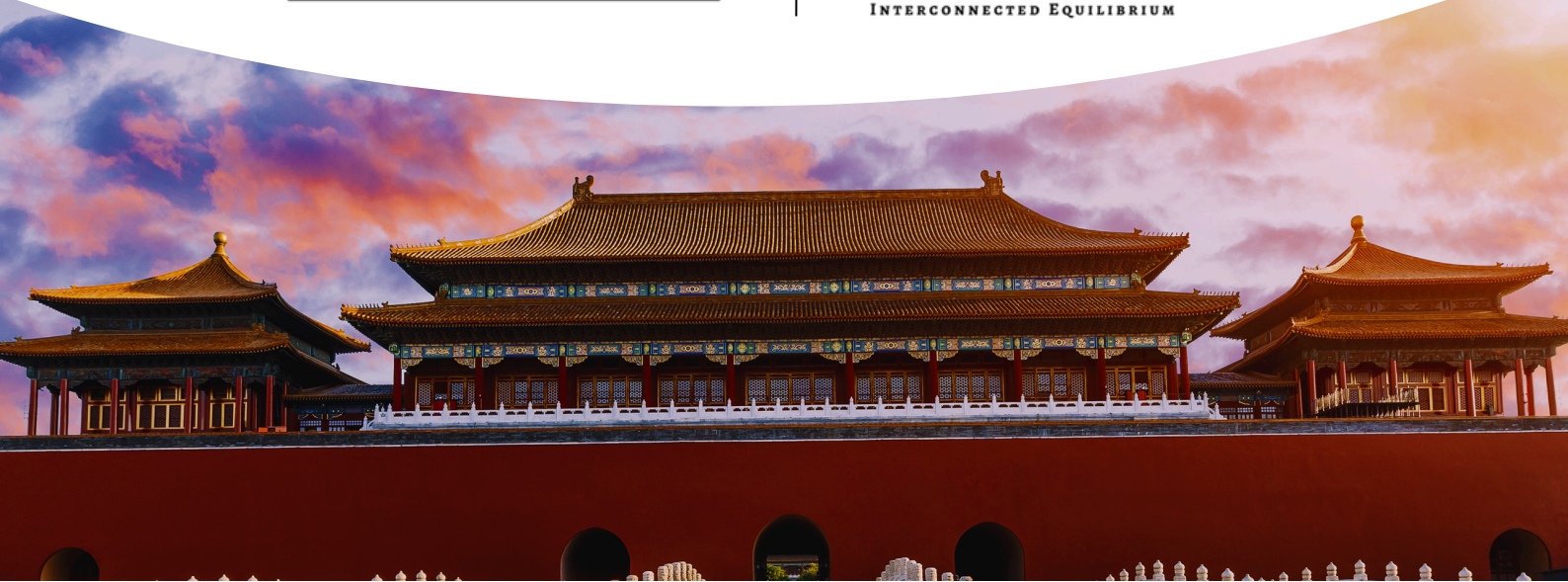




PRESENTING THE FOURTH EDITION OF ORCA'S
GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON NEW SINOLGY (GCNS) 2026
ON THE THEME OF

ZÌLÌ GÈNGSHÈNG IN AN ERA OF 'GREAT CHANGES UNSEEN'



27TH - 29TH SEPTEMBER 2026



INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (IIC), NEW DELHI



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ORCA's Global Conference on New Sinology (GCNS) 2026

27th-29th September 2026

Venue: India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi

Theme: *Zìlì Gēngshēng* in an Era of 'Great Changes Unseen'

Link to the GCNS website: <https://orcasia.org/pages/gcns2026>

GCNS 2026 Concept Note

China today stands at the intersection of profound domestic transformation and an increasingly volatile international order. From technological competition and supply chain fragmentation to demographic transitions, economic restructuring and intensifying geopolitical rivalry, Beijing increasingly characterises the contemporary international environment as one marked by “great changes unseen in a century” (百年未有之大变局). Although the phrase predates the presidency of Xi Jinping, it is under his leadership that it has become one of the defining frameworks through which the Communist Party of China (CPC) interprets the contemporary international order. Originally articulated by Chinese political scientist Yuan Peng in 2009, the concept was elevated into the strategic lexicon by Xi in 2017. It has since been incorporated into the broader architecture of Xi Jinping Thought post the 19th Party Congress, presenting a clear example of analytical assessment transforming into ideological dictum via which Zhongnanhai understands the shifting global balance of power.

It is also within this worldview that *zìlì gēngshēng* (自力更生)-- which translates to "regeneration through one's own effort" or more simply, self-reliance-- has acquired renewed strategic significance. Originally articulated during the revolutionary period as a principle of political survival and national reconstruction, *zìlì gēngshēng* has undergone successive reinterpretations across different phases of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Now embedded within contemporary policy as seen in the 15th Five-Year Plan, the phrase is not confined to revolutionary rhetoric but rather used to push forward frameworks governing scientific innovation, military modernisation, new quality productive forces, social norms and more. The concept increasingly informs Beijing's

efforts to navigate external pressures/constraints while concurrently reshaping China's developmental and global positioning within what it defines as an era of great changes unseen in a century.

The Fourth Edition of the Global Conference on New Sinology (GCNS) seeks to examine the contemporary meanings, applications and implications of *zìlì gēngshēng* across China's internal and external behaviours within the broader framework of great changes unseen in a century. Moving beyond conventional interpretations of *zìlì gēngshēng* as 'self-reliance' that translates into economic or political autarky, the conference will explore how the concept in its true form-- regeneration through one's own effort-- is reshaping elite politics, Party ideology, state-market relations, technological governance, military strategy, regional diplomacy and China's engagement with the Global South in an age of systemic transformations.

Bringing together sinologists, scholars, policymakers, diplomats, practitioners, industry experts and researchers from around the world, GCNS 2026 continues with its aim to foster interdisciplinary dialogue on the intellectual foundations of Chinese statecraft in New Delhi. Through discussions and debates spanning politics, economics, security, technology, foreign policy, society, military and strategic affairs, the conference will aim to deepen the understanding of how China is adapting to an era it defines as one of great changes unseen in a century, and how *zìlì gēngshēng* is shaping its vision for navigating the uncertainties of the decade.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: DAY 0 (27TH SEPTEMBER)

6:30 PM Onwards: Fireside Chat & Welcome Dinner (The Grand Hotel, Delhi)

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
TBC	—	—

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: DAY 1 (28TH SEPTEMBER)

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM — REGISTRATION (Open All Day)

9:00 AM - 9:10 AM — OPENING REMARKS by **Ms. Eerishika Pankaj**

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

9:10 AM - 9:40 AM — KEYNOTE ADDRESS by **Prof. Kerry Brown**

Professor, Chinese Studies and Director, Lau China Institute, King's College London, UK

9:40 AM - 9:45 AM — CLOSING OF OPENING SESSION by **Ms. Eerishika Pankaj**

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

9:45 AM - 10:15 AM: Morning Tea

10:15 AM - 1:00 PM

**SESSION I: HOW IS CHINA'S SELF-RELIANCE INTEGRATED AND
IMPLEMENTED AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY?**

10:15 AM - 11:25 AM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Great Changes, Strategic Responses: China's Regeneration Playbook
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As China navigates what the Communist Party describes as an era of "great changes unseen in a century," it is increasingly developing new tools through which it interprets and responds to strategic uncertainty. This panel examines the centrality of *zili gengsheng* in China's contemporary statecraft by exploring how Party discourse, governance practices, foreign policy, economic management and artificial intelligence innovation are being remobilized to strengthen national resilience. Together, the discussions will highlight the comprehensive adaptation of domestic and external strategies to manage a contested international environment, offering insights into the ideas shaping China's regeneration efforts.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Mr. Kalpit A. Mankikar	<u>Opening Remarks:</u> <u>Closing Remarks:</u>	China Fellow, Strategic Studies Programme, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi
Dr. Ritu Agarwal	Narrating Social Stability Through Party Discourse	Associate Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Prof. Shin Kawashima	Unpacking Political Uncertainty and Risks of Leadership Transition in China	Professor of International Relations, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
Mr. Santosh Pai	Sustaining Self-Reliance Amidst Economic Headwinds	Partner, Dentons Link Legal, New Delhi
Dr. Qian Jiwei	China's AI Dominance Strategy Between Competition and Sovereignty	Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore

11:25 AM - 12:10 PM	EXPERTS' DIALOGUE	Signals Before Succession: Zhōngnánhǎi's Road to the 21st Party Congress
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As China approaches the 21st Party Congress in 2027, the question of who may eventually succeed Xi Jinping has emerged as one of the most consequential issues in contemporary Chinese politics. Xi's unprecedented concentration of power and the erosion of institutionalized succession norms have made leadership forecasting more complex than at any point in the reform era. While elite personnel reshuffles will inevitably attract significant attention from China watchers, the 21st Party Congress will also provide critical insights into the Communist Party of China's (CPC) broader political direction. This Experts' Dialogue will examine these political and policy signals to assess how the CPC is navigating questions of leadership continuity, institutional adaptation and long-term governance under Xi Jinping.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Jonghyuk Lee	● Xi's Challenge of Selecting Officials ● High-Level Leadership dynamics and Factional Balance ● Emerging Leaders/Stars ● Fate of Technocracy ● Future of Military and CMC Leadership	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy and Director, Sungkyun Institute of China Studies, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, South Korea
Ms. Han Yong Hong	● Policy Continuity and Transition/Flagship policies that may indicate successor ● Economic and Foreign Policy Outcomes/Implications Pre and Post Congress ● Internal and External Challenges Leading up to Party Congress ● How party's institutions are preparing for Party Congress and succession	Associate Editor, Lianhe Zaobao, Singapore

12:10 PM- 1:00 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Beijing's Self-Sufficient Architecture for a New Mandate of Power
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China's growing international influence is increasingly underpinned by institutions, doctrines and domestic actors that extend beyond the traditional instruments of diplomacy. As Beijing adapts to an uncertain external environment, it has invested in building an internal architecture capable of supporting its long-term strategic interests abroad. This panel examines how maritime posturing, subnational actors, public and private entities are

expanding China's capacity to shape its external environment, offering new perspectives on the relationship between domestic governance and international influence.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Rajiv Ranjan	<u>Opening Remarks:</u> <u>Closing Remarks:</u>	Associate Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi
Dr. Priyanka Pandit	Domestic Bases of Peripheral Power: Local Actors Advancing China's BRI	Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, Shiv Nadar University, Uttar Pradesh, India
Dr. Don McLain Gill	Sub-Conventional Instruments of China's Maritime Power Projection	Lecturer, Department of International Studies, De La Salle University, Philippines
Dr. Yu Hong	Public-Private Stakeholders in China's Global Connectivity Ambitions	Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore

1:00 PM- 2:00 PM: LUNCH

2:00 PM - 5:30 PM

SESSION II: HOW ARE CHINA'S DOMESTIC PRIORITIES AND FOREIGN POLICY SHAPING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER?

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM

EXPERTS' DIALOGUE

India-China in the 2020s: Lessons, Choices and the Bilateral's Global Significance

The India-China relationship in the 2020s is unfolding amid profound geopolitical change and growing uncertainty in the international system. As two major Asian powers, the trajectory of their bilateral ties will have significant implications for regional stability, economic integration and global governance. Following a decade marked by cooperation, competition, border tensions and cautious diplomatic re-engagement, the relationship

offers important lessons on managing strategic rivalry, sustaining diplomatic dialogue and rebuilding trust amid persistent differences. This experts’ dialogue will examine the lessons of the past, the policy choices confronting both countries today and the broader global significance of India-China relations. It will explore how the bilateral relationship interacts with shifting geopolitical dynamics, technological competition, evolving security challenges and economic transformation. The discussion will seek to unpack how the experience of the past decade has reshaped the strategic calculus of both New Delhi and Beijing, and the extent to which competition can be managed without foreclosing avenues for dialogue and engagement. It will further consider the choices confronting the two countries as they navigate persistent structural differences, and what the future management of their relationship could reveal about the prospects for strategic coexistence, regional stability and a genuinely multipolar order in Asia.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Jagannath Panda	• The Post-Galwan Strategic Paradigm • Border Stability and Strategic Trust • Crisis Management and Escalation Control • From Competitive Engagement to Armed Coexistence • Managing Asymmetry in India-China Relations • Multipolarity and Asian Order	Head, Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Sweden
Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli	• Deterrence, Military Posture and the LAC • Strategic Intentions and Threat Perceptions • The Limits of Bilateral Normalisation • Selective Engagement and Strategic De-risking • Competing Regional Visions • Soft Balancing and Strategic Partnerships • Economic Interdependence and Security Competition	Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

2:45 PM - 3:45 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Foreign Policy Institutions, Actors and Decision-Making in the New Era
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China's foreign policy is no longer the product of diplomacy alone. Under Xi Jinping, the CPC has fundamentally reconfigured the institutions, actors and decision-making processes that shape Beijing's engagement with the world. The growing centralisation of authority within the Party, the expansion of cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms and the integration of diplomatic, military, economic and political instruments have transformed

both the formulation and execution of foreign policy. At the same time, China's external engagement increasingly relies on a diverse ecosystem of Party organisations, state institutions, provincial governments, commercial entities and security actors that operate alongside traditional diplomatic channels. These institutional changes are underpinned by Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and the concept of a "New Type of International Relations," which together provide the ideological framework for China's external conduct. This panel will examine the institutional architecture, supporting actors, security dimensions and ideological foundations of Chinese foreign policy conduct, offering a deeper understanding of how Beijing conceptualises, coordinates and implements its diplomacy in an era of expanding global ambitions.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
TBD (Moderator)	<u>Opening Remarks:</u> <u>Closing Remarks:</u>	—
Prof. Zhao Minghao	Inside the Party-State Apparatus of China's Foreign Policy	Professor and Deputy Director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, China
Prof. Jiangnan Zhu	Anti-Corruption and Political Discipline in China's Foreign Affairs	Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Hong Kong, China
Dr. Zi Yang	The PLA and Security Dimensions in China's Foreign Policy Processes	Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore
Mr. Jayadeva Ranade	From Doctrine to Diplomacy: Xi Jinping Thought and the "New Type of International Relations"	President, Centre for China Analysis and Strategy (CCAS), New Delhi

3:45 PM- 4:20 PM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS	Peacemaker or Powerbroker? China's Crisis Management in an Era of Global Conflict
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As conflicts around the world continue to reshape the international order, China has sought to position itself as an increasingly active diplomatic and strategic actor. Although Beijing projects itself as a neutral advocate of political settlement, its responses are driven by a complex balance of geopolitical interests, economic priorities and security concerns. This keynote address will examine how China calibrates its diplomatic posture and material involvement across different conflict theatres, including Iran, Myanmar, Russia-Ukraine, Thailand-Cambodia, Israel-Palestine, Pakistan-Afghanistan and others. It will also analyse Beijing's diplomatic narratives, influence over conflicting

parties and the effectiveness of its mediation. The keynote aims to assess how Beijing is projecting itself as a credible crisis manager while also advancing its strategic interests.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
Dr. Miwa Hirono	Peacemaker or Powerbroker? China’s Crisis Management in an Era of Global Conflict	Professor, College of Global Liberal Arts and Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Japan

4:20 PM – 5:30 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION	Reading China’s 15th Five-Year Plan: Priorities for the Next Development Cycle
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As China embarks on its 15th Five-Year Plan, the blueprint offers a clear articulation of Beijing's vision for the country's next phase of development, setting priorities that will shape governance, economic transformation, national security and international engagement through 2030. The Plan serves as a strategic roadmap for navigating an increasingly complex domestic and external environment, detailing how the Chinese leadership seeks to pursue long-term developmental objectives. Hence, the 15th FYP is an internal playbook for resilience to immediate economic, political, military, and diplomatic challenges that are relevant to external audiences. This panel will examine what the 15th FYP indicates about China's evolving strategic direction and the policy choices set to define the next five years, offering a multidisciplinary assessment of the opportunities, constraints and trade-offs embedded within Beijing's agenda.

Speaker	Talk Topic	Designation
TBD (Moderator)	<u>Opening Remarks:</u> <u>Closing Remarks:</u>	—
Dr. Yao Yang	Deploying New Quality Productive Forces for High-Quality Development	Professor and Dean, Di-shui-hu Advanced Finance Institute (DAFI), Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, China
Lt. Gen. S. L. Narasimhan (Retd.)	Saving up for Security: Civil-Military Fusion and Integrated National Capabilities	Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai and Non- Resident Senior Associate, CSIS, Washington, D.C, U.S.A

Dr. Sriparna Pathak	Whither National Rejuvenation? Balancing Social Welfare and Governance Priorities	Professor, China Studies and International Relations, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana
Mr. Manoj Kewalramani	China's Global Development Initiative in an Era of Strategic Competition	Chairperson, Geostrategy Programme, Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru

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

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE: DAY 2 (29TH SEPTEMBER)

(Closed-door discussions to be held under Chatham House Rule)

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM — REGISTRATION

(Open All Day)

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM	SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE	Strategic Blind Spots: Challenging Conventional Wisdom on China
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Speakers (in no particular order)

- Dr. Yao Yang, Professor and Dean, Di-shui-hu Advanced Finance Institute (DAFI), Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, China
- Dr. Jagannath Panda, Head, Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs, Institute for Security & Development Policy, Sweden
- Dr. Miwa Hirono, Professor, College of Global Liberal Arts and Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Japan
- Prof. Kerry Brown, Professor, Chinese Studies and Director, Lau China Institute, King's College London, UK
- Prof. Jiangnan Zhu, Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Hong Kong, China

11:00 AM - 11:30 AM: MORNING TEA/NETWORKING BREAK

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	ROUNDTABLE I	China's Emerging Vectors of Regional Contestation in South Asia
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Speakers (in no particular order)

- Dr. Don McLain Gill, Lecturer, Department of International Studies, De La Salle University, Philippines
- Brig. Anshuman Narang (Retd.), Founder and Director, Atma Nirbhar Soch, New Delhi
- Dr. Yu Hong, Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore
- Prof. Kanti Bajpai, Visiting Professor, Department of International Relations, Ashoka University, Haryana
- Prof. Zhao Minghao, Professor and Deputy Director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, China
- Dr. Tara Kartha, Distinguished Fellow, United Service Institution of India and Former Director, National Security Council Secretariat

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM: LUNCH

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	ROUNDTABLE II	Domestic Impediments to China's Self-Strengthening
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Speakers (in no particular order)

- Ms. Han Yong Hong, Associate Editor, Lianhe Zaobao, Singapore
- Dr. Jonghyuk Lee, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, and Director, Sungkyun Institute of China Studies, Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea
- Prof. Shin Kawashima, Professor, International Relations, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo, Japan
- Dr. Qian Jiwei, Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore
- Ms. Antara Ghosal Singh, China Fellow, Strategic Studies Programme, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi
- Mr. Manoj Kewalramani, Chairperson, Geostrategy Programme, Takshashila Institution, Bengaluru

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM: AFTERNOON TEA/NETWORKING BREAK

3:45 PM - 5:15 PM	ROUNDTABLE III	Towards 2027 and Beyond: Evaluating China's Next Phase of Military Modernisation
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Speakers (in no particular order)

- Air Marshal (Dr.) Diptendu Choudhury (Retd.), Former Commandant, National Defence College, New Delhi
- Dr. Roshan Khanijo, Director (Projects & Events), Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi
- Dr. Manpreet Sethi, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies (CAPSS)
- Lt. Gen. S. L. Narasimhan (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, Mumbai and Non-Resident Senior Associate, CSIS, Washington D C, U.S.A.
- Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli, Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- Rear Admiral K. Raja Menon (Retd.), Former Indian Navy Officer and Submarine Specialist, New Delhi
- Dr. Zi Yang, Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore

5:15 PM - 5:30 PM — CLOSING REMARKS

by **Ms. Eerishika Pankaj**

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

5:30 PM - 6:00 PM: EVENING TEA/NETWORKING BREAK
