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Bangladesh's Transformative Journey: Then to Now

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A Message from the Director

PROFESSOR C RAJA MOHAN

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

A year always brings with it hope for a better and brighter future. However, 2020 has had perhaps one of the most trying beginnings, with COVID-19 infecting more than 11 million people worldwide and killing more than 500,000 persons. The numbers are still increasing each day. South Asia has not been spared and India, with the largest population, has been most severely affected in this region.

In Singapore, the government announced an eight-week Circuit Breaker in April 2020, shutting down non-essential services and schools to curb the spread. We at ISAS had to adapt to this new situation. We continued with our research and moved to organising online events which have been very well received. Keeping track of current developments, our scholars focused on various issues relating to the outbreak. This issue of the newsletter carries articles on the economic and political impact of COVID-19 on South Asia. The pandemic also reopened the debate of unity among members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). We look at the region's SAARC imperatives in this issue.

This year marks the centennial birth anniversary of Bangladesh's founding leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This issue's feature story highlights Bangladesh's social and economic success. While the COVID-19 outbreak has hampered Bangladesh's

growth, its strong fundamentals and good stimulus package provide optimism for a quick recovery.

The contributions of the South Asian countries to the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions have increased over the years. Recognising this, ISAS published a Special Report late last year on Bangladesh's contributions to these missions. In this newsletter, we showcase Pakistan's active participation in such missions. We also examine Sri Lanka-Singapore bilateral relations as they celebrate 50 years of diplomatic ties. Moving to the south-west of the Indian sub-continent, we appraise policy changes in the Maldives following President Mohammad Ibrahim Solih's election.

This April, we unveiled 'The Bookshelf', a new segment featuring recently published books on South Asia through a mix of video interviews, podcasts and written reviews. We have organised seven book discussions thus far. Earlier this year, we launched two books authored by our researchers on *Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India's Public Institutions* and *Does India Negotiate?* At the same time, we brought out three South Asia Scan publications – the first on the BJP's victory in the 2019 general election, second on China's engagement with the small island states in the Indian Ocean region and third on the role of India as a regional security provider.

With digital becoming the default means of communication under the

current conditions, we have been using webinars, video interviews and podcasts extensively. In a special series of podcasts on the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore, ISAS interviewed the High Commissioners of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in Singapore to gain deeper insights into their support for the migrant workers living here. Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Law, K Shanmugam, also shared his insights into the government's response in controlling the COVID-19 outbreak and the measures taken to keep these foreign workers safe.

We continue to engage with organisations from across the region such as Ananta Aspen Centre, the India Foundation and Indian Institute of Technology-Madras and the European Union in India, just to name a few. We also held webinars on timely themes such as China-Pakistan relations, COVID-19 and South Asia, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first year in office in his second term.

ISAS will continue to produce podcast interviews and webinars with experts from the subcontinent and beyond. These will be uploaded onto our website and YouTube channel. We also stream our online events live on the ISAS Facebook and Twitter pages. Do follow our social media pages for the latest at ISAS.

Stay safe and healthy!



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Bangladesh's Transformative Journey: Then to Now

IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh has had a remarkable history. From humble origins, it has steadily but surely catapulted itself into the list of emerging nations that merit watching. This truly phenomenal growth has been neither accidental nor sudden. A war-battered nation at its nascence in 1971, it began incredibly poor. The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate then was a woeful 0.14 per cent, one of the world's lowest. Furthermore, socio-political instability was rife. The situation was exacerbated by

floods and famines. The United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger called it a "bottomless basket case". It took decades of journey, often through vicissitudes of fortune, but then eventually, Bangladesh was able to turn the corner in a big way. Once the process began, it appeared to be inexorable. The transformation was largely owed to a combination of two major factors. The first was the exogenous support in the form of aid and generous market access.

The second was endogenous endeavours like people's resilience and their entrepreneurial spirit. Some apparently intractable problems and impeding issues, however, persisted.

Early socialist values – a heritage of the nation's history – gave way to the opening-up of the economy before the rest of South Asia. Prudent management of external resources and sagacious allocation of foreign and domestic resources

induced rapid developmental change. A steady line of progression was reflected in the shift from agriculture with raw jute as primary export to manufacturing industries of readymade garments, pharmaceuticals and now to digital products. The dependence on foreign aid was reduced from six per cent in the 1980s to less than two per cent now. Over the last three decades the GDP grew relentlessly at six to eight per cent annually, climbing to 7.85 per cent in 2018. The International Monetary Fund billed the country as the second fastest growing major economy of 2016, and the World Bank as the fifth fastest growing economy of that year.

Statistics and numbers seemed to bear out the positive prognosis. Life expectancy increased to 72 years, higher than 68 years for India and 66 years for Pakistan. In terms of other social indices for development, such as gender equity, women's empowerment, mortality rate, access to sanitary latrines and immunisation, the performance was better than that of its neighbours. Bangladesh was poised to graduate from the list at the United Nations (UN) of Least Developed Countries to the group of middle-income economies by 2024, expecting to retain the north-bound trajectory of most of its economic indicators.

Then, in early 2020, COVID-19 struck. The nation was caught somewhat off-guard. In any case, it did not possess, like many of its ilk, the social and infrastructural wherewithal to sufficiently address and contain the pandemic. The government was at pains to create the elusive equilibrium between life and livelihood. Prolonged 'holidays', a euphemism for 'lockdown', dealt a massive blow to the economy.

Growth predicted for 2020 plummeted to two per cent, barely evading recession. Over 650,000 migrant workers returned home from abroad, denting remittance earnings a crucial accretion to national income. Garment factories started closing as European and American markets dried up. The future looked bleak.

Corrective measures were put in place as rapidly as possible, though their teething problems caused some delay. To obviate the politicisation of relief distribution, an all too frequent allegation in South Asia, Permanent Secretaries were placed in-charge of operations in the districts. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced 18 stimulus packages equivalent to 3.5 per cent of the GDP to jumpstart the economy. Since the fundamentals were strong, a V-shaped recovery was aimed for and thought possible. According to *The Economist*, Bangladesh was ranked ninth strongest among 65 emerging economies battling COVID-19. Focus was immediately shifted to the information and communication technology (ICT) sector. Each of Bangladesh's 130 universities possesses an ICT lab and they churn out 500,000 tech-savvy graduates annually, thereby lending credence to the prospects of a 'Digital Bangladesh'. That could propel Bangladesh along the path to recovery.

Bangladesh is one of those countries that owe its progress to globalisation. As a natural corollary, a successful foreign policy is vital to its survival. The developing international situation can pose future challenges for Bangladesh. It relates closely to both India and China. Due to the burgeoning rivalry between the two countries, it must

manage to navigate between them with deft diplomacy. So far, its paradigm of getting China and India to share participation in infrastructural projects appears to be working. A positive international perception for Bangladesh is essential, hence; it significantly contributes to the UN Peacekeeping troops.

Challenges remain for Bangladesh. Prime Minister Hasina is herself acutely aware of them. There is prevalent corruption in a milieu where public projects provide ample scope but she sometimes places herself in the forefront of adopting strong opposing measures. An overwhelmingly Muslim country, exposed to the tumultuous politics of the Middle East, there are at times tendencies to extremist thought and action that she endeavours to counter by underscoring Bangladesh's syncretic tradition of religious toleration. However, the country's rise against the wind is the greatest justification it has for earning the cognomen of 'The Bangladesh Paradox' from the World Bank.

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COVID-19 and its Economic Impact on South Asia

AMITENDU PALIT



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The COVID-19 pandemic is exceptional in its global dimensions. No other pandemic in recent years, such as H1N1 flu, Ebola or even the SARS outbreak in 2003, has acquired as much global dimension as COVID-19. The ability of the pandemic to spread exponentially in remarkably quick time has had much to do with the heavy movement of people across borders. Unknowingly, several people travelling from one part of the world to the other have either carried the virus with them or brought back the virus with them to their original locations. This

remarkable cross-border transmission capacity of the virus puts all countries at risk. No country has been spared and the challenge for all has been to minimise the spread of the outbreak within their national territories. The objective has been to ensure that the 'imported' content of the virus localises to the least possible extent and communities are spared from infections.

The South Asian governments have not been exceptions. They have been active in putting together containment strategies to minimise

the spread of COVID-19. As a region, the implications of the pandemic are particularly high for South Asia, given that it includes three of the world's top 10 populous economies – India (1.3 billion), Pakistan (212 million) and Bangladesh (161 million) standing at second, fifth and eighth positions respectively. Bangladesh also has the highest population density in the region while being the 12th most densely populated country in the world. India and Sri Lanka are ranked 29 and 40 respectively in global population density. Furthermore, some of the major South Asian

cities, such as Mumbai, Dhaka, Chennai, Kolkata, Kathmandu and Colombo, are also among the most densely populated in the world. They are particularly vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19, given the ease with which the virus can spread among densely packed habitats.

The eventual spread of the pandemic in South Asia was in line with its demographic characteristics. The largest and most populated country of the region – India – reported the highest number of confirmed cases. As of 2 July 2020, according to the World Health Organisation's situation report, India had nearly 605,000 confirmed cases. With these many cases, India had the 4th largest incidence of COVID-19 infections in the world and had the maximum infections among Asian countries. With more than 217,000 cases, Pakistan was next in South Asia, followed by Bangladesh with almost 150,000 cases. The rest of the region, in contrast, reflected a much lower incidence of COVID-19. Afghanistan, with around 32,000 cases, was the fourth highest in the region. Nepal, with around 14,000 cases, was the fifth highest in the region. Sri Lanka and the Maldives had less than 2,500 cases each while Bhutan had less than 100. The regional total of around 1,000,000 confirmed cases at the beginning of July 2020 was just around 60 per cent from India, followed by a little more than 20 per cent from Pakistan and around 15 per cent from Bangladesh. Together, these three countries accounted for 95 per cent of South Asia's confirmed COVID-19 infections.

At the time of writing, South Asia accounted for nearly 10 per cent of globally confirmed cases of around 10.5 million. The fatality rate for the region, measured as a proportion of people to have died out of the

confirmed cases, was also slightly higher than four per cent. The number of confirmed cases and fatalities were less compared with those suffered by the United States and other major countries like Russia and Brazil. This, however, does not imply that South Asia's economic damage from the pandemic will be limited.

The World Bank estimates point to a fairly bleak scenario for the South Asian region. For the year 2020, the region is expected to grow by 1.6 to 2.8 per cent, which, in a further worrisome scenario, might even become negative, thereby pushing the region into economic recession. With population growth expected to continue in the countries at their respective projected rates, the much lower growth in gross domestic product (GDP) would reduce per capita incomes across the region, exacerbating the possibility of households and individuals across the region being pushed into poverty by low incomes.

The World Bank's projection also points to the Maldives, one of the smallest island economies of the region, being severely hit due to the terrible impact of the pandemic on its tourism industry. Tourism is the country's economic mainstay and a source of livelihoods for many. Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan might also encounter economic recessions while the GDP growth would significantly decline in India, Bangladesh and the other economies of the region. India might also experience negative GDP growth, as indicated by the Reserve Bank of India.

South Asia's economic difficulties are due to several factors. These include having large numbers of informal workers in sectors like tourism, garments, automobiles,

construction and real estate, which have been badly hit by COVID-19; inward remittances into the region – a major source of foreign exchange and steady source of earnings for several economies in the region – drying up as migrant workers return and economic activity contracts in the Gulf countries; limited capacities of several governments to provide the large economic support and stimulus packages required by their economies to support job losses and kick-start industrial activities. The economic distress in various South Asian economies would be aggravated due to disruptions in supply chains, both external and internal. The former would impact export prospects and the latter interrupt supplies of various essentials within the country.

The COVID-19 is an evolving situation. It is not certain when the pandemic will cease, or if it will cease at all. The impact on South Asia, therefore, would need to be judged accordingly. As of now, the economic damage for the region is expected to be substantial.

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Sri Lanka and Singapore: Celebrating 50 Years of Diplomatic Relations

CHULANEE ATTANAYAKE

As two small states, Sri Lanka and Singapore share a number of similarities. Both are plural and heterogeneous societies. They also have to position themselves geostrategically among major powers in their respective regions. While the similarities have made their strategic and foreign policy challenges identical to each other, their approach and response to such challenges and domestic circumstances have resulted in two different destinies.

The year 2020 is a landmark in Sri Lanka's and Singapore's bilateral history, as the two countries celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. After enjoying years of informal relations, Singapore and Sri Lanka established formal diplomatic ties on 27 July 1970. As they mark an important occasion in their relationship, they are, today, at two different stages of development. While Singapore experienced steady growth after independence,

Sri Lanka, despite having an early start to development, fell behind due to continuous political and economic turmoil over the decades. Despite their different destinies, the two island states enjoy a warm and abiding friendship, underpinned by mutual respect, understanding and shared cultural values. At the dawn of their semi-centennial diplomatic ties, Sri Lanka and Singapore have much to celebrate, and the former, in particular, has much to learn from the latter.



Photo courtesy of www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk

Anecdotes seem to reveal that Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, wanted to replicate the Ceylonese model at one point, noting that Sri Lanka's geographical positioning was well suited for it to become a financial hub in the region. When Sri Lanka gained independence from its colonial masters, it had a strong economy, a high set of development indicators and good literacy rate.

However, over time, the destinies of the two countries changed. While Singapore was emerging as a global business hub, Sri Lanka was embroiled in a war of more than three decades.

Relations Beyond 50 years

In reality, Singapore-Sri Lanka ties pre-dates their independence. While many traders from both Sri Lanka and Singapore may have travelled between the two countries for centuries, Sri Lankan migrants to Singapore are believed to have arrived in five different migratory phases spanning approximately 150 years. The earliest migrants are believed to be ethnic Sinhala merchants who came to Singapore between the 19th and 20th centuries. Starting from the 1900s, during the British colonial period, the English-educated Ceylonese community arrived and settled here as part of British military and bureaucratic establishments. These Ceylonese contributed to the fields of civil service, law, medicine, education and engineering. The pioneer Ceylonese played an instrumental role in making Singapore the vibrant country it is today. In the post-colonial era, the migration continued due to ethnic tension in Sri Lanka. More recently, there has been a gradual inflow of Sri Lankan professionals.

Upward Trajectory

Since commencing official diplomatic ties, relations between the two island states have experienced an upward trajectory. There have been several high-level bilateral visits between the two countries, including the visit of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

to Sri Lanka in 2018 and that of then-President Maithripala Sirisena to Singapore in 2019. Mr Lee's visit to Sri Lanka was the first visit by a Singapore prime minister in 14 years.

Trade and economic ties underpin the relationship between the two countries. Singapore was Sri Lanka's second-largest trading partner behind India between 2005 and 2009 until it lost out to China. In 2019, bilateral trade in goods between the two countries was valued at US\$883 million (S\$1,245.5 million). While Sri Lanka imports fuel, chemicals, and machinery from Singapore, it exports mineral fuel, textile, tea, precious and semi-precious stones, seafood, ships and boats. It is interesting to note that Sri Lanka's exports of boats and vessels to Singapore have recorded remarkable progress. In 2017, they contributed to 32.1 per cent of Sri Lanka's total exports.

Singapore is also Sri Lanka's seventh largest investor. It has invested US\$658 million (S\$927 million) in Sri Lanka between 2005 and 2017. There are about 100 Singaporean businesses operating in Sri Lanka in the areas of property development, tourism, food and beverage processing, and telecommunications.

Two agreements signed by the two sides – the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement in May 1979 and the Bilateral Investment Treaty in 1980 – have enhanced economic relations between them. Emphasising the two partners' interest in promoting economic liberalism and free trade, the Sri Lanka-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (SLSFTA) was signed in January 2018. The pact is meant to provide greater access for Singapore companies to the Sri Lankan market, allow for a diversification of goods and services and help build linkages to value chains and global production. Unfortunately, the implementation of the agreement has been put on hold owing to public opposition in Sri Lanka. With the new

government of Gotabaya Rajapaksa in power, there is hope that the consultations will be renewed with the relevant sectors in Sri Lanka and that the agreement will be implemented in due time.

While trade and people-to-people ties form the backbone of bilateral ties between the two countries, there are avenues for further cooperation. Given Singapore's success as a developed country with a diverse population, there is much for Sri Lanka to learn and take inspiration. Following a decade after the end of the war, Sri Lanka still faces challenges in countering new forms of terrorism and maintaining social cohesion.

While the Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 were a wake-up call on its lack of preparedness against global terrorism, the ethnically polarised results in the 2019 Presidential election showed that Sri Lanka needs to work on building a cohesive society. Singapore has succeeded in both areas. Its advanced counter-terrorism mechanisms and social cohesion policies can provide insights to Sri Lanka in its efforts towards addressing these challenges. By sharing and learning from each other, the two countries can only further enhance their bilateral ties.

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Impact of COVID-19 on Politics in India

RONOJOY SEN

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, some analysts had initially pointed to a temporary halt to conventional politics in India, particularly attempts by the opposition to hold the government to account. While this might have been true in the early stages of the pandemic, this was not the case as the pandemic dragged on. Moreover, the pandemic and the way it has been tackled are likely to have a long-term impact on politics in India.

The handling of the crisis by the central and state governments was itself intensely political. Both the centre and the states made a concerted effort to show that the pandemic, particularly the number of infections and fatalities, was under control. Surveys in April 2020 showed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handling of the crisis and the imposition of a national lockdown had enhanced his popularity at a time when he was confronting an economic slowdown and protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party publicised the positive ratings with Home Minister Amit Shah tweeting that Modi was way ahead of other global leaders in this regard. Modi addressed the nation on multiple occasions. By labelling the threat of the virus as a war, demanding

sacrifices of the Indian people and invoking the *Mahabharata*, Modi had expertly rallied the country around the flag. He also used the pandemic to show that he could effortlessly make the Indian public bend to his will.

Despite the spike in Modi's popularity, one aspect of the nationwide lockdown imposed on 24 March 2020 caused controversy and intense criticism of the government: the impact on migrant workers. Migrant workers – by one estimate comprising 40 per cent of India's workforce – bore the brunt of the lockdown with thousands of them initially stranded in their place of work or on highways. It was only when the media and some Chief Ministers highlighted the plight of India's internal migrants did the Indian state provide succour, first for shelter and food and later transportation. However, even the process of transporting migrants back home was mired in controversy. The centre and states traded charges on various aspects, including who should bear the cost of travel and deaths of several migrant workers. The issue was also taken to the Supreme Court.

The handling of the pandemic has thrown the spotlight on Indian federalism. Despite health coming under the purview of the states, the centre used the National Disaster

Management Act to impose the nationwide lockdown. While most state governments toed the central line, some were pulled up for deviating from the national policy. Indeed, opposition-ruled states like West Bengal – where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is the strongest critic of the Modi government and where elections are due next year – were singled out for criticism. Some states, on the other hand, criticised the centre for prohibiting the sale of liquor, one of the biggest sources of revenue, during the lockdown's first phase. On 26 May 2020, nearly 60 days after the lockdown was announced, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, went to the extent of calling it a failure.

There has been a wide variation too in the response of the different states to the pandemic. States like Kerala, with its strong public healthcare system and high levels of literacy, was held up as a model while others lagged behind. A study conducted in the early stages of the pandemic showed that the case fatality ratio was the lowest in Kerala and the highest in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The rate of testing, the enforcing of social distancing and health infrastructure possibly explained the variation.

Looking ahead, the impact of pandemic might be felt most in the



Photo courtesy of pib.gov.in

expansion and reach of the state and the centralisation of power. Both these trends had been visible in India over the past few years but the pandemic is likely to accentuate them. For one, the enormous increase in state surveillance, through apps like Aarogya Setu, which has happened worldwide, is unlikely to be rolled back in a hurry. More significantly, we are likely to see a much bigger role for the state and state-owned enterprises.

Centralised decision-making is also likely to outlive the pandemic. Modi's decision to impose a nationwide lockdown came at a few hours' notice and there was no evidence to show that he had consulted widely. Some Chief Ministers complained that had they been taken into confidence before, and not after, the Prime Minister's decision, the situation might not have been so dire regarding the

migrant labourers. It was only after the lockdown announcement that Modi consulted with the Chief Ministers and gave federalism its belated due. Indeed, some have pointed out that this was astute politics with Modi taking credit for the lockdown, leaving the heads of state to tackle the messy aftermath of the exit strategy, which proved to be a bureaucratic nightmare. Going ahead, India's federal structure is likely to face political and financial stress.

Finally, the jury is out on the impact of the economic package announced by Modi on 12 May 2020. While the government has touted it a huge financial package, totalling 10 per cent of the gross domestic product, critics have pointed out that the amount is actually much lower. They have also noted that it is not enough to revive

the economy as well as help the unemployed and poor. Leaving aside the economic ramifications, Modi's call for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) is something that will be watched with interest. Whether it remains just a slogan or charts a new path, different from the earlier versions of 'Swadeshi' (self-reliance), will be a critical feature of the remainder of Modi's second term.

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A Steep Path Ahead for the Maldives

AMIT RANJAN

Following his election as President of the Maldives in 2018, Mohammad Ibrahim Solih faced several social-economic and political issues. In an effort to address these challenges, his government took several policy decisions. However, nothing much has changed in essence. Radicalism remains a major threat, the position of women has not seen great improvement, human trafficking continues and the economy has not been showing major signs of recovery from its huge debt burden.

Islamic Radicalism

Radicalism in the Maldives has been imported mainly from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Egypt. One of the

early exhibitions of the radicalism in the country was in 2003 when posters appeared in public in support of Osama Bin Laden. Four years later, on 29 September 2007, Islamic radicals carried out a bomb blast in Malé's Sultan Park in which 12 foreign tourists were injured.

Drawing on political support, radical groups have gradually strengthened themselves. Unfortunately, conservatism promoted by them has also found social acceptance from a section of the Maldivians. During his 2014 interview with *The Independent*, former President and now Speaker of the Parliament, Mohammad Nasheed, accused the government of Abdulla Yameen

(2013-2018) of providing support to radical elements in the country. Nasheed also asserted that radicals have made their presence felt in the country's military and police force.

Even after the change of government in 2018, radical groups continue to threaten human rights defenders, journalists and civil society groups. Portals such as *Vaguthu Online*, *Siru Arts* and *Murtad Watch* (Apostate Watch) have publicly threatened human rights activists in the country.

On 4 February 2020, in the latest reported case of violence, an Australian and two Chinese tourists to the Maldives were stabbed in

Hulhimaale. A radical group claiming to be affiliated with the Islamic State took responsibility for this attack.

Gender-based Violence

According to Human Rights Watch, gender-based violence is endemic in the Maldives. To improve the social position of women in society, civil society groups launched an online social media campaign with hashtag, #nufoshey (Don't Harass), in 2017 to raise awareness about sexual harassment. In January 2018, a women's rights organisation, Uthema, criticised Yameen's government for failing to carry out adequate investigations into hundreds of cases of sexual assault. On 8 March 2019, on International Women's Day, women activists organised an 'Occupy Reygandu' (Occupy the Night) gathering in Malé and two other southern cities of the country to highlight the need for safe public spaces. On the same day, another protest, 'Occupy SaiHotaa', which pushed for harassment-free access to restaurants, was also organised.

Women activists in the Maldives face a major threat from conservative and radical groups. As reported by Human Rights Watch, on 7 January 2019, a magistrate in Naifuri, an island in northern Maldives, sentenced a 25-year-old woman to death by stoning on charges of adultery. This sentence was challenged in the Supreme Court (SC) which changed the verdict of the lower court. The SC's decision was denounced by the extremists who also threatened the human rights activists who challenged the lower court's decision in the higher court.

Supporting the cause of women, despite opposition from conservatives, on 3 September 2019, the Maldivian Parliament

confirmed Dr Azmiralda Zahir and Aisha Shujune Mohamed as the first two female justices of the Maldives' Supreme Court.

Human Trafficking

Despite having the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2013, human trafficking into the Maldives continues. According to the Maldives National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan 2020-2022, the number of undocumented workers in the country, as estimated by the Maldives immigration department, is over 63,000.

In 2019, Solih's government reconstituted the National Anti-Human Trafficking Steering Committee (AHTSC), giving it fresh energy and impetus, and shifted its mandate from the Ministry of Economic Development to the Ministry of Defence. The AHTSC submitted its report which was approved by the cabinet in February 2020.

The main objective of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Action Plan 2020-2022 is to accelerate efforts to eliminate the trafficking in persons (TIP) in the Maldives. This has to be done by enhancing anti-TIP legislations and policies; enhancing anti-TIP sensitisation and awareness and; and enhancing anti-TIP monitoring, enforcement and training.

Economic Challenges

Yameen's government invited large scale investments in the Maldives from China. As a result, the country has accumulated a debt of around US\$3.2 billion (S\$4.35 billion). However, China contends that the debt stands at only US\$1.5 billion (S\$2.01 billion) while the remainder is grant in aid.

On a positive note, in 2020, the Maldives managed to hold a high

foreign currency reserve of US\$752 million (S\$1.06 billion). This is greater than the expected amount of US\$635 million (S\$903 million).

One of the major economic decisions of the Solih government is to take civic infrastructure development projects to the islands and atolls beyond Malé. This will help the local economy of these islands and atolls.

Like other countries of the world, the Maldives economy will also suffer from the outbreak of COVID-19. The worst affected sector will be tourism which received about 1.7 million tourists in 2019 and was aiming to touch the two-million mark in 2020. It is estimated that, compared to 2019, this year will see a decline of 12 to 35 per cent in the number of tourist arrivals to the Maldives.

Conclusion

The Maldives has been facing several socio-economic and political issues in recent years. The outbreak of COVID-19 has accentuated many of its problems. Unfortunately, the Solih government has not been extremely successful in addressing these issues. The Maldives will face a challenging future.

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Pakistan's Commitment to UN Peacekeeping Missions

IOBAL SINGH SEVEA

Torrential rainfall on 16 and 17 April 2020 led to devastating floods in South Kivu, the eastern province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Tens of thousands of people in the province, which had already suffered years of warfare, food shortages and cholera, were displaced as floods destroyed more than 15,000 homes and damaged roads, bridges, power lines and water pipes. MONUSCO, the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force stationed in the DRC, was actively involved in helping to evacuate displaced people, repair infrastructure and provide food and medication. Peacekeepers from Pakistan were also at the forefront of MONUSCO's relief efforts in South Kivu.

The relief work being carried out by Pakistani peacekeepers in South Kivu and their wider efforts to facilitate post-conflict stability in the DRC highlight the often neglected fact that Pakistan has consistently been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions. Since 1960, when it sent its first batch of peacekeepers to Congo, it has committed more than 200,000 of its personnel to various UN missions in some 30 countries.

Article 43 of the UN Charter calls on all member states "to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to

make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities". Article 43 notwithstanding, many states, including the major powers, do not meet the financial and personnel commitment level assessed by the UN. Many member states are particularly wary of contributing uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping missions. Indeed, Pakistan is one of a small number of states which meets its obligations. With more than 4,000 personnel serving under the UN flag, it is currently one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping missions.

Over the past six decades, Pakistani peacekeepers have taken part in UN missions in a number of countries, including Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, the DRC, Indonesia, Kuwait, Liberia, Namibia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. They have played diverse roles in these missions. These range from ensuring peace, protecting civilians, delivering humanitarian aid and facilitating conflict resolution mechanisms. A total of 157 Pakistani personnel have died while serving on these missions.

Notably, in 2019, Pakistan deployed a Female Engagement Team (FET) to the DRC. While women have long

been a part of Pakistan's peacekeeping forces, this was Pakistan's first all-woman team on a UN mission. The FET played a number of roles, including establishing medical camps, training female police officers and enhancing local women's grassroots engagement. The deployment of the FET also demonstrated Pakistan's commitment to meeting the UN's target of ensuring that women constitute at least 15 per cent of its peacekeeping missions.

In recognition of the role played by Pakistan, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has hailed the country as one of the most consistent and reliable contributors to UN peacekeeping efforts. In a joint press conference with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan on 27 September 2019, Guterres expressed his gratitude to Pakistanis for "sacrificing their lives for the protection of civilians in order to allow democracies to be consolidated, in order to allow peace processes to be successful, and civilians to be protected against all kinds of risks and dangers promoted by armed groups, sometimes even by terrorist organisations."

Pakistan's active participation in UN peacekeeping missions is indicative of it being an important part of the country's foreign policy. There are a



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

number of reasons for this. Participation in these missions provides an international profile for the country and helps portray it as a responsible member of the international community. In particular, Pakistan is able to demonstrate its commitment to the UN as an international institution. Pakistani leaders often point out that this is in line with the assertion by the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, that "Pakistan will never be found lacking in extending its material and moral support to the oppressed and suppressed peoples of the world and in upholding the principles of the UN Charter."

There are also more pressing geopolitical and security related reasons underlining Pakistan's desire to display its support for the UN. Significantly, Pakistan is keen to engage the UN in its conflict over Kashmir with India. It has consistently called upon the UN to intervene in the issue. It is worth noting here that one of the UN's first peacekeeping operations – the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan – continues to be deployed

in the disputed region of Kashmir. Moreover, like other Pakistani leaders, Khan has used the UN as a platform both to highlight Pakistan's position over the Kashmir issue and to internationalise it. Pakistan has also long sought a more prominent position on the UN Security Council and a voice in the shaping of the international position on issues like arms control and non-proliferation. Overall, the support of a country's military is essential for its participation in peacekeeping initiatives. Given the key role that the military in Pakistan plays in the realms of foreign policy, the country is willing to commit to peacekeeping with a view towards its foreign policy goals.

At a practical level, peacekeeping missions provide important on-the-ground experience for the participants. Soldiers partaking in peacekeeping missions can potentially gain much-needed experience in facilitating conflict-resolution mechanism and overseeing post-conflict stabilisation mechanisms. These skills could no doubt prove to be useful in

dealing with restive movements within Pakistan.

In closing, it is important to note that in an era where countries like the United States are cutting their contributions to international institutions, Pakistan has reaffirmed its "unflinching commitment" to UN peacekeeping operations. Speaking to the UN's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on 17 February 2020, Pakistan's Acting Permanent Representative to the UN, Mohammed Aamir Khan, noted that cost-cutting by member states was endangering peace and reasserted his country's commitment to peacekeeping missions. Given the current financial crunch, he further highlighted that in the coming years, Pakistan was committed to helping peacekeeping missions become more agile, flexible and responsive.

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The Anti-CAA Protests: Rethinking Cultural Nationalism

JOHN VATER

When United States (US) President Donald Trump visited India in February 2020, a moment marking a historic deepening of ties between the world's oldest and largest democracies, 53 people, mostly Muslim, were killed in riots in Northeast Delhi. The media termed the riots as the deadliest communal violence in decades. This incident, together with the crackdown against the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) student protesters in Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in December 2019, has mostly faded from view as the COVID-19 pandemic began to dominate the headlines.

However, the anti-CAA protests continued amidst the outbreak, prodding a reflection on what form the protests would take next. With efforts to curb the spread of the Coronavirus taking steam, Section 144, a colonial-era law slapped on protesters to prohibit the assembly of more than four persons, was put into effect. By mid-March 2020, nearly 50 organisations had voluntarily suspended their agitations, while on 24 March 2020 in Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of dissent in Delhi, police forcibly cleared the protest site. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national secretary, Rahul Sinha, following an announcement by protesters in Kolkata to scale down their sit-in, welcomed the

precaution but said that this was "an emergency medical situation and ... not a time for politics."

Politics, meanwhile, has merely shifted online. Since 25 March 2020, Internet usage has jumped 20-25 per cent with an increase in socio-political engagement. For example, the hashtag, #FightCoronaNotActivists, generated over 10,000 posts on Twitter and more on Facebook after the student group, Youth India, asked users to post pictures of themselves from their home in response to the arrest of three JMI and JNU students under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for alleged involvement in instigating the Northeast Delhi riots. Some activists believe the government is capitalising on the lockdown to enact draconian measures against political activism, while other activists say it is using the lockdown to strategise for when India reopens.

The CAA, passed on 11 December 2019, grants fast track citizenship to minorities from certain countries who entered India before 2014. They could belong to any South Asian faith, except Islam. Liberal critics portray the protests as more than opposition to a single bill but rather the reclamation of India's secular identity. The protests encompass tens of thousands of Muslims and Indians from all faiths,

notably Muslim women and millennials. When paired with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and other recent laws implemented by the BJP, critics allege that the CAA is part of an attempt to supplant India's constitutional credentials with religious nationalism and majoritarianism.

Reading these accounts, however, one gets the sense of a nostalgic desire to return to an image of India's liberally democratic past that may have existed more as myth than reality. In 1996, when the BJP first came to power, most Indians viewed the secularism of the Congress as an illusion and had started questioning its effectiveness and applicability. And even before COVID-19 struck, the world had already entered a new 'normal,' with liberal democracies embattled all over. President Trump, rather than defending democracy by addressing India's illiberal drift, instead struck oil and weapon deals, reinforcing the perceived return to realpolitik.

Jill Lepore, in a timely essay 'The New Americanism', quotes historians as saying that if in the age of globalisation, the nation had become an "anachronism" or "stumbling, ghostly wraith", then today's climate suggests an urgency to return to narratives of political community and shared ancestry: "We can write history that implicitly



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

denies or ignores the nation-state," she quotes Pulitzer Prize-winning Carl Degler as stating, "but it would ... (fly) in the face of what people who live in a nation-state require and demand."

Undeniably, part of what people demand is belonging to something bigger than them. Hence, hypothetically, the premise of cultural nationalism is not wrong. Neoliberalism, which fostered its own 'meritocratic' inequalities, has been rebuffed by populisms worldwide, refocusing the state's attention to citizens, migration and questions of national identity. In the BJP's 2014 manifesto, it argued, "no nation could chart out its domestic or foreign policies unless it has a clear understanding about itself ... (and) its roots." Later, in the 2019 General Elections, the BJP weaponised this sentiment by demonising the opposition as foreign, rootless cosmopolitans, and equating Congress's 'false secularism' with minority appeasement. During the elections, even the Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi, unable to fully fend off this charge, stopped defending secularism and adopted a watered-down Hindutva. BJP supporters have recently argued that the anti-CAA protests are part of a similar opposition strategy to mislead the nation through vote-bank politics.

However, nationalism cuts both ways – cast too broadly, it ceases to confer meaning; and too narrowly, it fails to reflect the internal complexity of a country's makeup – which, in India's case, includes its nearly 200 million Muslims. In the BJP's 2019 manifesto, under 'Toward a New India,' it stated one of its primary goals was to secure "...the country against internal and external aggression." This has been seen in its hard-line approach towards Pakistan, but perhaps also internal dissent. Protesting citizens have been dismissed as exclusively Muslim, die-hard "urban Naxals" and terrorists. As one example of this vicious vortex of identity, domestic politics and national security, the government detained a couple accused of links with the Islamic State's Khorosan branch for alleged plans to exploit the anti-CAA agitations to incite Muslim youth to terrorism. This feeds into prevailing xenophobia, including the circulation of fake videos of #CoronaJihad, showing Muslims deliberately spreading the virus.

However, India also has a long history of harmonising communalism, which suggests sectarian divides can be surmounted. If nationalism has compelled a cultural rethink, perhaps one way to revive Indian secularism without relying on the legalistic language of

constitutionalism or rights (which are perhaps limited in their mass appeal) would be to foreground India's other accommodative traditions. Writing for *The Indian Express* on 28 April 2017, Amit Chaudhuri, novelist and professor of contemporary literature at the University of East Anglia, argued that we may be witnessing the resurrection of the anachronistic ideology of humanism, a mirror to 19th century nationalism. If this is the case, then there is much to draw upon from the devotional Bhakti saints and Dalit Buddhism to Sufism and Kabir which have conceptual roots distinct from the Enlightenment. Protesters are practicing this humanism by using their network to help migrant workers amid the pandemic. Perhaps what is needed, therefore, is more humanity and less identity in a subcontinent where civilisational ties are closely knit to restore a torn social fabric and shore up exploitable rifts. 'Jai-Ram' inspires pride. However, 'Insaniyat' could buttress a proud cultural nationalism too.

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South Asia's SAARC Imperative

C RAJA MOHAN

It was indeed a pleasant surprise when the leaders of the South Asian Regional Association for Cooperation (SAARC) met in a video conference in mid-March 2020 to discuss potential joint responses to the massive crisis generated by the spread of COVID-19 across the world, including in the subcontinent. Although the results have been modest, the very fact that the region's leaders met and initiated cooperative responses to the greatest health emergency the region has ever faced is a positive development.

The SAARC is the principal forum for regional cooperation in South Asia and was set up in the mid 1980s. Although it was borne amidst great hopes for the political and economic transformation of the subcontinent, the performance of the regional forum has been deeply disappointing. The forum had struggled to host regular high-level meetings amidst continuing political differences among member states, especially between India and Pakistan.

The last summit meeting was held in the end of 2014 in Kathmandu. The follow-on summit was to be held in Islamabad in November 2016. However, just days before the

summit, there was a deadly terror attack on Indian security forces at Uri in the border regions with Pakistan. The government of Narendra Modi cancelled his participation in the summit. Most other members of the SAARC joined India in ruling out their participation.

The inability to meet since then has reinforced the growing pessimism about the prospects of the SAARC as a credible regional forum. Beyond the question of summitry, there was the larger problem of advancing functional cooperation. The Kathmandu summit, for example, had two important agreements ready for signature by the leaders of the eight countries. These were on promoting cross-border railway cooperation and facilitating cargo and passenger vehicular movement across the region's frontiers.

The inability of Pakistan's leadership to sign these agreements led to an important political decision on the Indian side. If the SAARC is not ready for signing agreements advancing regional economic integration, India must invest in other forums. Delhi soon turned to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

forum that was formed in the 1990s and set up a new framework for cooperation called the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Initiative (BBIN) among four countries which share a border in the eastern subcontinent. While the BIMSTEC is a trans-regional forum that brings five countries of South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) with two Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar and Thailand) that share the Bay of Bengal littoral, the BBIN is a sub-regional forum.

As India focused its regional efforts on the BIMSTEC and BBIN, the SAARC looked doomed. Therefore, Modi's invitation to the leaders of the South Asian nations to discuss how to collectively combat the Coronavirus on 15 March 2020 has been widely viewed as a long overdue course correction in India's regional diplomacy. The smaller countries of the region were enthusiastic in welcoming Modi's initiative. While they acknowledged and understood India's deepening concerns on cross-border terrorism that led Delhi turning its back on the SAARC, they were despondent that the main forum for regional cooperation in South Asia had moved from a state of dysfunction to deep coma. Many of them were willing to work with India in



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

alternative forums like the BIMSTEC and BBIN but were not prepared to abandon the SAARC.

It was little wonder then that the leaders of the smaller countries responded with alacrity to Modi's invitation to confer on short notice on the mounting challenge of coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. They were one with Delhi in recognising that the problems posed by the Coronavirus cannot be addressed only at the national level and that a joint regional effort was needed. At the same time, the conversation among the leaders also highlighted the unique national problems that the countries confronted. For example, the Maldives and Sri Lanka highlighted the massive economic impact of the dramatic decline of tourism which is a major source of revenue and employment. As an archipelagic nation, the Maldives has the challenge of delivering assistance to patients in remote islands. Land-locked Afghanistan is struggling to cope after virus-infected Iran and Pakistan decided to close the

border through which much of the nation's trade flows occur.

All member states contributed to the creation of an emergency relief fund, exchanged experiences and best practices, and shared the capabilities needed to cope with the pandemic. Senior health officials from all the countries have met frequently after the video conference among the leaders.

If the video conference highlighted the urgent need for a regional approach to the COVID-19 crisis as well as the possibilities for it, it also highlighted the familiar difficulties of getting there. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan did not attend the meeting and sent his adviser on health, Dr Zafar Mirza, who brought the Kashmir issue into the discussion. Delhi, however, chose not to get into the familiar argumentation on the subject at the video conference.

The summit and the developments since then have brought into focus the main problem challenging the

regional forum. Pakistan is not willing to embark on deeper regional integration without a resolution of the Kashmir question. India is unwilling to engage in a political dialogue until Pakistan addresses its concerns on cross-border terrorism. This central divergence has not been overcome in the wake of the challenges posed by COVID-19. However, the fact that there has been modest cooperation among the health establishments of the region is a valuable development in its own. The imperative for cooperation is likely to grow in the months ahead as the full economic and financial impact of the pandemic begins to unfold. The severity of this challenge will hopefully bring the South Asian governments together to seek collective regional renewal.

Professor C Raja Mohan is Director of ISAS. He can be contacted at isascrm@nus.edu.sg.

ISAS Internship Programme 2020

ISAS offers research internships to students who are 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.

We are pleased to present the first batch of ISAS interns for 2020. They are:



Ms Wini Fred Gurung

Jawaharlal Nehru University
Graduated with Master of Arts
Internship Duration: 13 January – 9 April 2020
11 May – 26 July 2020



Mr Joshua Quek Hian Khun

National University of Singapore
Second Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 11 May – 7 August 2020



Mr Muhammad Bin Khalid

Yale-NUS College
First Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 11 May – 7 August 2020



Ms Nadia Dohadwala

King's College London
Second Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 11 May – 7 August 2020



Mr Nishant Rajeev

Nanyang Technological University
Final Year – Masters in Strategic Studies
Internship Duration: 10 June – 9 September 2020



Ms Devaki Banerjee

New York University, Abu Dhabi
Final Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 22 June – 14 August 2020



Ms Srishti Gupta

New York University, Abu Dhabi
Third Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 22 June – 21 August 2020

During their internship, these students will participate in ISAS' seminars and events, where they will interact with local and overseas-based participants. They will also collate data and provide research assistance to their supervisors at ISAS, as well as work on joint papers with the ISAS researchers.

ISAS Recent Agreement

ISAS collaborates with think tanks, academic institutions, business, industry, private and public organisations and the community to promote the understanding of South Asia. These partnerships bring invaluable mutual expertise, perspectives and resources to both ISAS and our partnering institutions and organisations.

In the last financial year, ISAS signed a fresh memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The agreement was signed in view of new developments in the region and new areas of cooperation between ISAS and CII.

Under the MoU, both institutions will identify opportunities for exchanges and cooperation in joint research, consultation and development in disciplines of mutual interest, and regional cooperation, with particular focus on India, South Asia and beyond the region.

CII is one of ISAS' key strategic partners in India.



8
JAN

ISAS Seminar Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges



ISAS organised the seminar on 'Challenges and Prospects in Pakistan' by Ambassador Sajjad Ashraf, former Pakistan High Commissioner to Singapore, on 8 January 2020. The session was moderated by ISAS' Visiting Research Associate Professor, Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea.

Ambassador Ashraf identified four challenges for Pakistan. First, its rising population affects the quality of education, healthcare and water resources, among many other issues. As a consequence, the large population and an inefficient government have wasted agricultural lands. The second is the issue of climate change. This is one of the areas India and Pakistan can collaborate. The third is economic issues and investments that would benefit Pakistan. Ambassador Ashraf stated that the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could be the silver lining as this could bring in more investments. The final issue is Pakistan's complicated foreign relations. Due to its economic difficulties, Pakistan faces external foreign policy challenges.

Following the presentation, Ambassador Ashraf answered questions on the army's role in the economy, the CPEC Phase II projects, media censorship and technocrats as politicians in power.

15
JAN

ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India's Public Institutions

ISAS organised a book launch and panel discussion on 'Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India's Public Institutions' on 15 January 2020. The event was to mark the launch of the book by Mr Vinod Rai, ISAS' Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow and former Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Mr K Shanmugam, Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Law, launched the book. He also shared his thoughts on the difficulties facing a democracy and its institutions. He posed several questions on how one could design an efficient system that would work in the multi-faceted and complex context of India.

The panel, comprising Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; Professor Tan Tai Yong, President, Yale-NUS College, and Deputy Chairman, ISAS; and Mr Rai discussed issues pertaining to India's public institutions. Dr Narayan emphasised autonomy, ability to withstand public scrutiny, transparency and objectivity as a framework with which institutions should be analysed. Professor Tan contextualised the themes of the book on India's starting point as a democracy versus its present context.



During the discussion session chaired by Mr J Y Pillay, Rector, College of Alice & Peter Tan, NUS, the questions touched on centre-state relations and their intersection with public institutions, problems of accountability versus partisanship and the way public institutions could influence good governance.

20
JAN

ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion Does India Negotiate?

ISAS launched the book, *Does India Negotiate?*, authored by its Research Fellow, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, on 20 January 2020. Dr Mohammad Maliki Bin Osman, Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs, launched the book.

Introducing the book, Dr Nachiappan argued that India's approach to negotiating is rational and sober, and driven by security and economic interests. He listed institutional capacity as one major factor affecting India's decision to sign an agreement.

The book launch was followed by a panel discussion, chaired by Professor C Raja Mohan, ISAS' Director, involving Professor Kanti Bajpai, Director of the Centre on Asia and Globalisation and Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy; Dr Amitendu Palit, ISAS' Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy); and the author. Professor Bajpai located Dr Nachiappan's publication amidst three main perspectives on India's negotiating culture. Dr Palit argued that in a multilateral



space undergoing challenges, negotiations may require a new paradigm, especially since India has been an uncomfortable player in mega free trade agreements.

During the question and answer session, questions were posed on the role of ideology in India's negotiations and how policy expertise can often act as a bigger constraint in negotiation.

5
MAR

CII-ISAS Stakeholder Consultation Trade, Connectivity and Institutions: A Study of Upcoming Prospects from Asia



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

ISAS and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) organised a stakeholder consultation meeting in Tamil Nadu, India, on 5 March 2020 on the automobile and auto-components, and gems and jewellery industries, as part of the 'Trade, Connectivity and Institutions' project funded by the Department for International Development, United Kingdom. The meetings were attended by more than 30 senior industry leaders and key government representatives.

The meeting examined the prospects for closer integration of Indian firms in the regional value chain and the challenges faced. Following the introduction by Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS,

Athena Infonomics (Chennai) presented on the trends of business engagement in both sectors. Thereafter, extensive consultations and discussions took place among the industry participants.

One of the key takeaways for the automobile and auto-components sector was the extensive usage of free trade agreements (FTAs) by foreign automobile assemblers, connecting India to the automobile value chain in the Asia-Pacific. In the gems and jewellery business, it was pointed out that Indian jewellers lacked sufficient knowledge about export markets, procedures and the FTAs. The emphasis is on the domestic market and aligned to local tastes and preferences.

15
APR

ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)

India, COVID-19 and Global Health Governance

ISAS organised a panel discussion (webinar) titled 'India, COVID-19 and Global Health Governance' on 15 April 2020, featuring Professor Rama Baru, Professor at the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; and Professor Ramesh Thakur, Emeritus Professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University. Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow at ISAS, moderated the session.

The presentations discussed the abrupt disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to all aspects of human life in India. The Indian government has had to simultaneously stanch new infections, treat rising cases and contain or sever chains of transmission while managing



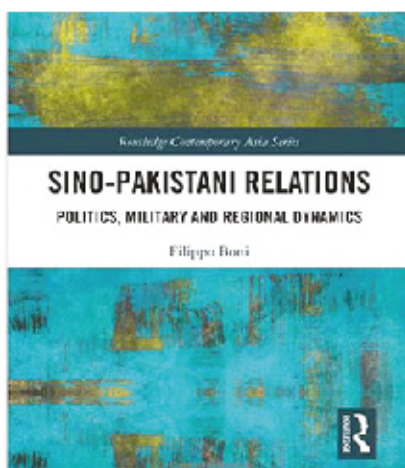
the economic and political fallout. The response marshalled by New Delhi, alongside Indian states and cities, will decisively shape the course of COVID-19 and mitigate the damage caused to India's economy and public health apparatus.

Globally, India's importance to the health landscape is not limited to its contributions to the World Health Organisation or as the 'world's pharmacy' plying other countries with generic drugs and related therapies but as a critical partner to entities, various multilateral and regional organisations. As a result, how India tackles COVID-19 has critical national and global health implications.

28
APR

ISAS Seminar (Webinar)

Sino-Pakistani Relations: Politics, Military and Regional Dynamics



ISAS organised the webinar on 'Sino-Pakistani relations: Politics, Military and Regional Dynamics' on 28 April 2020. Dr Filippo Boni, Lecturer in Politics and International Studies, The Open University, United Kingdom, reviewed the major trends that will shape Sino-Pakistani 21st century dynamics. Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, moderated the discussions.

Dr Boni argued that since the advent of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), analyses on the mega regional infrastructure projects have neglected domestic decision-making processes. He drew observations from case studies on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Gwadar Port and both countries' relationship with Afghanistan. He stressed that there is less focus today on the CPEC's mega projects than on social development, as the importance of local ownership to the project's success has become more important.

Dr Boni also stated that the success of the CPEC and the Gwadar Port will largely depend on regional integration which has been made difficult because of New Delhi's security concerns. Since 2014, Beijing has renewed its diplomatic push in Afghanistan but the CPEC's extension there also remains a challenge. He underlined the need to bring into focus the agency of BRI recipient countries and the complex interplay of interests among its stakeholders.

15
MAY

ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar) COVID-19 and its Economic Impact on Bangladesh and Sri Lanka



On 15 May 2020, ISAS organised the webinar on 'COVID-19 and its Economic Impact on Bangladesh and Sri Lanka'.

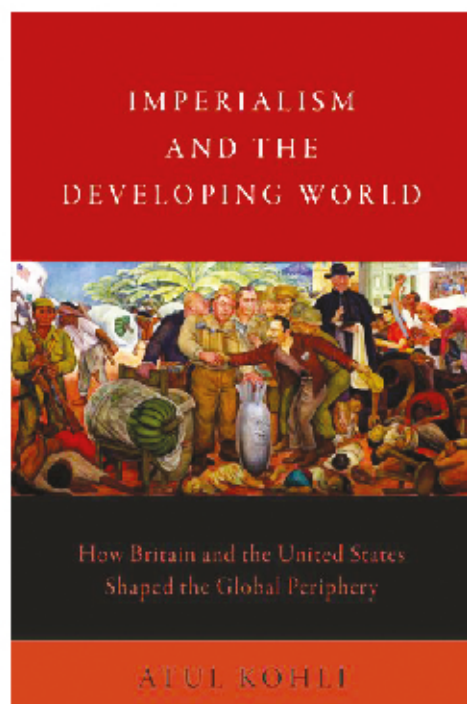
During the session, the first panelist, Professor Selim Raihan from the University of Dhaka, highlighted the impact of the virus for Bangladesh, touching on labour market issues, the strain on the healthcare sector, increasing food insecurity and rising poverty. The second panelist, Dr Ganeshan Wignaraja, Executive Director at Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute, Colombo, shared that the Sri Lankan government had mobilised the navy to trace infected people. Fortunately, civilian cases and the mortality rate in the country are low.

However, the country is facing unique economic and political challenges, including huge debt and falling exports, as well as deciding on the parliamentary elections.

The webinar concluded with a discussion session chaired by Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy) at ISAS. The questions included Sri Lanka's parliamentary democracy, the power rivalry between the United States and China as well as the impact of COVID-19 on regional cooperation in South Asia.

20
MAY

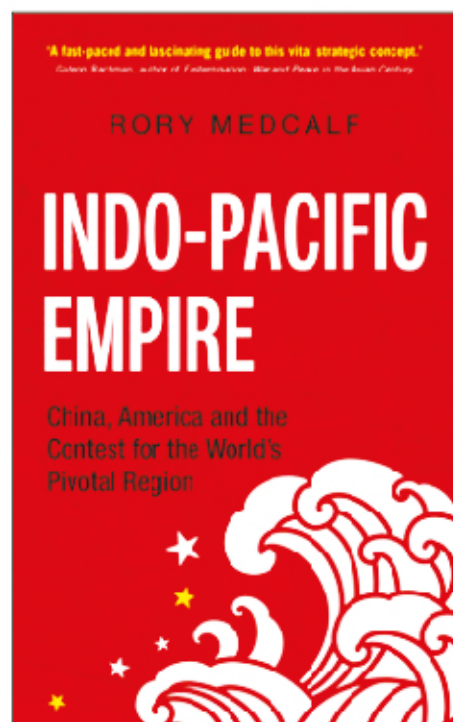
ISAS Book Discussion (Webinar) Imperialism and the Developing World: How Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery



On 20 May 2020, ISAS organised the webinar on the book, *Imperialism and Developing World: How Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery*, authored by Professor Atul Kohli, David K E Bruce Professor of International Affairs and Professor of Politics, Princeton University. The panelists included Dr Rani Mullen, Associate Professor, College of William & Mary, United States (US); and Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS. Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, moderated the session.

During his presentation, Professor Kohli argued that Britain needed an empire while the US wanted one; that both empires mainly had an informal empire through stable subservience; and that the empires varied in authority structure due to their context and control over mass politics.

Dr Mullen and Dr Nachiappan then posed several questions to Professor Kohli. These included the difference between formal and informal imperialism, South Korea and its relationship with the American security umbrella, and the difference between Japanese imperialism and that of the British and Americans, among others. Questions from the audience included British legacy vis-à-vis the others, US influence in Pakistan, the future shape of imperialism and the rise of China.

1
JUN**ISAS Book Discussion (Webinar)****Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region**

ISAS organised a book discussion webinar with Professor Rory Medcalf, Head of the National Security College, Australian National University on his book *Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region*. Besides the author, the panelists included Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Malcolm Cook, Visiting Senior Fellow, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. ISAS' Director, Professor C Raja Mohan, moderated the session.

During his presentation, Professor Medcalf touched on the strategic competition between great powers in the Indo-Pacific. He stated that the book attempts to take a fresh look at not only the regional order, but also the journey towards the Indo Pacific in the last 20 to 30 years, both in terms of connectivity and strategic competition. He also emphasised the agency of third country and the scope of a multi-polar world.

The panelists discussed China's rise and the implications in the geopolitics and shared their insights on the contributions of the Southeast Asian countries to the Indo-Pacific. The discussions following the presentation touched on China's assertion in the South China Sea, the inability of Southeast Asian nations to agree and India's contribution and role beyond the 'quad' to the region, among others.

10
JUN**Panel Discussion (Webinar)****Prime Minister Narendra Modi 2.0: New Directions and Old Challenges**

On 10 June 2020, ISAS organised a panel discussion (webinar) titled 'Prime Minister Narendra Modi 2.0: New Directions and Old Challenges'. The panellists included ISAS scholars, Dr Ronojoy Sen and Dr Amitendu Palit, and Dr Sinderpal Singh, Senior Fellow and Coordinator, South Asia Programme, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, moderated the discussion.

In 2019, since the return of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance to power for a second term, it has been an eventful period for the Modi government.

Dr Singh discussed India's foreign policy and the need for the country to navigate an increasingly competitive United States and China, now seen across all domains. On the economy, Dr Palit observed that where Modi 1.0 began with a focus on economic policy and management, there was a shift to populist welfare schemes when Modi sought the vote in 2019. On the political front, Dr Sen stated that the commentary on Indian politics could be divided into two periods: before and after COVID-19. In the initial period of Modi's second term, the government focused on longstanding items on the BJP agenda. He believes the focus, going forward, will be on the economy.



ISAS Events Listing (July to December 2019)

ISAS Seminar	Pakistan: Prospects and Challenges	8 January 2020
ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion	Rethinking Good Governance: Holding to Account India's Public Institutions	15 January 2020
ISAS Book Launch and Panel Discussion	Does India Negotiate?	20 January 2020
NZIRI-ISAS Conference	India: Seventy Years of the Republic	24-25 February 2020 Wellington, New Zealand
CII-ISAS Stakeholder Consultation	Trade, Connectivity and Institutions: A Study of Upcoming Prospects from Asia	5 March 2020 Tamil Nadu, India
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	India, COVID-19 and Global Health Governance	15 April 2020
ISAS Closed Door Book Discussion (Webinar)	British India, White Australia	17 April 2020
ISAS-Ananta Aspen Centre Panel Discussion (Webinar)	India and International Institutions post COVID-19	23 April 2020
ISAS Seminar (Webinar)	Sino-Pakistani Relations: Politics, Military and Regional Dynamics	28 April 2020
ISAS Roundtable (Webinar)	Cycles of Conflict and Cooperation in India-Pakistan Relations after the Kargil War: Tribulations of Strong-Weak States	29 April 2020
In-conversation with Dr Irudaya Rajan(Webinar)	Economic impact of COVID-19 on Kerala with Regard to the Economy, Remittances and Migration	29 April 2020
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	COVID-19 and its Economic Impact on Bangladesh and Sri Lanka	15 May 2020
ISAS Book Discussion (Webinar)	Imperialism and Developing World: How Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery	20 May 2020
ISAS Book Discussion (Webinar)	Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-1952	22 May 2020
ISAS Roundtable (Webinar)	Is there a "BJP System" in Indian Politics?	27 May 2020
ISAS Closed Door Session	Unleashing the Vajra: Nepal's Journey between India and China	28 May 2020
ISAS Book Discussion (Webinar)	Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region	1 June 2020
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	Impact of COVID-19 on the Indian Economy and Financial Sector	5 June 2020
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	Prime Minister Narendra Modi 2.0: New Directions and Old Challenges	10 June 2020
ISAS Closed Door Panel Discussion	India's Distinct Development Model	15 June 2020
ISAS-NIICE Public Lecture (Webinar)	New World Order Post-COVID-19	21 June 2020
ISAS Roundtable (Webinar)	COVID-19 and India's Economic Reforms	26 June 2020

ISAS BRINGS OUT SPECIAL REPORTS AND SOUTH ASIA SCAN

In an effort to bring in-depth analysis of the latest developments in South Asia, ISAS periodically publishes Special Reports and the South Asia Scan. These are in addition to its regularly published online papers that include the Briefs, Insights and Working Papers. While the latter are topical in nature, Special Reports and the South Asia Scan take a deeper look into the complex South Asian region, providing substantial perspectives on key social, political, economic and strategic changes.

This year, three special reports were published covering China's digital strategy, artificial intelligence in South Asia and Bangladesh's contribution to the United Nation's (UN) peace operations.

China's Digital Silk Road: Implications for India came out of a symposium organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and ISAS in New Delhi in September 2019. While the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has received intense scrutiny in India, the digital dimension of China's ambitious initiative has received little attention. However, with the Indian industry already having a significant exposure to China's digital industries, this dependence has come into sharp view amidst the growing concerns about its large trade deficit with China.

Regulating Artificial Intelligence in South Asia: Projections for the Future focuses on artificial intelligence having a critical impact in key areas such as healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and mobility. It also raises fundamental questions about data privacy, mass surveillance and the infringement of fundamental rights. The report was the outcome of an ISAS- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) roundtable in August 2019.

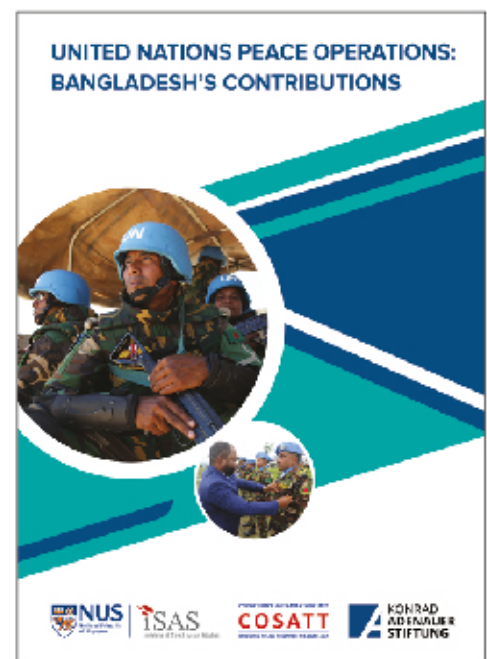
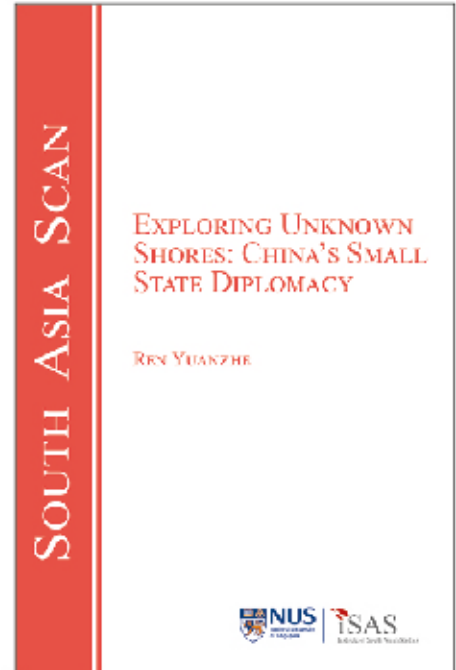
The third report, *United Nations Peace Operations: Bangladesh's Contributions*, was based on a workshop organised by ISAS, KAS and the Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks on 'Bangladesh's Contributions to Internal Security: The Case of Peace Operations' in August 2019. This report examines the participation of the Bangladesh armed forces in UN peace operations, and highlights the challenges and opportunities arising from it.

In the first half of the year, we also brought out three South Asian Scan publications. These examined important developments relating to the two Asian powerhouses – India and China.

Published in February 2020, *The 2019 Indian General Election and its Implications* was written by ISAS scholars, Dr Diego Maiorano and Dr Ronojoy Sen. It is a comprehensive assessment of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's landslide victory in the election. They look at factors that contributed to this win and also assess future policy and governance issues.

In May 2020, ISAS Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Dr Ren Yuanzhe, published *Exploring Unknown Shores: China's Small State Diplomacy in the Indian Ocean Ring*. Since the inauguration of the BRI in 2013, many developments have made the 'China factor' indispensable and crucial in the foreign and domestic affairs of this region. The publication delves into China's interest in and strategic engagement with the small island states in the Indian Ocean Region.

In June 2020, Dr Christian Wagner, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, wrote on *India as a Regional Security Provider in South Asia*. This Scan traces how, since 2009, successive Indian governments have claimed a new role for the country as a security provider in the neighbourhood. While it had been long ambivalent to this role, a new consensus has emerged between India and its neighbours on the fight against terrorism leading to an increase in cooperation.



ISAS launches the 'The Bookshelf'

As a research institute at the National University of Singapore, publications are our scholars' lifeline. With a view to sharing some of the most insightful works published in recent times, we launched the 'The Bookshelf' in April 2020. This segment looks at some of the latest books written on issues that dominate and affect South Asia.

The Bookshelf offers a good mix written reviews, video and webinar interviews and podcasts. We have, so far, completed seven book reviews and have many more interesting ones in the pipeline.

Professor Robin Jeffrey, Visiting Research Professor at ISAS, kick-started the initiative by conducting a video interview and podcast with Dr Kama Maclean, Professor of South Asian and World History, University of New South Wales, Australia, on her new book, *British India, White Australia*. The book unearths the complicated colonial dynamics between India and Australia and their relationship before 1947. It touches upon the theme of racism, the social bonds transcending the 'commonwealth' commonalities and also the positive impact left by Indian hawkers.

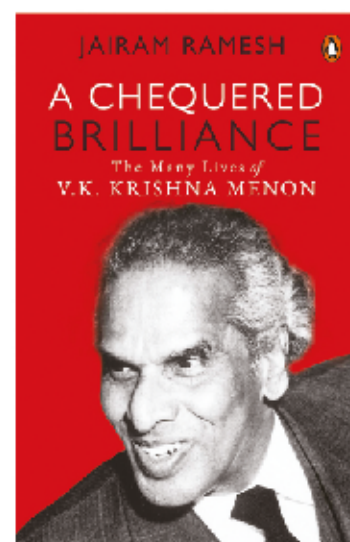
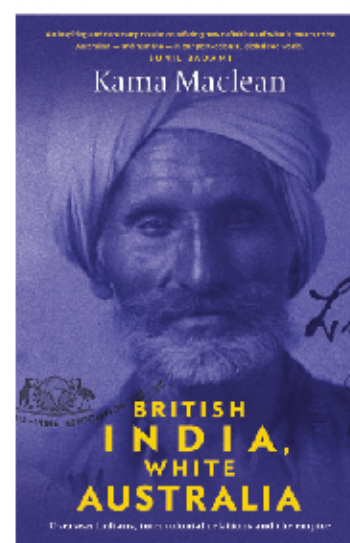
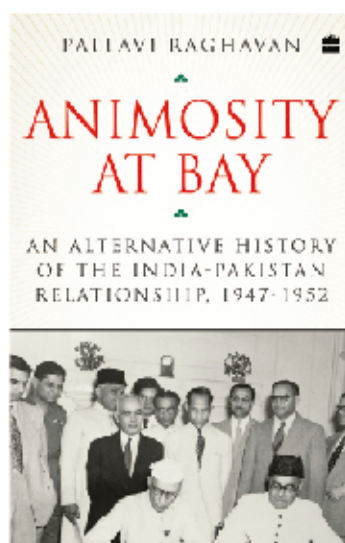
Professor Jeffrey followed this up with a written review of Mr Jairam Ramesh's publication, *A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V K Krishna Menon*. A compelling biography of one of India's most controversial and consequential public figures, Krishna Menon is known not just for his proximity with India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, but also for his eight hour speech defending India's stand on Kashmir at the United Nations in the 1950s and his role in the India-China war of 1962.

The United States and India are expected to play a predominant role in shaping the future of democracy, with the former being the world's most powerful democracy and the latter the largest. Professor Nico Slate from Carnegie Mellon University discussed his book, *Lord Cornwallis is Dead: The Struggle for Democracy in the United States and India*, with ISAS' Research Fellow, Dr Karthik Nachiappan. The book traces not just Gandhi's influence on the American Civil Rights movement, but also the connection between Hollywood and Bollywood.

Expanding our coverage of the Himalayan state of Nepal, Mr John Vater, Research Associate at ISAS, interviewed Mr Sujeev Shakya, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Beed, an international management consulting and advisory firm, on *Unleashing the Vajra: Nepal's Journey Between India and China*. The book looks at how Nepal can grow by capitalising on its strategic advantage of being located between India and China, two Asian giants. He analyses the social, political and cultural aspects underlying the current state of Nepal and the recalibrations required to achieve this.

The other webinar book discussions which attracted great attention included *Imperialism and the Developing World: How Britain and the United States Shaped the Global Periphery* by Professor Atul Kohli, David K E Bruce Professor of International Affairs at Princeton University; *Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-1952* by Dr Pallavi Raghavan, Assistant Professor, International Relations, Ashoka University; and *Indo-Pacific Empire: China, America and the Contest for the World's Pivotal Region* by Professor Rory Medcalf, Head of National Security College, Australian National University.

With so much taking place in South Asia, we can expect to see new and interesting books coming out regularly on the region. So keep a lookout for books that will be featured in this new ISAS platform!



Books

Chiriyankandath, James; Maiorano, Diego; Manor, James; and Tillin, Louise. *The Politics of Poverty Reduction in India: The UPA Government 2004-2014*. Orient Blackswan, 2019

Ranjan, Amit. *Water Issues in Himalayan South Asia: Internal Challenges, Disputes and Transboundary Tensions*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020

South Asia Scan

Maiorano, Diego; and Sen, Ronjoy. South Asia Scan Issue No. 6 – *The 2019 Indian General Election and its Implications*. Institute of South Asian Studies, February 2020

Yuanzhe, Ren. South Asia Scan Issue No. 7 – *Exploring Unknown Shores: China's Small State Diplomacy in the Indian Ocean Region*. Institute of South Asian Studies, May 2020

Wagner, Christian. South Asia Scan Issue No. 8 – *India as a Regional Security Provider in South Asia*. Institute of South Asian Studies, June 2020

Special Reports

China's Digital Silk Road: Implications for India, Ambassador Ashok K Kantha, Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi; and Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, January 2020

Regulating Artificial Intelligence in South Asia: Projections For The Future, Ms Aishwarya Natarajan, Research Associate, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung; and Ms Vani Swarupa Murali, Research Analyst, ISAS, 11 March 2020

United Nations Peace Operations: Bangladesh's Contributions, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS; Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Ms Nazneen Mohsina, Research Analyst, ISAS, 19 March 2020

Briefs

735 India's Personal Data Protection Bill: Increased State Power and Control, Dr Karthik Nachappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 January 2020

736 Indian Foreign Policy Struggles with the Iran Dilemma, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 January 2020

737 Pakistan's Taliban Dilemma, Professor Touqir Hussain, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 January 2019

738 Xi Jinping in Myanmar: Complex 'Pauk-Phaw' Relations in Operation, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 22 January 2020

739 India Presents a Conservative Budget for 2020-21, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 February 2020

740 India's Annual Budget 2020-2021: Will it Revive the Growth of the Economy, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 February 2020

741 India Budget 2020-21: Inviting Risks on Hope, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 3 February 2020

742 Analysing the Crackdown on the Pashtun Movement in Pakistan, Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 4 February 2020

743 Xi Jinping's Visit to Myanmar: Implications for the Bay of Bengal, Ms Archana Atmakuri, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 February 2020

744 Woes of Wuhan: The Politics of a Pandemic, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 5 February 2020

745 The Reserve Bank of India announces Growth-oriented Measures, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 February 2020

746 Aam Aadmi Party Storms Back to Power in Delhi, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 14 February 2020

747 Pakistan and Malaysia: Ties that Bind, Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 14 February 2020

748 India's Supreme Court sets Norms to bar Candidates with Criminal Record, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 February, 2020

749 The BJP at the Centre and in the States: Divergence, Big Time, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 February 2020

750 AI for All: Artificial Intelligence Approach, Dr Karthik Nachappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 February 2020

751 United States-India Trade Deal: Will it Happen?, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 1 March 2020

752 Narendra Modi's India sheds Historical Reservations about the United States, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 1 March 2020

753 Coping with Coronavirus and China: Bangladesh's Twin Challenges, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 3 March 2020

754 Regulating Cyberspace: Pakistan's New Social Media Rules, Dr Karthik Nachappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 March 2020

755 COVID-19 and India: A Long Battle Ahead? Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 10 March 2020

756 Yes Bank in Moratorium: How it Collapsed and What Next?, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 March 2020

757 The State of Democracy in South Asia, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 March 2020

758 The Doha Deal: The Bumpy Road Ahead to Afghan Peace, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 13 March 2020

759 AI and Facial Recognition in India, Dr Karthik Nachappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 March 2020

760 Afghanistan: The United State-Taliban Deal and Beyond, Professor Touqir Hussain, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 March 2020

761 The Modi Initiative: Can COVID-19 Resuscitate the SAARC?, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 16 March 2020

762	India and COVID-19: The Battle Intensifies and Challenges Emerge, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 19 March 2020
763	Scindia's Switch and the Role of Ideology in Indian Politics, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 23 March 2020
764	Maharashtra's Fight against COVID-19, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 March 2020
765	Pakistan Grapples with COVID-19, Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Research Associate Professor, ISAS, 25 March 2020
766	Measures by the Reserve Bank of India: Containing the Fallout of COVID-19, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 March 2020
767	Sri Lanka's Online Battle against COVID-19, Ms Archana Atmakuri, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 1 April 2020
768	COVID-19 Indian States: Those with Fewer Cases cannot be Complacent, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 2 April 2020
769	The Maldives' Response to COVID-19, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 April 2020
770	COVID-19 in India: Re-thinking Economic Strategies, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 April 2020
771	COVID-19 in Sri Lanka: A Litmus Test for the New Government, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 April 2020
772	COVID-19 in India: Re-emergence of the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 April 2020
773	The Reliance Jio-Facebook Deal: Creating a One-stop Shop for Consumers, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 April 2020
774	Facebook's Investment in Reliance Jio: Lunging Ahead of Walmart and Amazon, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 28 April 2020
775	Facebook-Reliance Jio Partnership: India's Tilt Towards the United States, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 April 2020
776	Maharashtra Chief Minister's Election: The Governor's Role under Scrutiny, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 5 May 2020
777	COVID-19 Crisis in Bhutan: An Opportunity to Boost Agriculture, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 May 2020
778	COVID-19 and Indian States: Spread localises in Economically Significant States, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 7 May 2020
779	COVID-19 Fallout in India: State-led Economic Recovery and Reforms, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 May 2020
780	COVID-19 in India: Time to Reform Labour Laws, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 May 2020
781	India Rethinks the Non-Aligned Movement, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 11 May 2020
782	Aarogya Setu: Containing Disease or Violating Privacy, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 May 2020
783	COVID-19 and India: Economic Imperative Drives Strategy, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 13 May 2020
784	Goa Tourism: Under the Shadow of COVID-19, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 May 2020
785	Pandemic Politics in India, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS, 15 May 2020
786	COVID-19 and South Asian Tourism: Challenging Times Ahead, Dr Deeparghya Mukherjee, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 May, 2020
787	The Rise of Right Wing Student Activism in North India, Ms Eirilani Abdul Rahman (Guest Writer), 26 May 2020
788	Effects of COVID-19 on South Asia's International Relations, Mr Shivshankar Menon, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 June 2020
789	Repatriating Migrants during COVID-19: Challenges for the Sri Lankan Government, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 June 2020
790	Liberalisation of Indian Agriculture: Creating Efficient Farm Markets, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 10 June 2020
791	Of Insects and Insecticides: Locust attacks in South Asia, Ms Nadia Dohadwala, Research Intern and Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 June 2020
792	The Dimer-Bhasha Project: A Continuing Challenge for Pakistan, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 June 2020
793	Should India Ban Imports from China?, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 June 2020
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594	A New Chief of Defence Staff Post in India: Ensuring Greater Security Coordination, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 2 January 2020
595	The Climate Emergency Situation in Maharashtra: A Big Challenge for Uddhav Thackeray, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 January 2020
596	The Deeper Implications of India's Protests against the Citizenship Act, Dr Diego Maiorano, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 23 January 2020
597	Structural Transformation of Bhutan's Economy: Challenges Remain, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 February 2020
598	Whither India-Malaysia Relations? Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 February 2020
599	The Novel Coronavirus Outbreak: Risks for India's Pharmaceutical Industry, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 1 March 2020
600	Not A Happy Place: Bhutan faces serious Socio-economic Problems, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 1 March 2020

601	India's Myanmar Engagement under the Modi Government, Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Archana Atmakuri, Research Analyst, ISAS, 2 March 2020
602	Envisioning the Potential in India-Brunei Relations, Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 March 2020
603	Sri Lanka's Equidistant Policy: Implications for China, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Archana Atmakuri, Research Analyst, ISAS, 12 March 2020
604	India's Groundwater Woes, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 March 2020
605	Lessons from the Yes Bank Saga in India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 March 2020
606	Rebooting Bangladesh-Malaysia Relations, Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS, 23 March 2020
607	Rekindling Pakistan's Southeast Asia Engagement under Imran Khan, Dr Mustafa Izzuddin, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Sidra Tariq Jamil, PhD Candidate at Tsinghua University in Beijing and Lecturer at University of Management and Technology, Lahore, 30 March 2020
608	Pakistan's FATF Woes: A Tough Gauntlet to Run, Dr Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 8 April 2020
609	The Long Walk Home: COVID-19 Lockdown and Migrant Labour in India, Dr Dipinder S Randhawa, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 9 April 2020
610	Public Health Governance to Battle COVID-19 in India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 April 2020
611	Indo-Nepal Dynamics vis-à-vis China, Ms Wini Fred Gurung, Research Intern, ISAS; and Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 April 2020
612	New Dilemmas for Sri Lanka: Federalism and Post-war Reconciliation, Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 April 2020
613	COVID-19 and Indian States: Spread, Risk and Implications, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 18 April 2020
614	The Kerala Model to battle COVID-19, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 April 2020
615	Combating COVID-19 in Rural Bangladesh: The Role of the Local Government, Dr Mohammad Tarikul Islam, Associate Professor of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, 21 April 2020
616	COVID-19: Economic Impact and Challenges for the Maldives, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 May 2020
617	Bangladesh and Bhutan: Fostering Win-Win Bilateral Relations, Dr Mohammad Tarikul Islam, Associate Professor of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, 15 May 2020
618	Indian Government's Stimulus Package: Opportunity for Widespread Reforms, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 May 2020
619	Economic Stimulus Package: Can India Reboot the Reform and Revival Process, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 May 2020
620	Pillar of Changed Relationship? Australia's New Indian Diaspora, Professor Robin Jeffrey, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 5 June 2020
621	Attracting Foreign Investment into India: Key Initiatives by the Government, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 June 2020
622	Impact of COVID-19 on Nepal's Economy, Dr Keshav Bashyal, Faculty at Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal and Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 June 2020
623	Economic Impact of a Pandemic: Pakistan Grapples with COVID-19, Mr Muhammad Bin Khalid, Research Intern, ISAS and Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea, Visiting Associate Professor, ISAS, 19 June 2020
624	Modi, the RSS and a Self-Reliant India, Dr Ronjoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS and John Vater, Research Associate, ISAS, 24 June 2020
625	Atmanirbhar Bharat: A Political Initiative, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 June 2020

Working Papers

322	The CAA and the NRC: Exploring Possible Solutions, Mr Sanjeev Tripathi, Former Chief of the Research and Analysis Wing in India, 11 January 2020
323	Shifts in Policy Paradigm in India: Re-emergence of the Hindutva Agenda, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, 20 February 2020
324	Becoming a Five Trillion Dollar Economy by 2024: A Roadmap for India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 March 2020
325	India-Nepal Tension: The Issue of Lipulekh, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 5 June 2020
326	Strengthened Global Partnership: Crucial to Bangladesh's Economy and Development Goals, Md Mustafizur Rahman, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Singapore, 9 June 2020
327	Return and Reintegration without Assimilation: South Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf during COVID-19, Dr Bilesha Weeraratne, Research Fellow and Head of Migration and Urbanisation Research, Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka, 18 June 2020

The Bookshelf

Macleay, Kama. <i>British India, White Australia: Overseas Indians, intercolonial relations and the empire</i> . UNSW Press. 2020.
Ramesh, Jairam. <i>A Chequered Brilliance: The Many Lives of V K Krishna Menon</i> . Penguin Viking. 2019.
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Raghavan, Pallavi. <i>Animosity at Bay: An Alternative History of the India-Pakistan Relationship, 1947-1952</i> . C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd. 2020. HarperCollins Publishers India. 2020.
Kohli, Atul. <i>Imperialism and the Developing World: How Britain and the United States Shaped the Global Periphery</i> . Oxford University Press. 2020.
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The authors bear full responsible for the facts cited and opinions expressed in their articles in this publication.

The Institute of South Asian 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. Researchers 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, the business community and civil society.

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