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Indian Elections 2019: A Historic Verdict Again

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A Message from the Director

PROFESSOR C RAJA MOHAN

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

The first half of the year has kept my colleagues and me busy with the critical developments in the South Asian subcontinent. At the beginning of the year, tensions between India and Pakistan were high following the Pulwama attack and the subsequent airstrikes. In April 2019, Sri Lanka witnessed the Easter Sunday terror attacks, which have thrown the country into chaos.

While focusing on the implications of these important contemporary developments in the region through regular publications and papers, the flavour of the season has, undoubtedly, been the Indian elections which concluded on 23 May 2019, following six weeks of voting. In this issue, we analyse the reasons for the resounding victory by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Following elections in India and several South Asian countries, where social media was an important tool for the political parties during their electoral campaigns, we examine the misuse of social media in elections. Beyond social media, we examine the importance and relevance of public institutions to ensuring governance in India.

Apart from the elections, we analyse South Asia's complex trajectory in a changing world. The search for peace in Afghanistan remains elusive, despite attempts by various actors. The peace process and its

implications have emerged as a key area of study at ISAS. The war in Afghanistan that has persisted for nearly four decades underlines the challenges of promoting peace in the north western subcontinent. Moving to the north, we look at prospects for Nepal's involvement in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While Nepal inches closer to China through the BRI, Bhutan remains the only South Asian country, besides India, to steer clear of the BRI. We examine Bhutan's efforts to manage its relations with China, with India looming large in the background.

In our efforts to supplement our range of publications, we launched South Asia Scan in January 2019 and the South Asian Discussion Papers in June 2019. The two publications are prompted by the need for a timely, substantive and accessible review of key social, political, economic and strategic changes in South Asia. Do read the first two issues of our South Asia Scan (*E-commerce in India: Opportunities and Challenges* and *Afghanistan: Time for Peace*) and the inaugural issue of the South Asian Discussion Papers (*Trump and Modi: Prospects for US-India Burden Sharing*) on our website.

ISAS has continued its active engagement of institutions in Singapore and abroad. Over the last six months, we held seminars, panel discussions and workshops on our core themes – economics and trade, international relations, foreign policy and security – with

institutes such as the Asia Foundation (San Francisco), the Commonwealth Secretariat (London), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Berlin), the South Asian Studies Programme in the National University of Singapore, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (Singapore), among others.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Singapore's founding by Sir Stamford Raffles. As Singapore was part of the Bengal Presidency back then, ISAS jointly organised a public lecture with the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata in February 2019 to trace Singapore-Kolkata relations. On that occasion, Professor Tan Tai Yong, Deputy Chairman of ISAS, delivered a lecture on 'A Tale of Two Cities, Singapore and Calcutta, Past and Present'. It was well received by the audience.

In the last few months, we have widened our footprint on social media to promote and publicise our research and events. We started a podcast, South Asia Chaat, where we conduct regular interviews with our in-house researchers and external experts on contemporary and relevant issues in the subcontinent. Do follow us on Twitter and Facebook for all our analyses and updates on the upcoming events.

We look forward to exciting times ahead.



Photo courtesy of the Bharatiya Janata Party, India

Indian Elections 2019: A Historic Verdict Again

DIEGO MAIORANO

In 2014, when the results of the Indian elections were released, commentators called it a ‘historic’ verdict. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi, won 282 seats and secured a majority in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) on its own – something that no party had managed to do over the previous 30 years.

If the 2014 polls were, indeed, ‘historic’, the results of the 2019 Indian elections are even more remarkable. The BJP not only

managed to secure a majority on its own again, but also increased its seat tally to 303 and its vote share to 37.4 per cent, up from 31.3 per cent in 2014. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 352 seats, well above the majority mark of 272. This is, indeed, a historic verdict again.

While few doubted that the BJP would emerge as the single largest party and would be the cornerstone of the governing coalition, few had predicted that the BJP would

manage to consolidate and increase its dominance over India’s political system. In fact, several elements make the scale of the BJP’s victory very surprising.

First, the BJP’s economic performance during its first term in office was far from spectacular. The economy grew substantially – between six and seven per cent per year – but far less than what had been the case during the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. Unemployment data

suggests that the government's record on job creation – a key electoral promise Modi made in 2014 – has been very poor and credible surveys show that unemployment actually increased substantially under Modi. The price of farm products fell sharply, deepening long-term rural distress, and rural wages stagnated. This was, again, in sharp contrast to the rise witnessed under the UPA governments.

The decision to cancel 86 per cent of the country's circulating currency in November 2016 caused a 'heart attack' of the Indian economy, leading to millions of lay-offs, widespread liquidity crunch and severe inconvenience, especially for the overwhelming majority of the workforce (around 80 per cent) employed in the cash-dependant informal economy. The introduction of a national Goods and Services Tax in 2017 caused severe problems, especially to small business, which form the great majority of the enterprises in India. In short, the performance of the economy cannot certainly explain why the BJP was returned to power with such a massive mandate. In fact, the BJP barely focussed on its economic track record during the electoral campaign.

Second, there were signs that the popularity of the ruling party was declining. Pre-poll opinion surveys showed a clear declining trend in the proportion of people who intended to vote for the BJP. Moreover, in December 2018, barely six months before the general elections, the opposition Congress party had won three important state elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. This

had led analysts to predict major losses for the BJP in the north of the country (where these three states are located), which elects the majority of the members of parliament and is the BJP's core stronghold. However, this prediction failed to materialise and the BJP won an overwhelming majority of the seats in these three states and in the rest of North India.

What can, thus, explain the results? While sophisticated sociological analysis will dissect the 2019 verdict in detail over the next few months, it is clear from the onset that the most important factor is the enduring popularity of Prime Minister Modi in what has been a presidential-style electoral campaign. Certainly, several other factors are important as well in explaining the BJP's resounding win. The BJP clearly had an overwhelming advantage in terms of financial resources, organisational capacity and media support, all of which made the prime minister's message penetrate way more effectively than that of any of the other contenders. Also, the main opposition party failed to challenge the prime minister where he was most vulnerable, particularly job creation and rural distress. However, the fact remains that this was a personality-led election, much more than an issue-driven one. Voters found reasons to vote for their preferred leader rather than vote for a leader on the basis of his performance in office.

According to post-poll survey evidence from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi, close to one-third (32 per cent) of the BJP voters would have not voted for the party if Modi was not the prime-ministerial

candidate. Anecdotal evidence from ground reports published in all Indian newspapers also showed that a large section of the voters chose to vote for Modi rather than for the BJP. It is also significant that, in many states, voters behaved differently when it came to choosing their state rather than their national representatives. In Odisha, for instance, which voted for both state and national governments, there was a six-percentage point gap between the BJP's vote share for the state elections (32.5 per cent) and for the national poll (38.4 per cent). Similarly, the BJP increased its vote share in the three states that elected a Congress (state) government in December 2018 by 18 (Chhattisgarh), 15 (Madhya Pradesh) and 20 (Rajasthan) percentage points. This is very significant because these three states have historically voted similarly in the state and national elections. This time, the big difference in the mind of the voters seems to be that they wanted to make sure that Modi would be the prime minister even though the approval rating of their Congress state government were quite high.

Overall, Indian voters found Modi to be their best bet to secure a strong and prosperous India, despite the uncertain track record over his first term in office.

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The Peace Process in Afghanistan: Where are we in the Process?

RANI D MULLEN



Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Defence, Government of Afghanistan

Eighteen years after the defeat of the Taliban government in Afghanistan and after over four decades of a barely interrupted civil war, peace talks are currently underway among two of the three main protagonists of the war in Afghanistan, namely, the Taliban and the American government. The elected Afghan government has, thus far, been relegated to the sidelines of their own peace talks. Yet, whether these United States (US)-initiated talks will bring about an enduring end to the protracted Afghan conflict, or whether they will lead to a peace deal that enables the withdrawal of US troops while defacto handing the country over to the Taliban

remains unclear despite nine months of peace talks.

What is clear is that with the Afghan war killing more than 32,000 Afghan civilians in the past decade, war-weary Afghans want peace, as do their international supporters. Yet, despite the yearning for peace, many Afghans worry that, in the changing political and security climate, the significant gains achieved over the past 18 years, ranging from women's rights and a more than doubling of school enrolment rates to a 20-year increase in life expectancy, might be sacrificed in the rush to negotiate a fragile peace.

Building Blocks

Though the American peace talks with Taliban representatives have been underway since September 2018, the momentum towards peace was initiated months earlier by the Afghan government and was driven by the fact that Afghanistan today is more insecure than at any other time since the defeat of the Taliban by US forces at the end of 2001. The Afghan government also took the initiative for peace talks with the understanding that President Donald Trump's Afghanistan strategy, which laid out a shift in approach from one that was time-based to one that was based on conditions on the ground, would

provide the continued military pressure on the Taliban to start engaging in peace talks and on Pakistan to stop providing safe havens for terrorist organisations, including the Taliban.

Against the background of the 2017 American strategy towards Afghanistan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani changed the momentum for peace in 2018 by offering unconditional peace talks to the Taliban. He also offered the Taliban recognition as a political party and other incentives. Though the Taliban ultimately rejected Ghani's offer, the Afghan government has repeatedly tried to regain the momentum for peace talks by, for example, presenting an updated peace plan in November 2018 and holding a Consultative Loya Jirga, or grand assembly, in April 2019.

While the Taliban have consistently argued that they would only talk directly to the US, the Afghan government nevertheless reached out to the Taliban and negotiated a ceasefire during three days of the Eid-al-Fitr holiday in June 2018. Though the Taliban refused to extend the ceasefire and still refuses to negotiate with the Afghan government, Taliban fighters posting photos of Eid celebrations with Afghan civilians on social media raised the prospect for all Afghans and their international supporters that peace might indeed be within their grasp.

Another factor which added pressure on the Afghan government, the Taliban and the US to work towards a peace deal was the rise of a grassroots peace movement in Afghanistan in 2018. This movement highlighted a compelling alternative to political violence and the intractable conflict in Afghanistan.

Current US-initiated and -led Peace Talks

By September 2018, rising American frustration with the growth in the number of attacks by the Taliban,

together with a desire by Trump to deliver on his 2016 campaign promise to end the war in Afghanistan and bring the troops home, led the US government to appoint Zalmay Khalilzad as the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation in order to initiate peace talks. Since then, the US has been the main driving force behind peace discussions, holding several rounds of talks with the Taliban.

Yet, while these rounds of talks have increased the momentum for peace in their current form, they have also relegated the Afghan government to the sidelines in an American rush to deliver an Afghan peace deal. As of May 2019, the Taliban continue to refuse to negotiate with the Afghan government, calling it an American "puppet" government. American willingness to talk to the Taliban without the presence of the Afghan government has lent some legitimacy to this Taliban characterisation of the Afghan government.

Ambassador Khalilzad and other US government officials have also suggested that the Afghan government is only one of three central stakeholders to any political settlement, with the Taliban and other Afghan political leaders being the other two stakeholders. This elevation of other Afghan political leaders in the run-up to Afghan presidential elections, which are now planned for end of September 2019, has also led to growing fractionalisation of Afghan politics. As senior political leaders, including former Afghan president Hamid Karzai, have met the Taliban in Moscow, individual political leaders have seen greater political value in differentiating their position on the peace talks from that of the Afghan government. At the same time, Afghan politicians have accused their government of sidelining them from the government's peace

efforts. This growing fractionalisation was evident during the April 2019 Loya Jirga which was boycotted by some of the main contenders of the presidential office.

Afghanistan's history as the battleground of the British and Russian empires and the superpowers during the Cold War, as well as its landlocked geography, have shown that peace in Afghanistan will not be achieved without regional and indeed international buy-in to and inclusion in any peace agreement. Conversely, an insecure Afghanistan will continue to present a regional and international security challenge. Outreach to the Taliban by Afghanistan's neighbours, including Pakistan, China and Iran, and other international actors such as Russia are, therefore, signals of regional will to attain peace in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Despite the significant outreach to the Taliban by the Afghan and US governments, as at the end of May 2019, the US-initiated and -led peace talks with the Taliban have yielded few concrete results. Though US-Taliban meetings earlier in the year ended in a draft agreement on the eventual withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and a commitment by the Taliban to cut all ties with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups, the two thorny issues of an intra-Afghan dialogue and a comprehensive ceasefire agreement remain. In addition, fundamental questions such as whether the Taliban are willing to join in a power-sharing agreement with other Afghans and whether the human rights of all Afghans will be protected in a peace agreement still remain big question marks.

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Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bhutan

Bhutan-China Ties: Present State and Challenges

RUPAKJYOTI BORAH

Bhutan does not have any diplomatic relations with China. In fact, the two countries have a long-running territorial dispute. Bhutan is also the only country in India's neighbourhood that has not joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. More recently, it did not participate in the Second Belt and Road Forum in China in April 2019.

The tiny landlocked Himalayan state has the tough task of balancing its relationship with its two large neighbours – China and India. It has generally tilted towards India but has always been mindful of China's reaction. While relations with India have generally been cordial, its ties with China also seem to be on the uptrend in recent times.

Bhutan-India Ties

When Lotay Tshering won the Bhutan National Assembly elections last year, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first world leader to congratulate him on his electoral success. The Chinese, on the other hand, did not react to the election results.

India's relations with Bhutan go back to 1968 when a special office of India was established in Thimphu. However, it was in 1949 that a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was first signed between India and Bhutan, which was subsequently revised in 2007. This revision removed the need for Bhutan to seek New Delhi's guidance on foreign policy. In 2018, the two countries celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their formal diplomatic relations.

The first state visit by Modi after taking office in 2014 was to Bhutan. This is a reflection of the strategic importance of Bhutan for India. In December 2018, Modi announced ₹4,500 crore (S\$890 million) worth of financial assistance to Bhutan for its 12th Five-year Plan during the Bhutanese Prime Minister's visit to India. Tshering's first foreign destination after assuming office was India.

Challenges in Bhutan-China Ties

In 2012, in a move that caught New Delhi unawares, then-Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and his Bhutanese counterpart Jigmi Y Thinley met on the sidelines of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. They "expressed their willingness to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries." However, things did not progress on this matter thereafter, partly due to pressure from India.

The Doklam crisis in 2017 further complicated the state of affairs between Bhutan and China. Chinese troops started constructing a road in the Doklam region of Bhutan (known as Donglang in China). India intervened on the side of Bhutan. New Delhi was worried

that, if the Chinese troops increased their foothold over the Doklam region of Bhutan, they would come dangerously close to the so-called narrow "Chicken's Neck Corridor" or the "Siliguri Corridor" which connects Northeast India to the rest of the country. Northeast India is strategically significant to India as it shares borders with many countries and is an important part of New Delhi's 'Act-East' policy.

Following the Doklam crisis, Beijing seems to have increased its efforts to woo the Himalayan kingdom. In July 2018, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou made a two-day visit to Bhutan. This marked the highest-level of Chinese diplomatic interaction with Bhutan after the Doklam standoff. During this visit, the Vice Foreign Minister was accompanied by the Chinese Ambassador to India Luo Zhaohui.

Tshering has stated that his country "is willing to strengthen pragmatic cooperation with China, including tourism, and resolve the border issue at an early date through friendly consultations." During a meeting with visiting Chinese Ambassador to India, Luo Zhaohui, in early 2019, in the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu, Tshering said that "his country attaches great importance to relations with China and will adhere to the one-China policy." China has emerged to become the third largest source of imports for Bhutan.

While relations seem to have improved between China and Bhutan, the disputed border issue continues to remain a thorn on their sides. The two countries have held 24 rounds of border talks. However, the issue is yet to be resolved. Formal border talks date back to 1984. Apart from the Doklam

region, there are other disputed regions like Jakarlung and the Pasamlung valley.

Conclusion

Moving forward, China will increase its efforts to woo Bhutan and Thimphu will have the difficult task of managing its ties with the two Asian behemoths. The quick visits by the New Delhi-based Chinese Ambassador to Bhutan clearly show Beijing's seriousness in this regard. However, the boundary issue remains a sore point between Bhutan and China. Also, Chinese overtures are likely to raise concerns in New Delhi. Given these scenarios, Bhutan will still hitch its wagons to India in the foreseeable future.

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Governance and Public Institutions in India

VINOD RAI

Public institutions support good governance which, in turn, promotes sustainable economic development and, thereby, nurtures the welfare of the people. The most vital bond between a people and its government is that of trust, and public institutions help maintain this trust. It is on the strength of these institutions that the distance between 'the ruler and the ruled' gets reduced and the 'ruler' is made accountable to the 'ruled'. These institutions serve as the pillars supporting the foundation of any robust and vibrant democracy. Weakening the strength of any of the pillars shakes the foundations of the democratic fabric. The need of the hour is to build institutional capability to enforce laws and regulations and to incentivise action that contributes to nation building.

The Parliament is the most representative and visible institution upholding democratic values, and accounts for its legitimacy. The challenges facing the Indian Parliament have been immense. Analysis points to a distinct decline, in recent years, in the effectiveness of the Parliament as an institution of accountability and oversight. Instruments that the Parliament can use for accountability, such as motions on the floor of the House,

the quality of debate and the committee system are increasingly being rendered ineffective and dysfunctional.

A survey of institutional autonomy around the world would reveal the prevalence of evidence that accountability and transparency support reform and lead to sustainable economic development. In India, a strong judicial and constitutional culture supports good governance. The judiciary supports fundamental rights and, thereby, enhances citizens' personal security and ability to pursue developmental goals. A proactive Supreme Court, unmindful of the mindset of the Executive, has been instrumental in striking down government legislation when it interferes with constitutional provisions and transgresses onto the liberties of the citizen. In seven decades of independent India, the Court has shown remarkable dynamism in interpreting the Constitution and ensuring that the welfare of the common man remains paramount. This has provided the citizen the confidence that his/her liberties and constitutional rights are well protected and in safe hands.

Electoral systems are yet another critical pillar of the formal institutional

environment that affect the commitment to enlightened governance and for sustainability of the reform process. The errant among those seeking election and, hence, political office, have had to bow before the indefatigable capacity of the Election Commission to ensure fair play in the election process. There is evidence to show that alacrity and objectivity in decision making in the Election Commission ensures that the wily politician is not able to have his/her way. It is this remarkable feature of the Indian Election Commission which has earned it worldwide credibility and has been instrumental in establishing the culture of a robust and 'no nonsense' electoral system.

Good governance requires accountability, which necessitates effective monitoring and answerability. The use of the supreme audit institutions has been an important factor in tracking the devolution of funds and ensuring the efficient use of resources across all levels of government. Globally, these institutions help the Executive to ensure economy and efficiency in public spending. Democracies are expanding the remit of the national auditor to reflect a transformational shift from conventional audit of



Photo courtesy of the Election Commission of India

public expenditure to public accountability. Accountability is now the citizen's demand and, hence, there is a need to reposition the traditional audit body into an agency which will provide the nation, and the citizen, comfort that its government is indeed spending wisely to ensure their welfare and economic development. To the extent that these institutions in India have been given independence from the Executive, they have built trust and credibility in ensuring that they hold the Executive financially accountable to the Legislature. The national auditor has been instrumental in providing objective assessments of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government spending.

Responsive and responsible leadership can nurture good governance by building a capable, professional and independent civil service. This enhances the credibility of the Executive to deliver sustainable development and services, and transform national plans and development strategies for the welfare of the citizen. It is widely believed that the steel frame of Indian civil services has considerably

weakened. There is an urgent need to introduce reforms in the services by, inter alia, professionalising them and recruiting persons who are young and can still be moulded into capable, honest and apolitical officials. This can be done by ensuring requisite mid-career training after a certain foundation has been built in each official, so as to ensure that they can manage the complex administration and development agenda. The move to laterally induct experienced and professional experts in to the public administration set up, has been a welcome move. The government must weed out non-performers, provide an incentive for dynamic performance and institute a legal framework which insulates and indemnifies bonafide decisions taken in good faith. A civil service can be effective only when it is allowed to perform on its own merit, strength and capability without extraneous influences.

The agenda for nation building through good governance has embedded within it an agenda for building institutions empowered to question and monitor every action of governmental organisations

and persons in authority. Such a movement will have to ensure the independence and autonomy of these institutions. It will require training and equipping the personnel who populate these institutions to work without fear or favour. Media and civil society organisations must show alacrity and ensure vigilance over the performance of these institutions. It is only an informed citizenry, the ultimate stakeholder in any democracy, who can ensure an effective and responsive governance structure that in turn creates institutional capability to build an administration premised on an edifice of probity, accountability and transparency.

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Photo courtesy of Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan

Imran Khan's *Naya* Pakistan faces Old Challenges

TOUQIR HUSSAIN

Imran Khan won the elections last year on the promise that he would create a new Pakistan. However, before he could even begin, Pakistan has come to face one of its worst economic crises. His *Naya* (new) Pakistan project is facing old challenges that are being addressed just as they were in 'old' Pakistan – by borrowing.

Almost every new government in Pakistan has found an economy in crisis, and gone to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for emergency support. Khan's government has just completed a staff-level agreement with the IMF for a bailout package of US\$6 billion (S\$8.2 billion). And that is not all. In January 2019, Pakistan reached an agreement

with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for a relief package comprising US\$30 billion (S\$41.2 billion) in loans and investments, beginning with an immediate infusion of US\$12 billion (S\$16.5 billion). In the bargain, the Pakistan government allowed Saudi Arabia an "entry" into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with a US\$10 billion (S\$13.7 billion) investment in a refinery and petrochemical plant at Gwadar Port. The IMF deal would now signal "credibility" among international lenders that Pakistan is serious in resolving its fiscal issues. This would then pave the way for the resumption of policy loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and help

Pakistan raise funds from international capital markets as well.

Economy in Crisis

The current economic crisis is arguably worse than the government is acknowledging. The accumulated mismanagement of previous regimes is now catching up, thus, leaving few options for the current government. Every key economic indicator is alarming. In Khan's Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) first year in office, the country's fiscal deficit in the first three quarters (July-March 2019) of the current fiscal year itself is equivalent to five per cent of gross domestic product. Added to this is the issue of record expenditure by the state and the lowest revenue accrual in a decade. Foreign

direct investment fell 52 per cent year-on-year during the 10-month period, to US\$1.37 billion (S\$1.88 billion).

The foreign exchange reserves have dropped to US\$8.8 billion (S\$12.1 billion). This is not even enough for three months of import cover. While Pakistan's exports are worth around US\$23 billion (S\$31.6 billion), imports cost US\$60 billion (S\$82.4 billion). The currency has cumulatively lost 37.45 per cent since January 2018. The State Bank has just raised the interest rate by 150 basis points to 10.75 per cent.

For the first time in Pakistan's history, external debt crossed the US\$100 billion (S\$137.4 billion) mark. This occurred during the third quarter (January-March) period of the current fiscal year. Debt servicing has now become the biggest expenditure item in the budget.

Crisis of Governance

Khan campaigned on the anti-corruption platform and, for years, accused the leadership of both the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and the Pakistan Peoples Party of robbing the wealth of the nation. It was the strong resonance his message found among population, especially among the young and the educated, which helped him win the election. He had the backing of not only his party supporters, but also much of the urban middle class intelligentsia, who may or may not have shared his overall agenda but subscribed to his view that corruption and the lack of accountability are contrary to democratic values.

He must have discovered since coming to power that, however true his charges of corruption may be, they do not exhaust the explanations for Pakistan's economic crisis. Corruption is part of the larger issue of governance. The primary issue that ungirds the current economic

crisis is that Pakistan, as a nation, is living beyond its means. If a government is not going to tax its rich, it will always be short of money, especially if it has not learnt to live within its means and has high and increasing defense costs and increasing debt servicing on existing loans. It has no choice but to borrow money.

Indications are that the current loan is going to be one of the toughest financial packages that the country has received from the IMF. This will have serious implications for the PTI government. With increased risk of inflation, unemployment and the lowest economic growth levels in over a decade, Khan, who campaigned on the promises of an expanded welfare state and the creation of 10 million jobs, will have a hard time fulfilling his pledge.

In the past, every Pakistani government that received an IMF loan agreed to undertake long-term structural reforms. However, all governments faltered in the implementation of the reforms and kept regressing to bad economic behaviour. Such reforms would have caused short-term pain, particularly by restricting growth, but could have laid the foundation for economic revival in the long run. The lack of long-term structural reforms has resulted in Pakistan having to keep going back to the IMF.

Solutions

Solutions to Pakistan's economic woes are not hard to find. Pakistan has the natural and human resources to become a progressive and prosperous country. However, it needs to restructure the economy by broadening the tax base, controlling government expenditure and resolving the issue of trade deficit. And it must encourage foreign direct investment by improving the security and stability of the country and assert the rule of law.

It must also act against money laundering. However, the painful reality is that all of these need be done while meeting existing debt obligations.

Agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy and small-medium enterprises have shown that they are capable of surviving and thriving. There is considerable room to make agriculture more productive and a value-added industry. The CPEC can also play a critical role in growth and development, especially through special economic zones that can boost industrial activity. Last but not least, there are over 190 hemorrhaging state-owned enterprises. They need to be shut down.

For the next three years, the government will be forced to put in place tough economic measures to meet the conditionalities of the IMF. Undoubtedly, this will create serious economic difficulties for the people and political challenges for the government. It is expected that, with increasing prices of electricity, gas, and petroleum products, hikes in interest rates and indirect taxes, an austerity budget and resulting high unemployment, the PTI will attract public anger. The question is whether Khan will show true leadership and not backtrack on reforms. He has lost some popularity but still remains the last hope for many. He also enjoys the army's backing. He has the best chance to do it.

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Nepal and the Belt and Road Initiative: Projects, Potentials and Challenges

AMIT RANJAN

China is Nepal's second largest trading partner and its largest source of foreign direct investment. China-Nepal bilateral trade was estimated to be around US\$1.29 billion (S\$1.78 billion) in 2018. Nepal was one of the first countries to welcome China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) when it was introduced in 2013. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in May 2017 and Nepal became a part of the BRI. Defining the objective of the MoU, the press release following the signing stated that, it "seeks to strengthen cooperation in connectivity sectors including transit transport, logistic systems, transport network and related infrastructures development such as railway, road, civil aviation, power grid, information and communication."

In April 2019, Nepal and China signed the Transit Transport Agreement during Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari's visit to Beijing. This agreement grants access to the landlocked country to four seaports in Shenzhen, Lianyungang, Zhanjiang and Tianjin and three dry ports in Lanzhou, Lhasa and Shigatse.

Writing for Scroll.in, Nicola P Contessi enumerates four

advantages which Nepal accrues from the growing connectivity with China. First, it will circumvent Nepal's overdependence on India without impacting the country's religious, cultural, social and military ties with India. Second, it will increase Nepal's bargaining leverage with both India and China. It seems that this is already playing out. Chinese commitment to extend the Lahasa-Xigatse railway to Gyirong by 2020 and assistance in repairing Nepal's Araniko and Syabrubesi-Rasuwa-Gadhi highways, have already resulted in a response from New Delhi. During Nepal Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli's visit to India in April 2018, the latter agreed to expand rail linkages to connect Raxaul in the Indian state of Bihar to Kathmandu in Nepal. India also agreed to give Nepal access to the sea through the inland waterways. Third, the China route will cut shipping times and costs for certain points of origin or destinations. Fourth, Nepal may become a bridge between the Asian giants – India and China.

Presently, Nepal mainly uses the ports of Haldia in Kolkata (West Bengal) and Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) for trade. Problems have erupted on a number of occasions because of

the waiting time of goods which can take up to three months. More generally, Nepal suffered from its trade overdependence on India. Allegedly, in 2015, India imposed an economic blockade against Nepal. During that period, the country faced disruptions in the supply of basic goods such as fuels and medicines. Normalcy was restored and goods started moving between the two countries in February 2016. Since 2017, they have cooperated with each other to improve transportation links. Recently, Nepal sought access to Mundra in Gujarat and Dhamra port in Odisha.

Kathmandu-based journalist, Kamal Dev Bhattarai, holds the view that the Chinese ports and trade points are less feasible than the Indian ones. The Chinese ports are over 3,000 kilometres away from the Nepal-China border while Kolkata is only 742 kilometres from the Nepal-India border and Vishakhapatnam is approximately 1,400 kilometres from the border. Bhattarai also feels that topography and infrastructure will prove to be major hurdles. The oldest trading point between Nepal and China, the Tatopani border point, has remained closed since it was badly damaged by the 2015 earthquake in Nepal. It is only expected to reopen by the



Photo courtesy of the Office of the Investment Board, Nepal

end of May 2019. Another reason for closing it, Bhattarai writes, and as noted by Chinese officials, was growing anti-Chinese activities by dissenting Tibetans crossing into the Nepalese border and living in the Barhabise area which is about 30 kilometres from the border point.

In its absence, Rasuwagadi-Kerung is the only major trade point open between the two countries. Even this point is not regularly used due to the poor road infrastructure. Nepal has expedited the task of widening the road towards Rasuwagadi-Kerung. Two-third of the Nepal-China trade depends on this crossing. There are a few more border points and the two countries have discussed the possibility of opening these points to trade.

China is taking all the necessary steps to help build infrastructure in Nepal. During the second Belt and Road Forum attended by about 5,000 delegates from across the world in Beijing in April 2019, "the Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including the Nepal-China cross-border railway", have been

listed among the 35 corridors to be built by China. This connectivity project aims to link the Tibet Autonomous Region with Kathmandu via railway. This line would eventually be extended to Pokhara in Nepal and further to Lumbini which is the birthplace of Lord Buddha, near the Indian border with Nepal.

The growing economic and political relationship between Nepal and China is naturally of concern to India, which fears China would establish its footprints in the country, and come close to the Indian border through these projects. However, the Chinese assert that such concerns are unfounded. China's Ambassador to Nepal, Hou Yanqi, said, "We [China] respect enormously the traditional relationship between the two countries in religion, culture and people exchanges, and also respect India's other interests in Nepal. The cooperation we want to seek between China and Nepal is that one plus one should be greater than two, and the same with China-India cooperation. We do not think that China-Nepal economic and trade cooperation will make

India feel uncomfortable. Instead we welcome a series of sound bilateral relations to achieve rapid development of the entire region."

However, Nepal's involvement in the BRI is not without some projected economic challenges such as the potential of falling into a Chinese debt trap. It wants grants for the projects but China is offering soft loans. Furthermore, there is concern that Nepal's growing ties with China would adversely impact its relations with India. Oli's foreign policy imperative would be to enhance Nepal's relationship with China without disturbing the country's balance with India. If Oli is able to do that, Nepal can expect to benefit from its relationship with both countries.

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South Asia in Today's Changing World: An Assessment

IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY

Our experience today is of a rapidly changing world, at a pace that was inconceivable half a decade ago. The post-World War Two global order has pretty much broken down. Multilateral institutions that largely maintained global economic and security order such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization have been severely weakened because of intended and unintended consequences of the policies of some key players, in particular the United States (US). The paeon of praise for globalisation that used to be all pervasive has now given way to narrow nationalism. The US, with President Donald Trump at the head, is seeking to disengage itself from any international interest that does not overtly benefit that country. It is, for all practical purposes, withdrawn from the position of arbiter of major global disputes, such as the Palestine issue, and has begun to be seen as taking sides. For instance, on Iran, it is openly siding with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. A rising China, increasingly assertive, is epitomising a model of capitalism which is state-run and where the individual has little role in influencing what the classicists called the hidden hand of the market. President Xi Jinping's pursuit of the 'China Dream', its massive Belt and Road Initiative

connecting major regions, and its rapid building of deterrence capability, reflects an inherent desire to surpass the US economically, politically and strategically.

Unsurprisingly, these two principal state actors, the US and China, while heavily interdependent, are also locked in a vicious trade war. Europe, once a conglomerate of mighty imperial powers, and, thereafter, a promoter of liberal values, is rapidly shrinking in authority. Conflicts have become asymmetric with non-state actors, the main protagonists in on-going wars, and, for some, terrorism has become a major instrument for achieving goals. In such a scenario, the received wisdom is that the Asian century is upon us, and, to cite a Classical allegory, the West is rapidly becoming Greece to Asia's Rome.

This is the global backdrop against which this paper seeks to study South Asia, and how it relates to these phenomena. This vast sub-continent, covering one-fourth of the world population, comprises eight countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The states, apart from Afghanistan, now sadly mired in an intractable war with the fundamentalist

Taleban seeking to take over the country's control, were the offshoots of British imperialism, their rich historical and cultural heritage notwithstanding. Most of the states achieved sovereignty with the departure of the British. The process of nation-building was at different stages. In Pakistan, nation-building efforts began after the state came into being in 1947 but the emergence of Bangladesh demonstrated that it was not altogether a success. In Bangladesh, the sense of nationhood predated the liberation and was indeed its prime cause. In India, diversity was accepted as a criterion of nationhood. In Sri Lanka, a fierce civil war determined the issue when Tamil separatist tendencies were discomfited. Intramurally, in South Asia, two factors became causes of disputes. One was that often the distinctiveness between states was not so marked, so the governments needed to stress differences rather than commonalities to justify separate sovereignties. Second, some significant territorial issues were left undetermined by the British, such as Kashmir, leading to several wars. Also, some borders were undefined, such as between Bangladesh and India, which were eventually resolved. The division of natural assets, such as water, became an apple of discord, which



was resolved between Pakistan and India (Indus) but remained unresolved between India and Bangladesh (Teesta). The conflict, real and potential, led South Asia to be the world's least integrated region. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation seemed to be an attempt of hope over experience and eventually came a cropper, mainly due to India-Pakistan rivalry. This was followed by a now on-going experimentation with sub-regional cooperation such as through BBIN (Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan) or BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

While South Asia, thus, has not quite emerged as an identifiable distinct political grouping, its economic achievements in recent times have been largely creditworthy. According to the World Bank estimates, the region showed strong gross domestic product growth from 6.2 per cent in 2013 to 7.5 per cent between 2013 and 2016. Currently, the momentum may have subsided but from 2019 onwards, it is expected to regain. India has successfully diversified its production base and expanded

production capabilities. Foreign investments are substantial with key sectors like defence, real estate, railways and insurance liberalised. However, impediments continue to be faced by hurdles in implementing the newly imposed Goods and Services Tax, and land acquisition. Bangladesh also has a remarkable story to tell, posting a growth rate of over 7.5 per cent, with increase in domestic demand, increase in public sector wages, and enhanced construction activity bolstering its economy in the near term. Pakistan is, however, confronting the balance of payment difficulty, largely due to poor management and political turmoil, but is negotiating a US\$6 billion (S\$8.28 billion) credit with the International Monetary Fund and has attracted massive Chinese investments for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a string of infrastructural projects. Bolstered by foreign investments, Bhutan is building three hydropower projects. Sri Lanka was benefitting from growth in tourism but the recent Easter terrorist bombings have caused it to take a hit. China has increased its energy supply to Nepal, and logistic construction in Sri Lanka but the recent Chinese assumption of control over

Hambantota port for non-payment of debt has raised apprehensions of the so-called Chinese debt-trap.

With the next government installed in May 2019 elections in India, almost every South Asian country (again except Afghanistan, an outlier in many ways), will have fairly new governments in office. It is hoped that the newly-mandated leadership will recognise that, though challenges remain due to political uncertainties and security concerns, the potentials of South Asia can increase enormously if nations forego their differences. That would enable them to be the integrated economic powerhouse that their potentials would render possible. The global scenario is a compelling reason why they should endeavour to react collectively to the fast-moving changes. Their peoples, who have elected them, deserve no less.

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Taming the Misuse of Social Media: Lessons from the Indian Elections

ANURADHA RAO

Introduction

Much has been said and written about the pivotal role played by social media during the recently-concluded Indian general elections – as a key source of (mis)information and public opinion, agenda setter and as a propaganda tool. All political parties were quick to leverage social media, although the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in a league of its own, building on its social media prowess from the 2014 elections.

Both the BJP and the main opposition Congress party are found to have shared large quantities of junk news and fake news. Such flagrant misuse of social media by political actors and their proxies is an issue that needs to be discussed and debated, and policy solutions proposed that would reduce its detrimental impact on India's long-term security and stability.

Fact Checkers as Fake News Warriors

The alarming propagation of fake news compelled a slew of initiatives in the run up to the elections. This included partnerships between technology companies and fact-checking and media companies

to monitor and debunk online falsehoods, while conducting awareness campaigns and workshops on the ground. One of these fact-checking entities is BOOM, a digital journalism initiative that Facebook partnered with to tackle fake news during the elections.

Jency Jacob, managing editor of BOOM, notes that although the volume of online information was discernibly higher, there was a continuation of trends witnessed in the 2018 state elections. These included misleading and cleverly-clipped videos, campaign videos that were edited to target



Photo courtesy of the Bharatiya Janata Party, India

certain communities, and longer textual messages on WhatsApp that contained several factual inaccuracies, making them especially difficult to counter.

The role of fact checkers during the elections received much media attention, and citizens were able to play a role by providing tips and complaints about questionable content. Jacob acknowledges that technology companies may have less than noble intentions in debunking fake news and that fact checkers will always be playing catch up. However, their work is crucial in fighting misinformation and pushing technology companies to be more transparent. For instance, BOOM was able to create a feedback loop with Facebook, flagging problematic pages that escaped software detection and getting the technology company to act on false or inflammatory content.

Fact-checking activities have also expanded to include vernacular content, with mainstream media and independent fact-checking outfits operating in several Indian languages. This is a significant step, given that vernacular content consumers will soon outweigh English users in India. However, several languages are still unmonitored, making them perfect breeding grounds for misinformation and propaganda.

Building up Citizen Immunity

Given the limitations of the fact-checking process, fact checkers, media and technology companies have also focused on digital literacy efforts, such as the mammoth Google News Initiative, a pan-India training series that supported journalists covering the elections.

Such critical digital literacy efforts are indispensable in the battle against fake news in India, where political stakeholders are complicit in perpetuating the problem. BOOM's frontline involvement has enabled it to glean insights about the role of political parties and their supporters. Jacob notes that although social media was used by the Congress and its supporters to mislead and misinform voters, the BJP was ahead of the game, having learnt from its past mistakes, as well as the United States elections and Cambridge Analytica scandals. Hence, while the Congress was making key rookie mistakes, the BJP's online presence was far more evolved, enabling it to distance itself from its supporters, such as popular pro-BJP websites and Facebook pages like Nation With Namo and Bharat ke Mann ki Baat.

Given the involvement of political stakeholders, digital and news literacy efforts are critical mechanisms in the broader fight against fake news. This is a sentiment echoed by Latoya Ferns-Advani, who chaired the Mumbai Congress committee tasked with coordinating print and electronic media during the elections. Noting that political parties and governments have vested interests, and that laws are often neither adequate nor benign, she highlights the need for civil society to take the lead in building immunity against fake news.

While any legislation to control media would naturally arouse suspicions, the government can dispel such concerns through participatory and more inclusive policy-making processes. Ferns-Advani cautions that any legislation restricting online expression and behaviour should be

contingent on it causing harm to targeted individuals, and in keeping within the reasonable restrictions of the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Conclusion

The National Democratic Alliance government will soon have to initiate the process of addressing rising calls to rein in social media without compromising free speech. While it would make political sense for the BJP to continue to exploit its social media advantages, it is clear that the long-term destabilising effects of unchecked social media would far outweigh narrow political gains. Sri Lanka is a cautionary tale of how divisiveness propagated by fake news on an unbridled social media will eventually come home to roost. The larger national security implications would necessitate an enlightened approach to taming the misuse of social media, involving greater interaction between the government and other stakeholders.

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Recent Agreements



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

Between January and June 2017, ISAS signed two new memoranda of understanding. These were signed with the Amaravati Development Partners Private Limited in Andhra Pradesh, India, on 10 January 2019, and with the the Emirates Policy Center, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 31 March 2019.

ISAS and the partners will identify opportunities for exchanges and cooperation in joint research, consultation and development in disciplines of mutual interest; organise and participate in joint, bilateral and multilateral scholarly events; and exchange publications and research work.

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

ISAS Internship Programme 2019

ISAS offers research internships to students keen on furthering their academic and research interest in South Asia. This fulfils ISAS' educational role of nurturing students to develop greater awareness and understanding of the region. The internship also serves as a testing ground for potential research analyst appointments at the Institute.

In the first half of the year, we have had four interns. They are:



Ms Ruthra D/O Thiyagarajan

National University of Singapore
Graduated with Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours)
Internship Duration: 7 January – 6 April 2019



Mr Nathanael Lee Yong Jian

National University of Singapore
Second Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 13 May – 4 August 2019



Ms Jasmine Gnanam John

Christ University, India
First Year – Master of Arts
Internship Duration: 15 April – 31 May 2019



Ms Ghazi Tahira Namreen Fatima

National University of Singapore
Final Year – Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Internship Duration: 13 May – 2 August 2019

During their internships, these students participate in ISAS' seminars and events, where they meet and interact with local and overseas-based participants. They also collate data and provide research assistance to their supervisors at ISAS.

**21
JAN****ISAS Panel Discussion****Sri Lanka at the Crossroads: Geopolitical Challenges and National Interests**

ISAS organised a panel discussion on 'Sri Lanka at the Crossroads: Geopolitical Challenges and National Interests' on 21 January 2019. The event was to mark the launch of the book by Mr Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, the head of the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka.

Delivering the opening remarks, Professor C Raja Mohan, ISAS Director, stated that the book was an important contribution to South Asia. Colombo is at a critical juncture both in its domestic and foreign policies realm. While it aspires to become a hub of the Indian Ocean, it is also engaging in nation-building and reconciliation.

The panel, comprising Mr Abeyagoonasekera, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, discussed the book and the issues on the ground in Sri Lanka. When sharing his book, Mr Abeyagoonasekera



explained the rise of regional powers such as China in the Indian Ocean and their influence on Sri Lanka. Dr Attanayake focused on the geopolitical, domestic and foreign policy issues in Sri Lanka while Dr Palit provided his perspectives on the economic and geopolitical landscapes.

**26
FEB****ISAS Public Lecture****A Tale of Two Cities – Singapore and Calcutta, Past and Present**

ISAS, in collaboration with the Victoria Memorial Hall (VMH) in Kolkata, organised a public lecture on 'A Tale of Two Cities: Singapore and Calcutta – Past and Present' at the VMH on 26 February 2019.

During his keynote address at the lecture, ISAS Deputy Chairman and President of Yale-NUS College, Professor Tan Tai Yong, said that Kolkata and Singapore were two different entities and there was no one-size-fits-all theory applicable for any of the cities. He stated that, what Singapore being a city-state could decide faster, Kolkata, being a city within a state, could not. He added that Singapore, which used to be part of the Bengal Presidency and ruled from Kolkata, then Calcutta, till 1867, may learn how the city's chaos help the flourishing of its liberal arts. He said that Kolkata, in return, may take a few tips from Singapore on how to expand its hinterland.

The public lecture was organised as part of celebration of the historic relationship between Singapore and Kolkata, and the Singapore bicentenary.

28 FEB
1 MAR

ISAS-RSIS Workshop **India – Rising Power in an Age of Uncertainty**

ISAS and S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, jointly organised a two-day workshop on 'India – Rising Power in the Age of Uncertainty' on 28 February and 1 March 2019. The event brought together a diverse group of academics and experts from India and Singapore.

The first day's session discussed India's great power status; the Modi Doctrine and India's relations with the United States, Russia and Japan; India's relations with China and Pakistan, and the rest of South Asia and Southeast Asia, West Asia and Africa. At the same time, the panellists examined India's military capabilities, defence production, trade and investment policy, and foreign aid policy.

The panellists on the second day discussed democratic institutions, social cohesion challenges that hinder India's rise, trade reforms and, lastly, societal challenges such as human capital and demographic dividend.



During the question-and-answer session, the discussion touched on India's great power status, foreign policy issues and domestic challenges such as the lack of opportunities for certain sections of the society, challenges of crony capitalism, credibility of institutions, trade effective confidence-building measures and increasing low level social indicators.

25
MAR

The Asia Foundation-ISAS Panel Discussion **United States-India Relations in a Turbulent World**

ISAS organised a panel discussion on 'United States-India Relations in a Turbulent World', in collaboration with the Asia Foundation on 25 March 2019.

Mr Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia, Wilson Centre, presented on the United States' (US) strategy towards Afghanistan in the context of the Donald Trump administration's South Asia policy. Dr Rani Mullen, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, spoke about India's role and involvement in the US' Afghanistan policy. Dr Tanvi Madan, Director, The India Project, Brookings Institution, outlined the role of the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' in bilateral ties. Mr Aman Thakker, Research Associate, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, focused on the positive realities of India-US trade, beyond the rhetoric between New Delhi and Washington. Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, touched on the bilateral trade ties between the US and India.



The interactive discussion focused on the Indian approach to the 'Quad' in the Indo-Pacific, the US' counter to China's Digital Silk Road, bilateral sanctions and their impact on trade, prospects and implications for India of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, a possible bilateral trade agreement, and Indian troops in Afghanistan.

28
MAR

ISAS Ambassadors' Lecture Moscow's Pivot to Asia: Russia and the Indo-Pacific

ISAS organised the Ambassadors' Lecture on 'Moscow's Pivot to Asia: Russia and the Indo-Pacific' on 28 March 2019.

During his address, Ambassador Tatarinov offered an overview of Russia's foreign policy priorities in the Indo-Pacific, and Russia's views on the regional development trends in the region. He remarked that Moscow has always had an important presence in Asia by virtue of its geography. The participation of Russian President Vladimir Putin in the 13th East Asia Summit in Singapore opened a new page in the long history of Russia's engagement with Asia. The recent elevation of its dialogue partnership with ASEAN to the strategic level will add up to Russia's multi-faceted cooperation with Southeast Asia and beyond.

With specific reference to the Indo-Pacific, he stressed that Russia endorses initiatives aimed at collectively shaping a new regional architecture. However, while

considering the various Indo-Pacific strategies put forward by some countries, it is necessary to preserve the ASEAN-centric system of security and cooperation. The Indo-Pacific strategy is a controversial initiative aimed at establishing the American dominance through the containment of Chinese and Russian influence in the region. As such, it cannot be accepted, with a view to support the Asian identity of the region as well as ASEAN's centrality.

09
APR

ISAS-ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Workshop India and Indonesia: Constructing a Maritime Partnership

ISAS and the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute jointly organised a panel discussion on 'India and Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific' on 9 April 2019. The speakers were Mr Jusuf Wanandi, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, CSIS Foundation; Ambassador H K Singh, Director-General, Delhi Policy Group; Professor Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Research Professor, Research Centre for Politics, Indonesian Institute of Sciences; Vice-Admiral Anil Chopra, Former Commander-in-Chief, Eastern and Western Naval Commands, Indian Navy; and Mr Siswanto Rusdi, Founder and Director, National Maritime Institute.



Professor Anwar spoke about the historical relationship between India and Indonesia in the context of the Indo-Pacific and the role of institutions in the maritime zone. Vice-Admiral Chopra highlighted the 'synergies' between the two sides and the importance of capacities and capabilities in cooperation. Mr Wanandi recounted the historical bilateral relationship from ancient civilisations to contemporary times. He also noted the

future bilateral challenges such as globalisation, international politics and security. Mr Rusdi touched on the lack of commercial maritime connectivity between India and Indonesia. Ambassador Singh broadly focused on the political, historical and geographic similarities between the two countries as well as convergences in their maritime strategies and perspectives.

26-27
APR

ISAS Workshop

Navigating to an Enduring Peace in Afghanistan



On 26 and 27 April 2019, ISAS organised a workshop on 'Navigating to an Enduring Peace in Afghanistan' co-sponsored by the governments of Canada, Commonwealth of Australia and Kingdom of Norway, and supported by the Kabul-based National Center for Dialogue & Progress. The workshop brought together international Afghanistan experts and representatives of the Afghan civil society.

The political situation in Afghanistan today is extremely fragile, with the Taliban controlling more territory than any time since 2001 and the United States (US) administration talking to the Taliban in order to withdraw their troops if possible before US elections in 2020. This

situation requires urgent efforts amongst Afghan and international policy makers, analysts and researchers to analyse and propose ways of ensuring successful peace talks and prevent the return of a Taliban government.

The ISAS workshop discussed how to best leverage the peace processes already underway that would help to support the Afghan government and get the Taliban to negotiate peace. It also identified the potential minefields on the path to an enduring peace in the country.

23
MAY

ISAS Workshop

Assessing the Transformation of Bangladesh

Held on 23 May 2019, the workshop on 'Assessing the Transformation of Bangladesh' examined the different aspects of Bangladesh's journey from a lower to a middle income nation. These included Bangladesh's economic policies, the role of both local and foreign non-governmental institutions, and the socio-political developments in the country. The workshop also looked at Bangladesh's international relations.

The panellists from Singapore, India and Bangladesh highlighted the coherence amidst contradictions and the origins of Bangladesh's policy – whether it lay in the realm of politics



or institutional structures. In addition, the panellists explored Bangladesh's ability to cope with the changes that come with its evolution into a middle income country and the implications for its neighbours.

**28-29
MAY**

Commonwealth Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Region Harnessing Trade Policy for Global Integration



Organised in the Asia-Pacific for the first time, the participants in the consultations on 28 and 29 May 2019 included senior government officials from several Commonwealth-member countries and the Pacific Island States. Speakers and resource persons included distinguished academics, private sector representatives and practitioners from Australia, Bangladesh, India and Singapore, as well as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva and the Commonwealth Secretariat in the United Kingdom.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Koh Poh Koon, Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, mentioned that, "The diversity within the Commonwealth is our common strength. Given the current backdrop of rising populism and protectionism, it is even more critical for Commonwealth countries to continue to come together to signal our joint commitment towards upholding the open and rules-based multilateral trading system. Economic integration remains the essential foundation for global prosperity and progress that will allow us to better address the global challenges of the future."

The agenda for the meeting covered a broad range of topics, from improving physical connectivity through multi-modal mega-infrastructure projects in the region to the benefits of digitisation and the sustainable use of the oceans or blue economy, all framed by the need for more effective and targeted Aid for Trade to build productive and supply capacities. The overall objective of the meeting was to assess how the Asia-Pacific countries could better harness trade policy to improve their global connectivity and integration.

**03
JUN**

ISAS Workshop Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Moving from Periphery to the Centre?



On 3 June 2019, ISAS organised a symposium on 'Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Moving from Periphery to the Centre?'. The EU Centre in Singapore, the Embassy of Sweden in Singapore, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, the Swedish South Asian Studies Network (Lund University) and the Embassy of Poland in Singapore partnered ISAS in organising the symposium.

Academics, diplomats and experts from Europe and Asia spoke at the event. They included Ambassador David Daly, Head of Division, Southeast Asia, European External Action Service; Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS; Professor Shutaro Sano, Professor and Deputy Director, Center for International Exchange, National Defence Academy of Japan; and Dr Frederic Grare, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, South Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, France.

The panellists discussed the European Union's (EU) Indo-Pacific connectivity strategy and tools; individual and collective policy outlooks on the concept of the Indo-Pacific; Japan's security interactions with the EU and other Asian powers; challenges for cross-border connectivity; the scope, capabilities and capacity for EU-ASEAN security cooperation; and the impact of intensified United States-China strategic competition or 'New Cold War' on European involvement in the Indo-Pacific.

06
JUN

ISAS-RSIS Panel Discussion Long-term Implications of India's 2019 General Elections

ISAS and S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, jointly organised a panel discussion on 6 June 2019 to examine the recent Indian general elections and to look ahead to several critical issues.

Professor Walter Andersen, Senior Adjunct Professor of South Asia Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, US, outlined three factors behind the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) victory: "money, machinery and Modi". He stressed how the 2019 elections marked an inflection point in Indian politics, and predicted that the Centre will progressively shape the politics of the states.

Dr Sinderpal Singh, Head of the South Asia Programme at RSIS, designated China as India's future strategic challenge. He questioned what India's next reprisal to



terrorism from Pakistan might look like, and said India will increasingly engage with its Eastern neighbours. Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy) at ISAS, explained the BJP's victory against a backdrop of poor economic performance. He pointed to government schemes targeting poor households and economically forward castes. He argued that India will see a rise in welfare economics.

20
JUN

Singapore Symposium 2019 India and Singapore: Partners in a Connected World

ISAS, in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry and Ananta Aspen Centre, organised the Singapore Symposium on 20 June 2019 in New Delhi, India.

Mr S Iswaran, Singapore's Minister for Communications and Information & Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations, stressed on the importance of India being part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), stating that it can "bring the region together with a far-sighted and high ambition agreement." He also highlighted possible collaboration between India and Singapore in the digital economy in such areas as trade facilitation, financial technology and emerging technologies.

Mr Nitin Gadkari, India's Minister for Road Transport and Highways; and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, who also delivered an address at the event, invited Singaporean companies to invest in India's Green Express Highways and to set up logistics and industrial parks around them. He added that his ministry was also

seeking to develop inland waterways as a major mode of transportation of goods.

The Singapore Symposium is ISAS' signature event conducted in the key cities of South Asia.



ISAS Events Listing (January to June 2019)

ISAS Closed Door Session	India and Australia: Towards a New Era of Business Engagement	8 January 2019
SASP-ISAS Seminar	Nationalism as a Democratic and Authoritarian Resource: Lessons from India, Myanmar and Malaysia	10 January 2019
ISAS Panel Discussion	Sri Lanka at the Crossroads: Geopolitical Challenges and National Interests	21 January 2019
ISAS Seminar	The Internal Political Dynamics of the Belt and Road Initiative: Federalism and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	24 January 2019
ISAS Seminar	The Dragon and the Elephant: Sino-Indian Relations in the Era of Modi and Xi	28 January 2019
ISAS Seminar	Liberalisation Sans Liberalism: The Dilemmas of Higher Education in India	31 January 2019
ISAS Roundtable	Between South and Southeast Asia: Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Case for a New Regional Framework	20 February 2019
ISAS Public Lecture	A Tale of Two Cities – Singapore and Calcutta, Past and Present	26 February 2019
ISAS-RSIS Workshop	India – Rising Power in an Age of Uncertainty	28 February – 1 March 2019
ISAS Closed Door Session	War and Peace in South Asia: New Developments in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan	1 March 2019
ISAS Closed Door Session	China's Naval Strategy in the Indo-Pacific and the Regional Responses	25 March 2019
The Asia Foundation-ISAS Symposium	The United States and South Asia in the Indo Pacific	25 March 2019
The Asia Foundation-ISAS Workshop	Trump and Modi: India-US Burden-sharing in the Indo-Pacific	26 March 2019
ISAS Ambassadors' Lecture	Moscow's Pivot to Asia: Russia and the Indo-Pacific	28 March 2019
ISAS-ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Workshop	India and Indonesia: Constructing a Maritime Partnership	9 April 2019
ISAS-ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Panel Discussion	India and Indonesia in the Indo Pacific	9 April 2019
ISAS Closed Door Session	India's Foreign Policy: Assessing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Legacy	11 April 2019
ISAS Panel Discussion	India's Eastward Engagement: From Antiquity to Act East Policy	17 April 2019
ISAS Panel Discussion	Peace in Afghanistan: A New Dawn or False Hope?	25 April 2019
ISAS Workshop	Navigating to an Enduring Peace in Afghanistan	26-27 April 2019
ISAS Seminar	How India manages its National Security	2 May 2019
ISAS Workshop	Assessing the Transformation of Bangladesh	23 May 2019
Commonwealth Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Region	Harnessing Trade Policy for Global Integration: Commonwealth Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Region	28-29 May 2019
ISAS Symposium	Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Moving from Periphery to the Centre?	3 June 2019
ISAS Closed Door Session	The RSS: A View to the Inside	4 June 2019
ISAS Panel Discussion	Long-term Implications of India's 2019 General Elections	6 June 2019
ISAS-ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute Workshop	The Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Port Projects in Malaysia and Sri Lanka	14 June 2019
ISAS-ATC Panel Discussion	Trade Wars: Scenarios, Situations and Strategies	17 June 2019
Singapore Symposium 2019	India and Singapore: Partners in a Connected World	20 June 2019 - New Delhi
ISAS Seminar	The Use of Digital Payments in India	24 June 2019
ISAS-KAS Panel Discussion	The Role of Digital Media in the 2019 Indian General Elections	27 June 2019
ISAS-KAS Workshop	Digital Media, Politics and Elections in India	28 June 2019

Authored Book

Borah, Rupakjyoti. *Act East via the Northeast: How India's Northeast is Strengthening the Kuzuna (Bond) between India, Japan and ASEAN?* Kaveri Book Service, 2019

Edited Books

Mukherjee, Deeparghya. *Economic Integration in Asia: Key Prospects and Challenges with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.* Routledge, 2019

Ranjan, Amit. *India in South Asia: Challenges and Management.* Springer, 2019

Burki, Shahid Javed; Chowdhury, Iftekhar Ahmed; and Butt, Asad Ejaz. *Pakistan at Seventy: A Handbook on Developments in Economics, Politics and Society.* Routledge, 2019

South Asia Discussion Papers

ISAS and The Asia Foundation – Trump and Modi: Prospects for US-India Burden Sharing, June 2019

South Asia Scan

Randhawa, Dipinder S. *South Asia Scan Issue No. 1 – E-commerce in India: Opportunities and Challenges.* Institute of South Asian Studies, January 2019

Mullen, Rani D. *South Asia Scan Issue No. 2 – Afghanistan: Time for Peace?* Institute of South Asian Studies, April 2019

Briefs

- 634** The Debate on the Economic Capital Framework of the Reserve Bank of India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 2 January 2019
- 635** The Economic and Security Dimensions of the Bogibeel Bridge in Assam, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 9 January 2019
- 636** Ferment at the Reserve Bank of India: Resetting the Relationship with the Government, Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 22 January 2019
- 637** Modi's Government Presents An Election-Oriented Budget, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 4 February 2019
- 638** India Budget 2019: Income Scheme For Farmers Could Politically Backfire, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 7 February 2019
- 639** Tracking Narendra Modis Popularity, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 14 February 2019
- 640** Election Alliances In Tamil Nadu: Focus On Caste Equations, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 February 2019
- 641** Boost for India's Realty Sector before the Elections, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 8 March 2019
- 642** Why India Lost US GSP Benefits, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 19 March 2019
- 643** Social Media And Critical Digital Literacy In India's General Elections, Dr Anuradha Rao, Independent Researcher and Consultant, 29 March 2019
- 644** New Dimensions to Malaysia-Pakistan Relations, Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 29 March 2019
- 645** Australia and Sri Lanka Deepen Naval Cooperation, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS; and Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS, 5 April 2019
- 646** Can BJP Sustain the Bounce from Pulwama and Balakot?, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 9 April 2019
- 647** The BJP in Rural Areas: Insights from the 2014 Elections, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 April 2019
- 648** An Assessment of the PM-Kisan and NYAY, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Vani Swarupa Murali, Research Analyst, ISAS, 15 April 2019
- 649** Bangladesh Among the Five Fastest Growing Economies, Dr Rahul Choudhury, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 April 2019
- 650** Swacch Social Media: Cleaning up Online Spaces during India's General Elections, Dr Anuradha Rao, Independent Researcher and Consultant, 15 April 2019
- 651** Is India becoming less democratic?, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 April 2019
- 652** Bangladesh: A Prognosis for Economic Potentials and Pitfalls, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 April 2019
- 653** The Impact of the Hambantota Oil Refinery on Sri Lanka, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 April 2019
- 654** India's Successes and Challenges in the Indo-Pacific, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 24 April 2019
- 655** Easter Attacks in Sri Lanka, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Ms Nazneen Mohsina, Research Analyst, ISAS, 18 April 2019
- 656** The Changing Narrative of India's General Elections, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 30 April 2019
- 657** New Lows in the Indian General Election Campaign, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 13 May 2019

658	Differences between Elections Commissioners: No Cause for Alarm but Need for Transparency, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 13 May 2019
659	Lahore Suicide Bombing Signals Emergence of a New Militant Organisation, Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 13 May 2019
660	Bangladesh and Free Trade Agreements: A Potential Partner in Singapore, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 May 2019
661	Indian Election 2019: The Bitter Battle for Bengal, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 16 May 2019
662	Indian Elections and their Economic Impact, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 16 May 2019
663	India's Northeast and its Connectivity with Southeast Asia, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 May 2019
664	Social Media and the Indian Elections: The Good, the Bad and (How to Rein In) the Ugly, Dr Anuradha Rao, Consultant, Smart Transformations, 28 May 2019
665	Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Eastward Tilt Remaps India's Neighbourhood, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 29 May 2019
666	Indian Elections 2019: Why the BJP Won Big, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 1 June 2019
667	India Elections 2019 – The New Cabinet and its Challenges, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 3 June 2019
668	Modi's Forthcoming Visit to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 June 2019
669	Resignation of Muslim Politicians: A Socio-political Setback in Sri Lanka, Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 June 2019
670	India Elections 2019: The Farmers' Vote for the BJP, Mr Nathanael Lee, Research Intern, ISAS; and and Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 June 2019
671	Modi's Visit to Sri Lanka, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 June 2019
672	India's Impending Water Crisis, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 June 2019
673	India and Pakistan: Modi Persists with Hardline on Terror, Mr John J Vater, Research Associate, ISAS; and Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 20 June 2019
674	The Rural Vote in the 2019 Indian General Elections, Vani Swarupa Murali Research Analyst, ISAS; and and Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 24 June 2019

Insights

532	Polls in Bangladesh: Implications for Future Theory and Practice of Electoral Politics, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 January 2019
533	The Indian Elections and the Rural Sector, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Vani Swarupa Murali, Research Analyst, ISAS, 19 January 2019
534	Citizenship (Amendment) Bill: Re-Defining Identity, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 January 2019
535	Zero Budget Natural Farming In Andhra Pradesh: Towards Sustainable And Profitable Farming, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS; Mr Sarin Paraparakath, Associate Director, Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB); Ms Trishala Kaviti, Senior APEDB, and Mr Sriharsha Chilla, Senior Associate, APEDB, 8 February 2019
536	Does Pulwama Jeopardise Pakistan's Potential IMF Deal?, Dr Rani D Mullen, Visiting Senior Research Fellow ISAS; and Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 25 February 2019
537	India's Economy – Concerns And The Road Ahead, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 February 2019
538	Japan as the Chair of the G20: Implications for South Asia, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 7 March 2019
539	The Maldives: Resolution of Constitutional Conundrum? Not Just Yet!, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 March 2019
540	Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Andamans: India ends the Neglect of the Strategic Island Chain, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS; and Mr Ankush Ajay Wagle, Research Analyst, ISAS, 8 March 2019
541	Foreign Policy and Voting Pattern in India, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 March 2019
542	India-Pakistan Standoff: What We Know, What We Do Not Know and What They Want Us to Know, Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 12 March 2019
543	Indian General Elections Announced, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 13 March 2019

544	India and Peru FTA: Issues and Concerns, Dr Rahul Choudhury, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 March 2019
545	Parliamentary Elections and Challenges in the Maldives, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 March 2019
546	A Dichotomy of Values in Foreign Policy, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 March 2019
547	Understanding India's Reluctance at the WTO E-Commerce Talks, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 March 2019
548	Can Minimum Income Schemes and Loan Waivers Help Farmers in India?, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS; and Ms Vani Swarupa Murali, Research Analyst, ISAS, 18 March 2019
549	Why Alliances Could Matter in India's General Election, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 18 March 2019
550	Politicisation of Data under the Modi Regime, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 March 2019
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554	Sabarimala: Controversy Over Women's Access To The Temple, Ms Silvia Tieri, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Dr Emma Jane Flatt, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 March 2019
555	National Budget Sri Lanka: A Budget To Empower People, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 March 2019
556	Japan in the Infrastructure Sector of Northeast India, Dr Rupakjyoti Borah, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 29 March 2019
557	Elections in Andhra Pradesh-Issues and Possible Scenarios, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS; Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS; and Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 April 2019
558	Saudi Arabia's Rising Profile in South Asia, Dr Omair Anas, Assistant Professor, Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, 9 April 2019
559	A Comprehensive Election Victory: What Next for the Maldivian Democratic Party?, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 April 2019
560	India's Hindi Heartland Key to General Elections, Mr Nalin Mehta, Executive Editor, Times of India Online, 10 April 2019
561	Decoding India's Strategic Weapons Capabilities, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Stanton Nuclear Security Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, 23 April 2019
562	India and the South Pacific, Ambassador Anil Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi, 29 April 2019
563	BJP Banking on Fortress Gujarat but Faces Challenge in Maharashtra, Mr Nalin Mehta, Executive Editor, Times of India Online, 14 May 2019
564	Afghanistan's Future: How can Pakistan help?, Mr Touqir Hussain, Adjunct Faculty, Georgetown University and Syracuse University, 20 May 2019
565	Environmental Degradation: Never an Election Issue in India, Dr Amit Ranjan, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 May 2019
566	Afghanistan's Future: How can Pakistan help?, Mr Touqir Hussain, Adjunct Faculty, Georgetown University and Syracuse University, 20 May 2019
567	Universal Basic Income in India: The Rationale and Challenges Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 May, 2019
568	Lessons from the Sri Lankan Easter Sunday Tragedy, Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 29 May 2019
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315	The Indian Civil Service – Shortcoming And The Course For Reforms, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Fellow, ISAS, 3 February 2019
316	Sri Lanka And Japan: Emerging Partnership, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS, 26 February 2019
317	Implication of the New "Normal" Indian Ocean Economy for Sri Lanka, Dr Ganeshan Wignaraja, Executive Director, Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) of International Relations and Strategic Studies, 8 March 2019
318	Japan's Foreign Aid to South Asia: Addressing a Strategic Need, Dr Sojin Shin, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 March 2019
319	South Asia: Possible Key to India's Next Government, Mr Nalin Mehta, Executive Editor, Times of India Online, 19 April 2019
Special Reports	
58	Analysing The United States' Vision For The Indo-Pacific, Mr Ankush Ajay Wagle, Research Analyst, ISAS, 17 February 2019
59	India and Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific, Dr Ian Storey Senior Fellow with the Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute; and Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 May 2019
	Digital Politics: Emerging Trends in South and Southeast Asia, Dr Ronojoy Sen Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS; and Vani Swarupa Murali, Research Analyst, ISAS, 28 May 2019

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SEPT**ISAS Forthcoming Event****13th ISAS International Conference on South Asia:
Politics in a Changing South Asia**

ISAS will organise the 13th ISAS International Conference on South Asia on 18 September 2019 at Orchard Hotel Singapore. Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Home Affairs, Singapore, will deliver the keynote address for the conference.

Themed 'Politics in a Changing South Asia', the conference seeks to locate and assess political strands, practices and dynamics emerging in South Asia. Both South Asia as a region and its individual states are witnessing demographic, economic, technological, climatic and social changes that are impacting upon

political discourse and practice. Established political, economic and social models are increasingly being debated. Furthermore, the emergence of various forms of social media and digital technology has given rise to new forms of socio-political mobilisation and notions of authority, and have influenced voting patterns. South Asia has also not been immune from global political shifts such as the rise of populism and rejection of established political frameworks.

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

ISAS Launches New Publication Series

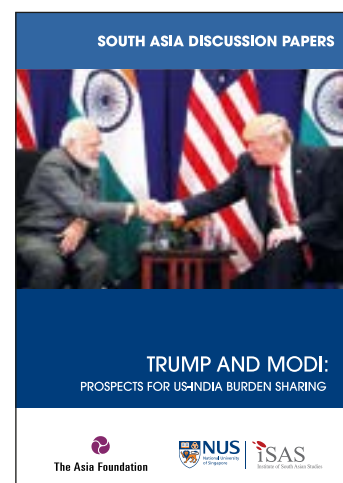
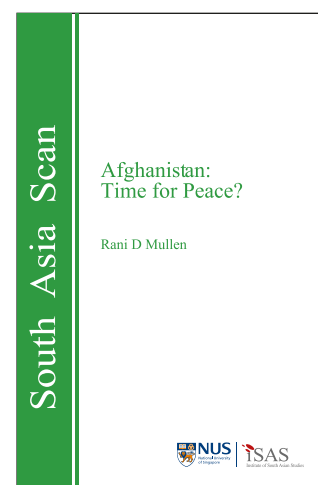
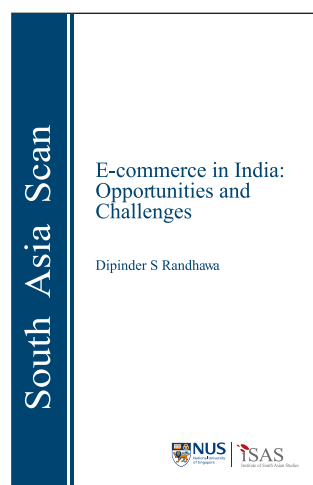
The first half of this year witnessed ISAS introducing two new series of publications.

South Asia Scan and South Asian Discussion Papers are important additions to the bouquet of publications from ISAS. They are prompted by the need for a timely, substantive and accessible review of key social, political, economic and strategic changes in South Asia.

In the first issue of South Asia Scan, titled *E-commerce in India: Opportunities and Challenges*, published in January 2019, Dipinder S Randhawa examines the reasons for the extraordinary growth of e-commerce in India, the challenges and risks that lie ahead, and the role for policymakers and regulators in shaping an efficient, fair and stable transition to the digital marketplace of the future. In the second issue on *Afghanistan: Time for Peace?*, published in April 2019, Rani D Mullen analyses the main factors contributing to the ongoing conflict in the country, as well as recent political dynamics with the potential to change the conflict, including the rising domestic and international pressure for peace.

In June 2019, ISAS published the first issue of its South Asia Discussion Papers. Titled *Trump and Modi: Prospects for US-India Burden Sharing*, the publication examines the shifting dynamics of India's relations with the United States. This issue is based on the papers presented at the workshop organised in March 2019 at ISAS, in collaboration with the The Asia Foundation, San Francisco.

ISAS will bring out the two publications periodically as our scholars look deep into this very complex region and provide perspectives on the unfolding structural transformations within South Asia.



The authors bear full responsible for the facts cited and opinions expressed in their articles in this publication.

The Institute of South Asia Studies (ISAS), established in July 2004, is an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. ISAS is dedicated to the study of contemporary South Asia. Researches at the institute conduct long-term and in-depth studies focused on social, political and economic trends and developments in South Asia and their impact beyond the immediate region. In addition, ISAS produces regular up-to-date and time-sensitive analyses of key issues and events in South Asia. ISAS disseminates its research output to policy makers, the academia, business community and civil society.

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