

Laboratory Products

Dire warnings about China voiced at GAMBICA conference are echoed in Japan and Germany

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While GAMBICA members have largely been enjoying a significant bounce back from the initial lows of 2020, and seem to be expecting the good times to continue at least for the bulk of 2022, speakers at GAMBICA's Annual Lab Conference in March were forecasting dark clouds on the horizon.



Star speaker, Anand Menon, focussed on the current and future impacts of Brexit on trade, and political commentator, John Arnold, offered a chilling prediction. Drawing conclusions from the speed and severity of the impact of sanctions on those trading with Russia, he directed the thoughts of delegates to China.

"China wants to be a superpower; that requires it to be a cultural superpower - which it believes it already is; an economic superpower -

which it believes it has already achieved; and a military superpower - which it feels it is yet to prove.

"High level commentators in China have repeatedly referred to Taiwan as belonging to China. Within the next ten years I believe China will take Taiwan by military means.

"It is very unlikely that we will start firing missiles at China but in this scenario it is inevitable that we will impose sanctions. As we have seen from Russia, sanctions will have a major impact on anyone exporting to China, and possibly a greater impact still on anyone importing from China.

"What will be the impact on your business if you can no longer purchase components from China?" he asked delegates.

John went on to explain that the UK Government has serious concerns about the extent to which China has infiltrated UK economic life. "The era of globalisation is about to come to an end" he predicted.

The increasing tensions with China were also raised at a recent meeting of the lab industry associations from Europe, Japan and the US.

Spokespersons for the Japan Analytical Instruments Manufacturers' Association noted increasing discussion in the Japanese press of the tensions between China and Taiwan. "We are not sure what's

coming and what the impact would be," they said, adding: "and North Korea do crazy things every day."

Chinese annexation of Taiwan would certainly undermine Japan's economic security as Taiwan is Japan's fourth-largest export market. Japanese prime minister Fumio Kishida has argued that "the front line of the clash between authoritarianism and democracy is Asia, and particularly Taiwan," and that Japan "cannot respond except by cooperating with our ally, the United States."

The Chairman of German industry body, Spectaris, admitted: "There is now talk in Germany about trying to become independent from China because in the long-term we see some problems because of the likely war followed by sanctions which would have a very serious impact on all our economies.

"We are all looking for fresh sources of goods and electronics but it is difficult, particularly in micro-electronics. We are looking to Japan and Korea and trying to find those whose supply chain does not rely on China."

He went on to suggest that in Germany, the view is that Russia will emerge from the current war in Ukraine as a "third world" country.

It is also interesting to note that the EU has recently sent an inward investment roadshow to Taiwan, hoping to capitalise as Taiwanese companies disinvest in China and look to move plants to other countries to avoid being affected by a ban on Chinese imports.

But there is opportunity in sustainability

Two of the best-received presentations at the GAMBICA Lab Conference were on sustainability. Alan Rance, whose company, Midas Pattern, makes enclosures for chromatography equipment, explained how by just taking the obvious steps he had moved his company to net zero carbon emissions and improved its bottom line significantly.

As well as doing the basics such as reusing all his packaging, Alan pointed out that now is a good time to fit photovoltaics on your



roof. With current energy prices the payback will be significantly reduced and the benefits of security of supply magnified.

Martin Farley, who developed the laboratory efficiency assessment framework (LEAF) to promote lab sustainability, highlighted some of the great work already being done by labs in terms of their buildings, their equipment purchasing and their operational use. As well as providing a standard by which labs can be judged, LEAF focuses on areas such as ventilation, equipment, procurement and waste, samples and chemicals and research quality.

Martin called upon purchasers to centralise ordering and logistics, standardise specifications in tenders and organise and manage new processes to deliver sustainability advantages. He also highlighted lab products from GAMBICA members, including the Genova tip washing machine which is available from GS Biotech, and also drew attention to the work being done by Starlab and Fisher Scientific on take back schemes for lab plastics.



The GAMBICA Lab Board has established a sustainability committee with the objective of helping members on their journey to net zero. New GAMBICA member, My Green Lab has had its accreditation included in the UN Race to Zero interim targets, which set out that 95% of all research laboratories should be accredited by My Green Lab by 2030.

The future of lab instruments

Waters have joined with other prominent GAMBICA members Shimadzu, Agilent, and Thermo Fisher to develop a standard interface for chromatography and spectrometry equipment.

“Today’s chromatography equipment,” said Matt Wherry of Waters speaking at the GAMBICA conference, “uses a patchwork of older interfaces to communicate with data systems. These interfaces were not designed for the modern era and modern IT infrastructure and require too much coordination among vendors leading to delays in instrument support. The situation is dissatisfying for all and if vendors weren’t busy working on integration, we could be solving ‘real’ customer problems.



“A standard to solve this is unlikely to be fit for purpose if we allow someone else to write it, so vendors need to take the initiative.” This thinking has led to the initiation of the Common Analytical Instrument System Integration (CAISI) project, by the Waters, Agilent, Thermo Fisher and Shimadzu consortium.

Matt also alerted delegates to a similar initiative which has come out of Germany, the Laboratory and Analytical Device Standard (LADS) which is developing an interface for a much broader range of laboratory equipment. The two initiatives are working closely together but, says Matt, the CAISI initiative is highly focussed on delivery and plans to have an operational interface in five years. It will be tightly managed and vigilant about scope creep because Matt doesn’t want CAISI to go the same way as the many other standards which didn’t make it.

If you would like more information about the GAMBICA conference, or about membership, email
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