

# South Asia

A publication of the Institute of South Asian Studies

MCI (P) 128/04/2017

Issue No.

24

JUL 2017  
TO  
DEC 2017



## The Belt and Road Initiative and Developments in South Asia

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 06 India: Economic Transition
- 08 Pakistan: Nation-Building
- 10 Maldives: Politics of Radicalisation
- 12 India: One-Party Dominance?
- 14 Sri Lanka: Domestic and External Relations
- 16 India: BJP's Next Generation Leadership
- 18 Nepal: Political Evolution and Foreign Policy
- 20 India-ASEAN Engagement

# Season's Greetings

The Chairman, Management Board and staff of ISAS-NUS  
wish everyone a wonderful 2018.

**Have a great year ahead!**

## Contents

A Message from the Director .....	03
<b>FEATURE</b>	
The Belt and Road Initiative and Developments in South Asia .....	04
<b>INSIGHTS</b>	
India at Seventy: The Economic Story .....	06
Pakistan: A Nation-Building Experiment .....	08
Politics of 'Radicalisation' in the Maldives .....	10
Towards One-Party Dominance in India? .....	12
Sri Lanka: National Reconciliation; Regional Ambitions .....	14
Grooming the Next Generation of BJP Leaders in India .....	16
Nepal: Political Evolution and Foreign Policy Challenges .....	18
India-ASEAN Engagement: The Youth Focus .....	20
<b>RECENT AGREEMENTS</b>	
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies .....	22
Centre for South Asian Studies .....	22
Asian Development Research Institute .....	22
<b>ISAS EVENTS</b>	
ISAS-COSATT-KAS Workshop – Re-energising the SAARC Process .....	22
ISAS Workshop – Pakistan's Politics, Economics and Sociology .....	23
ISAS-KIEP Symposium – India-South Korea and India-Japan Cooperation .....	23
ISAS-CII Chief Minister Lecture – Maharashtra – India's Engine of Development .....	24
ISAS Workshop – Skills Development in India, Southeast and East Asia .....	24
Singapore Symposium – India, Singapore & ASEAN: Shared History, Common Future .....	25
ISAS-ESI Conference – Towards a Low Carbon Asia .....	25
ISAS Events Listing (July to December 2017) .....	26
<b>ISAS FORTHCOMING EVENT</b>	
12 <sup>th</sup> ISAS International Conference on South Asia .....	27
<b>ISAS PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS</b>	
Authored and Edited Books .....	28
Briefs, Insights, Working Papers and Special Reports .....	28

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National University of Singapore  
Printed in Singapore, 19 January 2018

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# A Message from the Director

**PROFESSOR SUBRATA KUMAR MITRA**

As we herald the start of 2018, with customary hopes and aspirations, the year just gone by has been of seminal significance to the community of researchers and staff at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS). An autonomous research institute, ISAS is dedicated to research on contemporary South Asia. The year has seen our research community engage with many facets of life in this complex and vast region, and its global connectivity.

The China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will dramatically change regional connectivity and infrastructure capacities in Asia. Among others, it will have profound implications on the relations among the South Asian states as well as their interactions with China. This newsletter looks at developments in South Asia arising from the BRI. While still focussing on regional connectivity, we highlight the importance of youth relations in India's engagement with the states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Within South Asia, the two landmark events of India and Pakistan, as they celebrated 70 years of independence in August 2017, have received their due attention from ISAS' research community. Reflecting on this period of national introspection in these two South Asian countries, ISAS researchers have, through the Institute's mainstream online publications, commented upon the travails and triumphs of both neighbours.

It is impossible to compress all those comments, and the vast range of other publications, within

the space of a slim newsletter. We present a few articles here, offering brief glimpses of the political and economic aspects of India and Pakistan, and other parts of South Asia. We have a couple of articles on India's politics and economy, and a piece on Pakistan which is a hold-all in a nutshell. An article each on Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives offers a window to the socio-political and economic conditions in these states. Sri Lanka still struggles to attain national reconciliation after a long insurgent war against the state. The Nepalese have increasingly recognised the importance of having to balance their country's interests with those of big neighbours like India to the south and China to the north. On an altogether different plane, the idyllic Maldives has, in recent times, caught much attention because of its geostrategic location and the activities of some religious extremists on its shore.

For ISAS, international collaboration is an important means to achieving its mission of understanding contemporary South Asia and its global connectivity. In the last six months, the institute has signed memoranda of understanding with the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies in Bangladesh; Centre for South Asian Studies in Nepal; and the Asian Development Research Institute in India. Such partnerships bring invaluable expertise, perspectives and resources to both ISAS and our partner institutions.

In addition to providing glimpses of the academic fare, this newsletter intends to inform readers about the events at ISAS during the period

under review – July to December 2017. The Institute organised an array of workshops, seminars and lectures on various subjects of direct relevance to South Asia and its emerging global footprint. Thumbnail sketches of some of these events reflect the range of interests that animate the intellectual spirit at the Institute.

Moving forward, our research will continue to focus on key developments in the South Asian countries and their interaction with the rest of the world. The specific focus will be on the domestic priorities, economic potentials, security challenges, governance and international relations of these countries. Moving beyond the land mass of South Asia, ISAS increasingly focuses on maritime governance in the Indian Ocean which is also a salient part of our research agenda. These will also be the focus of our signature conference – the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on South Asia – in April 2018. At the same time, ISAS will play host to the 4<sup>th</sup> South Asian Diaspora Convention in the last quarter of this year. The biennial event brings together leading international policymakers, business leaders, academics and civil society leaders who will discuss business, economic and policy issues that could impact the South Asian region. Indeed, we have a busy year ahead!

On this note, I wish all readers a happy, prosperous and intellectually stimulating year.

# The Belt and Road Initiative and Developments in South Asia

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**P S SURYANARAYANA**

Chinese President Xi Jinping has won approval at home and abroad for his Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It is a massive plan to connect China to much of Asia, Europe and beyond through a network of roads, power plants and even digital links. Chinese officials portray it as a model of inter-state economic integration which, while being Beijing's bright idea, belongs to the global commons as a public good.

At Xi's behest, the long-governing Communist Party of China endorsed the BRI in these terms in November 2017. Moreover, several months earlier, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) had, in its Resolution 2344 of 17 March 2017, welcomed the BRI as a "regional [that is, inter-state] development initiative". China was very pleased and publicised the global stamp of approval received by the BRI. There was another but little-known fact. Significantly, the UNSC had, in its same resolution, welcomed the India-aided Chabahar port as a "regional development project" which was already agreed to by Iran and Afghanistan as well.

Such Sino-Indian competition drives China's BRI in South Asia. Almost all

of India's neighbours in South Asia have already associated themselves with the BRI. India remains a conspicuous critic. Not giving up, Beijing, on its part, seeks to overcome India's resistance. During the inaugural summit of the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in mid-May 2017, a top Chinese official told this author that "India can come in at any time on any [BRI] project" and "China will never impose anything on others". India remains sceptical.

In early December 2017, the Maldives, the Indian Ocean archipelagic state of numerous small islands, signed a memorandum of understanding with China to derive benefits from the BRI. Sri Lanka, the Indian Ocean island-state, is actively associated with the BRI. In 2015, China described Sri Lanka as "a dazzling pearl" in the emerging scenario.

However, it is now apparent that a few issues have come to the fore. An effort is ongoing to fully sort out the financial terms of China's own participation in the BRI projects in Sri Lanka. In one perspective, neither side is to be blamed, because of the

sheer novelty of the exercise. The Chinese do not necessarily count the BRI as a mere string of bilateral projects between China and other willing countries. Obviously, the BRI's global good is contested in some international circles, notably the United States (US) and India. Elsewhere in South Asia, China is engaged with the coastal state of Bangladesh and the land-locked (or land-linked) Himalayan state of Nepal. For Beijing, this is important, especially when little progress has been made on the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar connectivity project. On the whole, the most ardent adherent to the BRI in South Asia is Pakistan – China's "all-weather strategic partner".

Beijing's first "flagship" project in the BRI universe is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is partly designed to develop energy-related and other infrastructure projects for Pakistan's benefit. Significantly, however, the CPEC is also designed to give China a land route towards Gwadar port (also developed by Beijing) along the Arabian Sea as a gateway to the wider Indian Ocean. Gwadar





in Pakistan is China's lifeline as a potential alternative to the Malacca Strait as a route for energy and strategic supplies.

Despite being cognisant of this aspect, India's main objection to the CPEC and, therefore, the BRI flows from an altogether different consideration. An already-developed portion of the CPEC passes through some areas which Pakistan controls but India regards as its own sovereign territory. New Delhi is concerned about China's strategic intentions in this regard. Additionally, India is arguing that the overall BRI itself is visibly flawed when viewed through the prism of international connectivity norms, including the financing terms for projects in

China's partner-countries. The US, in particular, has associated itself with this Indian argument.

Apparently competing with China, India is aiding Iran in developing its Chabahar port, which lies very close to Gwadar itself. New Delhi is indeed seeking to do more, given the general US sensitivities towards Iran. India has sent through Chabahar essential supplies to the land-locked South Asian state of Afghanistan, which too has an often uneasy relationship with neighbouring Pakistan. There is a clear messaging by India about its own capability for a public good in the global commons. Interestingly, China, too, is seeking third-party cooperation in promoting the CPEC.

There is a lesson for both China and India. During a long-duration workshop organised by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in August 2017 for senior scholars from Southeast and South Asia, several participants from these two regions underscored a cardinal requirement. China was urged to not miss the expectations and sensitivities of the people in its partner-countries under the BRI rubric. This applies to India, too, as it competes with China in the global commons.

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A high-angle, wide shot of a crowded auto show. In the foreground, a blue and green Formula 1 car is displayed on a circular platform. Behind it, a white sedan is also on display. The background is filled with a large crowd of people, mostly men, walking through the aisles. Several cars are parked on the floor, including a silver sedan and a red car. The lighting is bright, with spotlights illuminating the cars and the crowd.

# India at Seventy: The Economic Story

AMITENDU PALIT

It is hardly surprising that the Indian economy has changed remarkably over the last seven decades. What is surprising, though, is the nature of these changes, many of which have not been on expected lines, given the experiences of advanced and other developing countries.

India began its economic journey in 1947 after a blood-soaked territorial partition in the aftermath of centuries of colonial rule that, while leaving a legacy of railway lines, posts and telegraph networks and colonial-style higher education institutions, had also saddled the country with debt, impoverishment, epidemics, and political and social trauma. Independent India faced

almost all challenges that were attributable to the global South and the Third World – poverty, unemployment, malnourishment, famine, low industrialisation, scarce foreign exchange reserves, and low health and literacy attainments. The context for crafting suitable economic policies was also complicated by the international situation – the world was getting split into political blocs and India set out on its independent journey, with ties already strained with its largest and nearest neighbour.

The decades of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed India almost institutionalising the catch-phrase of a ‘Hindu’ rate of growth as it followed

a Soviet-style socialist model of economic development. While relying on the state-owned sector as the prime mover of capital-intensive industrialisation, India encouraged small industries primarily to absorb the surplus labour that was getting displaced from the agrarian sector. The iniquitous effect of such displacement became stark, ironically, upon India achieving self-sufficiency in paddy and wheat production following the Green Revolution. The mechanisation of farming, using high-yielding variety seeds, fertilisers and generous irrigation, not only increased productivity, but also displaced many labourers who had worked as farm hands. The effect intensified



over time, as mechanical farming made smaller land holdings redundant and agriculture became a capital-intensive and commercial occupation. Large public sector enterprises tried to absorb the flow of labour and, in the process, move towards operational inefficiencies and indebtedness, as wages and salaries could not be offset by market-based revenues because the prices of goods and services produced by the state were tightly controlled.

Eventually, in 1991, when the country was on the brink of an external sector crisis and about to default on its repayment obligations, then-Prime Minister Narasimha Rao 'freed' the economy. Thus began the ongoing era of economic liberalisation. Import controls were withdrawn and foreign investment was permitted in most industries, as India allowed private entrepreneurship to take charge. The 1991 crisis also provided the ground to reform domestic industrial policies, for scrapping draconian laws like the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, stopping public sector enterprises and government agencies from surviving on borrowings and allowing the Indian Rupee to find its own value. Besides setting out to create a modern and varied financial sector, and a new investment regime, India began to streamline taxes and unleash growth in sunrise sectors like information technology and telecommunications.

More than 25 years after the onset of economic reforms, the Indian economy has changed fundamentally. The foremost change is the global integration of the economy. Indian consumers have been exposed to the widest array of products, while businesses have sought to expand overseas, with foreign firms doing likewise in India. Automobiles and household items are either produced on-site in India by foreign assemblers or these are procured overseas. Such integration has been facilitated by connectivity between Indian financial institutions and their foreign counterparts, with India lifting controls on capital-account transactions. Other remarkable changes include the extent of Indian labour migration overseas. As the world's largest remittance-receiving country, India has benefitted from the skills of its emigrant engineers, doctors, academics and other technical analysts. They have been produced by a higher education sector in India that has now diversified into an industry which is hospitable to numerous private players as well.

Notwithstanding these pluses, India still grapples with some of the challenges it began with. Poverty has certainly come down sharply. However, nearly a quarter of India's 1.2 billion population still struggles for basic needs, including food and shelter. While health and education indicators, too, have improved significantly, India is yet to catch up with the advanced economies, and lags way behind many of its

emerging-market peers as well as neighbours. Jobs, perhaps, remain the biggest challenge, with domestic manufacturing unable to do a 'China' by failing to absorb the surplus labour from agriculture in low-skilled industrial occupations. The crisis of jobs is made worse by the advent of robotics and artificial intelligence.

As India looks back at its experience of the last seven decades of economic development, it becomes evident that, in some areas, like industrial transition, it has failed to do what many countries have. On the other hand, it has done remarkably well in specific areas – creating a vibrant and well-regulated capital market that offers significant depth and sophistication of products; becoming the world's largest producer of cheap generic drugs; and growing into probably the world's largest and varied source of globally-competitive skilled manpower. However, these achievements, while noteworthy, have not been sufficient for a comfortable standard of living for the bulk of the world's second-most populous country. India remains a lower middle-income country. Reversing this condition should be the primary goal for India's policymakers as it celebrates seven decades of independence and plans for the future.

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# Pakistan: A Nation-Building Experiment

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SHAHID JAVED BURKI

On 14 August 2017, Pakistan turned 70, a day before India, its sister-state, crossed that milestone. The reason Pakistan was born a day before its sister-state was to allow Lord Louis Mountbatten, British India's last Viceroy, to administer oaths of office to the two successor governments. Since 15 August 1947 had already been set for India's independence, Mountbatten agreed with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was to become Pakistan's first Governor-General, to bring forward by a day the founding of his country. On 14 August 1947, the Viceroy flew to Karachi, chosen to be the new country's capital, and swore in Jinnah.

Pakistan's creation was an experiment at nation-building. A number of questions were asked, when Jinnah was campaigning, to convince the British to carve out a separate state for British India's Muslim community. At that time, India had a population of 400 million of whom 100 million were Muslims. About 75 million of them were concentrated in the colony's north-western and north-eastern areas. The remaining 25 million constituted minorities in the provinces in which the Hindus were a majority. What would be the

sense of separating the two religious communities when no amount of geographic engineering could create a state that accommodated all of British India's Muslims? If a state were to be created, what would be the basis of its nationhood? Jinnah had campaigned on the basis of religion and culture, projecting the Hindus and Muslims as two separate nations. Would this be the basis of the nationhood of Pakistan?

Three days before Pakistan won independence, Jinnah addressed what was to become the country's Constituent Assembly which was tasked with the job of giving the new state a constitution. Jinnah declared that, in Pakistan, "Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims." They would be equal citizens of the new state of Pakistan. Having secured a sovereign Muslim-majority state, Jinnah was abandoning the concept of two nations.

However, Britain's "shameful exit" – the expression used by historian Stanley Wolpert as the title of his book to describe the aftermath of London's decision to make a quick retreat from the Indian subcontinent – resulted in the death of a million people and

the movement of 14 million people across the hastily-demarcated India-Pakistan border. Eight million Muslims came to Pakistan from India while six million Hindus and Sikhs moved in the opposition direction. This was to be the largest movement of people in human history in such a short period of time – barely four months. Pakistan is still dealing with the consequences of such a huge influx of people in 1947. Within a few months, Pakistan, whose territory had 65 per cent Muslims at the time of its creation, became a country where Muslims constituted 95 per cent of the population. Jinnah might not have intended that outcome but the country he had created was soon facing the prospect of becoming "Islamised". That indeed has happened to some extent by now.

Pakistan had a shaky economic start, too. It had to accommodate eight million refugees, in addition to the original population of 24 million. It had to build a new government in a new capital. It had to deal with a hostile government in New Delhi that cut off electricity and threatened to block the flow of water into the canals that originated from the head-works that were now in India. The biggest shock





Photo courtesy of the Burki Institute of Public Policy, Pakistan

to Pakistan's economic system was administered in 1949, when New Delhi declared a trade-war against Pakistan to punish the neighbour for not following it to devalue its currency with respect to the United States (US) dollar. This particular action was to profoundly impact Pakistan – it changed the structure of the economy.

With an inauspicious beginning, Pakistan did surprisingly well in building its economy. Today, having grown at an average rate of 6.5 per cent a year since its birth in 1947, Pakistan's economy is 25 times larger in size than it was in 1947. Since the population has increased six and half times, income per capita is four times as large. The output of the industrial sector is 300 times as large. The proportion of people living in poverty has declined significantly.

While Pakistan has been an economic success, that is not the case with its political development. Unlike India, Pakistan was not able to evolve a political system that would accommodate all segments of the

population. Over the last 70 years, the country was governed by the military for over a period of 33 years. The country wrote three constitutions; the first, borrowed heavily from that of India, was adopted in 1956. Like India, Pakistan was to be a parliamentary democracy. However, the constitution was abrogated two years later after the military intervened and took over the country's administration. In 1962, Field Marshal Ayub Khan introduced a presidential form of government that survived for as long as he was in power. He was removed 11 years after he took over the reins of government by the head of the military. In 1971, Pakistan, after a bitterly-fought civil war, in what was then the country's eastern wing, saw the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. What was left of Pakistan went on to adopt the country's third constitution in 1973 that has survived two military take-overs and periods of extreme political instability.

Today, its political system is, once again, under considerable stress. An elected prime minister was removed

from office on charges of accepting payments from a foreign company headed by his son. A related puzzle is whether the military will stay on the sidelines and let civilian politics take its course.

Pakistan also has to deal with considerable tensions with two of its four neighbours. Afghanistan maintains that it can only stabilise itself when Pakistan stops aiding the terrorists operating in its territory. India has the same set of complaints, attributing the trouble in its part of Kashmir to intervention by Pakistan. The US, while not a neighbour, has openly threatened Islamabad with action if it does not decisively move against the terrorists operating from its territory.

In all, there is considerable uncertainty about the future of Pakistan as it begins the eighth decade as an independent state.

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# Politics of 'Radicalisation' in the Maldives

AMIT RANJAN

Although located along an important trade route in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives does not often attract as much attention as the other countries of South Asia. This is so despite the fact that the social and political changes it is going through have significant implications for South Asia and, to an extent, the larger Asian region as well.

The Maldives is an archipelagic country, with only one-sixth of its numerous islands being habitable. Nearly 98 per cent of its nearly 400,000 citizens are Muslims. In

fact, Article 109 of the Maldivian Constitution of 2008 stipulates that the president, who is the head of state, must "be a Muslim and a follower of a Sunni school of Islam". However, ancient Maldivians were possibly Buddhists. This is substantiated by the discovery of the remains of stupas on various islands. According to historical records, in 1153, the then-Maldivian king converted to Islam, with his subjects doing the same.

In the 1970s, the Maldives turned its idyllic beaches into attractive tourist

destinations. Since then, tourism has become an important contributor to the country's gross domestic product. The attractiveness of these beaches has generally lowered the intensity of global interest in the internal affairs of the Maldives. In recent years, the country has witnessed the rise of Islamists. Most of these Islamists have been educated in the *madrasas* (Islamic seminaries) in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or Egypt. After returning to their country, they have been trying to introduce an orthodox form of Islamic values in the Maldives.



On such developments and their ramifications, former President of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed, in an interview to *The Independent*, said that, "In 2014, there was a pro-IS [Islamic State] rally [in the Maldives] featuring banners that called for the introduction of Shariah law in the country". On the institutional support for these Islamists, he said that, "there were links between [radical] jihadist groups and the country's military as well as the police force...Radical Islam is getting very, very strong in the Maldives... Their strength in the military and in the police is very significant. They have people in strategic positions within both...Of the 200 people who have gone to [wage] jihad, the vast majority are ex-military [personnel]". On the social consequences of such Islamic values, Nasheed said that the Maldivian "society had become much more conservative because of the influx of Saudi money – paying for Wahhabi imams and mosques, and spreading a deeply conservative view of Islam at odds with the islands' traditions."

On 29 September 2007, the Maldives witnessed its first-ever 'Islamist' terror strike. Since then, the Islamists have strengthened their socio-political base. The latest incident happened on 22 April 2017. A young liberal blogger, Yameen Rasheed, was stabbed to death near his

apartment in Male, the capital city. With the rise of Islamist influence, it is said to have become difficult for anyone to remain in power without enjoying their support. An example cited in support is the ouster of Nasheed himself in 2012 because he had tried to introduce some liberal reforms.

The present President, Abdulla Yameen, was democratically elected in 2013. Since then, he has taken some steps to placate the Islamists, observers point out. The conspicuous ones are in the realm of foreign policy. In 2016, the Maldives announced that it was leaving the Commonwealth. This was because the organisation was pressing the government to promote democracy in the country. In 2016, following Saudi Arabia's footsteps, and to impress the Islamists at home, the Yameen government severed ties with Iran. Again, in 2017, the Maldives joined Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to sever its diplomatic relations with Qatar.

Some of Yameen's domestic policies have turned his erstwhile friends into foes. One such individual is former President, Abdul Gayoom, who ruled as an 'authoritarian' from 1978 to 2008, and helped Yameen gain power. As a result, the opposition, led by the Maldivian Democratic Party of

Nasheed, has gained some traction. The opposition had a successful moment in the 2017 Councillors elections, winning 300 out of 664 seats.

On 24 July 2017, the unified opposition served a notice to move a no-confidence resolution to impeach the Speaker of the Maldivian Parliament (Majlis), Abdulla Maseeh. On the following day, security personnel were called in to barricade the parliament complex. On 26 July 2017, when then-Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, was in Male, troops barricaded the Parliament. The opposition members were not allowed to enter the House.

In these circumstances, observers argue that the Islamists may remain a strong force in the Maldives, regardless of the changing nature of its political processes.

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# Towards One-Party Dominance in India?

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**RONOJOY SEN**

For a large part of independent India's political evolution, the country has had a one-party dominant system, with the Congress being the only real national party. Though the Congress was voted out from the Centre in 1977, it returned to power in 1980, and, in 1984, the party won its largest-ever mandate in the national elections. Since 1989, however, the Congress has not been able to scale its earlier heights and has either formed a minority government at the Centre or been part of a governing coalition. What has been termed a coalition era since 1989 might now be giving way to another one-party-dominant system. However, this time, the dominant party in focus is not the Congress but the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Towards the end of 2017, before elections were held in the States of Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, the electoral map of India clearly illustrated the dominance of the BJP. Leaving aside the Union territories, the BJP was in control, either on its own or in an alliance,

in 18 out of the 30 States. The latest State to have come under the BJP's control was Bihar, where, in 2015, the BJP had suffered its most surprising defeat under Narendra Modi's tenure as Prime Minister. However, in mid-2017, Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, switched sides to the BJP, handing the party a key State. The about-turn by Nitish was also a huge blow to the opposition since he was seen as the most credible face of the opposition. In contrast, the once-dominant Congress had been reduced to holding power in only five States, with three of them being tiny States in the country's northeast region. By the time the next national election is held in 2019, the BJP could very well be in control of more than 20 States.

The last time there was a similar political landscape was in 1993 when the Congress, along with the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which extended support to the government from the outside, controlled 18 states. However, the critical difference from the situation in 1993 is that, currently, 68 per cent

of India's population resides in the States held by the BJP and its allies, whereas only 45 per cent of India's population was under the Congress' control in 1993.

Leaving aside such numbers, does the BJP enjoy the kind of hegemony that the Congress once had? Analysts like political scientist Suhas Palshikar believe so. According to him, there are three factors that might be signalling a "second dominant party system" or a "new hegemony". First, the "all-India" imagination of the BJP and the national popularity of Modi have allowed the BJP, in most instances, to sweep aside state-level specificities during elections. It is only in States, such as West Bengal or Tamil Nadu, where there are strong regional parties, or Bihar, where a formidable caste-coalition contested the election, has the BJP been marginalised. Second, despite fringe elements in the BJP playing up issues like cow slaughter, Modi and his party have successfully conflated their ideology with nationalism. Hence, anyone who is seen as being anti-BJP is labelled



Photo courtesy of Dr Vijay Chauthaiwale and Bharatiya Janata Party

anti-national. Third, the BJP has sought to speak the language of development, which has an appeal cutting across class and caste.

One can add at least two others to the three aforementioned factors. One, the successful courting by the BJP of the Other Backward Classes voters, who are electorally critical in many Indian states. Two, the political ruthlessness and opportunism shown by the BJP in forming governments in States. The examples of Manipur and Goa stand out, where the Congress, and not the BJP, had emerged as the single-largest party after the elections in 2017. However, the BJP successfully outmanoeuvred the

Congress to form the government by allying with smaller parties and independents. This no-holds-barred approach was articulated by the BJP's President, Amit Shah, who in his speech at the party's national executive meeting in April 2017, said that the BJP should be present from "*panchayat* [the grassroots administrative unit] to Parliament" and win power in "every state".

However, despite the BJP's dominance in the States, the party had on its own a slim majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) as at the beginning of November 2017. According to news reports, Shah has set a target of 350-plus

seats to party members for the 2019 elections. The BJP will focus particularly on States like West Bengal, Odisha and Tamil Nadu where the party has, so far, had a limited impact.

In sum, it is too early to say whether India is seeing a second dominant party system. However, if the BJP were to achieve its target of 350 seats or more in the 2019 elections, the party would move closer to the position that the Congress once held.

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# Sri Lanka: National Reconciliation; Regional Ambitions

AMRESH LAVAN GUNASINGHAM

Photo courtesy of the Sri Lanka High Commission in Singapore

More than eight years ago, Sri Lanka's nearly-26-year-long civil war ended, raising cautious hopes of national reconciliation and a rightful place for the country on the international stage.

There has been some noticeable progress since Maithripala Sirisena became President in 2015, with strong support from the country's minority-Tamils and Muslims, as well as from the majority-Sinhala population. The new government established an Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, headed by former President Chandrika

Kumaratunga. The government also began to focus on education, agriculture and the construction of new homes for those displaced during the conflict.

In the northern and eastern provinces – overwhelmingly Tamil- and Muslim-populated regions where much of the fighting had taken place – the initial optimism among the affected people has now turned into disappointment over unmet expectations in the past two years, according to anecdotal and media reports. Sirisena rose to power on the promise to restore the rule of law,

end the country's relative isolation on the international stage and make progress towards reconciliation among the various communities. However, progress has been slow on issues such as missing persons, release of political prisoners and the military's continued use of land in the civil-war-ravaged areas. Such 'stalled' progress is weakening support for the Tamil National Alliance, the main Tamil party.

A relatively positive change in the political environment in Sri Lanka over the last two years is there for all to see. Comparisons with other societies



ravaged by civil war also suggest that national reconciliation takes time. The Sirisena administration, to its credit, has reached out to the minorities and initiated constitutional and legal reforms. However, the question remains as to whether high sentiment has masked slow implementation. In an address to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2017, Sirisena appealed for time for Sri Lanka to heal the wounds of the internal conflict and called for "patience, understanding and support for its slow, but steady march to create a peaceful and prosperous country for its people." His fervent appeal has to be seen in the context of the sharp comments by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on the slowness of progress in Sri Lanka towards post-war accountability and ethnic reconciliation. In October 2015, the UNHRC adopted a resolution, which Sri Lanka co-sponsored, calling for a credible judicial process to probe allegations of war crimes towards the end of the conflict. Sri Lanka committed itself to a "four-pillar approach" based on truth, reconciliation, accountability and non-recurrence. However, the Sri Lankan government's attempts to strengthen democratic rights and devolve certain political powers to the provinces have been foiled by key political actors, some observers believe.

These political observers note that, in the exercise of leadership, Colombo has become captive to some vested

interests in the military as well as religious hardliners. Part of the issue stems from Sirisena's proxy battle with his predecessor, Mahinda Rajapaksa, to control their Sri Lankan Freedom Party. The party's perceived nationalistic stance is also blamed. An example cited in this regard is the perceived soft-peddling by the Office on Missing Persons. Sceptics argue that the other mechanisms promised in 2015 are also increasingly in doubt, though the UNHRC has given Sri Lanka a couple of years to fulfil its commitments.

A key component of these commitments focuses on transitional justice. However, as Jehan Perera, Director of the National Peace Council, notes, many in Sri Lanka view transitional justice as a means to bring alleged war criminals to justice. However, they are still influential both in the political opposition and in the military, and also have the support of large segments of the population who see them as 'war heroes'. According to Perera, tracing the missing persons, reparations for the losses of lives and properties are seen as tools for war-crime prosecutions. He adds that, however, the call for international tribunals and hybrid courts to ensure accountability strengthens the hand of those who oppose the transitional justice process.

Sustained commitment to the implementation of reforms based on clear benchmarks and timelines are

considered essential in this situation. The window of opportunity must not be allowed to close. Time is of the essence, considering that the next national elections are expected by 2020. With Rajapaksa keen on ensuring a return of his brand of 'nationalist' politics, the reconciliation process hangs in the balance.

As for Sri Lanka's foreign policy choices, given its current domestic situation, the Indian Ocean region will be crucial. The region has become a venue for strategic planning by most of the world's dominant powers, especially the United States, a rising China and an emerging India. China plans to re-establish the ancient Maritime Silk Route by boosting its trade through enhanced regional connectivity and a safer passage for its energy purchases. Similarly, India is raising its maritime and security profile through collaborations with smaller states in the greater Indian Ocean region.

Accordingly, Sri Lanka, strategically located in the region, has been identified as a potential focal point for these two regional giants. Sri Lanka has a unique opportunity of partnering both India and China. For that, Sri Lanka must set its house in order in an exemplary fashion.

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# Grooming the Next Generation of BJP Leaders in India

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**RAJEEV RANJAN CHATURVEDY**

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) projects itself as the largest political party in the world, with more than 100 million members, with the competitor for this honour being the Communist Party of China. For the first time in 30 years since 1984, the BJP's victory in India's national elections in 2014 ushered in a government led by a party with an absolute majority of its own in parliament. In fact, it was also the first time in the 70-year political evolution of independent India that a party other than the Congress, which has ruled the country for several decades, won such a parliamentary majority on its own. Since 2014, Indian politics has been dominated by the rise of BJP in election after election at almost all levels. By all indications, a resurgent BJP has consolidated itself and there seems to be no strong opposition.

The BJP has been able to rise to its current position on the back of several notable leaders, such as the current Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, BJP President, Amit Shah, Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, and Home Minister Rajnath Singh. An interesting question, therefore, is how does the BJP seek to groom its next generation of leaders?

A glimpse of the party's history will shed some light on its approach to this issue.

The BJP, a direct successor of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), was founded in 1980. The BJS was founded in 1951 by Syama Prasad Mukherjee, a nationalist leader, former Union Minister and freedom-fighter. The BJP spearheads a wider movement guided by nationalism. With such a distinctive ideological identity, the BJP seeks to uphold Indian culture and civilisation – it came out with the pledge of “India First”. Modi styles himself as *Pradhan Sewak* (Prime Servant) of the people. Also, the BJP has a very strong institutional set-up and cadre of disciplined workers generally known to toe the party line. In order to provide greater representation to and empower the youth, the party has a youth wing – the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, which is tasked to facilitate the progression of the youth into the mainstream of national politics.

The BJP seems to search for its next generation of leaders at three levels – the government, the party's organisational hierarchy and in thought leadership.

By and large, men and women who seem to have performed well by committing themselves to the BJP's broad vision of a new India, have emerged as ministers in Modi's current government. The BJP is believed to conduct periodic performance appraisals of its ministers in order to bring about efficiency in the government. The relevant mantra is “perform [as ministers] and inform [the public]” of the BJP's achievements in power. Leaders like Nirmala Sitharaman, Kiren Rijiju, Piyush Goyal, Dharmendra Pradhan, Jayant Sinha, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and Smriti Irani are seen to be active in the central government. At the state level too, some BJP leaders are seen as rising stars, for example, Devendra Fadnavis, Yogi Adityanath, Sarbanda Sonowal, Keshav Prasad Maurya and Srikant Sharma, to name a few. They may well be among the next generation of BJP leaders.

As for talent at the organisational level, the BJP's reputation as the world's largest political party with a strong cadre network is a key factor. The BJP's institutional culture is apparently driven by a sense of collective political purpose, commitment and accountability.

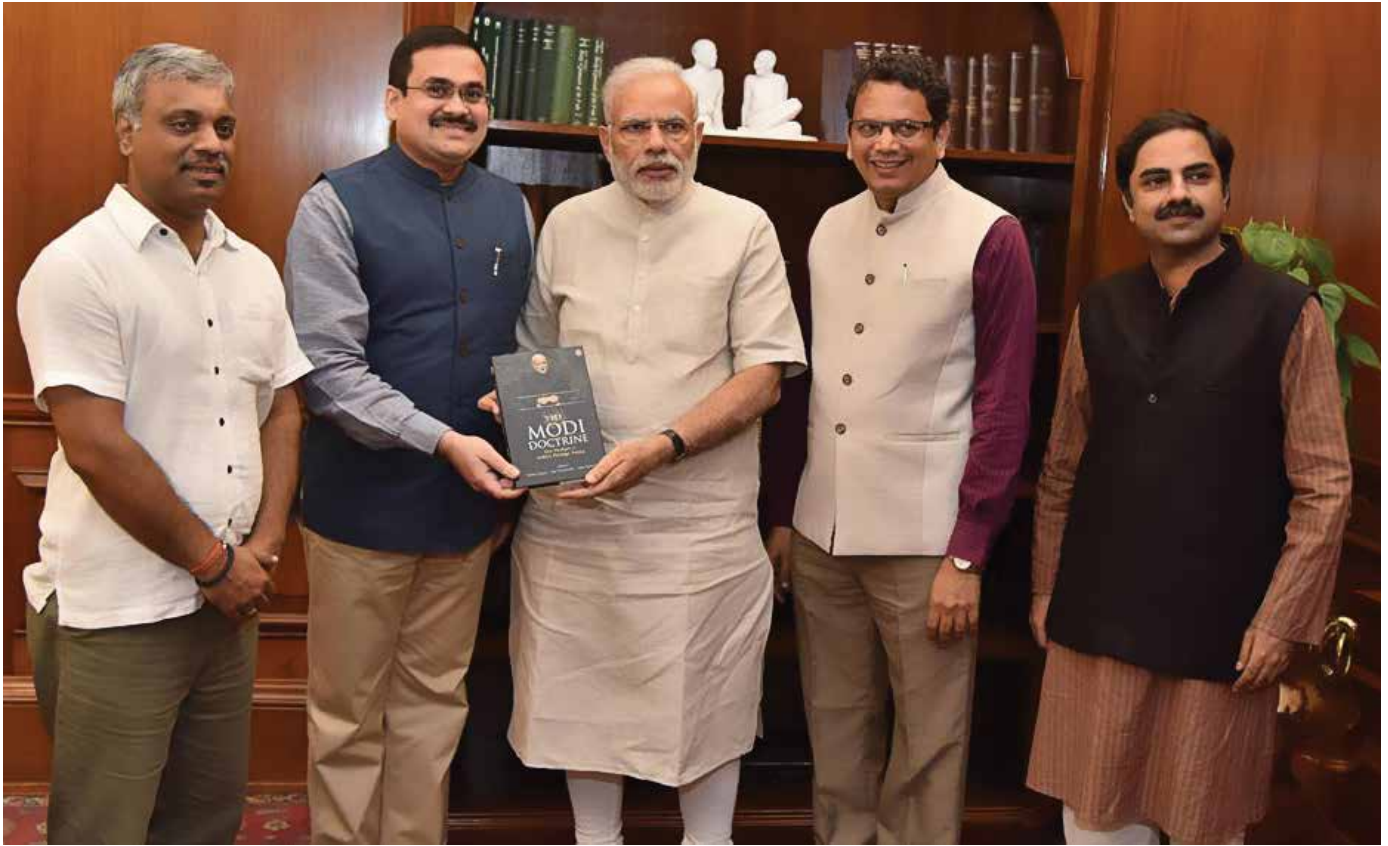


Photo courtesy of Dr Vijay Chauthaiwale and Bharatiya Janata Party

In general, the BJP is seen among the common people as a "party with a difference", especially with reference to India's oldest mainstream party, the Congress. The BJP has consistently sought to build its image as a party of disciplined leaders; not just disciplined cadre. More importantly, in recent years, the BJP has made efforts to improve its social identity by increasing its base among the people belonging to the poor, weaker and backward sections of the society, and giving them an opportunity to feel empowered. The expansion of party activities among many communities such as the tribes, farmers, teachers, lawyers, young professionals and the Indian diaspora has also enlarged the BJP's network. Viewed in this light, one can spot leaders like Poonam Mahajan, Manoj Tiwary, Swati

Singh, Abhishek Singh and a few others as emerging new generation leaders at the organisational level.

The BJP has also systematically tried to induct and nurture thought leaders. They are called upon to make proposals to the government, and to coordinate between the government and the party. They are also expected to solicit feedback from the people as well as grassroots party workers and various professionals, and inform the government and the party accordingly. Another task for the party leaders in this category is to inform the people about the various activities of the BJP government and the party. Leaders like Ram Madhav, Vijay Chauthaiwale, Anirban Ganguly, Sambit Patra, Vinay Sahasrabudhe and Amit Malviya can be identified in the category of the BJP's thought leaders.

The BJP has a full-fledged centre for data collection, documentation, research and communication. The party also draws on the intellectuals and professionals spread across the world who support its ideology and policies.

In sum, the party's credo, as outlined by Modi – *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas* (The Development of Everyone, with the Support of Everyone) – may prove to be a determinant of the next generation of the party's leaders at various levels. With an apparently evolving party culture as outlined above, it is not easy to foresee who might succeed Modi or Shah.

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# Nepal: Political Evolution and Foreign Policy Challenges

KUNDA DIXIT

When Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Maoist faction of the Communist Party of Nepal became Prime Minister in August 2016, the first foreign envoy to arrive at his residence to congratulate him was the Chinese Ambassador with an outsized bouquet that needed two people to lift it. The Indian Ambassador in Kathmandu came calling only the next day with a much more modest floral tribute of red carnations.

Political analysts in Kathmandu look out for small clues like that to detect which way the wind is blowing as Nepal walks the tightrope to balance its relations between its two giant neighbours. It has been that way ever since Nepal's founding king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, in 1767 described Nepal as "a yam between two boulders".

The joke in Kathmandu these days is that Nepal is not so much a yam as a mouse between two elephants – it is trampled not only when the elephants fight, but also when the elephants mate. Nepal's location between the giant nations of over 1.2 billion people each has defined its history and geopolitics.

The country went to war with British India and, in 1816, finally signed a treaty to protect its independence in return for giving away nearly half its territory and allowing the British to recruit Gurkha soldiers. Nepal invaded Tibet twice, but learnt not to do that after the Chinese Emperor sent reinforcements and chased the Nepali army back across the Himalayas.

Nepal has gone from a feudal oligarchy to democracy, lurching

back to being an absolute monarchy, then becoming a federal republic in 2008. Each of these changes has been accompanied by upheavals in which both Beijing and New Delhi have either been overt influencers or watched each other warily. Nepal shares an open border with India and is overwhelmingly dependent on this southern neighbour for trade and access to the sea.

In the post-colonial era, China and India were at first friends, and Nepal was trying, in 1960, to conduct its first democratic elections. Relations between New Delhi and Beijing soon soured and broke into open war all along the Himalayan arc. Nepal was neutral but 60,000 of its nationals were serving in the Indian Army. Perhaps nowhere else in the world do citizens of one country still serve in the army of a neighbouring

country to fight another neighbour with which it has close ties!

The democratic experiment did not last long because the new geopolitics of the region prompted King Mahendra to stage a coup in 1960, ban parties and run Nepal as a party-less absolute monarchy which lasted for the next 30 years. New Delhi was never comfortable with successive kings, whom it found to be too independent and nationalistic. The Chinese supported the monarchy because it ensured political stability.

Today, India and China compete with each other for influence in the Indian Ocean and its littoral states as well as for resources. They have disputed regions all along their long mountainous border but had decided in 1988 to address the issue. In exchange for India's acceptance of China's annexation of Tibet, the Chinese were willing to consider everything south of the Himalayas as India's sphere of influence. China has always wanted Nepal to be politically stable so that it will not be used as a springboard for Tibetan nationalism. India has generally preferred 'controlled instability' in Kathmandu so that it can influence political players to be pliant in meeting its security concerns as well as facilitate its long-term goal of harnessing Himalayan tributaries of the Ganges (Ganga) to meet future water needs.

During Nepal's decade-long Maoist war that ended in 2006 with an India-brokered ceasefire, the Chinese firmly supported the monarchy. In fact, the Chinese seemed embarrassed that a guerrilla army bearing the name of the Great Helmsman himself was waging

revolution in its own backyard. Top Maoist leaders actually conducted the war from a New Delhi suburb.

On a parallel track, despite the move for rapprochement, tensions do flare up between India and China from time to time. The latest was the sabre-rattling over the disputed Doklam region of the border tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan. Both sides ratcheted up the rhetoric, the media in Beijing and New Delhi went on the warpath, and it soured Bhutan's relations with India like never before. The dispute had lessons for Kathmandu, since Nepal is also a buffer state and has a similar dispute over a tri-junction of its own border with China and India in western Nepal.

Nepal's careful balancing between its two neighbours has also gone askew, like it did in 2015 when a few months after a massive earthquake, Nepal's parliament voted in a new federal constitution which was not to New Delhi's liking. India blockaded the border for five months (unofficially as some say), cutting off supplies of petroleum, food and relief materials to Nepal. This caused great hardship and wrecked Nepal's relations with India, which had been astutely mended by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Kathmandu in 2014.

Although China may not consider Nepal important enough to jeopardise its relations with a big trading partner like India, the blockade gave Beijing an opening to increase its influence in Kathmandu. It sent emergency fuel supplies, Nepal signed a trade and transit treaty with China to reduce its overwhelming dependence on India, and Chinese investors flocked in.

There are indications that the sphere of influence doctrine between Beijing and New Delhi over Nepal may have been overtaken by events like the 2015 blockade and the Doklam standoff. The most recent government changes in Nepal may be proof of that. During the blockade, Prime Minister K P Oli of the moderate left Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) openly thumbed his nose at the New Delhi establishment, played the nationalist card and leaned over backwards to be close to Beijing. By 2016, his coalition with the CPN-Maoists collapsed when Chairman Dahal switched sides to join the centrist Nepali Congress. There was no doubt in anyone's mind in Kathmandu that New Delhi had engineered that 'coup'.

The UML went on to win convincingly in the local elections in mid-2017 by carefully cultivating its anti-Indian line. However, as campaigning got underway for federal and parliamentary elections in November-December 2017, Oli and Dahal made the dramatic announcement that they were forming an electoral alliance and were working towards party unity. Many Kathmandu analysts saw this as a Chinese 'counter-coup' since Beijing has never tried to hide the fact that it would like the many communist factions in Nepal to unite.

In that respect, history keeps repeating itself, and Nepal is still a yam between two boulders. Or maybe a mouse!

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# India-ASEAN Engagement: The Youth Focus

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**ANKUSH AJAY WAGLE**

India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are celebrating 25 years of their partnership. The occasion has also heralded a much-needed auxiliary dimension to ASEAN-India collaboration, that is, youth engagement. In August 2017, India hosted the inaugural India-ASEAN Youth Summit which brought together more than 150 participants from both sides. The summit, jointly organised by the Indian government and the India Foundation, an Indian think-tank, involved several stakeholders from the public and private sectors. It served as a platform to highlight the cause of interactions among the youth of India and ASEAN.

Youth relations are increasingly viewed globally as a key area of focus for various stakeholders such as governments, corporates and civil society. These relations are reckoned to possess both tangible (in terms of economic worth) and intangible (in terms of greater connectivity) value for the stakeholders. The reasoning is simple – the youth of today will be policy makers, businesspeople and leaders of tomorrow. Consequently, the youth relations developed today will be the bedrock for development

tomorrow. India and ASEAN possess many common denominators – positive and negative – in pursuing the development of youth relations. Both sides are home to massive demographic bulges of aspirational youth. These youth are also the most digitally-savvy in history, accessing tremendous connectivity through the power of the internet. This connectivity has served to break down barriers such as distance by providing cheap, instant access to information. On the other hand, India and certain ASEAN states also suffer from deficits in facilities and opportunities for the youth. Economic slowdowns in both India and ASEAN have left their youth at a disadvantage, as they are often the 'last in, first out' in terms of employment. While all these problems certainly cannot be solved through youth relations, the linkages created can ultimately help the respective youth populations.

Given that the United Nations defines youth as persons in the age group 15 years to 24 years, it is but obvious that youth engagement across the India-ASEAN spectrum should ideally take the form of educational enterprises. Education is crucial to unlocking the potential of the youth

from both sides, and this has been a key challenge for India and most of the ASEAN states. Some ground has already been covered in this regard, through either bilateral or multilateral initiatives. For instance, in Singapore, the Agency of Science, Technology and Research and Singapore Airlines offer youth scholarships to Indian students under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. On the Indian side, the ASEAN-India Student Exchange Programme, started by the Indian government, has been implemented for 10 years now. However, these initiatives are few and far between. The need is to create a structured, stable, long-term system of educational exchanges between the two sides.

Both India and the ASEAN member states (individually and collectively) possess certain innate 'comparative advantages'. The challenge lies in 'connecting the dots', that is, capitalising on the distinctive competencies of the partners and translating them into a robust policy framework. A vital point of note in such youth educational collaboration is that it should not be limited to the parameters of conventional education such as tertiary institutional qualifications.





Rather, it should encompass a more holistic approach, with provisions made for technical education, and skills- and entrepreneurship-development as well.

India and ASEAN, much like many parts of the world, are witnessing a rapid manifestation of entrepreneurial tendencies, especially among the youth. The groundswell of youth-led 'start-ups' across India and ASEAN provides a fertile ground for cooperation in several disciplines such as e-commerce, emerging technologies, healthcare and social service.

Another key to the development of youth relations is co-opting young people from both sides in the dialogue over policy formulation. The importance of youth inclusion in this regard cannot be emphasised enough. If the youth of the two sides

are to be truly engaged with each other in a meaningful way, they must be given a sense of ownership of and responsibility for the process of deciding the path of future relations. In addition to initiatives such as the India-ASEAN Youth Summit, the governments from each side must actively promote the circulation of knowledge about the value of educational connectivity among the youth. This would not, of course, be a financially or logistically simple undertaking. However, as in the adage of small steps for the start of a journey of a thousand miles, incremental efforts would be welcomed. Even at the grassroots level, a basic understanding among the youth about the commonalities between the Indian and Southeast Asian cultures, inculcated through education, will go a long way in fostering youth relations. Here, think tanks such as ISAS, which hosts

several diverse events in the public sphere, can be co-opted in furthering the dissemination of information from either side.

In sum, youth relations constitute a 'high-value' area for India and ASEAN to further their existing relationship. Facing a future where global-level uncertainty is perhaps the only constant, the two sides can come together in this endeavour, taking a cue from an insightful observation by a former American President, Franklin D Roosevelt, that, "We cannot always build the future for our youth but we can build our youth for the future".

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# Recent Agreements

ISAS collaborates with think tanks, academic institutions, business and industry groups, private and public organisations and the community to enhance its mission of promoting the understanding of South Asia.

Between January and October 2017, ISAS signed or renewed three memoranda of understanding. The partner institutions included:



These new partnerships will bring valuable expertise, perspective and resources to ISAS and our partnering institutions and organisations.

## EVENTS

21  
AUG

**ISAS-COSATT-KAS Workshop**

### Re-energising the SAARC Process



The workshop on 'Re-energising the SAARC Process' took place on 21 August 2017. Organised by ISAS, in association with the Consortium of South Asian Think-Tanks (COSATT) and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) of Germany, the workshop discussed ways in which the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could be revitalised.

The workshop included an inaugural panel discussion, followed by two other sessions, during which scholars and former policymakers representing various countries of the region presented papers and explored the future of the SAARC.

The event also witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between ISAS and the Centre for South Asian Studies of Kathmandu, Nepal. The signatories were the Directors of the two institutes, respectively, Professor Subrata Kumar Mitra and Dr Nishchal Pandey. The report on 'Countering Youth Radicalization and Violent Extremism in South Asia', a publication by KAS and COSATT, was also launched during the event.

The event concluded with the participants calling for a transformation of the organisation into a 'People's SAARC'—this would be the only way to revitalise its functioning.

**11  
SEP****ISAS Workshop**

## Pakistan's Politics, Economics and Sociology

In Pakistan, while the military is still involved in shaping security and foreign policies of the country, it has also shown a commitment to supporting democratic processes. Its relevance to Pakistan's democracy was a major point of discussion at the workshop organised by ISAS on 'Pakistan at 70: Politics, Economics and Sociology' on 11 September 2017.

Another strand of discussion at the event was Pakistan's struggle to define the role of religion in society.



While the native Sufi Islam remains the pervasive tradition, the Islamisation programme of Zia-ul-Haq, a military dictator, and the Afghan War of his times had strengthened 'puritanical' Islam. The rise of terrorism and sectarian conflict indicates an ongoing struggle for political hegemony between the two traditions of Islam.

There are significant strains in Pakistan's economy. Despite that, its gross domestic product (GDP) today is around US\$300 billion (S\$404.5 billion), compared to US\$12 billion (S\$16.1 billion) in 1947. Over this period, Pakistan has grown at an average rate of 4.6 per cent a year and is expected to touch 5.5 per cent in 2018.

Pakistan's close ties with China and its geostrategic location have ensured its important place in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI-linked arteries of commerce will connect Pakistan to the West, while also developing its domestic infrastructure and power-generation capacity.

In sum, a relatively stable political environment, the strengthening institutions and a youthful population will provide Pakistan with opportunities for a better future.

**25  
SEP****ISAS-KIEP Symposium**

## India-South Korea and India-Japan Cooperation



ISAS and the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) organised a symposium on 'India, Japan and South Korea: Political and Economic Cooperation' on 25 September 2017.

Focusing on India-South Korea relations, the first session looked at the South Korean government's efforts to enhance bilateral cooperation with India in such areas as ship-building, steel, electronics, infrastructure and smart city projects. The session also examined the success of Hyundai Motor India, Hyundai Motor Company's foreign investment subsidiary in India's automobile sector. It also highlighted the higher

ratio of Seoul's financial and technical assistance to human development sectors in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, compared to Japan's aid that has been channelled to the infrastructure sector.

The session on Japan-India relations focused on several areas. These included the emerging importance of energy and resource security to the Asia-Pacific region; the rise of China's economic, political and military influence; growing economic and political linkages between Japan and India; and the role of Singapore as a regional hub in facilitating Japanese investments in India.



28  
SEP

ISAS-CII Chief Minister Lecture

## Maharashtra – India's Engine of Development

ISAS and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), supported by the High Commission of India in Singapore, hosted Mr Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of the Indian State of Maharashtra and 57<sup>th</sup> Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellow, at the ISAS-CII Chief Minister Lecture Series on 28 September 2017. Close to 200 guests attended the lecture.

Titled 'Infrastructure-led Growth: Maharashtra – India's Engine of Development', Mr Fadnavis' lecture focussed on Maharashtra's transition to an 'investment-based' model of sustainable agriculture, and underscored the State's progress in water conservation. He also highlighted the State's reduction of permits to establish businesses and the creation of a single, cohesive digital platform to improve accessibility. At the same time, he emphasised his 'war room' approach of assembling various authorities at timely intervals for speedy decision-making in infrastructure development.



An interactive session followed the presentation. The Chief Minister fielded questions on topics such as agricultural productivity, the need for public investment, solutions to flooding and solid waste management, the use of telemedicine and slum redevelopment, among others.

5-6  
OCT

ISAS Workshop

## Skills Development in India, Southeast and East Asia



The Indian government has, in recent times, invited the private sector, multilateral agencies, bilateral partners and civil society to participate in its skills development programmes. In this milieu, ISAS organised a workshop on 5 and 6 October 2017 under the overarching theme of 'Skills Development – Legacy, Current Challenges and Planning for the Future: Insights from the Indian, Southeast and East Asian Experiences'.

The workshop sought to highlight the existing challenges and those that lie ahead, and share India's experiences with Singapore and other successful states in Southeast and East Asia. The themes included engagement with the private sector via public-private partnerships and other forms of collaboration, initiatives to enhance

employability and institutional challenges of skills upgrading, among others.

Dr K P Krishnan, Secretary to the Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship in India, delivered the keynote address for the event. The other speakers included corporate leaders, human resource practitioners with regional and global responsibilities, academics, researchers and senior representatives of state governments.

As a follow-up to the workshop, ISAS will engage with and match partners in the skills development space in India and Singapore.

## Singapore Symposium 2017

31  
OCT

# India, Singapore & ASEAN: Shared History, Common Future

The fifth Singapore Symposium was held in New Delhi, India, on 31 October 2017. Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, was the special guest at the symposium, themed 'India, Singapore & ASEAN: Shared History, Common Future'. Close to 200 guests, including senior policymakers, corporate leaders, academics and civil society representatives attended the event.

Addressing the audience, Dr Balakrishnan urged India to engage more with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and called on the South Asian region to increase aviation and maritime links with the grouping through Singapore. He added that, "Singapore has always been a believer in India's role in Asia and in ASEAN...I can say with all honesty that we have always spoken up for India, we have always encouraged India to engage us and always done our best to ensure there is a seat at the table."

The Singapore Symposium is part of ISAS' ongoing efforts to foster closer exchange and cooperation between Singapore and the South Asian nations in



a frank and candid setting. These symposiums are highly successful in facilitating the sharing of views and perspectives on South Asia-Singapore relations, and on their interactions with other parts of the world.

28  
NOV

## ISAS-ESI Conference

# Towards a Low Carbon Asia

ISAS and the Energy Studies Institute (ESI) of the National University of Singapore organised an international conference on 'Towards a Low Carbon Asia: The Challenges of Ensuring Efficient and Sustainable Energy' on 28 November 2017.

Mr Vikram Singh Mehta, Executive Chairman of Brookings India and Senior Fellow at Brookings Institution in the United States, delivered the keynote address for this conference. The other speakers included Mr Ng Wai Choong, Chief Executive of the Energy Market Authority, Singapore; Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS and Former Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister of India; Mr Henning Gloystein, Energy Editor for Asia at Thomson Reuters; and Dr Anthony D Owen, Principal Fellow and Head of Energy Economics Division at ESI.

The speakers focussed on a number of key issues on ensuring efficient and sustainable energy. These included the various sources of energy in South Asia; the political economy of energy cooperation in South Asia;



sustainable development goals and energy transition; energy multilateral funding institutions and public-private partnerships; and the impact of climate change on energy management, among others.

The conference attracted cross-section participation from the corporate sector, regulatory agencies, academia and civil society.

## ISAS Events Listing (July to December 2017)

ISAS Seminar	<b>India, China and the US: Strategic Choices</b>	7 July 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Swachh Bharat (Clean India) – Obstacles and Advantages</b>	11 July 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>India's Priority in a Changing World</b>	12 July 2017
ISAS Roundtable Discussion	<b>Meet the Authors Session with Taylor &amp; Francis</b>	24 July 2017
ISAS Ambassadors' Lecture	<b>Canada at 150: Our Relations with Asia in a time of change</b>	27 July 2017
ISAS Panel Discussion	<b>Challenges to Economic Integration in Asia</b>	2 August 2017
ISAS Workshop	<b>Trade and Economic Integration: South Asia, Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific</b>	3 August 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Bihari Overseas Labour Migration 1857-1869: Origins, Intermediaries and the Role of Trust</b>	15 August 2017
ISAS Joint Event	<b>India's Soft Power – The Indian Film Industry</b>	18 August 2017
ISAS-COSATT Joint Workshop	<b>Re-energising the SAARC Process</b>	21 August 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Sri Lanka after Regime Change: Drift, Take-off or Relapse?</b>	23 August 2017
ISAS Panel Discussion	<b>Pakistan in Challenging Times</b>	25 August 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Sustainable Development Cities: A Case Study of Mega Cities in India</b>	30 August 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>Meet the Authors Session with Palgrave Macmillan</b>	31 August 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Nepal: Between a Rock and a Hard Place</b>	6 September 2017
ISAS Panel Discussion and Book Launch	<b>Asia's Resurgence and Divergences in Economic Growth</b>	8 September 2017
ISAS Workshop	<b>Pakistan at 70: Politics, Economics and Sociology</b>	11 September 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>Understanding the Doklam Standoff</b>	13 September 2017
ISAS Seminar	<b>Bangladeshi Migration to Singapore: A Process Oriented Approach</b>	18 September 2017
ISAS-KIEP Joint Symposium	<b>India, Japan and South Korea: Political and Economic Cooperation</b>	25 September 2017
ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion	<b>CultureShock! India</b>	27 September 2017
ISAS Ambassadors' Lecture	<b>Russia in Asia: Responding to Changing Times</b>	28 September 2017
ISAS-CII Chief Ministers' Lecture	<b>Infrastructure-led Growth: Maharashtra – India's Engine of Development</b>	28 September 2017
ISAS Workshop	<b>Skills Development – Legacy, Current Challenges and Planning for the Future: Insights from India, Southeast and East Asian Experiences</b>	5 and 6 October 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>The Challenge of Skilling India</b>	6 October 2017
Darpan-ISAS Joint Book Launch & Panel Discussion	<b>The South Asian Diaspora – Preserving Culture, Tradition and Identity</b>	10 October 2017
ISAS-BASC Joint Workshop	<b>Revisiting Globalisation: Comparing Country Experiences from South Asia and the World</b>	12 October 2017
ISAS-CLAS Joint Seminar	<b>Indian Supreme Court's Balancing Act on Triple Talaq</b>	13 October 2017
ISAS-ADRI Joint Roundtable	<b>Political Economy of Development in Eastern India</b>	25 October 2017



ISAS-CPR Panel Discussion	<b>The Clean India Mission: Challenges and Prospects</b>	30 October 2017
Singapore Symposium 2017	<b>India, Singapore &amp; ASEAN: Shared History, Common Future</b> New Delhi, India	31 October 2017
ISAS-IHC Panel Discussion	<b>Contemporary Relevance of Indian Heritage</b>	9 November 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>New India</b>	16 November 2017
SASP-ISAS Joint Seminar	<b>Accessing Schooling under the Right to Education Act in India: Results from a Field Study in Delhi</b>	24 November 2017
ESI-ISAS Joint Workshop	<b>South Asia's Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainable Energy Transitions</b>	27 November 2017
ESI-ISAS Joint Conference	<b>Towards a Low Carbon Asia: The Challenges of Ensuring Efficient and Sustainable Energy</b>	28 November 2017
ISAS Ambassadors' Lecture	<b>Peru and Asia: An Evolving Relationship</b>	30 November 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>Taiwan's New Southbound Policy</b>	30 November 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>Interactive Session with National Management College, Pakistan</b>	5 December 2017
ISAS Closed Door Session	<b>Schizophrenic Asia: India and China; India and West Asia</b>	7 December 2017
The ISAS Lecture Series	<b>Asia's New Geopolitics</b>	18 December 2017

Note: The venue is in Singapore, unless otherwise stated.

6

APR 2018

## ISAS Forthcoming Event

### 12<sup>th</sup> ISAS International Conference on South Asia Emerging South Asia: Politics, Economy and International Relations

**Guest of Honour: Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills); and Second Minister for Defence, Singapore**

ISAS will organise the 12<sup>th</sup> ISAS International Conference on South Asia on 6 April 2018. Singapore's Minister for Education (Higher Education & Skills) and Second Minister for Defence, Mr Ong Ye Kung, will deliver the keynote address for the conference.

The one-day event will explore the three determinants of stability – politics, economy and international relations – to identify the potential, prospects and pitfalls facing the region. Politics in South Asia are vibrant, representing and aggregating competing ideas and priorities. However, by and large, elected governments are geared towards development, governance and sustainability. Aside from domestic factors, there are regional and international dynamics at play, enabling or constraining the emergence and resilience of a buoyant, peaceful and cohesive South

Asia. Security concerns are increasingly transnational, requiring a coordinated and collaborative regional approach. The roles of the region's powerhouse, India, and that of extra-regional powers, especially China and the United States, will be crucial for the future of South Asia.

This conference will bring together policymakers, scholars and South Asia observers from Singapore, the region and the world. Together, they will address a number of important questions relating to South Asia's domestic priorities, its economic potentials, its security challenges and its aspirations on the international stage.

Please look out for the details on the event in due time. Alternatively, you can send an email to [jordanang@nus.edu.sg](mailto:jordanang@nus.edu.sg) should there be any queries on the conference.

## ISAS Publications and Papers (July to December 2017)

### Authored Books

Subrata Kumar Mitra. *Politics in India: Structure, Process and Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Routledge, 2017

### Edited Books

Elizabeth Hill and Amitendu Palit. *Employment Policy in Emerging Economies: The Indian Case*. Routledge, 2017

Devesh Kapur, Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Milan Vaishnav. *Rethinking Public Institutions in India*. Oxford University Press, 2017

### Briefs

- 497** The Goods and Services Tax in India: Impressions and Realities, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 3 July 2017
- 498** Challenging Times in Sri Lanka: A Reality Check for Maithripala Sirisena, Mr Amresh Gunasingham, Research Intern, ISAS, 5 July 2017
- 499** The 2017 Malabar Exercises – Testing Waters, Mr Benjamin Chin, Research Intern, ISAS, 10 July 2017
- 500** The Qatar Crisis in the Gulf: Implications for South Asian Migrant Workers, Dr Md Mizanur Rahman, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 July 2017
- 501** The G20 Hamburg Summit: Declaration, Divisions and Dividends, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy) ISAS, 13 July 2017
- 502** The Shifting Sand of Bihar Politics, Mr Rajeev Chaturvedy and Amit Ranjan, Research Associate, ISAS, 5 April 2017
- 503** The Disqualification of Nawaz Sharif: Implications for Democracy in Pakistan, Ms Faiza Saleem, Research Assistant, ISAS, 2 August 2017
- 504** The New Hambantota Port Deal in Sri Lanka: A Template for the Belt and Road Initiative Projects?, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 3 August 2017
- 505** India's New President and Vice-President: The Elections and their Impact, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 10 August 2017
- 506** A New Chapter In Indo-German Relations, Ms Roshni Kapur, Graduate student, University of Sydney; and Former Intern, ISAS, 16 August 2017
- 507** Appointment of a New Chief Minister In Nagaland: An End to the Power Struggle, Ms Roshni Kapur, Graduate student, University of Sydney; and Former Intern, ISAS, 21 August 2017
- 508** Triple Talaq in India: Religious versus Gender Issues, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 September 2017
- 509** GST Collections in India: Beyond the Government's Projection, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 5 September 2017
- 510** Tamil Nadu in a Muddle: The Politics of Admissions to Medical Colleges, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 September 2017
- 511** Donald Trump's Afghanistan Policy Statement – Economic Implications for India, Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 September 2017
- 512** India's Cabinet Reshuffle: Modi Looks ahead to the 2019 Elections, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 12 September 2017
- 513** India's Regional Role: Perceptions, Potentials and Prognosis, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 September 2017
- 514** Income Poverty in Sri Lanka: Beyond Traditional 'Poor' and 'Non-Poor' Classification, Mr Ravindra Deyshappriya, Doctoral candidate, School of Economics, Finance & Marketing, RMIT University, Australia, 22 September 2017
- 515** The Rohingya Crisis: Potentials for Possible Changes in the Regional Security Architecture, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 23 October 2017
- 516** India and the European Union – Poised for Partnership Scale-Up, Dr Jivanta Schoettli, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 October 2017
- 517** Revitalising the Indian Economy: Announcement of Public Sector Bank Recapitalisation Measures, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 October 2017
- 518** Rex Tillerson in South Asia: An American Tilt towards India?, Professor C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 30 October 2017
- 519** Gujarat Assembly Elections: BJP ahead despite Voter Discontent, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 1 November 2017
- 520** Shinzo Abe's Victory in Japan: Implications for India, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 November 2017
- 521** Ease of Doing Business in India: A Big Jump but Tough for a Bigger Jump, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 3 November 2017
- 522** India's Improved 'Ease of Doing Business' Ranking: Concrete Steps and Mindset Change, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 November 2017

<b>523</b>	The Sharifs of Pakistan: A House Divided against Itself, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 November 2017
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<b>525</b>	India and the Resurrection of the Quad, Professor C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 17 November 2017
<b>526</b>	The Status of Women in India: Widening Gender Gap, Ms Taisha Grace Antony, Research Assistant, ISAS, 17 November 2017
<b>527</b>	Sri Lanka's Budget 2018: Environment, Enterprise and Economics, Mr Ankush Ajay Wagle, Research Assistant, ISAS, 20 November 2017
<b>528</b>	Asia and Europe: Emerging Potentials for Cooperation, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 November 2017
<b>529</b>	Pakistan in Turmoil: Some Crystal Ball-Gazing on its Future, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 29 November 2017
<b>530</b>	India-Singapore Defence Agreement: A New Phase in Partnership, Professor C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 4 December 2017
<b>531</b>	The Bharatiya Janata Party Confident ahead of Gujarat Elections, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 6 December 2017
<b>532</b>	Diplomacy and Papacy: How do the Twain Meet?, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 December 2017
<b>533</b>	Nepal's Elections 2017: A Watershed in Nepalese Political History, Mr Ankush Ajay Wagle, Research Assistant, ISAS, 13 December 2017
<b>534</b>	Elections in Gujarat: A Close Win for the Bharatiya Janata Party, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 27 December 2017
<b>535</b>	The 24-Hour Electricity Programme in Telangana: More needs to be done for the Farmers, Ms Roshni Kapur, Graduate student, University of Sydney; and Former Intern, ISAS, 28 December 2017

## Insights

<b>429</b>	The Abolition of Australia's 457 Visa: Impact on India's Skilled Labour Mobility, Ms Liyana Othman, Research Assistant, ISAS, 3 July 2017
<b>430</b>	India-Israel Relations under Narendra Modi: A Robust Partnership in the Making, Mr Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, Research Associate, ISAS, 3 July 2017
<b>431</b>	Farm Loan Waivers in India: Good Politics but Poor Economics?, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow ISAS, 3 July 2017
<b>432</b>	Nature without Borders: Reconciling the Needs of Wildlife and People in India, Dr Ghazala Shahabuddin, Senior Scientist, Centre for Ecology, Development and Research, India, 5 July 2017
<b>433</b>	India-China Border Dispute: A Historical Enquiry on the Political Selection of Boundary Lines, Dr Joe Thomas Karackattu, Assistant Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, 10 July 2017
<b>434</b>	The Road to the Good and Services Tax – Growing Importance of India's States, Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 July 2017
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<b>437</b>	Pakistan Faces a Widening Fiscal Imbalance, Ms Faiza Saleem, Research Assistant, ISAS, 14 July 2017
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<b>443</b>	The India-China Stand-off over a Sino-Bhutanese Disagreement, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 July 2017
<b>444</b>	Can Demonetisation Catalyse the Quest for a Cashless India?, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 July 2017
<b>445</b>	The Consequences of Open Defecation in India, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 July 2017
<b>446</b>	Nudges: Small Behavioural Changes can enhance Well-Being, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 July 2017
<b>447</b>	Can Nudges Help with India's Sanitation Crisis?, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 31 July 2017
<b>448</b>	The United States-India Drone 'Deal': Regional and Global Implications, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 2 August 2017



## PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

449	A High-Altitude Tussle: The Strategic Stakes of Bhutan, China and India, Mr P S Suryanarayana, Editor (Current Affairs), ISAS, 8 August 2017
450	The Impact of Japanese and South Korean Official Development Assistance on their Relations with South Asian States, Dr Sojin Shin, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 August 2017
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452	Quo Vadis Pakistan? Yet It Keeps Moving!, Dr Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 August 2017
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454	Water Disputes in India: Andhra Pradesh–Telangana and River Krishna Water-Sharing Disputes, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 August 2017
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457	Labour Migration from Pakistan: An Overview, Professor Riaz Hassan, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 25 August 2017
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464	Pakistan's Population – A Ticking Time Bomb, Mr Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Professor Riaz Hassan, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 14 September 2017
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**479** Ensuring Water Supply in Amaravati: Challenges and Possible Solutions, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 December 2017

### Working Papers

**261** The Shaping of the 'Trumpian' World Economic Order, Mr Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, 6 July 2017

**262** The Indian Ocean Rim Association: Scaling Up?, Dr Barana Waidyatilake, Research Fellow, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 12 July 2017

**263** The Donald Trump Phenomenon and the American Presidency, Mr Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, 26 July 2017

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**280** Transitioning towards a Sustainable Energy Future: Challenges and Opportunities for India, Mr Vikram Singh Mehta, Executive Chairman of Brookings India, and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, United States, 27 December 2017

### Special Reports

**44** ISAS-COSATT-KAS Workshop: 'Re-Energising the SAARC Process', Ms Silvia Tieri, Research Assistant, ISAS, 27 September 2017

**45** ISAS Workshop: 'Pakistan at 70: Politics, Economy and Sociology', Ms Silvia Tieri, Research Assistant, ISAS, 16 October 2017

**46** ISAS Workshop: 'The State of Uttar Pradesh: Indian State Elections and their Implications', Mr Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, Research Associate, ISAS, 13 November 2017

**47** ISAS-KIEP Joint Symposium: 'India, Japan and South Korea: Political and Economic Cooperation', Mr Amresh Gunasingham, Research Intern, ISAS, 13 November 2017

**48** ISAS-ADRI Roundtable: 'Political Economy of Development in Eastern India', Mr Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, Research Associate, ISAS, 13 November 2017

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