

Webinar Report
Reading India's China Challenge

Organised by: Carnegie India

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Moderator: Rudra Chaudhuri (Director, Carnegie India)

Speakers: Ananth Krishnan (Beijing Correspondent, The Hindu), **Indrani Bagchi** (Diplomatic Editor, Times of India), **Srinath Raghavan** (Senior Fellow, Carnegie India), **M. Taylor Fravel** (Director, Security Studies Program, MIT)

Participant from CUTS: Jithin Sabu

1. Introduction

1.1 The webinar was organised to discuss the latest book titled '*India's China Challenge: A Journey through China's Rise and What It Means for India*', written by Ananth Krishnan.

1.2 Ananth has a decade-long experience in China as a journalist which gives him a front-row seat to China's remarkable rise and how its leading opinion-makers view India. The webinar discussed India's challenges in dealing with China in its move to consolidate the position as a formidable global power.

2. Key Takeaways

2.1 Ananth Krishnan told that the basic aim of his book is to present a clear and rational picture of China that challenges the conventional images about China that are propagated by the media. He has classified the challenges faced by India from China to four categories: political, economic, diplomatic and military and finally the historical challenge.

2.2 The panel agreed to the point that right now one cannot get a China beyond Xi Jinping. The interviews which media representatives from India got in China in the past couldn't have been possible today.

2.3 The current situation is unsustainable for both sides. Improvement of infrastructure on both sides will only lead to more army personnels reaching to the border which will eventually lead to more confrontations and patrolling. One possible solution suggested was to classify the LAC and create some buffer zone in between. This requires some great hard work.

2.4 China is overanalyzed and under reported according to the panel. What is happening in the borders from China's side is with the permission from the upper level and therefore its a centralised effort.

2.5 India should not think that its assessment of the Chinese thinking is the only way that things work and therefore it is important to get the Chinese perspective on the LAC too. It is important for Indian government to remember that the boundary settlement is not going to be simply about finding acceptable formulas. Trust is required to make anything stick and that is where the current problem is worse. The context of the lack of

trust is one of the central learnings that we have to take away from the complicated history.

2.6 Panel opined that no Indian government has ever seriously thought of the question- “what will India have to give up in order to have a settlement” and now is the time to look that up.

2.7 Going on the way of a highly personalized diplomacy between the two leaders of both countries who are very conscious about their image both at home and abroad is a difficult thing now. This will actually militate and worsen the situation, making the settlement we propagate more impossible.

2.8 The banning of Chinese investment will have a price to pay and unfortunately it came at a wrong time. The absence of Chinese investments will have a long term impact if no alternatives are made. Alternatives for the early stage financing that the number of Indian startups easily got from China have to be made.

2.9 If India wants to keep China out, it has to do a lot more to attract investments especially in areas like infrastructure development. If this is not happening, then Indian government should think of giving some sector exemptions for Chinese investment.