

Asian studies in China's academies of social sciences: an introduction

Wellin Pan

In his progressive vision of a general Chinese history, the phenomenal Chinese intellectual Liang Qichao in 1901 claimed the modern period of China would be characterized by a transition from 'China of Asia' [*yazhou zhi zhongguo*] when "the Chinese intensively engaged and competed with various peoples of Asia" to 'China of the world' [*shijie zhi zhongguo*] when "the Chinese united with all the Asian peoples in their negotiation and competition with the Westerners". It came as no surprise that the Chinese President Xi Jinping quoted Liang in his recent keynote speech at the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations.¹

As argued by contemporary scholars, regions are imagined constructs that have historical specificity and reflect the existing international structures. In the case of Asia, it was first created as a regional construct to rethink political action and organization during the twentieth century course of anti-imperialism and nation-state formation in the West Pacific and Indian Ocean. The rise of the modern scholarship of Asia in China was a response to China's frontier and identity crises from the mid nineteenth century to the WWII era. After 1949, Asian studies in China also bore as much strategic importance as the area studies in other countries. The best example is the development of Asian studies in the Chinese academies of social sciences.

Although modeled on the Soviet-style Academy, the Chinese academies of social sciences were established after 1978, when the Soviet influence had faded away and China re-embraced the world.

Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's reform and opening up, underlined the significance of academic achievements to China's course of modernization. Under his leadership, state and provincial level academies mushroomed in the capital and each provincial seat.

As government affiliated research institutes, all academies play both roles of academic research and advisory function to the party-state. Hence, their research agendas are tightly bound to the missions of particular ministries, and the foreign analysts have learnt to observe China's policy-making system through these 'important windows'. This also smoothened their recent transformation into 'think tanks with Chinese characteristics'.

In addition to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 7 out of 29 provincial-level academies have specialized institutes for Asian studies, largely in response to their geographical proximity to relevant Asian countries and sub-regions. As a result, the academic definition and scope of Asia and

its sub-regions reflect the geopolitical dynamics as well as China's major interests and concerns. Prior to 1978, attention was given to Asian countries with either historical ties with China or belonging to the Communist bloc. In the 1980s, country surveys and comparative studies of economic development were emphasized, as China endeavored to learn from the 'East Asian Miracle'. Since the 1990s, regional security and cooperation as well as sustainable development have become the common themes for the pursuit of a more integrated Asia. As China craves for a more substantial role in Asia, more academic resources have been poured into the studies of China's national strategies and new regional/sub-regional orders.

Besides this introductory piece, three scholars from different academies are invited to reflect on the development of their own institutes and their own research. It is the editor's wish that these articles will offer the audience 'windows' to how China envisions herself in Asia and the world.

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South Asian Studies at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences

Lan Deng

I joined the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (YASS) in 2000, when the YASS Institute of South Asian Studies was formally established and the then President of India, Kocheil Raman Narayanan, visited us. In the initial stage of my career, I was awarded a valuable opportunity and granted a scholarship to pursue my further studies and conduct fieldwork at the School of International Studies (SIS) and the Center of Economic Studies and Planning (CESP) of the School of Social Sciences (SSS) in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, as visiting fellow and full-time student from 2002 to 2005. Yet, my own career pursuit is in alignment with the overall commitment of YASS to become a high-end think tank with international influence especially in the fields of South Asian and Southeast Asian studies.

When Premier Zhou Enlai and Prime Minister Nehru met for the first time in 1954, they discussed the possibilities of opening airlines and motorways between China and India. The YASS scholars are the successors, promoters, practitioners and innovators of their ideas. As early as the 1960s, scholars at YASS started to conduct research on India and South Asia. In the late 1990s, China and India called for regional cooperation among Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) and met with positive responses of the other two. The four countries later signed and put it into action the 'Kunming Initiative'. After rounds of Track-II conversations, this cooperative mechanism was upgraded to Track-I channel, known subsequently as 'The Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM EC)' in 2013 in both Joint Statements of China and India and China and Bangladesh.

Responding to the constant changes both home and abroad, YASS continuously promotes the institutionalization of South Asian studies. In 2000, three years after its launching, the Center of South Asian Studies was upgraded

to the Institute of South Asian Studies. In 2003, the Yunnan Society of South Asian Studies was established. As the first local-level society of South Asian studies in China, it is built on the capacities of research and administration of our institute. In 2006, YASS was rebranded as the Yunnan Academy of Southeast and South Asian Studies. The newest addition to its research capacity is the establishment of the Chinese (Kunming) Academy of South Asian and Southeast Asian studies in 2015. The state-level institutes such as Institute of Indian Studies and Institute of Bangladesh Studies came out of the shell as well. I was transferred to the Institute of Indian Studies and have served as its deputy director since 2016.

Compared with other research institutions of South Asian studies in China, the strengths of YASS have lain in the regional and sub-regional cooperative studies. Apart from our long-term focus on the BCIM cooperation, we have widened our research scope by monitoring other multilateral sub-regional cooperative mechanisms, such as 'The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative', 'The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC), 'The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership' (RCEP) and emerging free trade zones in the region.

Considering Yunnan's geographical proximity to and historical links with the region in perspective, we have also expanded our work into Indian Ocean studies. A number of books are published and a few state and province sponsored projects are conducted on such topics as the geopolitics and geo-economics, maritime and non-traditional securities as well as the economic and social development

in the region. The Research Association of Indian Ocean has been set up to facilitate the networking of concerned scholars.

On the one hand, focusing on the national strategies and heated issues, our institutes have carried out research and provided policy consultation, on such topics as relationships among South Asian countries and major powers, regional security, international politics and relationship between neighboring countries and China. On the other hand, country-wise research has always been emphasized in the South Asian studies in China. Nowadays, all of the eight South Asian countries have been covered by different specialists. The *Series of South Asian Studies* and the *South Asian Annual Report* have run for almost 20 years, alongside the policy briefings and scholarly monographs published from time to time. In the future, the fundamental research on history, religion and culture should not be ignored, while the applied research continues to be emphasized. The in-depth research on individual countries will be further strengthened.

Last but not least, YASS has been seeking for active engagement and partnership in the region by hosting the China-South and Southeast Asian Think Tank Forum (2013-2019) and signing Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with major South Asian research institutions, as well as launching joint projects.

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Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai

The Center for Global Asia at NYU Shanghai serves as the hub within the NYU Global Network University system to promote the study of Asian interactions and comparisons, both historical and contemporary. The overall objective of the Center is to provide global societies with information on the contexts for the reemerging connections between the various parts of Asia through research and teaching. Collaborating with institutions across the world, the Center seeks to play a bridging role between existing Asian studies knowledge silos. It will take the lead in drawing connections and comparisons between the existing fields of Asian studies, and stimulating new ways of understanding Asia in a globalized world.

Asia Research Center at Fudan University

Founded in March 2002, the Asia Research Center at Fudan University (ARC-FDU) is one of the achievements of the cooperation of Fudan and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS). Through the years, the center is making all the efforts to promote Asian Studies, including hosting conferences and supporting research projects. ARC-FDU keeps close connections with the ARCs in mainland China and many institutes abroad.

Notes

- 1 The English translation of Xi's sentence is "China today is more than the country itself; it is very much a part of Asia and the world". See 'Full text of Xi's speech at opening of CDAC', 16 May 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/BaRP-full> (retrieved 29 May 2019).

Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: a retrospective

Lei Tang

In the winter of 1963, before visiting the African countries, Premier Zhou Enlai submitted 'A Report on Strengthening Research about Foreign Countries' to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which had been formerly endorsed by the Central Foreign Affairs Leading Group. In the report, Zhou proposed to strengthen research on foreign affairs by establishing institutes of area studies in response to the changed international status of China as a big country with the world's attention. This report was approved by Chairman Mao on 31 December 1963. After that, area studies in China took off.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is a case in point. It was originally the Philosophy and Social Sciences Division under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, formed in June 1955. It was during the 1960s and 1970s that CASS gradually took shape and developed its capacities in Asian studies. The main body of Asian studies at CASS today is composed of a number of administrative offices and institutes founded prior to its very own establishment and

now generally associated with international studies. For example, the Institute of West Asian and African Studies was established in 1961. In 1965, the Research Institute of Soviet Union was established and later became part of the CPC Central Foreign Liaison Department and finally absorbed into CASS in the early 1980s.

After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the Chinese government resumed its promotion of research on humanities and social sciences and proposed new development agendas of area studies. A number of new institutes were added after the establishment of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1977. They included the Institute of Japanese Studies (1978); the Institute of South Asian Studies (1978), renamed the Institute of South Asian and Southeast Asian Studies in 1986; as well as the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies.

In 2006, CASS restored the Academic Division system [xuebu zhi 学部制] and established five divisions to cover Literature, History and Philosophy [wenshizhe 文史哲], Economics [jingji 经济], Sociology, Politics and Law [shehui zhengfa 社会政法], International

Studies [guoji yanjiu 国际研究] as well as Marxist Studies [makesi zhuyi yanjiu 马克思主义研究]. While bits of Asian studies can be found across all the divisions, the main institutes are in the Academic Division of International studies, namely the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies, the Institute of Asian Pacific Studies (renamed as the National Institute of International Strategy in 2011), the Institute of West Asian and African Studies, as well as the Institute of Japanese Studies. These institutes cover the regions North, South, Southeast, West, East and Northeast Asia. Besides the research institutes, there are more than a dozen non-entity research centers of Asian studies, which coordinate interdisciplinary and trans-institutional research. The latter includes the Gulf Research Center, the Research Center of Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific Areas, and the Korea Research Center. In March 2002, with the support of the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies (KFAS), the CASS Center for Asian Studies was established to promote Asian studies at CASS through funding projects and international exchanges. The CASS Center is one of the 18 Asian research centers the KFAS has sponsored in Asia with two-thirds of them in China.

Today, CASS has become China's largest, most influential and comprehensive academic organization. It undertakes the dual roles of academic research and governmental think tank. Hundreds of researchers here are engaged in research on regional and international issues, and about one hundred

of them are engaged in Asian studies, with 40 scholars in the Institute of Japanese Studies alone. On the one hand, the researchers are engaged in basic academic research, including organizing and compiling comprehensive introductions to the latest developments in different areas in Asia on a large scale (all Asian countries have their respective introductions), and hosting such research reports as *Central Asian Yellow Book*, *Annual Report on Development in the Middle East and Africa* and *Japan Blue Book*. On the other hand, they also provide policy advice to the government and write reports for internal circulation.

CASS has more than 80 national academic journals. The ones related to Asian studies are *World Economics and Politics*, *West Asia and Africa*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia Pacific Studies*, *Russian, East European & Central Asian Studies*, *Japan Studies*, *Contemporary Korea*. It supervises more than 100 national-level academic associations, including the Chinese Association of West Asian and African Studies, Chinese Association of Asia Pacific Studies, Chinese Association for South Asian Studies, etc. It owns five national-level publishing houses. Through these academic institutions and platforms, CASS also plays the important role of organizing and promoting Asian studies across the country.

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Building global cities in Asia. Shared experiences and challenges.

Wei Tang

In order to explain the global influence of cities like New York, London and Tokyo, the theory of global city is proposed, which in turn becomes the developmental vision and reference point for leading cities in major developing countries. The rapid moving up of the Chinese cities in the global city rankings has aroused great interest among researchers. It becomes a focus of attention at my home institute, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, to study the internal logic and developmental path of the global cities in China, especially in comparison with the archetypical ones and the other emerging ones.

Recently, I have begun to examine the strategic planning and related policy instruments of the leading cities in the BRICS countries, namely Shanghai, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Sao Paulo and Moscow. I started my field study in Mumbai and New Delhi, because I think China and India share the most common experiences and challenges among all BRICS countries. When comparing the emerging global cities of China and India, I couldn't help noticing their similar trajectory of development: to reform the domestic system in accordance with the requirements of the international economic system, to upgrade the industrial structure with much emphasis on producer services and to renew the urban space through gentrification. Obviously, all of these institutional adjustments and policy instruments are responding to the fast globalization, which is particularly promoted by neo-liberalism and informatization. Though the degrees of achievements vary in these leading cities, the global city policy indeed brings significant economic growth and higher ranks in the world city system. Thus, these leading cities have been turned into emerging global cities.

However, the institutional setting, resource abundance, infrastructure and cultural atmosphere of the emerging global cities in China and India are quite different from those of New York, London and Tokyo, which are considered the archetypical global cities. The former all have long histories,

profound humanistic traditions and huge populations. Different races, castes, tribes, strata and communities coexist, presenting unimaginable complexity. The impact of the 'global city policy' on these cities with such complexity deserves examination.

The global city policy has brought huge changes, particularly in the social structure, which is far different from the current archetypical global cities. There are not only high-end professionals in high-end producer services, but also the employees who provide everyday services to the professional class; there are not only a large number of formal manufacturing workers in large-scale manufacturing industry, but also a large influx of immigrants to the fairly large-scale informal economy. As a result, unlike the polarization of income distribution caused by occupational structures in New York and other global cities, the number and proportion of high-end professionals in those of China and India are relatively limited, while manufacturing, low-end service sector and informal economy are so large that a very small number of professionals are at the top of income distribution while a large number of them are at the bottom. In between, there is a certain percentage of the middle class. The layers are typically pyramidal.

The key to the difference between the archetypical and emerging global cities lies in the urbanization stage of developing countries. The surges in population have made the cities unable to meet the basic needs such as housing and transportation, resulting in outbreaks of urban diseases, traffic congestion, pollution and social disorder. The industrial upgrading policy further made it impossible for cities to generate enough job vacancies, resulting in the fast expansion of informal economy and the spread of slums. This is particularly evident in the case of India. The mushrooming of new townships on the outskirts of the cities leads to a substantial



reduction in farming land and let the cities sprawl beyond any limitation. This is observed in both cases of China and India.

Hence, when orchestrating global city policies, the emerging global cities have to maintain a balance: to safeguard the social welfare for all stakeholders, especially the poor and the vulnerable groups; to coordinate the industrial upgrading and the domestic labor market; to enact urban preservation and renewal; as well as to better integrate the global development system into the existing urban system.

Unfortunately, with the outbreak of the financial crisis and the reversal of the world economic cycle, the emerging global cities, as they are so dependent on the world market, become more vulnerable. Thus, when seeking world-class influence, emerging world cities need to not only rethink the profound implications of globalization for their own development, but also to examine their own development strategies from the perspective of internal integration and complexity.

Compared with other emerging global cities in the BRICS, especially India, Shanghai has achieved considerable success in becoming a global city under the national reform and opening-up strategy. It is the rising node in the global city system. It also serves as the

Above: Coexistence of formal and informal economy in Dharavi, India: A food factory in the slum producing cookies for the local big hotels (10 December 2018).

engine of China's modernization and the bridgehead for China's going out strategy. In the global city theory, Asia's global cities like Tokyo and Seoul are considered as nation-led while western cities like New York and London are market-led. It is well understood that Shanghai falls into the nation-led type, and even more so than Tokyo and Seoul. Efficient public services supplied by the state, such as labor, healthcare and education, matter much in the process. Besides that, the informal governance based on a household registration system and local social network, which are indeed of Chinese characteristics, has effectively decreased the negative impact of global city practices. Thus, for any emerging global city in the BRICS to succeed in its global city policy, it must appropriately deal with the inherent complexity of its own development stage.

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