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Imran Khan: Captaining the Nation Yet Again



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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

South Asia is the newsletter of the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS).
You may send your feedback and comments to:

The Editor

South Asia
Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
#08-06 (Block B), Singapore 119620
Tel : (65) 6516 7235
Fax : (65) 6776 7505
Email : isassec@nus.edu.sg

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A Message from the Director

PROFESSOR C RAJA MOHAN

Greetings from the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS)!

We hope the New Year has begun well for all our readers and well-wishers. If the second half of 2018 is any guide, 2019 is going to be even more hectic at ISAS. Many critical developments in South Asia during the last six months of 2018 have kept my colleagues busy analysing them. It has also been a period when ISAS has stepped up its engagement with other institutions in the National University of Singapore and beyond to develop a more informed appreciation of a rapidly changing sub-continent.

One of the key changes in the region has been the election of the flamboyant former cricketer Imran Khan as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Our cover piece for this issue profiles the persona, politics and policies of the new prime minister amidst the many challenges confronting Pakistan. If Pakistan has opted for a fresh political face, Bangladesh has opted for political stability and continuity by re-electing the two-time incumbent, Sheikh Hasina, as the Prime Minister. We have an analysis in this issue on what led to Prime Minister Hasina's sweeping victory.

Equally surprising has been the peaceful transition of power in the Maldives, which defeated incumbent President Abdulla Yameen and replaced him with Ibrahim Solih. Our analysis captures the increasing impact of India-China rivalry on the Maldives and its politics. Surprise has also been the theme of elections in some key states in the Indian heartland. Our analysis focuses on the factors behind the Bharatiya Janata Party's defeat in the polls for the state assemblies in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Beyond the immediacy of the elections, this issue devotes attention to three very different themes. One is the little understood nature of welfare politics in Tamil Nadu and its long-term consequences. The second is the prospect for FinTech collaboration between India and Singapore. One of the highlights of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Singapore from 31 May to 2 June 2018 was the agreement to promote the linking of the payment systems in the two countries. Studying technology policy has emerged as one of the new priorities of ISAS. We hope to devote considerable energies

to understanding the impact of technological disruption on the politics, economy and international relations of South Asia. The third theme is the question of geopolitical identity in the sub-continent. Sri Lanka has long presented itself as a "South Asian nation". Today, amidst the growing significance of the regional waters, Sri Lanka has begun to see itself as an "Indian Ocean nation". Do read the essay in this issue on Sri Lanka's quest for a maritime identity.

As we look ahead to 2019, my colleagues and I are confident that our work on the South Asian sub-continent will become more relevant to the policymakers, the community of businessmen and entrepreneurs, and the civil society in Singapore and beyond. We also hope to widen the ISAS footprint and make it a real hub for scholars and analysts of contemporary South Asia. We look forward to your strong support in 2019. Meanwhile, I trust you will enjoy reading this issue. Your feedback is always welcome.



Photo courtesy of the Government of Pakistan

Imran Khan: Captaining the Nation Yet Again

IQBAL SINGH SEVEA

Imran Khan was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan on 18 August 2018. Khan became a national hero when he captained the Pakistani cricket team to victory in the 1992 World Cup. He now promises to utilise his leadership skills to build a *Naya Pakistan* (New Pakistan).

Khan entered the political terrain in 1996 when he launched his political party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice), or PTI. The political arena, however,

proved to be a sticky wicket. Despite his celebrity status, it took Khan 21 years to break the hold of the two established political parties — the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) — and to emerge as a major player in the political realm.

Cricketing Star and Playboy

Khan was born in 1952 to an affluent Pashtun family in Lahore, Punjab. He received his formative education in

elite institutions — Aitchison College in Lahore, and the Royal Grammar School in Worcester, England — and graduated from Oxford University with a degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.

Khan began his cricket career as a teen playing for Lahore, and went on to play county cricket in England. He made his international test cricket debut for Pakistan in 1971. His mastery over the craft of fast bowling, coupled with his charisma

and fiery temperament, led to him being appointed captain. His impact on the team was profound. The team displayed a new sense of confidence and aggression.

Khan's exploits on the pitch and his matinee-idol looks led him to acquire a huge fan following internationally. In England, where he lived for much of his cricketing career, he was a darling of the paparazzi. Tabloids regularly published photographs of him partying with female socialites and tales of his numerous affairs.

In 1995, Khan married Jemima Goldsmith, scion of the billionaire financier Sir James Goldsmith. This marriage lasted nine years; in 2015, Khan married the British Broadcasting Corporation news presenter Reham Ramzan. The second marriage lasted less than a year. Ramzan recently authored a sensational biography in which she accuses Khan of promiscuity, drug consumption and bisexuality, amongst other things. Khan is currently married to Bushra Maneka, who is a spiritual healer. Khan stated that his marriage to a Sufi who veils herself reflected a development in his own views on religion and relationships. The days of parties and affairs were, according to him, long gone.

Philanthropy and Politics

Following his retirement from cricket, Khan used his popularity to raise over US\$200 million (S\$272 million) to build the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre. Named after his mother, who struggled with cancer, it is the largest cancer hospital in Pakistan. The cost of treating nearly 75 per cent of the patients is borne by the hospital.

In 1996, Khan turned his attention towards politics and formed the PTI. He took part in the 1997 elections and ran for a National Assembly seat from two constituencies but ended up losing in both. In the subsequent elections of 2002, Khan was elected to the National Assembly from his hometown, Mianwali. His party,

however, was unable to garner substantial support. In the 2013 elections, his party won 35 seats in the National Assembly and formed the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Prime Minister Khan

The upswing in Khan's political fortunes can be traced to his successful agitation against the previous Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, over the issue of corruption. In April 2016, the "Panama Papers" leak revealed that eight off-shore companies had links with Sharif's family. Khan launched a two-pronged campaign demanding Sharif's resignation. On one level, Khan organised mass protests that attracted tens of thousands. This allowed him to capture the public imagination and expand his party's grassroots reach. On another level, he filed a petition in the Supreme Court, calling for a probe against Sharif and demanded that the latter resign. On 28 July 2017, the Supreme Court disqualified Sharif from office. Occurring less than a year before the general elections, this decision constituted a massive political victory for Khan.

In the build-up to the 2018 elections, the PTI's campaign largely focused on criticising established politicians as corrupt, and promoting Khan as the saviour. Khan promised to deliver a non-corrupt government and develop an Islamic welfare state that provides educational and health facilities to the masses. The constant focus on the issue of corruption had generated widespread support. Khan and his party had also generated a tremendous amount of enthusiasm amongst sections of Pakistan that were disillusioned by the dynastic, provincial, and patron-client based politics of the PML-N and the PPP. However, the PTI's victory itself has partly been due to its success in winning over a number of politically powerful traditional elites, feudal leaders, and spiritual authorities who had previously been aligned with the PML-N and the PPP.

Khan also made a conscious effort to appeal to religiously and socially conservative sections of Pakistani society. His often unprovoked defense of the blasphemy laws indicate that this is a calculated decision. There have also been serious accusations leveled against the military of having influenced the results in favour of the PTI. Procedural errors on the part of the Electoral Commission Pakistan, and censorship of news coverage by the establishment leading up to the elections, have raised questions over the role of the military in ensuring the PTI's victory.

Challenges

Given the financial crisis confronting Pakistan, the need to balance the huge social coalition that the PTI had to stitch together to win the election, and the powerful role of the military, it remains to be seen how Khan will negotiate the political wicket. The immediate challenge confronting Khan and the PTI is Pakistan's crippling current account deficit. Pakistan is poised to approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for help. A loan from the IMF will, however, be contingent upon the imposition of austerity measures and structural reforms. These would contradict the PTI's campaign promises of building an Islamic welfare state.

Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea is a Visiting Research Associate Professor at ISAS. He can be contacted at iqbal@nus.edu.sg.

State Poll Boost for the Congress

RONOJOY SEN



Photo courtesy of the Indian National Congress

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has lost elections in five Indian states, three of which were Hindi heartland states. The opposition Congress party was the big gainer, dislodging the incumbent BJP in the three Hindi belt states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh (MP), and Rajasthan. In the two other states — Telangana in southern India, and Mizoram in the northeast — regional parties came out on top. Though the scale and margin of the Congress victory differed in

the three Hindi heartland states, the results represented a coming of age for Rahul Gandhi, who has often been dismissed as a lightweight but as of December 2018, has completed a year as the party president.

The results will ring alarm bells for the BJP as it heads into general elections in early 2019. In the 2014 general elections, the BJP won 62 of the 65 parliamentary seats from Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan. This represented

22 per cent of the 282 seats that the BJP had won in 2014. If the Assembly poll results were to be replicated in 2019, the BJP's seat tally would go down to 31 seats in these three states. While state election results are not necessarily always a reflection of the general elections, the proximity of the polls to the 2019 elections is crucial, as is the erosion of BJP votes across the board. Indeed, the past cycle of elections in these three states suggests that the party that does well in the state

polls carries forward the momentum to the general elections.

Though the results in Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan augur well for the Congress party in 2019, the party is organisationally weak in most of the other Hindi heartland states, including the populous states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar, where even winning a handful of seats is unlikely. Outside the heartland, the Congress party performed poorly in Telangana and Mizoram, which goes to show that the party, and Rahul Gandhi, have a long way to go. However, Congress' strong showing will make it a far more credible fulcrum in 2019 for the opposition parties.

For the BJP, the erosion of support in Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan cut across the rural-urban divide, caste, and class. This was due to agrarian distress and unemployment turning out to be burning issues in the recent elections. The BJP was particularly hit hard in rural constituencies, as well as those reserved for lower castes and tribals. This will be a cause of concern for the BJP in 2019.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi still remains very popular, his ability to swing elections is under scrutiny. Though he addressed 30-odd rallies in the three Hindi heartland states, the BJP's success in those constituencies was mixed. Modi, who benefited from being the challenger in 2014, has to now face the problems that come with incumbency. The tenor of the BJP's 2019 campaign will be decided by what lessons Modi and his inner circle draw from the current results.

The BJP's poll campaign in the three Hindi heartland states saw a distinct rise in the pitch for Hindu nationalism with UP's controversial and divisive chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, campaigning prominently for the BJP and facing an escalation of personal attacks. Arguably, both did not have

a positive impact on the party's electoral fortunes. Whether the BJP will continue ratcheting up its rhetoric on Hindu nationalism or highlight development and governance, as it did in 2014, remains to be seen. The party, though, might find itself in a corner, given its poor record of alleviating rural distress and creating jobs. It is likely that the Modi government will announce big-ticket populist measures before the 2019 elections to sway voters.

The results of the Assembly elections, particularly in the three Hindi belt states, have thrown open the field for 2019. The BJP will try and compensate for its probable losses in the Hindi heartland with additional seats from eastern India and the northeast, but that might not be enough. The BJP will also be looking to reach out to regional parties as possible allies, both before and after the 2019 elections. The Assembly poll results have firmed

up the Congress party's role as the pivot for opposition politics. But the Congress party, too, needs to stitch together state-level alliances with regional parties if it is to significantly increase its seat tally from 2014.

Given its formidable election machinery, considerable war chest, and Modi's continuing popularity, the BJP still remains the frontrunner to form the government in 2019. Like in 2014, the BJP is likely to turn the general election into a referendum on Modi. The recent Assembly elections have, however, given the opposition significant momentum and has made the BJP's task that much more difficult.

Dr Ronojoy Sen is a Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance) at ISAS. He can be contacted at isasrs@nus.edu.sg.



Photo courtesy of the Indian National Congress

Bangladesh: Politics of Polls

IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY



Photo courtesy of Jatiya Oikya

The 11th Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh were held on 30 December 2018. The contest was between two broad coalitions. One was the ruling Mohajote (Grand Alliance), comprising around 14 parties, the main component being the Awami League (AL) led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The other was the Jatiya Oikya Front (JOF) (National Unity Front) of nearly 20 parties, but mainly the AL's traditional rival, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), whose Chairperson Khaleda Zia is currently in prison on corruption charges. The Acting Chairman, her son Tareq Rahman, is a fugitive in exile

in London. The coalition JOF is, however, being spearheaded by the octogenarian and well-respected jurist, Dr Kamal Hussain.

The electorate of the world's 8th largest country numbers more than 104 million. According to the Election Commission of Bangladesh, 80 per cent of that

number voted. By any standards, this participation was enthusiastic. In the lead-up to the polls, the AL campaigned on the remarkable development of Bangladesh over its decade of rule. Indeed, Bangladesh's gross domestic product growth rate of over seven per cent in 2018, and six per cent consistently over the past, has been praiseworthy. The party promised continuity. The opposition underscored its governance deficit, alleged corruption, and suppression of dissent. The opposition's leaders offered positive change.

The result of the polls was a landslide victory for Hasina's government. Out of the coalition, the AL alone won 259 of the 298 contested seats. The Mohajote partners bagged 288 seats in total. The total for the JOF was a paltry seven seats, of which the BNP accounted for five. Almost immediately, the JOF cried foul.

Over the past months, it had indeed been complaining of the absence of a level playing field, exacerbated by violence and use of state instruments against its members. To these, the JOF now adds allegations of ballot box stuffing by AL supporters, who were also accused of intimidating JOF voters. Dr Hussain also claimed massive rigging. The opposition has now demanded fresh polls under a neutral government, a demand which the Election Commission has already rejected. The JOF is threatening to commence an agitation but all this politicking may already have left the nation a tad exhausted.

The politics of elections, as is the case in Bangladesh, has been polarised for years between the AL and the BNP. In the past, both alternated in government. While the AL was usually perceived as secular and left-of-centre, and the BNP both right-wing and

religious-leaning, these differences have eroded over time. Some analysts will now see their ideological divergence as between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The electorate appeared to have opted for continuity, rather than change. More so as the BNP's performance, on what was on offer from past experiences, was not altogether pristine.

So, for now, the Bangladeshi people seem to have spoken. The results of the elections are known. However, there might well be consequences to follow — not immediately perceptible, but lying well beyond the rim of the saucer.

Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury is a Principal Research Fellow at ISAS, and is a former Foreign Advisor (Foreign Minister) of Bangladesh. He can be contacted at isasiac@nus.edu.sg.



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh

The FinTech Landscape in Singapore and India – Prospects for Enhanced Collaboration

DIPINDER S RANDHAWA

On 1 June 2018, the Indian Department of Economic Affairs and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation in financial innovation between Singapore and India through the establishment of a Joint Working Group. This agreement will consolidate ongoing collaboration in the FinTech space, and spearhead initiatives in this rapidly evolving, innovative, and promising field.

FinTech Landscape

Backed by a robust startup ecosystem encompassing a network of industry-specific incubators and accelerators, and over 400 Fintech startups spanning the financial services landscape, Singapore is at the forefront of global initiatives in FinTech experimentation and validation. It offers a unique regulatory sandbox that allows startups to develop, test, and apply financial products and services to assess regulatory compliance, before bringing them to markets.

India stands amongst global leaders in the adoption of FinTech services across a range of industry segments driven by mobile wallets and innovations. FinTech offers the possibility of bringing hundreds of millions of its financially-excluded citizens, including the poor, women, and socially marginalised groups, as well as small businesses starved

of capital, into the realm of formal finance. Access to finance raises the prospects for inclusion, economic mobility and, eventually, inclusive development.

The “JAM” trinity underpins development of the enabling environment for FinTech development in India: the confluence of bank accounts for every individual (JanDhan, or people’s wealth accounts); a universal biometric identity card (Aadhaar); and the increasing penetration of mobile phones (M), that together offer access to a growing portfolio of financial services. Policymakers treat the digital infrastructure as a public good, where interoperability, consumer protection, and strong anti-money laundering safeguards have been instituted. India has taken steps that have ultimately enabled the launch of pure play digital banks. Established by DBS Bank, Digibank — India’s first fully digital bank — has enlisted more than 1 million customers. JAM is building the foundation for the growth of e-governance and delivery of public services.

The Unified Payment Interface platform unveiled by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the first interoperable payment system in the world, allows funds from different financial institutions to be transferred between mobile wallets, and smartphones to double up as virtual debit cards.

Rationale for Collaboration

Despite differences in the levels of development, the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration between India and Singapore is vast. India has a large pool of skilled workers in information and communications technology, and a robust and vibrant FinTech infrastructure. Singapore offers one of the most progressive FinTech ecosystems, with a regulatory sandbox to expedite the entire early life cycle of startups. It offers access to global financial institutions, and a reservoir of expertise and capital-seeking profitable avenues for investment.

Collaboration

FinTech collaboration between Singapore and India is spearheaded by close engagement between the two governments, as well as the private sectors. The Network for Electronic Transfers Singapore (NETS) group in Singapore and the NPCI-owned RuPay can now be deployed in Singapore. The BHIM app was launched in Singapore recently to facilitate remittances to India. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been collaborating with MAS to ease cross-border funds flow.

Government to Government

The potential for government to government as well as private sector collaboration in new technologies such as blockchain, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data analytics, will catalyse



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of India

further engagement between the two countries. The benefits of developing AI for use in sectors such as water supply, health, education, and maintenance of records in real estate holds tremendous potential for broadening access to finance.

Financial Inclusion

FinTech offers the possibility of bringing hundreds of millions of India's financially excluded citizens — the poor, women, and other socially and economically marginalised groups — as well as SMEs starved of capital, within the ambit of formal finance. It can help millions of individuals and SMEs to access financial services at affordable costs. Payments can be a pathway to other areas such as lending, savings, insurance, and wealth management. Most people in India lack credit history. Digital payments create a credit history which can be leveraged in other areas, and also provides a platform to serve the unbanked and the uninsured, and link old age pensions to the poorest and the remotest due to links in their bank account.

Regional Integration

Singapore is leading ASEAN's efforts in FinTech. The ASEAN FinTech Network

(AFIN) offers an excellent platform to learn and share experiences and, over time, increase trade and financial linkages. Affiliation with AFIN can facilitate innovation and collaboration between financial institutions and FinTech enterprises in India and ASEAN in regards to financial inclusion, blockchain, cybersecurity, and innovations in trade finance, with the potential to ease India's integration into the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. India and ASEAN should also work towards an interoperable system.

India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Collaboration

The India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Bridge (InSprenneur), is a collaborative platform for entrepreneurs, incubators, the vast Indian diaspora, and startup founders in Singapore and India, that has proven to be quite successful. It is supported by industry associations in both countries, including SG Innovate, Enterprise Singapore, Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and National Association of Software and Service Companies.

Regulatory Consultations

FinTech is an evolving area where effective regulation and the quest for financial stability are of paramount concern for both countries' central banks. The main question, of course, is balancing regulation and innovation, and questions of what, whom, and when to regulate. Sharing experiences in regulatory technology and e-governance, is important. The challenge of regulatory silos, as the bifurcation of responsibilities in India (for example, the RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, and the Pension Fund Regulator) demonstrate, is a serious problem.

The growing public infrastructure should breathe life into collaboration between firms in Singapore and India, be it a small firm or a large multinational with an eventual bearing on productivity and growth. We are in an exciting phase where technology, innovation, enterprise, and FinTech have been perhaps the most dominant areas of engagement between India and Singapore.

Dr Dipinder S Randhawa is a Senior Research Fellow at ISAS. He can be contacted at isasdsr@nus.edu.sg.



Photo courtesy of the Office of the President of the Maldives

India-China Rivalry in the Maldives

AMIT RANJAN

With the defeat of Abdulla Yameen in the presidential elections on 23 September 2018, the Maldives has reclaimed normalcy and democratic rule. During his term as the President of the country (2013-18), Yameen used his power to silence dissenting voices and imprisoned prominent leaders from the opposition parties, such as former president Abdul Gayoom. Yameen had also imposed a state of emergency twice (2015 and 2018) to establish his hold over the country. On the foreign policy front, the presidential elections were seen by many commentators as a contest between India and China to regain and maintain their influence in the Maldives. During the elections, it was believed that Yameen was a pro-Chinese candidate, while the joint opposition candidate and present President of the country Ibrahim Mohamed Solih was seen by many as a supporter of India. The election results certainly comforted India as it stood to

improve its deteriorated relationship with the Maldives. However, Beijing cannot be completely sidelined from Maldivian affairs, and it is premature to claim otherwise.

Deepening Ties with China under Yameen

Traditionally, the Maldives has been closer to India than China. However, this started to change when then-President Mohamed Nasheed was forced to quit office in February 2012 for his policies, which were alleged by then opposition groups and institutions as "anti-Islamic".

During Yameen's tenure, the Maldives deepened its relationship with China at the cost of India. This drift was primarily to find a supporter to his regime against Nasheed, who was then seen as getting support from India. Also, the Maldives needed Chinese investments to develop

its infrastructure. In September 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the Maldives. Soon after his visit, in December 2014, China and the Maldives signed a memorandum of understanding to join China's maritime Silk Road policy. At that time, China-Maldives bilateral trade was about US\$100 million (S\$135 million).

Chinese investments in the Maldives' infrastructure sector underpinned this bilateral relationship. China is engaged in building the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge at the cost of around RMB1.26 billion (S\$253.7 million). As much as 57.5 per cent of the project's cost is covered by a grant from the Chinese government, while 36.1 per cent of the cost is covered by a preferential loan from the Chinese government. The remaining 6.4 per cent is to be borne by the Maldives. China is also upgrading and expanding the Velena International Airport, and engaged in housing projects in Male. It has also

taken up the Hulhumalé Phase II housing project, and is developing a link road between Hulhule and Hulhumalé. Further, in 2017, Yameen's government signed a free trade agreement with China.

While such investment projects help in the development of the Maldives, they could lead the country into a debt trap. According to the Centre for Global Development, a Washington-based think-tank, the total Chinese loan to the Maldives is around US\$1.5 billion (S\$1.9 billion). Such a large loan to a small economy puts the Maldives in danger of getting into a debt cycle. However, the Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives, Zhang Lizhong, called the investments "completely normal", and has rejected any such allegations made by the then joint opposition parties which won elections in September 2018.

China is also accused by the local people of land-grabbing in the Maldives. China presently has leases on 17 Maldivian islands. Just a few days before the presidential elections, the global investigative journalism consortium (a global network of more than 220 investigative journalists in 80 countries) reported that Yameen has been a part of a multi-million dollar scam that "helped developers skirt public tenders and acquire dozens of islands and lagoons".

Unlike China, India was sidelined during Yameen's term. In 2017, his government suspended three local councillors working for the Indian Ambassador to the Maldives, Akhilesh Mishra. Later, in December 2017, an editorial in Divehi language in the pro-Yameen newspaper *Vaguthu* described India as an enemy, and called on Male to find a new best friend in China. The editorial also termed India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, as a Hindu extremist and anti-Muslim. However, soon after publication, Yameen's government made a statement that "the administration would never entertain negative sentiments towards India, highlighting that Indian assistance formed an 'invaluable contribution to the Maldives'".

Just a few days before the 2018 presidential elections, Yameen made a request to India to withdraw its helicopters from the airfields on the Gan and Laamu islands of the Maldives. The Indian government suspected that this move was to "clear the decks for a Chinese air and naval presence".

Political tensions between India and China in the Maldives came into the open after Yameen declared a state of emergency in February 2018. There was also a division within the Maldivian opposition parties on India's role at that time. In an opinion piece published in the Indian daily, *The Indian Express*, Nasheed wrote, "It is essential that India leads the international community in forcing President Yameen to comply with the 1 February 2018 Supreme Court order. This will pave the way for genuinely inclusive, free and fair elections with full international monitoring." However, former Minister for Foreign Affairs (2013-2016) and a member of a joint opposition, Dunya Maumoon, said, "I believe that the call by Nasheed for foreign intervention is very irresponsible".

In tune with Nasheed, a section of Indian commentators even supported the idea of sending troops to restore normalcy in the Maldives. The Indian national daily, *The Times of India*, reported that the Indian troops were on stand-by in case they needed to enter the Maldives. Reacting against such personal opinions and views, Ai Jun, a columnist for *The Global Times*, wrote in *The Global Times* in China that, "Since Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen assumed office in 2013, the nation has proactively interacted with the US, China, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, gradually heading toward(s) more independent and balanced diplomacy. This apparently irritated India. Perhaps New Delhi has been seeking an opportunity to showcase its military again in its 'backyard'...If India one-sidedly sends troops to the Maldives, China will take action to stop New Delhi. India should not underestimate China's opposition to unilateral military intervention."

The situation calmed down only after the emergency was lifted by the Maldivian government in March 2018. The incumbent and the opposition parties then started preparations for the September polls. In order to stop Nasheed from contesting the elections, the Yameen government amended the electoral laws of the country. However, the government was not aware about the high anti-incumbency sentiments in the country, which were expressed by the voters on 23 September 2018.

Future of India and China in the Maldives

As India extended its support to the opposition leaders suffering due to

Yameen's political high handedness, it was expected that Solih would favour India. However, India should not become complacent, and should work towards resetting its relationship with the Maldives. In its congratulatory message to Solih on 24 September 2018, India said that "this election marks not only the triumph of democratic forces in the Maldives, but also reflects the firm commitment to the values of democracy and the rule of law. In keeping with our 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India looks forward to working closely with the Maldives in further deepening our partnership".

On 25 September 2018, in congratulating Solih for his win, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang expressed his country's willingness to work with the new government. Later, Xi, in his congratulatory message to Solih, said that he is "willing to join hands with Solih to lift the comprehensive friendly cooperative partnership between China and Maldives to a new level".

In the 100 days agenda, published after taking oath on 17 November 2018, Solih's government, without mentioning the country's name, highlighted that it would start re-negotiating the contracts and loans that have put the Maldives into debt. However, such a move would not be straightforward for the debt-ridden government. It has to also repay the loans taken by the previous government. In such a situation, the new government has limited options. It could re-negotiate some of the projects agreed upon by the previous government. Another option would be to negotiate new deals with other countries because India would not be able to match the "unparalleled scale of Chinese capital".

Conclusion

Yameen's defeat in the presidential elections has strengthened India's position in the island country. On the other hand, it will take time for China to recalibrate its relationship with the new government. Having said that, it would be interesting to see how Solih's government will manage its relationship with its two big neighbours and yet maintain its sovereignty.

Dr Amit Ranjan is a Visiting Research Fellow at ISAS. He can be contacted at isasar@nus.edu.sg.

Delivering a Social Agenda through the State in India

S NARAYAN

One of the strengths of public policy in Tamil Nadu has been the balance of development of infrastructure and the focus on social welfare. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), came to power in 1967 on the plank of social reforms and equal opportunities for all communities, and, for the last 50 years, Dravidian parties have ruled Tamil Nadu. During the earlier two decades, from 1947 to 1967, the state was ruled by the Congress party.

The Congress governments focused on improving infrastructure, roads to villages, rural electrification, and support to the agricultural economy, while expanding the reach of primary education and public health. There was a limited focus on school meal programmes, and public distribution of food grains. There was a focus in these years on industrialisation, especially the creation of industrial parks for small-scale industries.

Large, centrally-owned public sector units were set up, providing access to employment, technology, and skills development.

When it came to power, the DMK had an important agenda, different from the above. It had grown to power on the promise of providing equal opportunities for all communities in education, public employment, and in all public services. The



Photo courtesy of the Government of Tamil Nadu



Photo courtesy of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

election plank was that the forward communities had cornered too much of the state's resources, and that an opportunity had to be provided for the backward communities to catch up and have equal access. Significant institutional and social changes happened in the decade from 1967 to 1977. At the same time, the government was alive to both the welfare and the development agenda. Industrial development took place at an accelerated pace, promoted by policies of the government. The scope and reach of the public distribution system were expanded significantly, along with institutions and logistics for procurement and distribution of food grains to all family card members. The state moved rapidly forward in all developmental indices and, by 1977, was ranked next only to Maharashtra and Gujarat.

The next decade saw an increased focus on welfare expenditure. The mid-day meals programme of providing a hot meal to every school-going child was a massive programme involving enormous manpower, logistics, and costs to the state. Other programmes of free school text books and note books, assistance for the elderly and the widowed, and a plethora of welfare initiatives attempted to reach the poor and the underprivileged, without discriminating on the basis of caste or community. These massive welfare programmes were initially criticised by all the multilateral agencies as a

waste of resources, and even by the government of India, which refused to support some of the programmes.

The state persisted and, indeed, all the social development parameters improved in terms of nutritional status, life expectancy, infant mortality reduction, and access to education and health. Other states followed, and even the Indian government, by 1995, had come round to the view and enacted a food security act, which required that the public distribution systems be expanded to all states. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of mid-day meals for all school children, and what had started as a welfare initiative in Tamil Nadu soon became a model for state policy in all the states, and even in the central government.

During the period of the United Progressive Alliance government in Delhi between 2001 and 2014, there was a National Advisory Council assisting Sonia Gandhi, then-leader of the Congress party. It comprised a number of eminent economists and public persons who seriously believed that, in a developing country like India, where there is a high level of poverty, chasing economic growth and gross domestic product numbers alone was not enough — there had to be direct intervention to alleviate poverty. The National Rural Employment Guarantee programme was conceptualised to provide for a payment of ₹100 (less than \$2)

for a day's work to every able-bodied person. While this involved a huge budget expenditure, it improved money supply in the hands of the poor, and enabled them to better address their livelihood needs. It also improved rural wages by setting a floor to the wages paid on a daily basis.

The criticism to this approach has been that it draws away public funds from much-needed development expenditure like the building of infrastructure, especially roads, irrigation networks, and power plants. Direct grants also reduce the funds available to improve access to health and education. While viable private sector alternatives are available in both these areas, they are considerably more expensive than public health and public education alternatives.

At the other end is the democratic reality that regional parties wishing to remain in power find that giving away freebies to the poor and expanding direct benefit schemes is a good approach to winning votes. From both the electoral as well as the poverty alleviation point of view, the state is getting more and more engaged in welfare programmes.

Dr S Narayan is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS. He is a former Chief Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister of India. He can be contacted at snarayan43@gmail.com.



Photo courtesy of Sri Lanka Navy

Ocean Diplomacy: Sri Lanka's Quest for an Indian Ocean Identity

CHULANEE ATTANAYAKE

A Key Player

Sri Lanka, known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean, is surrounded by the world's third largest ocean. The country's territorial boundary extends to a part of the Indian Ocean, with a continental shelf seven times more than the land area, and an Exclusive Economic Zone of up to 200 nautical miles.

Sri Lanka has been viewed as a South Asian state, where its identity is linked with the diversity, rich history, creaking bureaucracy, and poverty

of the Indian sub-continent. Yet, in the recent years, Sri Lanka is seen developing two parallel identities; as a South Asian state, and as an Indian Ocean state. Then-Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe, addressing the Indian Ocean Conference in 2017 in Colombo, emphasised that the Indian Ocean has shaped Sri Lankans as a distinct people. This affirmation hinted that the country is undergoing a refashioning of its identity, and that the new identity is centred on the Indian Ocean.

Historically, the Indian Ocean played a central part in Sri Lanka's economy, politics and culture, making Sri Lanka a key player in the region. It was a stop-over for travellers from the East and West, a port of call for maritime traders and mariners, and a muse for many writers and poets. During the early post-colonial years, Sri Lanka was a notable leader in Indian Ocean affairs, raising awareness of the Indian Ocean and security, freedom of navigation, and marine environment.

In recent years, Sri Lanka's Indian Ocean identity was diluted, losing the geopolitical and geo-economic relevance of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean was curtailed from strategic and policy circles as the protracted Sri Lankan conflict dominated discussions.

Having ended the conflict, today, the relationship between Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean is looked at with a new meaning at home. The government seeks to incorporate the Indian Ocean into its policies, from economic to security and foreign affairs, acknowledging its context and developing a path along it.

Ocean Diplomacy: Strategy for New Identity

Sri Lanka's significant diplomatic role in Indian Ocean affairs over the years exceeds its capacity as a small island state. It was one of the early signatories to the first four conventions on the Law of the Sea in 1958, and has taken leadership in multiple initiatives on ocean affairs. In 1967, Sri Lanka held the chairmanship at the Sea Bed Committee, which proposed that the sea bed and ocean floor beyond national jurisdiction should be declared the "Common Heritage of Mankind". The "Declaration of Principles Governing the Sea bed and Ocean Floor, and the Sub-soil thereof beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction" was negotiated under Sri Lanka's leadership, and adopted in 1970. In 1973, Sri Lanka was chosen as the President of the third United Nations Conference of the Law of the Seas, giving it unparalleled recognition and acknowledgement for its leadership in oceanic affairs. As a result, today, Sri Lanka is known for its influencing role in laying the foundations for the new institutions created by the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, and for its attempt to declare the Indian Ocean, the air-space above it, and the sea-bed below it, "for all time a zone of peace"

through the Resolution 2832 (XXVII) of Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

In retrieving its new identity, Sri Lanka is reclaiming a leadership role in Indian Ocean diplomacy, where it is active in multiple multilateral forums promoting a rule-based order. It is an active member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Sri Lanka has been vocal in establishing an international code of conduct for military vessels traversing the Indian Ocean, through which a rule-based order will be ensured. Cognisant of the changing power dynamics and the country's vulnerability towards the security, Sri Lanka believes that only a rule-based order will ensure its safety and security.

Sri Lanka is also taking the lead in regional maritime discourse, creating a platform for local and foreign scholars, and experts in maritime and naval affairs, to discuss regional maritime security issues. In 2010, Sri Lanka initiated the Galle Dialogue, a flagship annual international maritime conference, to share its expertise in combating maritime terrorism. In 2017, it hosted the second Indian Ocean Conference in Colombo. During the recent IORA Ministerial Meeting, Sri Lanka suggested holding a Sub-working Group meeting on maritime security of IORA at the sidelines of the Galle Dialogue. Further, the Track 1.5 International Conference titled "Indian Ocean: Defining Our Future" was held in Colombo in October 2018.

New Indian Ocean Identity: Opportunities and Challenges

Sri Lanka's biggest asset and strength is its location. As such, it was always subjected to competition between the major powers. It was invited to be a partner in the US' Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and numerous other similar initiatives, highlighting that Sri Lanka cannot escape from this

reality. The rising competition to take the centre stage of the Indian Ocean brings multifaceted economic, political, and security challenges, yet Sri Lanka is determined to take advantage of the opportunity.

The island is becoming a destination of choice among businesses and investors who are looking to tap opportunities in pan-Indian Ocean trade. Against this backdrop, Sri Lanka wants to become the economic hub of the Indian Ocean by becoming the gateway to the sub-continent and connecting itself with the growing pan-Indian Ocean supply chain.

It is also aware of the challenges brought by new developments. As this ocean is Sri Lanka's primary environment, any geopolitical tension in this region will have direct impact on the country's security. Hence, developing a dual identity opens avenues for the country to build close ties with competing powers in the region without offending one or the other, and helps Sri Lanka to remain balanced and neutral.

Dr Chulanee Attanayake is a Visiting Research Fellow at ISAS. She can be contacted at chulanee@nus.edu.sg.

05
JUL

ISAS Public Lecture

The Bay of Bengal: History, Memory and the Future

During his lecture, Professor Amrith mentioned how, after decades of neglect, the Bay of Bengal is now gaining strategic and economic importance. He also provided insights on how Singapore, much more than Calcutta, came to be the heart of the Bay of Bengal as he highlighted the increasing trend of migration across the Bay of Bengal in the 1950s. These historical connections, arising from the South Asian diaspora, were reflected by the flourishing of print culture among the Tamil, Telugu, and Bangla speaking diaspora who had settled in different parts of Southeast Asia.

On 5 July 2018, Professor Sunil Amrith, Mehra Family Professor and Professor of History at Harvard University, as well as Academic Visitor at the Asia Research Institute at NUS, delivered an ISAS Public Lecture and discussion on “The Bay of Bengal: History, Memory and the Future”, chaired by ISAS Director Professor C Raja Mohan.

Touching on the religious aspect of the Bay of Bengal, he went on to elaborate on how scholarship was reviving the Indian Ocean as a geopolitical concept.

Professor Amrith highlighted the Bay of Bengal's crucial role in international politics noting that the Bay of Bengal was emerging as a strategic point in light of China's Maritime Silk Road.

02
AUG

ISAS-Business China Panel Discussion

The Global Trade War: Implications for India, China and the Region

On 2 August 2018, ISAS Director Professor C Raja Mohan chaired a panel discussion on “The Global Trade War: Implications for India, China and the Region”.

Members of the panel were Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Chairman, Business China; Mr Dustin Watson, Director, Asia Business Trade Association; Mr Eduardo Pedrosa, Secretary-General, Pacific Economic Cooperation Council; and Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead, ISAS.

Mr Lee provided a summary of the trade war thus far, sharing that it will be a double-edged sword which will hurt both Chinese and American firms involved in China through the supply chain. He gave the example of Apple Inc. where 538 out of its 900 plants are located in China, to emphasise how the trade war will hurt both parties. He also stressed that while China would be able to ride through the war, President Xi Jinping's goals to be moderately developed by 2035 and a superpower by 2050 will push him to find ways to avoid the trade war.

Mr Watson added that the trade war rhetoric will not decrease before the United States (US) midterm elections in November 2018 as it is an attempt to maintain a Republican majority in the Senate and that it could cool down after if President Donald Trump maintains the House and Senate.

Mr Pedrosa provided data from surveys that the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council has conducted showing that the highest risk was increased protectionism. Dr Palit focused on India, mentioning that India officially joined the trade war by announcing retaliatory measures on 29 items that it imports from the US.

15
AUG

ISAS-MEI Workshop

Reflections on the Partition of India and Palestine after 70 years

On 15 August 2018, ISAS jointly hosted a workshop with the Middle East Institute (MEI) on "Reflections on the Partition of India and Palestine after 70 Years" to analyse the partitions of British India and Mandatory Palestine on political leaderships, ideologies, laws, and institutions that connect them.

Mr Bilahari Kausikan, Chairman of MEI, delivered the welcome remarks whereby he noted that "partition" is a harsh and loaded term compared to "separation", and cited Singapore-Malaya as a successful case of "separation" whereby the two countries are not unweighted by emotional and historical baggage and complications. They get along fairly better than India-Pakistan or Israel-Palestine.

In his introductory remarks, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director of ISAS, mentioned how the consequences of both India-Pakistan and Palestine-Israel partitions were so terrible and cataclysmic for the respective regions that the involved states still have not been able to come to terms

and transcend their differences. He expressed the necessity for academic enterprises to make fresh enquiries into the multiple dimensions of the two partitions, and renew efforts to transcend negativities.

Dr Victor Kattan, MEI's Senior Research Fellow, delivered the introductory lecture on "What is Partition?". He defined partition as a form of statecraft that has been employed by different actors, in different contexts, at different moments, for different reasons. He argued that, while India and Palestine are the paradigm cases of partition, they were a part of a broader phenomenon.

The full-day workshop included four panel discussions involving scholars from around the world. The sessions were on the partition of British India, the partition of Mandatory Palestine, the comparison of the partition of India and Palestine, and the consequences of the partition for South Asia, the Middle East and beyond.



23
AUG**ISAS Panel Discussion****Pakistan under Imran Khan: A New Dawn?**

ISAS Visiting Research Associate Professor Iqbal Singh highlighted the electoral impact of religious-focused parties emerging in Pakistan, specifically the Tehreek e Islami, which pushes for Pakistan to be governed by Sharia Law, and is opposed to strong capitalism.

Professor Riaz Hassan, ISAS Visiting Research Professor, weighed in on the strength of existing stakeholders within Pakistan, and highlighted that among various public institutions, the Pakistan military still yields the greatest share of trust, followed by religious scholars and education institutions. At the other spectrum, the police and parliament yield the lowest trust. Whether this structure would face adjustments would depend on Mr Khan's new administration.

On 23 August 2018, ISAS hosted a panel discussion on "Pakistan under Imran Khan: A New Dawn?". ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai opened the session where he suggested that Mr Imran Khan, Pakistan's new Prime Minister, would eventually show that he is independent of the military and has influence on the country's future foreign policy and domestic reformations.

Mr Shahid Javed Burki, however, proposed a visible transformation in Pakistan's politics and held that Mr Khan's appeal to the urban youth population in Pakistan is new and essentially shifts political support from the rural to urban, and this could likely give Mr Khan another term after this as social contracts with urban youths are being strengthened.

28
AUG**ISSD Public Forum****ASEAN-India: Commerce, Connectivity and Culture**

ISAS hosted the Public Forum of the 11th India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue on 28 August 2018, along with the Ananta Aspen Centre and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

The forum, themed "ASEAN-India: Commerce, Connectivity and Culture", included a panel discussion with four panellists – two each from Singapore and India. Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore; and Associate Professor Rajesh Rai, Head of South Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

NUS, were the Singaporean speakers. Dr Sugata Bose, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs, Harvard University, United States; and Mr Rajan Navani, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Jetline Group of Companies (India, Asia-Pacific and United States) were the Indian speakers.

The four panellists examined a range of issues on India-ASEAN relations under the three pillars of cooperation – commerce, connectivity, and culture. These included a



historical perspective of the relationship, possible areas of cooperation, innovation and technological cooperation, and cultural connectivity.

Following the presentations, there was a question-and-answer session with the audience. The questions looked at ensuring the continuity of the process of relations between

India and ASEAN, improvement of the representation of Northeast India in the linking of ASEAN and India, frameworks for Singapore-India business cooperation, penetrating the Indian market by Singapore companies, overcoming the resistance to failure in Asian culture and youth engagement between ASEAN and India.

14
SEP

ISAS Closed Door Session

The United States and South Asia: Assessing the New Dynamics



On 14 September 2018, ISAS organised a closed door session with Dr S Jaishankar, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow at ISAS and former Foreign Secretary of India, on "The United States and South Asia: Assessing the New Dynamics". ISAS Director Professor C Raja Mohan chaired the session, and opened it by stating that the US used to be seen as a constant, but that the current Trump administration has challenged this assumption in terms of trade, multilateral institutions and immigration policies.

Dr Jaishankar highlighted the deep opposition that the US now has towards global supply chains, the resistance to global mobility, and the challenge of China. He added that the

US was a stabilising constant, but has now evolved into a destabilising constant due to the failure of its institutions. Dr Jaishankar also highlighted the importance and challenge of getting the balance right between the US and China today. He cited the example of Japan, and also spoke on Iran and Russia's relationship with India vis-à-vis the US. Dr Jaishankar concluded optimistically by mentioning that the building of connectivity and market mobility has pushed South Asia to acquire a sense of regionalism.

He highlighted the importance of noting that the challenge of China was not being dealt with militarily but instead economically, technologically and politically. He added that it was in India's interest to see that its relationship with China did not deteriorate, but also that India retained its position of being the centre of South Asia amidst Chinese entry into the neighbourhood.

24
SEP

ISAS-KAS-COSATT Workshop BIMSTEC at 20: Priorities and Prospects

On 24 September 2018, at the "BIMSTEC at 20: Priorities and Prospects" workshop, scholars, policy-makers and dignitaries reflected on the achievements and future challenges of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). The event was the result of a joint effort by ISAS, the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks (COSATT), and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung of Singapore (KAS). With the latest BIMSTEC Summit concluded August 2018 in Nepal, the proposed re-invigoration of the 20 year-old organisation acquires particular significance within the contemporary international context, further characterised by the return of nationalist and protectionist policies.



In his keynote address, Ambassador M Shahidul Islam, Secretary of BIMSTEC, said he was optimistic about its future prospects as it has progressively expanded its outreach/expertise/focus, while undergoing a process of institutional transformation which led, among the other things, to the institution of the Secretariat headquartered in Dhaka. Ambassador Islam commented that trade, investments and connectivity will remain at the core of BIMSTEC's work and he is confident that a Free Trade Agreement will soon be signed.

While delivering the special address, Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman of the S Rajaratnam

School of International Studies, highlighted that the current will to strengthen the BIMSTEC mechanism provides an opportunity that should not be missed. It is, therefore, imperative to act quickly to produce tangible results. He added that enhancing infrastructure and standardising regulations to allow people and goods to travel across borders easily are of fundamental importance to this purpose as are the digitalisation of the local economy and engagement of local populations. Rather than further expanding the potential foci of its activity, Ambassador Ong said that BIMSTEC should target "low hanging fruits", such as business and market development.

03
OCT**ISAS Roundtable****Indian-Singapore FinTech Cooperation:
Opportunities and Challenges**

ISAS organised a roundtable on “India-Singapore FinTech Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges” on 3 October 2018 to better understand how Singapore and India could leverage their complementary strengths in FinTech and the digital economy, and to strengthen collaboration and mutual benefits between the two growing FinTech players. The motivation for the roundtable arose from a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Singapore and Indian governments in June 2018 to strengthen cooperation in financial innovation through the establishment of a

Joint Working Group. This MoU builds upon a growing level of cooperation between the two countries in terms of business-to-business cooperation, increasing cross-border investment, and several initiatives to ease cross-border financial engagement in FinTech.

The roundtable saw a total of 32 selected participants from establishments such as the Monetary Authority of Singapore, OCBC Bank, World Bank, MasterCard, NITI Aayog, and Centre for Policy Research, India.

29
OCT**ISAS-CII Distinguished Lecture
Higher Education in Singapore**

ISAS and the Confederation of Indian Industry organised the distinguished lecture by Professor Tan Eng Chye, President of the National University of Singapore (NUS), in Chennai, India, on 29 October 2018. Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, ISAS Chairman, moderated the event.

Titled “Higher Education in Singapore”, Professor Tan stressed on the huge opportunity for collaboration between India, particularly Tamil Nadu, and Singapore in the field of higher education. He added that higher education institutions must continue to innovate for the future in order



to help prepare the future generation of students to thrive, create new opportunities and contribute to the society. He pointed out the various challenges faced by Singapore over the years in emerging as a major higher educational hub in Asia, and added that quality, transformative education, and influential research supported by innovation, has made NUS a leading global university in higher education

Following his keynote address, Professor Tan engaged the guests in an interactive session chaired by Professor Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

The event attracted more than 150 members from the government and business communities, as well as representatives from the academic fraternity and civil society in Chennai.

30
OCT

ISAS Ambassador Lecture

Switzerland in Asia: Burgeoning Links with South Asia and ASEAN

ISAS hosted Ambassador Fabrice Filliez, Switzerland's Ambassador to Singapore, under its Ambassador Lecture series on 30 October 2018.

Speaking on "Switzerland in Asia: Burgeoning Links with South Asia and ASEAN", Ambassador Filliez mentioned the international cooperation activities that Switzerland has been pursuing in ASEAN, such as improving living conditions, reducing development gaps and providing humanitarian support. He also focused on Switzerland-ASEAN cooperation in climate change and disaster risk reduction, human security, vocational training and food security.

On India, Ambassador Filliez stated that the two countries celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship. He also highlighted the cooperation with India on tax investigation, and allowing automatic information exchange between the two countries. He also shared the good relationship that Switzerland has with Pakistan through investment protection, double taxation and disaster relief; with Bangladesh through poverty reduction, direct investment and development cooperation; and with Sri Lanka through reforms, reconciliation, investment protection and humanitarian assistance.

The discussion session focused on Switzerland's view on referendums and on the successful implementation of vocational institutes in the country.



19
NOV**Atlantic Council-ISAS Roundtable****Emerging Technologies, Shifting Power Balances and Nuclear Stability**

On 19 November 2018, ISAS organised a roundtable on “Emerging Technologies, Shifting Power Balances and Nuclear Stability”, in partnership with the Atlantic Council.

Dr Matthew Kroenig, Deputy Director for Strategy at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, presented a brief history of the Council, and then spoke about the Council’s project on how emerging technologies could affect nuclear stability. The presentation listed emerging technologies (including their capabilities and implications), critiques and defences of the conventional wisdom, and the hypothesis that emerging technology’s effect on the broader balance of power is a greater risk to strategic stability.

Following Dr Kroenig’s presentation, participants discussed the topic in the context of four different themes: evaluating the conventional wisdom on emerging technology and strategic stability, the state of play of emerging technologies, the geopolitical context and flashpoints, and policy implications for arms control, non-proliferation, and exports control. Three experts presented in each thematic session followed by an interactive discussion between the roundtable on the theme.

The discussions covered points such as the stabilising effect of arms races, new and conventional weapons capabilities and their impact, the competition in technologies between different countries and policy implications related to arms control, as well as a “cascading” security dilemma.

**28**
NOV**ISAS Workshop****Maritime Sri Lanka: Reclaiming Indian Ocean Identity**

On 28 November 2018, ISAS held a full-day workshop on “Maritime Sri Lanka: Reclaiming Indian Ocean Identity”. In his opening remarks, ISAS Director Professor C Raja Mohan said that Sri Lanka is going to be an important part of the world and, so, there has been much discussion lately on how Sri Lanka is an Indian Ocean, rather than a South Asian, state. The keynote address was given by Professor Mohan

Munasinghe via a video recording, where he shared that Sri Lanka is reclaiming instead of transforming its Indian Ocean identity and that Colombo wants to be a dynamic and thriving Indian Ocean hub by 2030.

The workshop explored how Colombo has been developing its maritime identity after the civil war and that the sea is

EVENTS

seen as integral to its national consciousness. Discussions also centred on the strategic placement of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean. Post-independent Sri Lanka had a clear stand on foreign policy initiatives. However, a rules-based order is important for small states like Sri Lanka. There was a general consensus that Sri Lanka will become a significant player in the Indian Ocean.



05
DEC

ISAS Roundtable

Digital Politics: Emerging Trends in South and Southeast Asia



On 5 December 2019, ISAS organised a roundtable on “Digital Politics: Emerging Trends in South and Southeast Asia” which saw 21 distinguished guests share their views about recent events and key topics in the field of digital politics.

In his opening address, Mr Philip Chua, Global Lead for Government and Elections at Twitter, said that any mistruths circulated online would beg the question of citizen media literacy. He suggested focusing less on the content being circulated online, and rather, look into the behaviour of people online but warned of the trade-off between having open conversations online and curbing the freedom of expression.

Subsequently, the importance of viewing technology as an enabler and as a solution was highlighted.

Questions on whether there were any new artificial intelligence or machine learning techniques that could help address content and identify bad actors were raised, as was the issue of how other forms of social media, such as images, videos, and memes, could be regulated. On legislation, participants emphasised that there could be no single actor serving as an arbiter of truth; rather, a multitude of credible actors was necessary.

ISAS Events Listing (July to December 2018)

ISAS Closed Door Session	India's Agrarian Distress and its Economic and Political Implications	2 July 2018
ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion	Seven Decades of Independent India: Ideas and Reflections	3 July 2018
ISAS Public Lecture	The Bay of Bengal: History, Memory and the Future	5 July 2018
ISAS Seminar	Is Corruption Growth-Enhancing in Autocracies?	31 July 2018
ISAS-Business China Panel Discussion	The Global Trade War: Implications for India, China and the Region	2 August 2018
ISAS Seminar	Sino-Indian Relations after the Wuhan Summit	7 August 2018
ISAS-MEI Seminar	India and the Gulf: Modi turns West	14 August 2018
ISAS-MEI Workshop	Reflections on the Partition of India and Palestine after 70 years	15 August 2018
ISAS-CII Closed Door Session	The Future of Singapore-India Relations	21 August 2018
ISAS Panel Discussion	The Billionaire Raj: Business, Corruption and Growth in India and Beyond	23 August 2018
ISAS Panel Discussion	Pakistan under Imran Khan: A New Dawn?	23 August 2018
Strategic Dialogue	India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD)	28 August 2018
ISAS Public Forum	ASEAN-India: Commerce, Connectivity and Culture	28 August 2018
ISAS-MEI Seminar	Secular States, Religious Politics: India, Turkey and Future Secularism	28 August 2018
ISAS Roundtable	IIM-Nagpur Singapore Immersion Programme	29 August 2018
ISAS Panel Discussion and Art Exhibition	The Evolving Status of Women in Pakistan	30 August 2018
ISAS-ESI Seminar	India's Global Energy Engagements: Ambitions and Outcomes	31 August 2018
ISAS-SASP Seminar	India, Europe and the Indo-Pacific	31 August 2018
ISAS Closed Door Session	Sinan Hatahet, al-Sharq Forum, Turkey	6 September 2018
ISAS Closed Door Session	The United States and South Asia: Assessing the New Dynamics	14 September 2018
ISAS-KAS-COSATT Workshop	BIMSTEC at 20: Priorities and Prospects	24 September 2018
ISAS-SASP Seminar	The Truths of India: Information and Society from Manu to Modi	27 September 2018
ISAS Roundtable	Indian-Singapore FinTech Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges	3 October 2018
ISAS Closed Door Session	Crucial Issues in Indian Foreign Policy	4 October 2018
ISAS Seminar	Modi and the Ganges: Governance in India	4 October 2018
ISAS Seminar	Power Shift and the Regional Architecture of the Indo-Pacific	24 October 2018
ISAS-CII Distinguished Lecture	Higher Education in Singapore	29 October 2018
ISAS Panel Discussion and Book Launch	Do Welfare Policies lead to Development? – The Tamil Nadu Experience	30 October 2018
ISAS Ambassador Lecture	Switzerland in Asia: Burgeoning Links with South Asia and ASEAN	30 October 2018
ISAS-Atlantic Council Roundtable	Emerging Technologies, Shifting Power Balances and Nuclear Stability	19 November 2018
ISAS-Atlantic Council Symposium	Analysing the United States' Vision for the Indo-Pacific	20 November 2018
ISAS Workshop	Maritime Sri Lanka: Reclaiming Indian Ocean Identity	28 November 2018
ISAS Seminar	Narendra Modi's Religious Diplomacy and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy	3 December 2018
ISAS Roundtable	Digital Politics: Emerging Trends in South and Southeast Asia	5 December 2018
ISAS Closed Door Session	Agile Governance	28 December 2018

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- 585** India and the Seychelles: Controversy over an Island?, Dr Jivanta Schoettli, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 2 July 2018
- 586** Climate Change Strategy in Bangladesh: An Analysis of Policy Back-up, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 July 2018
- 587** Can India ever Qualify for the World Cup?, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 10 July 2018
- 588** India and the Global Trade War: Long-term Impact can be Serious, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 12 July 2018
- 589** Pakistan's Beleaguered Democratic Project, Mr Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Associate Professor of Political Economy, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan, 23 July 2018
- 590** Imran Khan and the Pakistani Elections: Political Visions, Coalitions and Prospects, Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Associate Research Professor, ISAS; and Ms Faiza Saleem, Research Assistant, ISAS, 25 July 2018
- 591** Sri Lanka-Singapore Free Trade Agreement: Towards a Shared Economic Future, Dr Ganeshan Wignaraja, Chair of Global Economy Programme, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka; and Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 26 July 2018
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CONTACT US

Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore
29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace
#08-06 (Block B)
Singapore 119620

Tel : (65) 6516 4239 / (65) 6516 6179
Fax : (65) 6776 7505
Email : isassecc@nus.edu.sg
Website : www.isas.nus.edu.sg
Website : <http://southasiandiaspora.org>