

A photograph showing a person's hand pointing at a wall covered with several sticky notes. The notes contain handwritten text, including the words "SHORT CUTS" and "ELOSE". The image is partially obscured by a dark grey banner at the bottom left.

CSSAME Viewpoints

Perceptions of Xi's China

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ABOUT

CASSME Viewpoints is the second newsletter series from the Center for Studies of South Asia and the Middle East (CASSME). Here, we cover policy issues regarding Taiwan-South Asia relations. The aim is to invite scholars and young researches from South Asia and Taiwan to present their views on the current and past political, economic and social developments and similar issues relevant to Taiwan- South Asia relations. The idea is to represent scholars' various perspectives related to a special focused theme in each issue.

Each issue aims to inform, create debate and deliver prospective outlooks and policy recommendations. Thus all opinions, statements and thoughts are welcomed and represented. We particularly welcome your feedback and suggestions to keep progressing with our initiative.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Executive Summary

Along side the COVID-19 outbreak last year, Xi's China remained a major source of concern for its neighbors on both side; i.e. India and Taiwan. On one hand, India faced illegal Chinese intrusion along the western sector of disputed Line of Control, while on other, Taiwan witnessed the highest number of airspace intrusion since its democratic transition. Focused on these increased aggressive posturing of China around its neighborhood, this issue attempts to reflect on the changing perception of China under Xi's leadership.

In the first article, author Rudroneel Ghosh, concisely, traces Indian leadership's changing view of China since president Xi's first official visit to India in 2014. He looks at three phases - from 2013 to 2015, from 2016 to 2018, and 2019 till date - to track New Delhi's evolving viewpoint, policy responses and the Indian public perception. He points out that the hopes of meaningful economic cooperation have taken a backseat in face of Beijing's non-reciprocity and outright disrespect for India's sovereignty. It has become increasingly difficult to find a friendship between the nationalistic India and China. The second article by Dr Chein Fu- Chen also reflects on the constant deviation between Xi's rhetoric of 'win-win cooperation' and 'mutual respect' and his real actions surrounding the sovereignty issues. He elaborates on the domestic motivations behind Xi's international promises and the idea of China being the core leader as a driving force. In his opinion, today's Taiwan takes each and every promise of Beijing with a pinch of salt.

INDIA'S CHINA CONUNDRUM: THE STRATEGIC POWER PLAY WITH THE NEIGHBOUR

Rudroneel Ghosh

There's no denying that India-China relations today are marked by uncertainty, distrust and considerable lack of understanding. It's clear that both sides have been misreading each other for quite some time. Perhaps such a situation is inevitable when one has the world's largest democracy and the world's largest communist nation as neighbors. India has never fully been able to shed the baggage of its 1962 war with China. However, growing bilateral economic ties in the last decade and a half had temporarily pushed this to the background. In fact, for a brief moment, there were talks of an Asian century propelled by India-China cooperation. But those hopes lie in tatters today, and the old psychological wounds have resurfaced with the border standoff between the two militaries over the last ten months.

In that sense, Xi Jinping's tenure as the leader of the People's Republic of China has thrown all assumptions about New Delhi-Beijing ties to the wind. This paper, which aims to analyze the Indian perspective of Xi's China, looks at three phases – from 2013 to 2015, from 2016 to 2018, and 2019 till date – to track New Delhi's evolving viewpoint, policy responses and the Indian public perception.

Phase I: Consensus Leaders and Pragmatic Cooperation

When Xi Jinping was nominated to take over the reins of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government in 2012-13, there was little inkling that he would turn out to be one of the most consequential leaders of modern China. Newspapers in India^[1] used terms like 'princeling' and 'consensus candidate' to describe Xi's rise. Around that time, the primary Indian concerns – much like today – revolved around the People's Liberation Army (PLA) incursions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that serves as the de facto border between India and China. In April 2013, a platoon-sized contingent of PLA set up camp at Raki Nula at the Depsang Plains area of Ladakh-Aksai Chin. The incursion was 19km inside what India considers its side of the LAC. The standoff lasted for three weeks and finally resulted in the restoration of status quo ante in the area with the Chinese troops withdrawing. The episode was put down as yet another fallout of the un-demarcated LAC, differing perceptions of the boundary, and at best

signaling from the new Xi regime that it was interested in raising the priority level of the boundary question^[2].

However, there was yet another Chinese intrusion in Ladakh's Chumar -- in September 2014, which astonishingly coincided with Xi's three-day visit to India that month. The face-off between the Indian army and PLA troops was live even as Xi met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bilateral talks. Given the circumstances, Modi was forced to raise the issue of the intrusion at least twice^[3] with Xi during their interaction. On both occasions, Xi assured that he had told the PLA to stand down. But the Chinese troops did not completely pull back till Xi was back in Beijing. The episode was initially read as a huge challenge for the then newly inaugurated Modi government. Yet, like before, the Chumar episode again came to be seen as an unfortunate result of the un-demarcated India-China border and both governments' inability to resolve this issue quickly.

At the time, it was believed that India-China relations hadn't reached a point where either government could compromise on territorial claims. And without this, resolving the border wasn't feasible. After Chumar, Xi's restructuring of the Chinese armed forces^[4] did raise some eyebrows, but they were seen as internal adjustments to assert his leadership authority over PLA. Thus, overall, despite the military standoffs in 2013 and 2014, the perception of Xi in India was that he was still trying to assert his authority over China's internal state organs. Xi's vast anti-corruption campaign in China had some resonance in India with Modi's own political platform of providing clean governance and fighting corruption and black money^[5]. Therefore, there was some hope that given their leadership style, Modi and Xi themselves could work out a modus vivendi to boost India-China ties. This hope was reflected in Modi's visit to China in May 2015, where the two sides inked 24 agreements of cooperation^[6].

Phase II: Growing Economic Complementarity with A Sting in The Tail

In this phase, there was considerable momentum in the development of India-China economic ties. Since Modi's rise to power, Chinese FDI inflows started booming-- most likely propelled by his visit to China in 2015. For the financial year 2015, FDI from China jumped to \$505 million. In fact, in the dozen years from 2000-2012, FDI inflows from China totaled around \$133.88 million, while the amount from April 2014 to March 2019 totaled \$1.81 billion^[7].

Plus, the most visible Chinese economic impact has been in the Indian mobile phone sector, where Chinese brands have been dominating since 2017. In fact, smartphone shipment data for 2020 shows Chinese companies control 75% of the Indian market, with leading Chinese smartphone brand Xiaomi registering a 13% year-on-year growth ^[8]. This has had huge socio-political ramifications in India, empowering millions of people to voice their opinions through smartphones and social media platforms. This telecom revolution in India simply wouldn't have been possible without the influx of affordable entry-level Chinese smartphones.

Additionally, in the period between 2016 to 2019, Chinese investments in Indian start-ups increased by 12 times from \$381 million (2016) to \$4.6 billion (2019) ^[9]. This statistic is important because the Modi government had been encouraging the start-up culture in India. And until before India-China border tensions escalated in June 2020, a large number of Indian start-ups were eyeing Chinese funds.

However, despite the upswing in economic ties during this period, political tensions continued to simmer between the two countries. Three particular episodes stuck out. First was China's seemingly neutral position on the terror attack in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir, on an Indian army brigade headquarters that led to the deaths of 19 soldiers on 18th September 2016. India responded by carrying out surgical strikes against terror launch-pads across the Line of Control – the de facto India-Pakistan border in the majority of Jammu & Kashmir state. But China's insistence in the aftermath of the terror attack that India and Pakistan resolve their differences themselves through dialogue ^[10] was interpreted in India as Beijing's all-weather support for Islamabad. Plus, China's continued blocking of India's then bid to get Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed's chief Masood Azhar designated as a terrorist by the UN was seen as treachery by the Indian public ^[11]. After all, India had blamed Jaish-e-Mohammed for the Uri terror attack and here was China seemingly taking Pakistan's side and shielding a terror mastermind.

Second, India in May 2016 applied for the membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). However, China was and continues to be a big stumbling block for India's aspirations here. China has previously talked about a two-step process for allowing countries that aren't signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to join the NSG ^[12]. However, this has merely been perceived as stonewalling on the part of Beijing. Plus, the fact that Pakistan too applied for NSG membership following India and China has been hinting at treating both applications on an even footing once again raised suspicions that Beijing will always back Islamabad against New Delhi.

The third and the most visible point of difference during this period was the Doklam standoff at the tri-junction of India, Bhutan and China in 2017. While the Doklam area has been a matter of dispute between Bhutan and China, India's decision to block Chinese road construction activity here – the spark for the standoff – on behalf of ally Bhutan again raised tensions between New Delhi and Beijing. China saw any dispute over Doklam as purely between itself and Bhutan and therefore viewed India's involvement as uncalled for. However, New Delhi articulated its response as defending its ally Bhutan, resisting China's unilateral activities to change the status quo in the tri-junction area, and defending its vulnerable Siliguri Corridor – a narrow strip of land about 22 km in width that connects India's northeast region with the rest of the country. Many Indian strategic security experts believed that China's Doklam move was meant to put pressure on the Siliguri Corridor^[13].

However, others believed that India's Siliguri Corridor concerns were overblown and that the Chinese PLA would be foolhardy to try and mount an attack here given India's formidable military formations in this region and populated areas. In any case, the Doklam standoff, which was eventually resolved after 72 days, soured relations between the Modi government and Beijing. And unlike before, when New Delhi was willing to give Xi the benefit of the doubt as a new Chinese leader, Doklam simply couldn't be justified from the Indian point of view as Xi's military reorganization was well underway now.

The mood in the Indian government towards Xi's China started changing, as evidenced by New Delhi's decision to stay away from Beijing's first Belt and Road Forum in 2017. India had been signaling its reluctance to join BRI for some time before that point. Initially, the reason was a lack of adequate consultation between the two sides. This soon morphed into New Delhi's objections over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project – a key part of BRI – that passes through Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir. India sees CPEC – as the Pakistan-based corridor is called – as an affront to its sovereign rights over Kashmir and a blatant disregard for its sensitivities by China. Indeed, India's then foreign secretary – and current foreign minister – S Jaishankar told the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi in March 2016 that connectivity projects (read BRI) that don't follow consultative processes and seen by some countries (read China) as hard-wiring that influences choices are problematic^[14]. This view became New Delhi's dominant view of BRI and Xi's China after Doklam.

Thus we see that even though economic investments from China into India during this period saw a significant uptick, political issues created substantial hurdles in India-China relations. The Chinese

reaction after the Uri terror attack, China's blocking of Masood Azhar's terror listing, Beijing's stonewalling of New Delhi's NSG membership, and the Chinese disregard for Indian sensitivities over CPEC all contributed to the feeling that China wanted to strategically subjugate India by using Pakistan. And India decided to take a stand against the perceived Chinese designs at Doklam – which is actually Bhutanese territory according to New Delhi – and by repudiating Beijing's BRI. The message was clear: despite immense economic complementarities, India was not going to compromise its strategic interests while dealing with China.

Phase III: Geopolitical Headwinds and Growing Distrust

It is in this phase that global events started playing a big role in shaping India-China relations and coloring Indian views about Xi's China. As mentioned earlier, India's perspective about China was coming around to the view that Beijing will support Islamabad to strategically hem in New Delhi. In other words, it was felt that China doesn't treat India as an equal and will certainly not abandon Pakistan despite the latter's complicity in sheltering anti-India terrorists. Neither was Beijing going to support New Delhi's participation in international forums like the NSG. In such a scenario, the need was felt to cultivate some strategic depth against China's assertive tactics. It is against this backdrop that the US under then-president Donald Trump started applying pressure on China through a trade war.

Trump's decision to start applying tariffs and trade barriers on China in 2018 to reduce Washington's trade deficit with Beijing had a certain resonance in India. After all, the India-China trade imbalance -- New Delhi's deficit with Beijing was \$48.66 billion in 2019-20 -- too is glaring, and the talks of reducing this deficit have been around for some time. Initially, the Modi government's strategy was to manage the deficit by attracting investments from China. But with the deficit remaining high, coupled with the political issues between the two sides, the trade imbalance became a strategic problem for India.

Meanwhile, China's aggressive tactics in the South China Sea, which had continued despite the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling (2016) rejecting Beijing's so-called Nine-Dash Line historical maritime claims, could no longer be ignored. The free and open Indo-Pacific concept started gaining traction amongst fears that China was aiming to turn the South China Sea into a Chinese lake and extend its claims in the East China Sea. For India, which at this point was already becoming suspicious of China's assertive approach, supporting the US and Japan on the free and open Indo-Pacific ideal was a natural

fit ^[15]. However, New Delhi was initially very careful not to be perceived as openly joining an anti-China camp. Thus, despite steps to revive the Quad grouping of India, Australia, Japan and the US, New Delhi was cautious about militarizing the platform. That practically changed last year (2020) with the Malabar ^[16] naval exercise featuring all four navies for the first time since 2007.

Thus, we see that India's appetite for the Quad increased in parallel with its rising concerns about China. From low-key, official-level Quad meetings on the sidelines of other summits till 2018 to the first Quad ministerial in 2019 and the first Quad naval exercise in 2020, the Quad's revival and consolidation have certainly mirrored China's growing aggressive behavior. And from India's point of view, the tipping point was certainly the border standoff with China that began in the summer of 2020. The standoff, which is yet to be fully resolved, saw the mobilization of around 50,000 troops from both sides backed by heavy weaponry and armored vehicles. This time the Chinese PLA had intruded and taken up positions in eastern Ladakh at Galwan Valley, from Finger 4 to Finger 8 (mountain spurs) in the Pangong Tso area, and again in the Depsang Plains. Plus, the clashes between the two sides in Galwan in June 2020 that resulted in the killing of 20 Indian soldiers were an inflection point. This was the first time since 1975 that the two armies had violently engaged, leading to loss of life.

Add to this, the Covid-19 pandemic that brutally brought home the reality of India's dependence on China in certain crucial sectors such as pharmaceuticals. The bulk of the active pharmaceutical ingredients procured by Indian pharmaceutical companies are imported from China. In fact, the pandemic compelled the Indian government to articulate an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' ^[17] (Self-reliant India) vision that was seen by many as a code for decoupling from China. Indeed, New Delhi's moves to stop foreign direct investment from neighboring countries through the automatic route ^[18] and the banning of scores of Chinese apps ^[19] show concrete intent to dial down bilateral economic engagements with China. While the lack of reciprocity from the Chinese side – Indian pharma and IT continue to face market access hurdles in China – has been cited as the reason for curbing economic engagement. It is clear that security concerns on New Delhi's part have overtaken the impetus for commercial ties with Beijing. And this is likely to continue for some time.

Conclusion: A Great Asian Rivalry?

Taken together, India's perspective towards Xi's China can be divided into two parts – popular and systemic. At the popular level, Xi's China today is seen as India's No.1 strategic rival. Doklam in 2017 and Galwan in 2020 have dealt a huge blow to the 1993 Agreement to Maintain Peace and Tranquility at the India-China border. Additionally, there is greater recognition of a China-Pakistan axis against India where Beijing and Islamabad will coordinate to hem in New Delhi. Despite its economic growth and technological advances, Xi's China is no longer seen as a force for good and regional stability. There are concerns that China plans to surround India with a 'String of Pearls' – bases and outposts in India's neighboring countries – to keep it in check. And Xi's 'Great China Dream' is seen as nothing more than an attempt to impose Chinese hegemony on the region.

However, analyzed from a systemic viewpoint, the problems between India and Xi's China results from two nations undergoing great changes. There's no denying that under Xi, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has undertaken a massive effort to centralize power and re-impose its authority and legitimacy. Essentially, China has become a big economic power at a meteoric rate leading to the creation of multiple power and influence centers in Chinese society and polity. This is a natural by-product of China's market reforms over the last three decades. But since the CCP wants market reforms without political reforms, it has to undertake purges and rectification campaigns from time to time. And doing so in this day and age when the Chinese people are more tech-savvy than ever before, have travelled abroad more than any previous generation, and are richer than ever before, is extremely difficult.

But Xi has taken upon himself precisely this task to prolong the life of the party. Meanwhile, Modi came to power in India riding a nationalist wave that promised to re-instil self-confidence and boost growth. Thus, neither Xi nor Modi has any elbow room to lose face as this would undermine their internal political agenda – Great China Dream and strong India, respectively. And when both sides start using responses to each other for internal signaling – as has been evident during the latest (2020) border standoff – things get complicated and pushed up the escalation matrix. But as the latest agreement (2021) to mutually disengage troops in Pangong Tso shows, both sides do not want to push things beyond a point. However, this means China, as the economically bigger nation, can carry out grey-zone tactics against India and possibly continue to assert itself at the boarder. India, of course, will now be on heightened alert regarding any Chinese maneuvers at the LAC. While the economic logic of China being

the second-biggest economy in the world does leave the door open for commercial ties down the road, Xi's China is no longer seen as a friend. For India, the suspicions of 1962 are definitively back.

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XI JINPING'S CHINA: RHETORICS VS REALITY

Chien Fu-Chen

Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed ‘racing against time and keeping abreast with history to reach the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation’ in the 2020 Chinese Lunar New Year reception held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. “Under the strong leadership of the CPC, all members of the Party, armed forces and people of all ethnic groups must fear no wind or wave, rise up to challenges and keep marching toward the glorious goal of national rejuvenation and the great prospect of building a community with a shared future for humanity”, Xi said ^[1]. In many addresses Xi delivered, he always alluded to these three messages: the CPC’s leadership, the glorious goal of national rejuvenation, and building a community with a shared future for humanity. We can understand the importance of the Chinese Communist Party for Xi, who has already inscribed his thoughts in the Chinese constitution. In this short comment, I will critically discuss what does national rejuvenation and global community with a shared future for humanity attributes to.

Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation

The concept of the great rejuvenation of the nation often appears in the speeches of President Xi Jinping. Xi wants to recall China’s past of being violated by Western powers over the past century and arouse nationalists. However, the countries surrounding China, such as Korea, Vietnam, and the ethnic minorities in the northwest regions, have been violated by regimes in China for hundreds of years, such as the Yuan Dynasty (Mongolia), Ming Dynasty, and Qing Dynasty (Manchus). China was invaded by Western foreign powers only in the last century of the Qing Dynasty. There is another metaphor behind Xi Jinping's call for the Chinese people to consolidate nationalism. Xi hopes that the Chinese people will be vigilant, and currently, there are ‘*foreign forces*’ invading China, especially the United States. The world's economic, military and technological hegemon is carrying out a visible or invisible invasion of China. Even if China is already the world super power and its GDP is about to be the second-highest in the world, the Chinese government led by Xi Jinping lacks self-confidence. It has to stimulate an atmosphere of nationalism to gather domestic support and opposition forces to act as government backing against ‘*foreign forces*’.

After joining the WTO in 2000, China has become the world's factory. The rapid economic growth has created a new middle class and a new wealthy class. Chinese companies can go worldwide to conduct mergers and acquisitions and establish their industrial chain belonging to China. At the same time, China's huge domestic demand market has also attracted investors from all over the world to pour into China. However, the rise of China's economy is seen by the Western world as a threat to the international liberal order. Xi's national strategy of the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) further deepen these suspicions.

BRI places special emphasis on the five connectivity goals and hopes all countries can accept the benefits of China's economic growth. It aims to promote 'policy coordination', 'connectivity', 'unimpeded trade', 'financial integration' and 'people-to-people bonds' ^[2]. With these goals, China pushes BRI participating countries to coordinate their development strategies and infrastructural plans, remove investment barriers for state-owned Chinese companies, and promote a currency stability system centered on the Chinese Yuan. To form an infrastructure network linking sub-regions in Asia and connecting Asia, Europe, Africa and beyond, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund, among other financial organizations, are set up to finance connectivity-related projects. People-to-people connectivity further grounds the public support for implementing the initiative. The establishment of the AIIB has sparked interest in China's One Belt One Road investment plans from countries around the world. Items of BRI's infrastructure construction has become the most important diplomatic strategy of the Chinese economic development for the coming decade.

These overseas infrastructure items can extend the Chinese economy to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the core countries of the European Union. Due to these infrastructure-related plans, these countries along the BRI's route have to rely on China. The five connectivity mentioned in the BRI has shown China's willingness to establish a strong interactive connection with countries along the BRI's route. But it also reflects that the value of China as the core is expanding outward. Governments along the BRI's route must accept China's core values, including culture, economics, politics, military and diplomacy. China is trying to establish a tributary system with China at its core. Countries along the BRI's route must obey the tributary system with China as the core under the leadership of Xi Jinping.

Imaginations of Xi's Shared Community

On 25 January 2021, Xi Jinping delivered a special address titled '*Let the Torch of Multilateralism Light up Humanity's Way Forward*' at the World Economic Forum Virtual Event of the Davos Agenda^[3]. He indicated four major tasks for the international community. The first is to step up macroeconomic policy coordination and jointly promote strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth of the world economy. The second is to abandon ideological prejudice and jointly follow a path of peaceful coexistence, mutual benefit and 'win-win cooperation'. The Third indicated to close the divide between developed and developing countries and jointly bring about growth and prosperity for all, and the fourth called for coming together against global challenges and jointly create a better future for humanity.

He further added that upholding multilateralism and building a community with a 'shared future' for mankind is the way out of contemporary world problems. He demanded the commitment to openness and inclusiveness instead of closeness and exclusion, to international law and international rules instead of seeking one's own supremacy, to consultation and cooperation instead of conflict and confrontation and lastly, to keep up with the times instead of rejecting change.

Compared with Xi's '*Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth*' at the Opening Session of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2017, we clearly conduct the core contents of Xi's Global governance rhetoric, include 'openness and inclusiveness', 'international law and international rules' 'consultation and cooperation' and 'keeping up with the times'; not widely different from 'ideals' of the liberal order. Also, Xi is openly critical of superpowers who are exclusive, selfish, unwilling to be open, unwilling to cooperate, emphasize competition, conflict and confrontation, and reject the change. As known, he is referring to the US Trump administration's trade war, economic and technological blocks to suppress China.

Additionally, asserting China's 'five continue promises', he projected China would continue to implement opening-up, promote sustainable development, advance science, technology and innovation, and promote a new type of international relations. He placed China as an active participant in international cooperation on COVID-19, indicating that China has provided assistance to over 150 countries and 13 international organizations, sent 36 medical expert teams to countries in need, and

stayed strongly supportive and actively engaged in international cooperation on COVID vaccines. Ironically, not commenting on how can the COVID-19 happen in Wuhan 2020.

Xi's addresses continuously highlight China's willing to promote sustainable development, the continued open and win-win economic cooperation organization and the further development of technology, R&D and innovation. However, these issues have been the focal point of liberal order for long. It is a very complex issue of how China intend to create a new type of international relations.

Xi Jinping keeps emphasizing that a zero-sum game or a winner-take-all is not traditional Chinese philosophy. China pursues peace and hopes to share it with everyone. But China does not think this way about the relationship between the surrounding countries, such as, the border issue with India, or the events of the CCP's naval aircraft circumventing Taiwan, or the South China Sea sovereignty dispute. In fact, China seldom adopts the positive attitude of tolerance and openness. China just continues to paint China's imaginary peace-loving image. When faced with sovereignty issues, Taiwan, the South China Sea and the Sino-Indian border, those all become China's inalienable territories.

As long as China does not have territorial and sovereignty disputes, it can play a good role in solving many international affairs, such as South-South cooperation or to provide aids to African developing countries jointly fighting poverty or dealing with debt problems. In the model of 'Chinese global governance', we can clearly find that China continues to block Taiwan's international participation space, including the WHO under the United Nations and international conferences of non-governmental organizations. Chinese media also claims that China has South China Sea sovereignty to restrict countries ability to pass openly and freely. CCP has also implemented many policies and isolation mechanisms in order to extinct ethnic groups in Tibet and Xinjiang and to provoke conflicts on the Sino-Indian border.

If Xi Jinping does not face these core issues, how can China ensure that a new type of international or state-to-state relations will emerge? Especially within Taiwan, both political parties and Taiwanese society are more divided on Xi Jinping's cross-strait and international relations than ever. The Kuomintang tends to support Xi Jinping's BRI and believes that by maintaining the 'One-China' structure, cross-strait relations can be exchanged for peace and economic prosperity. But the Democratic Progressive Party under Tsai leadership is more vocal about Xi's aggressive posturing around the world.

In the two recent presidential elections, most Taiwanese voters did not support the Kuomintang narrative. Tsai Ing-wen has indicated that Taiwan is indeed related to mainland China in history and culture, but is not willing to rely too much on China's politics and economy. Tsai government still has expectations from the new administration of Biden and is ready to join the economic and political alliances of democratic countries such as the United States, India, Japan, and Australia. Furthermore, it is no longer mainstream public opinion in Taiwan to accept the vision of peace and reunification released by China, especially after the US-China trade war and the outbreak of the Wuhan epidemic.

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ABOUT THE CENTER

Established in March 2014, Center for Studies on South Asia and the Middle East aims at promoting studies of both regions in Taiwan, and serving as a platform for exchanges among government think tanks and academic communities. Affiliated with the College of Law and Politics, National Chung Hsing University, the Center organizes academic seminars and conferences regularly and hosts scholars from South Asia and Middle Eastern countries for research. Through the official website (cssame.nchu.edu.tw) and two newsletters (Middle East Weekly and CSSAME Viewpoints), the Center provides updated observations, insightful analyses, and research findings on contemporary politics, economics, and society in South Asia and the Middle East.

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