

South Asia

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Nepal's Geopolitical Advantage: An Opportunity for Economic Development?



HIGHLIGHTS

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A Message from the Director

PROFESSOR C RAJA MOHAN

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

The year 2020 has been unusual year for all of us, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Singapore has cautiously started to relax some restrictions since June 2020, our researchers have predominantly worked from home during the second half of 2020.

Adapting well to this arrangement, we continued to hold webinars and collaborate with think tanks in Singapore and globally, making the most of digital connectivity. However, with the newly-developed vaccines and Singapore managing the COVID-19 situation well, we expect to return to some form of normalcy in the New Year.

In December 2020, Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong launched the book, *India On Our Minds*, edited by Professor Tommy Koh and Hernaikh Singh. The book brings together 51 Singaporeans from different sectors to share their thoughts on India.

Keeping track of current developments in the subcontinent, our scholars have been focusing on various issues relating to South Asia. In October 2020, Nepal's Foreign Minister, Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, unveiled a new integrated foreign policy that embraced the message of Gautam Buddha's teachings of peace and non-violence and Prithvi Narayan Shah's maxim of Nepal being "a yam between two boulders". This issue of the newsletter examines how the new foreign

policy will transform Nepal's geographic position between India and China for its economic development. We also look at Gotabaya Rajapaksa's first year as president in Sri Lanka; the potential for India's economic revival after the pandemic; and Pakistan's ambition of becoming the leader of a new Islamic grouping.

During the past six months, ISAS brought out five Special Reports, which are a collation of viewpoints from various ISAS events and publications. Three of these reports cover various aspects of the COVID-19 outbreak in South Asia, focusing on issues relating to the economy, migration and remittances, tourism, public health and online battles, as well as on India's latest round of economic reforms. The remaining two reports focus on the emergence of a 'BJP System' in India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy during his second term.

At the same time, we published two South Asia Discussion Papers – the first on the changing geopolitics of South Asia due to the conflict between India and China and the second on the road ahead for Sri Lanka following the 2020 parliamentary election. In August 2020, we launched S Narayan and Sreeradha Dutta's timely book, *Bangladesh at 50: Development and Challenges*, which delves into Bangladesh's overall growth story.

Meanwhile, ISAS continues to engage with organisations from across the region. In the second

half of the year, we worked with the Pathfinder Foundation (Colombo), Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Tokyo), Australia India Institute (Melbourne) and Institute of Chinese Studies (New Delhi) to organise webinars on timely themes such as post-election United States policy towards the Indo Pacific, India-Australia relations, India and Singapore's cooperation on global partnership on artificial intelligence, resetting India-Nepal relations and Sri Lanka's economic imperatives.

The Bookshelf segment has taken off well with 11 books being featured since June 2020. These included written reviews and video discussions of books pertinent to South Asia.

Our podcast series, South Asia Chat, has gained good traction and we hope to hit 40,000 downloads soon. Given the growing interest, we are now available on Spotify. We also stream our webinars on ISAS' Facebook page, besides sharing our work on our official LinkedIn and Twitter handles.

ISAS is grateful to its stakeholders and constituents for their active support this year. I hope all of you have a safe and healthy 2021!

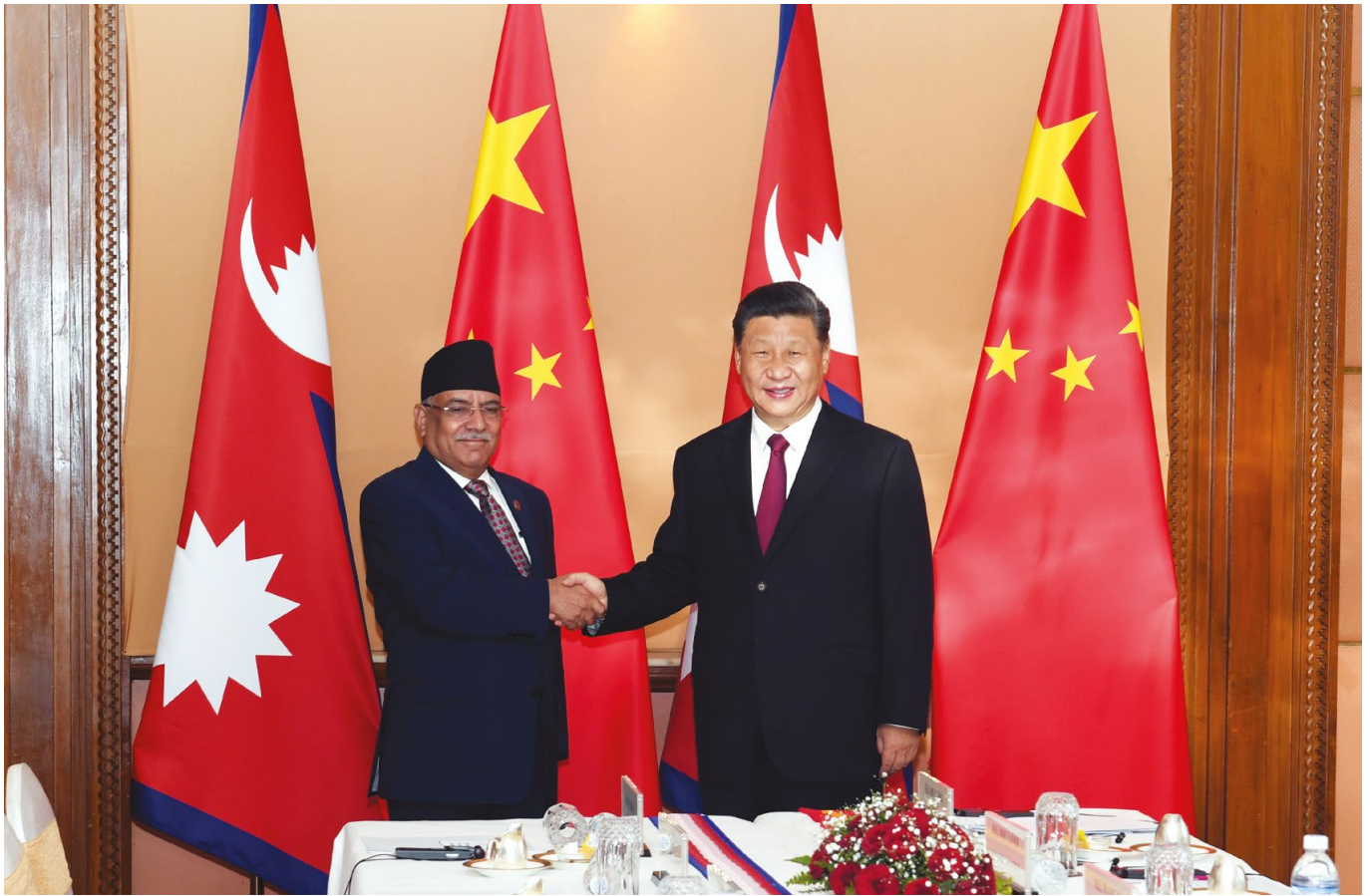


Photo courtesy of mofa.gov.np

Nepal's Geopolitical Advantage: An Opportunity for Economic Development?

AMIT RANJAN

In October 2020, Nepal's cabinet endorsed a new foreign policy. While speaking to Nepali news portal *Onlinekhabar*, the country's Foreign Affairs Minister, Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, highlighted its objective, stating that the new foreign policy would transform Nepal's geographic position between the two Asian giants – India and China – as an opportunity for economic development. Gyawali said, "The policy that we are drafting will reflect changes

occurred in the country's internal life and the external world and its geopolitics ... As the Constitution has clearly stipulated what our national interest is, we are preparing an integrated written document about our way forward." He added, "Being situated between two of the biggest global markets, and having several cultural connections with both of them is an opportunity." The new foreign policy document, as mentioned, would also guide Nepal's relationships with its

'traditional friends', development partners and other countries of the world.

Nepal's foreign policy is guided by several provisions under the 2015 Constitution. The first, Article 5.1, states, "Safeguarding of the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality, independence and dignity of Nepal, the rights of the Nepalese people, border security, economic wellbeing and prosperity shall be the basic

elements of the national interest of Nepal.” The second provision, Article 50.4, states, “The State, shall direct its international relations towards enhancing the dignity of the nation in the world community by maintaining international relations on the basis of sovereign equality, while safeguarding the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and national interest of Nepal.”

Then there is Article 51, which states:

1. “To conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of Panchasheel, international law and the norms of world peace, taking into consideration of the overall interest of the nation, while remaining active in safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national interest of Nepal.”
2. “To review treaties concluded in the past, and make treaties, agreements based on equality and mutual interest.”

Historically, taking advantage of its strategic location, King Mahendra (1920-1972), King Birendra (1945-2001) and some of the successive elected heads of state allegedly roped in China to extract incentives from India. However, under the leadership of K P Sharma Oli (from October 2015 to August 2016 and then from 2018 onwards), Nepal has been accused of tilting towards China.

In 2019-2020, India accused Nepal of raising the border issue at the trijunction of Kalapani-Limpiadhura-Lipulekh

“at the behest of China”. Tensions became further aggravated between the two countries when, in June 2020, the Nepali parliament adopted a new map of the country showing the trijunction as its sovereign territory. The diplomatic and political stand-off eased a little after the 11-minute talk between the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Oli on 15 August 2020. Oli telephoned Modi to congratulate India on its 74th Independence Day. Two days later, on 17 August 2020, the two countries reviewed projects in Nepal funded by India. Nepal was led by its Foreign Secretary Shankar Das Bairagi, while the Indian team was headed by its Ambassador to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra. In October 2020, India’s Research and Analysis Wing Chief, Samant Kumar Goel, visited Nepal. Then, in November 2020, Indian Army Chief M M Naravane paid a visit to the Himalayan nation where he was conferred the honorary rank of General of Nepali Army by its President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

Simultaneously, after the 2015-16 economic blockade by India, which the Modi government denies ever happened, Nepal’s relationship with China improved significantly. China has opened an academy to train the armed police force and the Nepali paramilitary forces that are deployed to guard the Nepal-Tibet border from possible infiltration of “Free Tibet” activists into Nepal. The two countries also carried out joint military exercises in 2017 and 2018.

In 2017, Nepal signed a memorandum of understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At present, China is Nepal’s second largest trading partner and the largest source of foreign direct investment into the country.

In October 2019, China’s President Xi Jinping paid a visit to Kathmandu. The two countries agreed to enhance connectivity and communications within the overarching framework of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network. They also agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fields of economy, including trade, tourism, investment, capacity of production and improving people’s livelihood, as well on the Border Management System.

Despite close relations, there has not been much progress on some key issues between Nepal and China. First, Nepal has not yet selected specific projects under the BRI which the two countries signed in 2017. Second, Nepal and China are yet to arrive at a consensus on the funding modality of the projects implemented in Nepal under the BRI.

In conclusion, whatever the draft of a new foreign policy says, as a “yam between two boulders”, it will be difficult for Nepal to resist pressure and properly balance between India and China.

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

One Year into Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Government

CHULANEE ATTANAYAKE AND ROSHNI KAPUR



Photo courtesy of Facebook/Gotabaya Rajapaksa

On 18 November 2020, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa marked one year in office. His presidency was a welcome change from the chaos and infighting that ravaged the *Yahapalana* (Good Governance) government for citizens who were yearning for a robust government with political stability, security and financial prosperity. As a result, Gotabaya's party, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, despite being a relatively new contender in the electoral system, won both the 2019 presidential and 2020 parliamentary elections.

Sri Lanka was entangled in numerous challenges and chaos at the time of Gotabaya's ascension to office. The country's economic growth was at an all-time low and national security was compromised due to the weak security apparatus.

Moreover, rising debt, slow economic growth and fragile security had driven investors away. Adding to that was the minority government he was bestowed with. He realised that policy changes will be difficult without a parliamentary majority. This led him to dissolve the parliament and hold elections at the earliest.

Response to the Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic that spread across the globe one month after Gotabaya assumed office posed a key challenge to his administration. However, he took timely and proactive measures to combat the effects of the virus in Sri Lanka. A task force to control a possible pandemic wave was set up even before the first COVID-19 positive patient was reported in the country. An island-wide lockdown

was imposed for over three months until the spread of the virus was contained to a manageable level. Contact tracing with the support of the military and the police intelligence service facilitated in rapidly identifying close contacts. Institutional quarantine of first contacts helped in reducing contamination within the community. The World Health Organization commended Gotabaya's political leadership and effective collaboration for prompt action in containing the first wave of the pandemic.

Even though Sri Lanka succeeded in managing the first wave of the pandemic, the second wave, which emerged on 5 October 2020 with a cluster of infected apparel factory workers, was challenging. The mutation associated with the second wave is identified to be with high transmissibility; hence, the

number of cases has grown rapidly. As at 30 November 2020, the total cases had risen to 23,484 persons with 116 deaths. Given the rapid increase of the transmission and the rising number of close contacts, the government had to move away from the institutional quarantining and impose home quarantine.

Getting a head start and learning from the experience of the first wave enabled the administration to take multiple measures, including enhancing the capabilities of hospitals and the health sector, back-up plans and emergency preparedness. The COVID-19 (Preventive Measures) Regulations Extraordinary Gazette was also issued to streamline the response measures, a 'Stay Safe' digital programme (similar to Singapore's TraceTogether) was introduced to facilitate contact tracing and a mechanism was set up to monitor the home quarantine process.

Constitutional Amendment

Even though a large part of Gotabaya's first year has been dominated by his response to the global pandemic, revoking the 19th amendment, which was brought by the Yahapalana government and replacing it with the 20th amendment was carried out as promised. The Gotabaya government contended that the 19th amendment resulted in weak governance and leadership; hence, restoring full executive powers through the 20th amendment is imperative in making the country economically and militarily stable. The new amendment has centralised some of the executive's powers which were curtailed following the implementation of the 19th amendment. For instance, the limitation to hold ministerial posts for the president has been repealed, and the president now has the authority to appoint and dismiss ministers. However, the new constitutional changes have been criticised for centralising political power in the executive branch.

Delivering Election Promises

Amidst the challenging economic conditions, the current administration has managed to deliver some of the key promises made during

Gotabaya's election campaign. As part of his promise to usher in a new political culture, Gotabaya eliminated unnecessary expenses. New measures have been adopted to ensure approximately 60,000 graduates were provided with employment in government departments, and they have been given the required training. Another 35,000 from low-income families were given employment under the programme of providing 100,000 jobs targeting the poorest of the poor. Furthermore, import duties on essential items such as wheat, sugar and dhal to help lower-income groups have been removed.

Ensuring National Security and Strengthening Security Apparatus

There was widespread public concern pertaining to the country's weak national security when Gotabaya assumed office. Rising activities of religious extremism and incidents of international drug trafficking within the island raised alarm about public security. There was public consensus, especially after the 2019 Easter Sunday attack, that intelligence services had collapsed and the security apparatus was broken.

Gotabaya took commendable steps to strengthen the security apparatus and restructure and revitalise the collapsed intelligence services. Experienced officers such as Major General Kamal Gunaratne were appointed to oversee national security issues.

Managing the Economy

The key election promise of Gotabaya was economic prosperity for the citizenry. However, the global pandemic, which hit the country just four months into his tenure, posed immense challenges in realising it. Disruption to the international supply chain and travel industry affected its export-import industries and tourism.

Amidst these challenges, Gotabaya's government has attempted to introduce several measures to keep the economy afloat. Harsh import controls of selected agro products and halting

of the re-export of crops such as pepper were imposed to protect local farmers and entrepreneurs. These measures have been fruitful, given that the country's trade experienced an unprecedented surplus since the economic liberalisation in 1978. The measures, such as an allowance of LKR5,000 (S\$35.98) each for 5.9 million poor families; tax relief to reduce the prices of essential food items; tax concessions for local entrepreneurs; reduction in the indirect tax on wages and the removal of withholding tax on interest were all welcomed by the public during this difficult period.

However, there are questions pertaining to the management of the economy amid a downturn produced by COVID-19. The Asian Development Bank has forecast that Colombo would see a negative gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of -5.5 per cent in 2020. Although it is not the worst performer in South Asia (India's GDP is -9 per cent and the Maldives is -20.5 per cent), the estimation is still worrying. Even though the 2021 budget proposes a manufacturing-led economy, there is no clear implementation plan to achieve these proposals.

Gotabaya's administration is confronted with both economic and public health challenges, including controlling the second wave of COVID-19 in the country. The effect of the pandemic has resulted in several lockdowns, curfews and a shutdown on tourism and general services sectors. The state's policies and implications are likely to be closely watched in the remaining part of Gotabaya's presidential term.

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Green Shoots? India's Economic Revival Post COVID-19 Pandemic

VINOD RAI

The Indian economy recorded its worst-ever contraction at 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of FY2020-21. There has, however, been a sense of relief, as by the end of November 2020, gross domestic product predictions for FY2020-21 indicate the contraction to be limited to about 10.6 per cent and a fairly sharp rebound in FY2021-22. It is felt that the rebound could be as much as 13 per cent. Does that indicate that the green shoots are

visible and will show sustained improvement and that technical recession is behind the country?

The pandemic has caused millions of job losses. It has created mayhem in the micro-, small- and medium-enterprises sector. There have been shocks both on the demand and supply side. On the supply side, there were factory closures, labour shortages and dislocations in the input supply

chains. The demand side saw decreased retail spending, weakening global demand for Indian products and unemployment.

The lockdown imposed by the government in March 2020 to break the chain the spread of COVID-19 was very harsh causing immense hardship to the working class. It led to unbridled migration of labour from the urban areas to the rural areas defying the stringent



Photo courtesy of pexels.com

lockdown. The government did well at that time to increase the outlay for the national rural guarantee programme. It helped provide some succour to the really distressed labour groups. The tranches of sops offered were designed to provide liquidity, credit and subsidy for industries to revive and provide livelihood more than directly putting disposable income in the hands of people who had lost jobs. Advance payment of salaries to government employees prior to the festival season and providing a tax exemption for leave travel was directed at boosting retail spending. Piggy backing on these tranches were some reforms in the agriculture and labour sectors. Whilst there is still some resistance, largely due to politics in certain states in implementing the agriculture reforms, over time these do appear to be poised to unshackle the farmers from state-designated market committees.

The first month of the third quarter witnessed a recovery in the Purchasing Managers' Index with manufacturing output touching 58.9, which is probably a decadal high, though there was a slight weakening in November 2020. The Index of Industrial Production has finally just turned positive after showing negative growth over the last six months. The factor which caused maximum despondency was record levels of unemployment that the country had witnessed. However, from a high of about 23.5 per cent in April 2020, it appears to have petered to about seven per cent in October 2020. These factors still do not indicate that the economy is out of the woods, considering the fact that crude oil production is still down by six per cent, natural gas by 10.6 per cent and cement by 3.5 per cent. These are certain key industries which are

indicative of the supply side problems that the economy faces. Services sector, such as hospitality and air travel, continue to show negative growth.

There are indications that the wheels of the economy have begun to move. Exports in the month of September 2020 were of the order of US\$27.5 billion (S\$36.7 billion), which was about US\$1 billion (S\$1.33 billion) higher than in the same month last year. The Goods and Services Tax collections at ₹1.05 trillion (S\$20 billion) have registered a growth of 10 per cent. The collection in November 2020 was ₹1.04 trillion (about S\$19.67 billion). Two wheeler and passenger car sales have registered an increase. There has been a decline in the demand for rural jobs. While 24.3 million households demanded work in October 2020, the number was down to 22.5 million in November 2020. Similarly, persons seeking jobs in November 2020 fell to 28.5 million from 30.9 million in October 2020. After a washout in the first quarter, garment exports are picking up the threads to affect a recovery. This is largely due to the opportunity offered by souring Sino-American trade relations. Capacity utilisation is at 70 per cent. Big firms report utilisation to be as high as 85 per cent with order books showing encouraging signs. There has been an increase in the forex reserves of the country to about US\$550 billion (S\$733.34 billion) by the end of September 2020. The expected current account surplus during the year is likely to provide a cushion to increased spending in the economy. With net inflows by foreign portfolio investors staying robust, the rupee stood strong. There have been suggestions that some money out of these reserves should be set aside for the development of

infrastructure, which would speed up job creation and give a leg-up to industries such as cement, bricks, steel etc which are employment multipliers.

There has been a significant interest among industries desiring to shift shop out of China to set base in India. States like Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are offering incentives. It is to be seen how many of these enquiries will actually translate into ground level investment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has raised prospects of India's economy by pegging contraction at 9.9 per cent, against 10.2 per cent it projected in September 2020. It forecast that the economy would rebound to eight per cent in the next fiscal year and five per cent a year later.

Daily numbers of COVID-19 infections have fallen sharply from a mid-September 2020 peak of about 93,000 per day. This has helped ease restrictions on businesses. There is an uptick in signs of economic life, though concerns persist about renewed outbreaks. How the Indian economy fares in the coming months will depend to a large degree on whether it can avoid a resurgence of the pandemic in urban areas.

Mr Vinod Rai is a Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow at ISAS. He can be contacted at isascr@nus.edu.sg.

Is Pakistan Becoming the Leader of a New Islamic Grouping?

IMRAN AHMED

For most states around the world, the year 2020 brought forth unprecedented challenges not least with the disruptions of a global pandemic. For the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the challenges of the past year have proven ostensibly difficult, enduring and encompassing. Pakistan continues to face a faltering economy, mounting internal political dissent, hostilities with its neighbours, international pressure to institutionalise unpopular governance reforms and violent insurgencies and uprisings across the country. The emergence of the pandemic did not simply add one more crisis to the list; it heightened, complicated and compounded pre-existing social and political conflicts in the country. In Islamabad, domestic politics and international relations are intimately tied. And the country often looks beyond its territorial borders to seek aid, assistance and allies to mitigate and manage crises beyond and within its sovereign borders.

Relations with the Muslim world are critical in this equation both for ideological and practical reasons. When Pakistan was created, it was hailed as an “Islamic experiment”, a “new Medina”. The centrality of Islam as the *raison d’être* of the state ensured that strengthening bonds with the Muslim world would

feature as an ideological pillar of the state. Indeed, Article 40 of the current Constitution captures this commitment declaring that the state shall endeavour to preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic unity. However, this constitutional prerogative is a difficult and delicate diplomatic balance since the Muslim world is not a monolithic bloc, but rather a complex, divided and evolving set of regions with diverging and contradictory strategic goals and agendas. For Pakistan, navigating these tensions whilst pursuing its own interests is no simple task.

Indeed, rivalries for regional influence between neighbouring Iran and Pakistan’s long-standing supporter, Saudi Arabia, has profoundly shaped the politics of the broader Middle East. Moreover, who leads the Muslim world is a contested question. While Pakistan projects itself as the leader of the Muslims of South Asia, it has long recognised Saudi Arabia as the leader of the broader Muslim world and the guardian of the two holy sites of Mecca and Medina. The countries share a long political and economic relationship going back to the Afghan jihad. Saudi Arabia has supported Pakistan’s fuel and financial aid needs. Meanwhile,

Pakistanis make up the second largest migrant community in Saudi Arabia. There is also a shared Islamic cultural dimension since Saudi wealth has supported the proliferation of religious institutions and seminaries across Pakistan which share a close ideological connection with the Saudi brand of Islam. However, despite the deep, historical and interdependent relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the two nations have drifted apart as a consequence of Pakistan’s initial refusal to join the Saudi-led coalition in the war in Yemen and Saudi silence on Pakistan’s Kashmir cause. Pakistan has framed itself as the voice of Kashmir and looked to the international community, and in particular to other Islamic nations to counter India on the issue.

The tensions between India and Pakistan over the current Kashmir issue has provoked possibilities for new strategic alignments between Pakistan and other Muslim states that have sought to rival Saudi leadership and influence. Pakistan harbours a sizeable Shia Muslim community and shares a long territorial border with Iran. The two nations work together on a range of activities, including managing access to sacred Shia sites and cities, and Pakistan relies on Iran for



Photo courtesy of Twitter/@ImranKhanPTI

its electricity. Both countries also share common strategic interests in Afghanistan, and Iran's criticisms of India over the Kashmir issue has been most welcome in Islamabad. Malaysia and Turkey's disapproval of India's actions in Kashmir has also been well received in Pakistan. However, their efforts to counter Saudi leadership in the creation of a rival group of Muslim states to the Saudi-led Organisation of Islamic Cooperation resulted in Riyadh placing pressure on Pakistan to not attend the Kuala Lumpur summit. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan's last-minute withdrawal from the Kuala Lumpur summit was termed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as "a great betrayal". Nevertheless, Pakistan's growing closeness to Iran, Turkey and Malaysia has been a source of frustration for Riyadh.

As Riyadh and Islamabad drift apart, analysts have suggested that China has not only sought to fill the Saudi-vacuum but has also urged

Pakistan to lead the Muslim world. However, the difficulty Pakistan faces in taking up this mantle is that the country lacks both credibility and the economic strength to achieve its foreign policy goals, as well as the ability to maintain close and stable ties with other Muslim states and existing or emerging Islamic organisations. Its critique of Indian oppression of Kashmiris sounds hollow since both India and Afghanistan, and the United States (US) continue to accuse Pakistan of harbouring militants, supporting extremism and undermining peace within its neighbouring region. A frequent complaint made by Afghanistan is that Pakistan meddles in its internal affairs through militant proxies. Pakistan's notable silence on the plight of the Muslim Uighur population in Xinjiang is also deemed to be hypocritical. It suggests that its advocacy for the plight of Muslims around the globe is both selective and self-serving. And finally, a strong economy is needed for Pakistan to reel itself out

of the shadow and control of its financial donors and supporters. Pakistan's engagement with the US has been transactional and scholars and commentators have suggested that it would serve Pakistan well to develop deeper economic engagements with the US. For now, Pakistan lies between a rock and a hard place balancing donors, allies and its own foreign policy objectives.

Dr Imran Ahmed is a Consultant for ISAS. He can be contacted at iahmed@une.edu.au.

New Research Staff At ISAS

ISAS would like to extend a warm welcome to several scholars who joined its research team recently. They are:



Dr Masudur Rahman

Visiting Research Fellow
University of Waikato
PhD in Economics

Area of Focus:

- Trade Policy Analysis
- Trade Facilitation
- Non-Tariff Measures
- Regional Integration
- Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Modelling



Mr Nishant Rajeev

Research Analyst
Nanyang Technological University
Master of Science (Strategic Studies)

Area of Focus:

- Technology and National Security
- India's Neighbourhood Policies



Ms Wini Fred Gurung

Research Analyst
Jawaharlal Nehru University
Master of Arts in International Relations
Area of Focus:

- Himalayan Geopolitics
- India-Nepal Relations
- India's Neighbourhood Policies



Ms Ramita Ramachandra Iyer

Research Analyst
National University of Singapore
Master in International Affairs

Area of Focus:

- Technology and International Relations
- Asian Strategic Thinking
- Negotiation and Conflict Resolution
- Global Governance and Public Policy

The Institute looks forward to their contributions to ISAS in promoting understanding of the South Asian region and in communicating knowledge and insights about it to policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society in Singapore and beyond.

ISAS Traineeship Programme 2020

In an effort to support the Singapore government's initiative to provide employment opportunities for graduating students, ISAS has signed up for the SGUnited Traineeship programme. This programme aims to help fresh graduates acquire relevant work experience, develop professionally and boost their employability in anticipation of a post-COVID-19 job market.

We are pleased to have the following trainees with us:



Mr Ryan Seah Yuan Rui

University of Sydney
Graduated with Bachelor of Arts
Apprenticeship Duration:
14 September 2020 – 13 June 2021



Ms Kunthavi D/O Kalachelvam

University of London
Graduated with Bachelor of Science
Apprenticeship Duration:
14 September 2020 – 13 June 2021

During their traineeship, these trainees will work with the researchers on ISAS' research agenda. Among others, they will collate data and provide research assistance to the researchers, as well as work on joint papers with these researchers. In addition, they will help organise and participate in ISAS' seminars and events, where they will interact with local and overseas-based participants.

ISAS Recent Agreement

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

ISAS entered into another two-year term memorandum of understanding with the Pathfinder Foundation, Sri Lanka, on 22 November 2020. Under this agreement, both institutions will undertake joint research programmes on issues of common concern, organise events and facilitate regular exchange of academic publications in disciplines of mutual interest, and regional cooperation, with particular focus on Sri Lanka, South Asia and beyond the region.



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ISAS-ESI Panel Discussion Energy Cooperation in South Asia

ISAS and the Energy Studies Institute jointly organised a panel discussion on 'Energy Cooperation in South Asia' on 3 July 2020. Even though South Asia is home to one fifth of the world's population, it is one of the least integrated regions in terms of energy and trade.

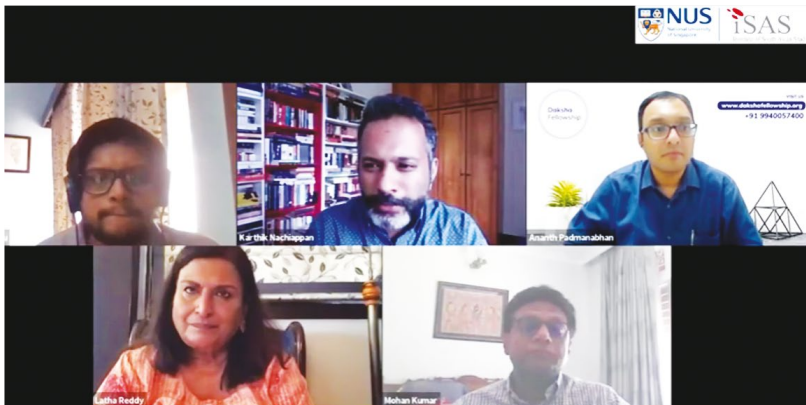
The first speaker, Dr Mirza Sadaqat Huda, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, OSCE Academy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, based his presentation on his newly published book, *Energy Cooperation in South Asia: Utilizing*

Natural Resources for Peace and Sustainable Development. He shared that there has been an exponential increase in energy cooperation in the last seven years, and more than 15 bilateral energy projects and four multilateral projects are at different stages of construction or negotiation. Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman from the Department of Economics at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, discussed the cost of non-cooperation in South Asia, pointing out that the presence of the private sector in energy production is on the rise. Dr S Narayan, Senior Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, explored the overarching framework that may help increase energy cooperation in the region.



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ISAS-Seminar Magazine Panel Discussion India and Digital Worldmaking



To discuss policy issues in a complex digital world, ISAS and *Seminar Magazine* (India) jointly held a panel discussion on 'India and Digital Worldmaking' on 14 July 2020.

Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, initiated the discussions by stressing on the need to create global norms and rules to ensure that the technology generated manages key issues. Moderator, Dr Ananth Padmanabhan, Dean at Daksha Fellowship, and Visiting

Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, India, said that domestic policies have been intersecting with international conversations and norm setting in technology. He added that there has been much international engagement in recent years in e-commerce, data and cyber security.

The first speaker, Ambassador Latha Reddy, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India; and Former Deputy National Security Adviser of India, discussed the shift undertaken by the United States and the European Union on national security

issues. Ambassador Mohan Kumar, Chairman, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India, discussed the role played by states in the post COVID-19 era. Mr Arindrajit Basu, Research Manager, Centre for Internet & Society, India, explored how countries have been using economic policies in the technology space to assert strategic influence, citing the example of economic and security angles related to 5G in India.

15
JUL

ISAS-EAI Panel Discussion Deadly Clash in the Himalayas: Impact on India-China Relations and Geopolitics in Asia

On 15 July 2020, ISAS and the East Asian Institute (EAI) jointly organised a panel discussion on 'Deadly Clash in the Himalayas: Impact on India-China Relations and Geopolitics'.

Welcoming the participants, ISAS Director, Professor C Raja Mohan, placed three contextual points: one, this was the first time in 40 years that military personnel have died at the border; two, India-China tensions are rising on several other issues, increasing the friction; and three, the conflict intersects with the countries' relationship with the United States.

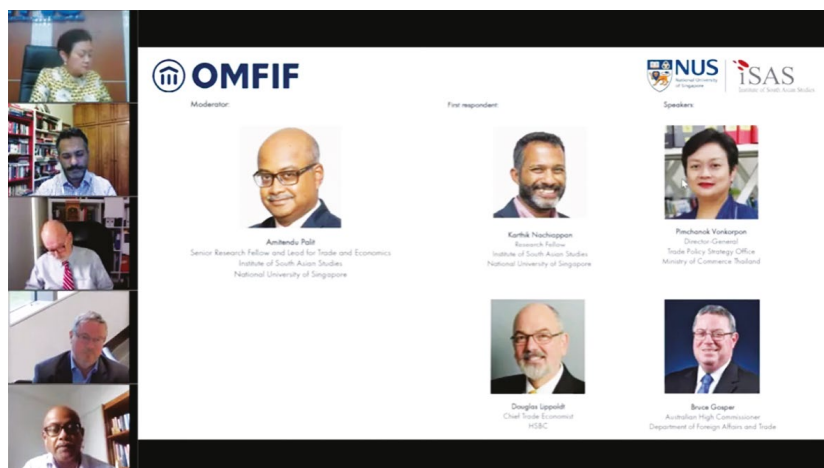


The two panellists from EAI, Dr Li Nan and Dr Ryan Clarke, shared their interpretations of the Chinese position and its maritime activities by putting them in context of the recent crises. ISAS' senior researcher, Dr Amitendu Palit, discussed various economic issues, including Chinese investments in India while another ISAS scholar, Dr Yogesh Joshi, shared the long-term implications of the crisis.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion session. Questions were asked concerning the role of the Taiwan, the Tibetan community in India, China's growing dominance in the Indian Ocean region and the renewed significance of the Indo-Pacific, the Quad and other multilateral alliances.

16
JUL

OMFIF-ISAS Panel Discussion COVID-19 and the Acceleration of Digital Trade



Mr Douglas Lippoldt, Chief Trade Economist, HSBC, then outlined how the pace of digitalisation is due to increased connectivity, technological advances and e-commerce platforms. He emphasised that cross border digital trade has only begun and has not gone fully global yet. Ms Pimchanok Vonkorporon, Director-General, Trade Policy Strategy Office, Ministry of Commerce Thailand, explored the impact of COVID-19 on trade and economic issues in Thailand, the region and the world. She highlighted six main areas of disruption to trade, namely, the change of supply chains; growing trade protectionism; importance of healthcare issues; food security; digital

The panel discussion on 'COVID-19 and the Acceleration of Digital Trade' was jointly organised by the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum and ISAS on 16 July 2020.

The session opened with HE Bruce Gosper, Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, discussing Australia's role as a key partner in digital connectivity in the region.

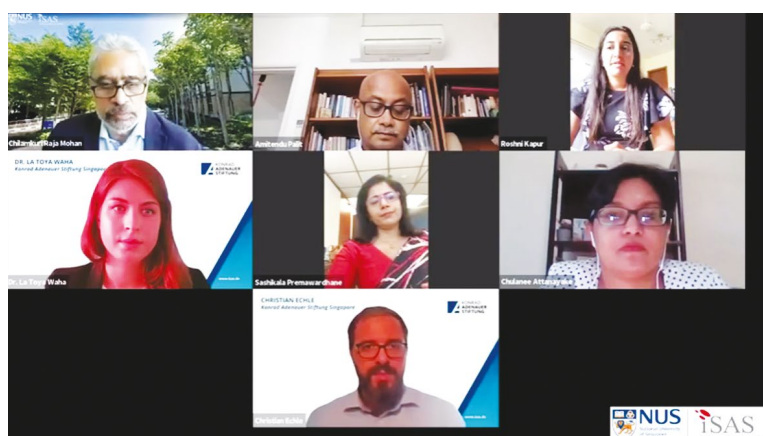
disruption; and digitalisation of economic activities/innovation. Finally, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, highlighted that the emergence of digital trade was already accelerating before the outbreak of COVID-19, and the difference now was due to the scale of transactions, the emergence of new and disruptive players, and business models that were transforming production processes and industries.

21
AUG

ISAS-KAS Panel Discussion Sri Lanka under Gotabaya Rajapaksa: Domestic Challenges and International Priorities

ISAS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) jointly organised the webinar on 'Sri Lanka under Gotabaya Rajapaksa: Domestic Challenges and International Priorities' on 21 August 2020. HE Sashikala Premawardhane, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Singapore, delivered the opening remarks for the session. Among others, she highlighted how the Gotabaya government has brought in a new political culture in the country and has positioned the president as a result-oriented leader and technocrat.

The first speaker, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, explored the political configurations during the parliamentary election and the impact on domestic politics of Sri Lanka. The second speaker, Dr La Toya Waha, Deputy Director, KAS, Singapore, elaborated on the societal dimension of Gotabaya's presidency. Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), ISAS, discussed the economic challenges facing the country. Finally, Mr Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, Founding Director General of the Institute of National



Security Studies, Sri Lanka, discussed the international and security challenges for the government and its relations with the United States, China and India.

Questions from the audience revolved around the election being a watershed, victory for the Rajapaksa government, minority issues and the human rights situation in Sri Lanka.

28
SEPT

ISAS-PF Lecture

Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Imperatives under the Rajapaksa Administration



On 28 September 2020, Admiral Professor Jayanath Colombage, Sri Lanka's Foreign Secretary, delivered the joint ISAS-Pathfinder Foundation Lecture on 'Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Imperatives under the Rajapaksa Administration'.

During the lecture, the Foreign Secretary touched on Sri Lanka's war on terrorism and its impact on the country's political and economic landscape. Among others, he highlighted the roles played by India and

China in developing the war-torn country following the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Between 2009 and 2014, Chinese enterprises and investments surpassed Japanese investments, ringing alarm bells in India and the United States. In 2015, a unity government was sworn in. However, ideological differences in the leadership impacted the economy of the country, including the stalling of Chinese investments. The united government's strategic balancing was unpopular among the citizens who felt that the national strategic assets were being politicised.

Admiral Professor Colombage then highlighted the challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, especially at a time when Sri Lanka was facing many other challenges. Nonetheless, the pandemic situation has been brought under control. The military oversees the COVID-19 task force and is running quarantine centres in the country. He also highlighted that under President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's leadership, Sri Lanka wants to maintain a neutral foreign policy and not get caught up in big power rivalry.

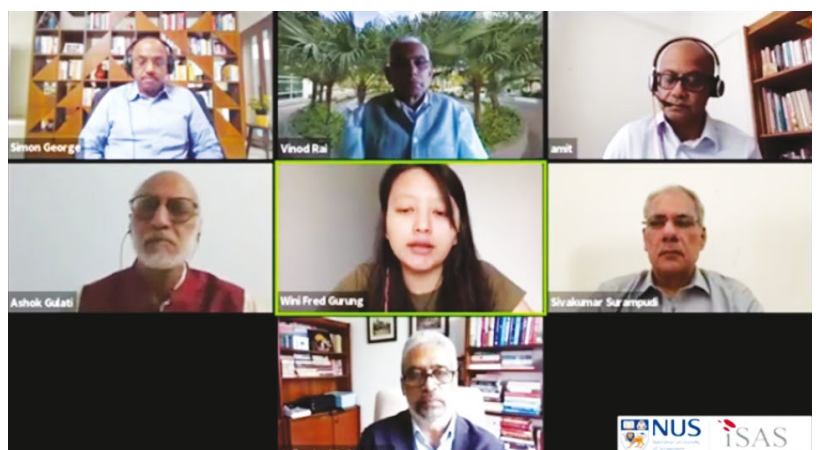
14
OCT

ISAS Panel Discussion

India's Agriculture Reforms: Implications and Prospects

On 14 October 2020, ISAS organised a panel discussion on 'India's Agricultural Reforms: Implications and Prospects'. It brought together a group of distinguished experts to discuss the economic, business, trade and political implications of the recently enacted agricultural reforms in India.

The panellists viewed these reforms, which enable farmers to sell outside government-regulated markets, as a positive development for the country's agricultural sector. They felt that these reforms have the ability to transform Indian agriculture, which in turn would improve the country's economy and the prospects of the marginal sections of society. The panellists envisaged that these reforms would make the system more demand-driven through direct contact between the buyers and the farmers, bring about greater efficiency in marketing agro products, improve food safety standards and result in a stable and financially robust system.



The discussions also centred on the possible challenges that may hinder the implementation of these reforms, such as opposition from the states that have not adopted the framework and India's complex domestic market. As such, one should be cautiously optimistic on the success of these reforms, as it could be an extremely long process.

28
OCT**ISAS-PF Lecture****Sri Lanka's Economic Imperatives: Creating a Compelling Investment Climate**

The ISAS-Pathfinder Foundation Lecture titled 'Sri Lanka's Economic Imperatives: Creating a Compelling Investment Climate' was held on 28 October 2020.

The guest speaker, Mr Sanjaya Mohottala, Director General, Board of Investment, Sri Lanka, highlighted some of the major changes taking place that will enable the country to position itself as a growing economic and trade hub. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has formed a cabinet sub-committee that would address

policy-related issues and facilitate investment in the country. Mr Mohottala said that the government wanted to increase the gross domestic product growth to seven per cent, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), diversify the export basket and transform the country's economic landscape. He stated that there are four important components to achieve these objectives: build support infrastructure; strengthen the market environment; create a robust labour force; and build a strong legal and regulatory framework. The Board of Investment has adopted a multi-prong approach to reach out to potential investors based on specific value propositions and sector strategies.

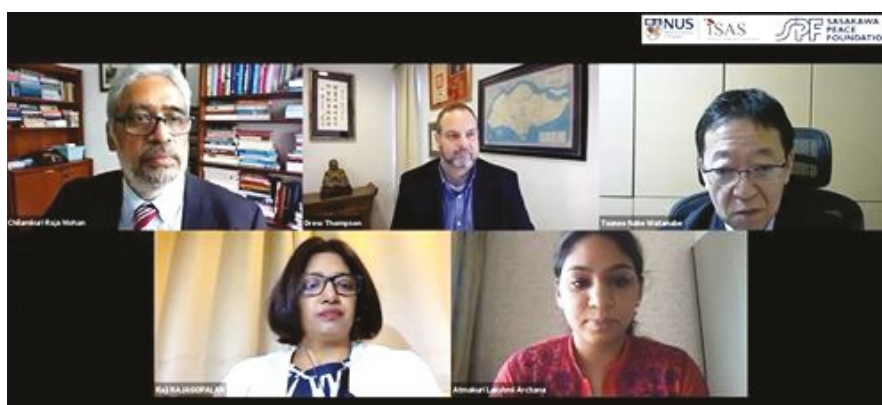
Mr Mohottala concluded his lecture by exploring the current challenges faced by the government in attracting FDI, including limited market access; lack of specialised workforce for certain skills; low female participation rate in the labour force; and insufficient industry clusters.

27
NOV**ISAS-SPF Panel Discussion****Post-election US Policy towards the Indo Pacific: Expectations and Concerns**

ISAS co-organised a panel discussion on 'Post-election US Policy towards the Indo Pacific: Expectations and Concerns' with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), Japan, on 27 November 2020.

The panellists were Dr Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, Distinguished Fellow and Head of the Nuclear and Space Policy Initiative at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi; Mr Tsuneo Watanabe, Senior Fellow at SPF; and Mr Drew Thompson, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Dr Pillai began the discussions by using two key phrases – reliability and predictability – to describe post-Donald Trump's policies towards Asia. Mr Watanabe touched on the Indo-Pacific from Japan's point of view while Mr Thompson elaborated on the United States' (US) policies towards Asia that could be divided into three camps: a) Competitors (views China as the greatest

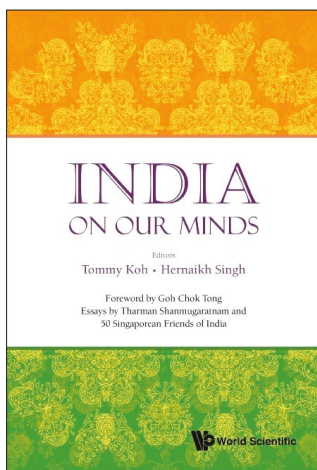


challenge); b) Centrists (willing to accommodate China); and c) Optimists (open to do a free trade deal with China).

Some of the questions addressed by the panellists included the US' policy towards China, approach towards regional trade under the Biden administration, policy towards Southeast Asia and entrenchment of Sino-Russian entente.

7
DEC

ISAS Book Launch India On Our Minds



On 7 December 2020, ISAS spearheaded the launch of the book, *India On Our Minds*, by Singapore's Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong.

Edited by Ambassador-at-Large, Professor Tommy Koh, and Mr Harnaikh Singh, Senior Associate Director, ISAS, the publication offers candid reflections on India and India-Singapore relations, grouped according to the past, present and future, through 50 essays by thought leaders in Singapore, including Senior Minister Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam; NUS President, Professor Tan Eng Chye; and Yale-NUS College President Professor Tan Tai Yong. It also features a foreword by Emeritus Senior Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong.

During his address, Prime Minister Lee spoke about the longstanding relationship between Singapore and India. He said that Singapore had been an early believer in India's potential, as well as a significant element in India's 'Look East' policy. There has been a steady deepening of economic ties between Singapore and India. Further, a strategic partnership was established in 2015 on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and India.

Speaking about the book, Prime Minister Lee said, "This collection of essays offers readers insights into India's history, culture and future from the lens of a small country that has a vested interest in India's success."



ISAS Events Listing (July to December 2020)

ISAS-ESI Panel Discussion	Energy Cooperation in South Asia	3 July 2020
ISAS-Seminar Magazine Panel Discussion	India and Digital Worldmaking	14 July 2020
ISAS-EAI Panel Discussion	Deadly Clash in the Himalayas: Impact on India-China Relations and Geopolitics in Asia	15 July 2020
OMFIF-ISAS Panel Discussion	COVID-19 and the Acceleration of Digital Trade	16 July 2020
ISAS Roundtable	India and the World in Modi's Second Term	4 August 2020
ICS-ISAS Seminar	China, US and Changing Asian Geopolitics	5 August 2020
All-ISAS Roundtable	India and Australia – Context and Contest in the Neighbourhood	12 August 2020
ISAS-KAS Panel Discussion	Sri Lanka under Gotabaya Rajapaksa: Domestic Challenges and International Priorities	21 August 2020
VIF-ISAS Book Discussion	Bangladesh at 50: Development and Challenges	28 September 2020
ISAS-PF Lecture	Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy Imperatives under the Rajapaksa Administration	28 September 2020
ISAS 1 st Roundtable	Resetting Nepal-India Relations	29 September 2020
Ananta Centre-ISAS Roundtable	India, Singapore and the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence	30 September 2020
ISAS Panel Discussion	India's Agriculture Reforms: Implications and Prospects	14 October 2020
ISAS-PF Lecture	Sri Lanka's Economic Imperatives: Creating a Compelling Investment Climate	28 October 2020
ISAS-SPF Panel Discussion	Post-election US Policy towards the Indo Pacific: Expectations and Concerns	27 November 2020
ISAS Book Launch	<i>India On Our Minds</i>	7 December 2020
ISAS 2 nd Roundtable	Resetting Nepal-India Relations	8 December 2020
ISAS Roundtable	India's Self Reliance Initiative: Old Idea or New Direction?	10 December 2020

Note: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all our events except for the launch of *India On Our Minds* were organised online.

ISAS PUBLISHES SPECIAL REPORTS, SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS AND SOUTH ASIA SCAN

In a constant endeavour to provide insightful and deeper analyses of the latest developments in South Asia, ISAS has been publishing Special Reports, South Asia Discussion Papers and the South Asia Scan at regular intervals. During the second half of 2020, we brought out eight such publications – five Special Reports, two South Asia Discussion Papers and a South Asia Scan – covering a gamut of issues pertinent to the region.

Providing substantial coverage on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, *COVID-19 in Singapore: Reaching out to the South Asian Community* focused on how the South Asian community in Singapore, especially migrant workers, was affected by the outbreak. It is based on interviews with Singapore's Minister for Law and Minister of Home Affairs, Mr K Shanmugam; and the High Commissioners of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The report highlighted the strong and proactive measures adopted by the Singapore government to contain and combat the spread of the virus in the island nation.

The second report, *The COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on South Asia*, assessed the havoc wreaked by the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods across the subcontinent. It looked at various aspects of the economy, migration and remittances, tourism, public health and online battles as well as the steps taken by the governments of the region.

Reforming India: A New Economic Era, written by ISAS scholars, covered various aspects of India's economic reforms, including the liberalisation of farm and labour laws, the government's stimulus package, initiatives to attract foreign direct investment, India's vision of becoming a five-trillion dollar economy by 2024 and the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* programme.

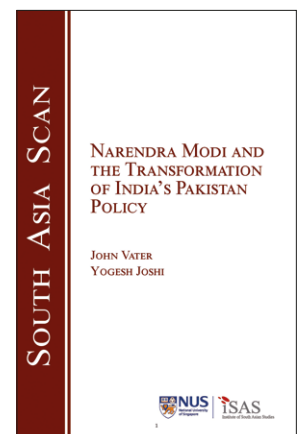
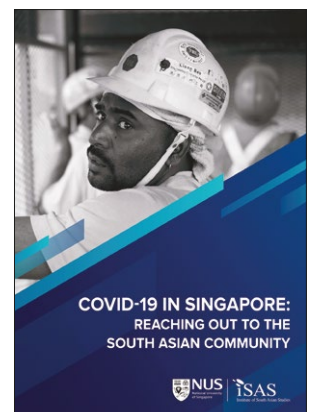
Our roundtable discussions are important platforms where experts delve deep into significant subjects that impact the subcontinent. The Special Reports on *Is There a 'BJP System' in Indian Politics?* and *India and the World in Modi's Second Term* are the result of two such discussions.

The former, held a year after the 2019 general election, assessed how long the Bharatiya Janata Party's dominance would last, whether India's current system is dominated by a single party or whether the party was displaying unique mechanisms and characteristics reflecting its efforts to shape India in its own mould. The latter examined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policy challenge. It focused on India accommodating and furthering its interests in a world increasingly fraught with great power friction, the decaying legitimacy of international norms and institutions, retreating globalisation and an unstable neighbourhood.

Our South Asia Discussion Papers are a collection of papers focusing on key transformations in the region. *Navigating India-China Rivalry: Perspectives from South Asia*, edited by C Raja Mohan and Chan Jia Hao, draws attention to the growing conflict between India and China as well as the need for other South Asian countries to be sensitive to the complex dynamics between Beijing and New Delhi. It also explores how various South Asian countries are navigating these two Asian giants and the structural changes taking place in the region's geopolitics.

The 2020 Sri Lankan Parliamentary election has been a landmark one for many reasons, especially with Gotabaya Rajapaksa's party, Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, receiving a firm stamp of approval. ISAS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Political Dialogue Asia hosted a panel discussion (webinar) on 'The 2020 Parliamentary Election: The Road Ahead for Sri Lanka' in August 2020. This set of papers, an outcome of the joint panel discussion, provides important insights into the socio-political, economic, security and international challenges confronting Gotabaya's government.

In August 2020, John Vater and Yogesh Joshi published a South Asia Scan titled *Narendra Modi and the Transformation of India's Pakistan Policy*. This publication argues that the Modi government has revised India's Pakistan policy from one of strategic restraint to realist strategic assertiveness. This assertiveness can be explained by a combination of external and internal factors. The former includes Delhi's failure to credibly deter Pakistan's revanchism; its upsized military and economic capabilities; flexibility to pursue its national interest on its northwestern frontier; and the potential terror threat of radicals moving from Syria to Afghanistan-Pakistan and on to Kashmir. The latter includes the BJP's 2019 general elections victory empowering Modi to take a zero-tolerance policy as well as a majority in Parliament allowing the government to independently advance a Hindu nationalist agenda.



Books

- Sen, Ronojoy; and Goyal, Omita, *Games We Play, Sports in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2020
- Rahman, Md Mizanur; and Ranjan, Rakesh, *Indian Migrant Organizations: Engagement in Education and Healthcare*, Oxford University Press, 2020
- Narayan, S; and Datta, Sreeradha, *Bangladesh at 50: Development and Challenges*, Orient Blackswan, 2020
- Flatt, Emma J; Murali, Vani Swarupa; and Tieri, Silvia, *Voices on South Asia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Women's Status, Challenges and Futures*, World Scientific, 2020
- (Ed) Koh, Tommy; and Singh, Hernaikh, *India On Our Minds*, World Scientific, 2020

South Asia Discussion Papers

- Navigating India-China Rivalry: Perspectives from South Asia*, Edited by Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS; and Mr Chan Jia Hao, Research Analyst, ISAS, September 2020
- The 2020 Parliamentary Election: The Road Ahead for Sri Lanka*, December 2020

South Asia Scan

- Narendra Modi And The Transformation Of India's Pakistan Policy*, Mr John Vater, Research Associate, ISAS; and Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, 1 August 2020

Special Reports

- Reforming India: A New Economic Era*, Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS; Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS; and Mr John Joseph Vater, Research Associate, ISAS, 21 July 2020
- COVID-19 in Singapore: Reaching out to the South Asian Community*, Ms Nithya Subramanian, Editor, ISAS, 27 August 2020
- The COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact on South Asia*, multiple authors, ISAS, 1 October 2020
- Is There a 'BJP System' in Indian Politics?*, Dr Diego Maiorano, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance); and Mr John Joseph Vater, Research Associate, ISAS, 1 December 2020
- India and the World in Modi's Second Term*, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; Mr Nishant Rajeev, Research Analyst, ISAS; and Ms Wini Fred Gurung, Research Analyst, ISAS, 24 December 2020

Briefs

- 794** India at the UNSC 2021: Reinforcing Reforms, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 1 July 2020
- 795** Developments on Nepal-China Border: Concerns for India, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 1 July 2020
- 796** Pakistan's Sugar Scandal Report: Political Manoeuvre or Real Accountability, Mr Muhammad Bin Khalid, Research Intern, ISAS; and Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, and Research Lead (Multilateral and International Linkages), ISAS, 9 July 2020
- 797** SAARC-ASEAN: Post COVID-19 Relationship, Dr Chu Minh Thao, Deputy Director at the Centre for Security and Development, Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies, Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, 13 July 2020
- 798** Tik-Tok-ed: India's Ban on Chinese Apps, Mr Nishant Rajeev, Research Intern, ISAS; and Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 July 2020
- 799** Pakistan's Legislative Gap: Cause for Political and Constitutional Concern, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS 20 July 2020
- 800** Attracting Fresh Foreign Investments: Opportunities for Tamil Nadu, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 July 2020
- 801** China's Hydropower Projects on River Brahmaputra, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 August 2020
- 802** Presidential Powers in Pakistan: Accountability Concerns, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS, 13 August 2020
- 803** Language Barriers: Inequalities of India's National Education Policy, Ms Vani Swarupa Murali, PhD student, National University of Singapore; and Dr Diego Maiorano, Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 August 2020
- 804** India's Direct Tax Reforms: Transparent Taxation and Taxpayers' Charter, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 August 2020
- 805** Challenging Times for Bangladesh's Economy, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 August 2020
- 806** India and the Deepening Sino-Pak Alliance, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 24 August 2020
- 807** Inflationary Pressures or New Opportunities: Will Indian Industry Buckle or Bounce?, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 August 2020
- 808** Governing Non-personal Data in India, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 August 2020
- 809** India's GDP Decline Won't Halt Unless Services Recover, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 3 September 2020
- 810** India and Shinzo Abe's Strategic Legacy, Professor C Raja Mohan, Director, ISAS, 15 September 2020
- 811** Agriculture Reform Legislations: Farmer Opposition in North India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 September 2020

812	India's Farm Reforms: Protests Rise as State Controls Fail, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 24 September 2020
813	Resilient Supply Chain Initiative: Attracting Japanese Investment to Bangladesh, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Consultant, ISAS, 12 October 2020
814	National Commission for Minorities in Pakistan: Problems of Inclusion, Jurisdiction, Independence and Legitimacy, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS, 31 October 2020
815	Potential Joe Biden Administration and United States-Pakistan Relations, Professor Touqir Hussain, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 9 November 2020
816	Impact of the RCEP on South Asia, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 9 December 2020
Insights	
626	Will Nepali Remittance Bounce Back?, Mr Sujeev Shakya, Author of <i>Unleashing The Vajra – Nepal's Journey Between India and China</i> , 8 July 2020
627	India's Critical Medical Imports and the China Dependency, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS; and Mr Joshua Quek Hian Khun, Research Intern, ISAS, 15 July 2020
628	Women Empowerment in India: More needs to be done, Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS, 15 July 2020
629	China's New Claim in Eastern Bhutan: Pressure Tactic or Message to India?, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 July 2020
630	Current Land Issues in India: Puzzles and Possible Solutions, Mr Subhomoy Bhattacharjee, Consulting Editor, <i>Business Standard</i> , Senior Adjunct Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, and faculty at OP Jindal Global University, Sonapat, India, 22 July 2020
631	Pandemic of Poverty in COVID-19 Stricken South Asia, Mr Muhammad Bin Khalid, Former Research Intern, ISAS; and Dr Diego Maiorano, Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 July 2020
632	'Google Tax': Implications for India, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economic Policy), ISAS, 31 July 2020
633	Forthcoming Parliamentary Elections in Sri Lanka: Initial Observations, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS, 3 August 2020
634	Bangladesh the Much-Coveted Neighbour, Dr Sreeradha Datta, Centre Head, Neighbourhood Studies and Senior Fellow, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi, India, 4 August 2020
635	The Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple Case: Landmark Ruling by the Indian Supreme Court, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 5 August 2020
636	The Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh: Not Just Rhetoric, HE Md Mustafizur Rahman, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Singapore, 12 August 2020
637	Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: A Palpable Thaw, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 August 2020
638	Digital Accountability and Transparency Act: Towards Digitising the State, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 August 2020
639	Financing the Connectivity Project: A New Milestone in India-Maldives Relations, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 August 2020
640	Bangladesh a Regular Feature in UN Peacekeeping, HE Md Mustafizur Rahman, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Singapore, 21 August 2020
641	The 18 th Amendment: Historical Developments and Debates in Pakistan, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS, 4 September 2020
642	The Taliban and External Power Politics in Afghanistan, Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed; Mr Abbas Farasoo; and Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, Investigators on the Carnegie Corporation of New York-funded project on 'Assessing the impact of external actors in the Syria and Afghan proxy wars', Deakin University, Australia, 16 September 2020
643	The BBIN Initiative Power Corridor: Opportunity to Revive Regional Integration, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Consultant, ISAS, 17 September 2020
644	Pakistan and the IMF: Debts, Deficits and Dependency, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS; Ms Nadia Dohadwala, Research Intern, ISAS; and Mr Muhammad Bin Khalid, Research Intern, ISAS, 30 September 2020
645	South Asia and US Election 2020: The Shape of Things to Come, Dr Monish Tourangbam, Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, 7 October 2020
646	Sectarianism and Censorship in Pakistan: The Punjab Tahaffuz-e-Bunyad-e-Islam Bill 2020, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS, 9 October 2020
647	Recent Labour Reforms in India: How will they Facilitate Investments?, Mr Partha Pratim Mithra, Consultant in areas of labour, skill and employability, 28 October 2020
648	Presidential Pardon and the Limits Prescribed by God: A Bill to Amend Article 45 in Pakistan, Dr Imran Ahmed, Consultant, ISAS, 9 November 2020

- 649** Decline of the Congress: The Impact of Defections and Breakaway Factions, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, Society and Governance), ISAS; and Ms Srishti Gupta, Former Intern, ISAS, 11 November 2020
- 650** Ertuğrul: A Turkish Delight for Pakistan, Ms Nithya Subramanian, Editor, ISAS, 20 November 2020
- 651** The DBS-Lakshmi Villas Bank Merger and Far-Reaching Bank Recommendations in India, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 2 December 2020

Working Papers

- 328** Sri Lanka: Debate on Holding Elections During a Health Crisis, Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Roshni Kapur, Research Analyst, ISAS, 26 July 2020
- 329** A Reset in India-Nepal Relations, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, Former Indian Diplomat, Columnist and Writer, Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, 28 July 2020
- 330** Pakistan and United Nations Peacekeeping: Experiences and Opportunities, Lt Gen Shafaat Ullah Shah, Retired Officer of the Pakistan army and Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Jordan, 28 July 2020
- 331** Post COVID-19 Indian Economy: A Roadmap for Revival, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 30 July 2020
- 332** Bihar Assembly Elections: Politics in the times of COVID-19, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Jeetendra Kumar, Lecturer, Shaheed Bhagat Singh (Evening) College, 7 August 2020
- 333** The Great Game in Nepal: A Himalayan State's Search for Higher Ground, Mr John Joseph Vater, Research Associate, ISAS, 8 September 2020
- 334** United States-Maldives Defence Pact: What Lies Ahead for India?, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 October 2020
- 335** After Abe: Japan's Foreign Policy and its India Engagement, Dr Purnendra Jain, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Asian Studies, University of Adelaide and honorary head of research and academic development at an Adelaide-based think tank, Sage International Australia, 15 October 2020
- 336** The Erdogan Effect: Turkey's Relations with Pakistan and India, Dr Vinay Kaura, Assistant Professor at the Department of International Affairs and Security Studies, Sardar Patel University of Police, Rajasthan, India, 16 October 2020
- 337** Taiwan: A Potential Economic Partner for South Asia, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 December 2020.

The Bookshelf

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