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INDEPENDENT SOUTH ASIA: Still Living in the Shadow of Separation

HIGHLIGHTS

- 06 Political Churnings in Pakistan
- 08 The BJP Riding High on the Road Towards GE2024
- 10 Fifty Years of Bangladesh-Singapore Relations: Taking Ties to the Next Level
- 12 Explaining India's Ukrainian Predicament
- 14 The First India-Central Asia Summit

CONTENTS

A Message from the Director	03
FEATURE	
Independent South Asia: Still Living in the Shadow of Separation	04
INSIGHTS	
Political Churnings in Pakistan	06
The BJP Riding High on the Road Towards GE2024	08
Fifty Years of Bangladesh-Singapore Relations: Taking Ties to the Next Level	10
Explaining India's Ukrainian Predicament	12
The First India-Central Asia Summit	14
ISAS APPOINTS NEW NON-RESIDENT FELLOW	16
NEW ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT ISAS	16
ISAS INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME 2022	17
ISAS RECENT EVENTS	
ISAS-SPF Panel Discussion (Webinar)	
The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific	18
ISAS-SICCI Panel Discussion (Webinar)	
Budget 2022 and the Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth and Macroeconomic Stability	18
ISAS Panel Discussion (Hybrid)	
Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific	19
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	
Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election: The Verdict and Beyond	19
ISAS Distinguished Lecture	
Post-COVID World Order: Global Initiatives, Strategies and Imperatives	20
ISAS Seminar	
Imran Khan's Fall may be a New Beginning: Pakistan's Ongoing Tryst with Populism	20
ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)	
Bay of Bengal: Challenges of Progressing on Connectivity and Trade in Uncertain Times	21
ISAS Seminar	
US-Pakistan Relations: How They Reflect and Affect Domestic Politics on Both Sides	21
ISAS EVENTS LISTING (JANUARY TO JUNE 2022)	22
LATEST SPECIAL REPORTS AND SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS	23
ISAS PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS	23
Books	24
South Asian Discussion Papers	24
Special Reports	24
Briefs	24
Insights	26
Working Papers	27
The Bookshelf	27

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IQBAL SINGH SEVEA

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

The beginning of the year witnessed much of the world progressing towards some degree of normalcy following a near two-year battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. At ISAS, our researchers adapted to the evolving environment as we began holding in-person events to complement our webinars, collaborating with other think tanks in Singapore and globally, and actively participating in partner events overseas.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. In 1947, India and Pakistan emerged as independent countries that had to adapt to new geographies, cultivate a sense of nationhood, develop state institutions and infrastructure following the ruptures of the Partition, and negotiate their geopolitical positions. They had to do this while confronting the socio-economic legacies of colonial rule. In 1971, there was a further separation that witnessed the emergence of Bangladesh. The feature story of this newsletter reviews the political, ideological, socio-economic and foreign policy imperatives that have defined and framed the development of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh since their emergence.

Domestically, Pakistan went through political upheaval at the start of the year, which led to Imran Khan's tenure as prime minister coming to an end when his government lost a no-confidence motion. We explain that in the coming months, Pakistan will continue to witness intense political, constitutional, and ideological contestations, and assess the potential role of non-elected entities like the military and judiciary in determining

the future of political processes in the country.

Across India, five states went to the polls in early 2022 and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged victorious in four of them. Coming on the heels of the dislocation caused by the pandemic, prevailing economic difficulties and rising social tensions, the BJP's electoral performance was remarkable. We illustrate how the BJP's ideology of muscular Hindu nationalism and centralised welfare delivery make its position as India's dominant party unassailable.

Singapore and Bangladesh mark 50 years of cordial bilateral relations. They have been enjoying a strong trade and investment relationship. Given that Singapore plays a critical role in global supply chains and Bangladesh is on the cusp of a new development phase, we propose that both countries should adopt suitable measures to reap the full benefits of their growing bilateral ties.

The Russian-Ukraine conflict has had profound implications on the South Asian region, particularly India. While the Western countries resoundingly condemned the Russian invasion, New Delhi abstained from successive efforts to blame Moscow for the crisis. We explore the reasons behind India's tightrope stance over Ukraine and the impact it will have on New Delhi's strategic choices and autonomy.

The inaugural India-Central Asia virtual summit in late January 2022 affirmed that New Delhi is adjusting its stance and revitalising engagements with the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Given China's growing footprint in the region and the burgeoning ties between India and Central Asia, we delve into the dilemma that leaders of the CARs

will face in balancing their relations between New Delhi and Beijing.

In addition to regular online-published Briefs, Insights and Working Papers, ISAS released five Special Reports and a set of South Asia Discussion Papers. They examined issues of Dravidianism as a transformational movement in South India; the origins, evolutions and relevance of frontiers and borders in South Asia; regional security architecture in the Andaman Sea; Russia's emerging role in the Indo-Pacific region; Nepal's capabilities and challenges in global politics; and an analysis of the strategic alliance – AUKUS.

As part of our collaborations with organisations analysing topical issues across the Subcontinent, we held seminars and panel discussions on our core themes with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Middle East Institute at NUS, among others. After a long hiatus, ISAS organised an in-person distinguished lecture by Bangladesh's Foreign Minister. We look forward to more such in-person events in the months ahead.

As we adapt to the new normal, ISAS will continue with its effort to offer current, important and relevant research outputs to its stakeholders and the larger community locally and globally. We will continue with regular reviews of our research priorities and identify new and interesting research areas and platforms so that the Institute remains at the cutting edge of research on South Asia in Singapore.

I hope you enjoy this issue!

INDEPENDENT SOUTH ASIA: Still Living in the Shadow of Separation

AMIT RANJAN



Photo courtesy of AJ+Twitter (@ajplus)

The Partition of British India in 1947 happened on the grounds of religious incompatibility. However, many Muslims chose to remain in India, while some Hindus and Sikhs also stayed on in Pakistan. Religion could not keep Pakistan united for long. Twenty-four years later, East Pakistan was liberated, or, as the Pakistani establishment referred to it, separated from the West wing.

Although the erstwhile British Indian territory is now divided into three countries, some colonial and separation problems linger on.

The first is communal tensions. India is a secular country, as defined in its constitution. However, some have argued that while the Indian state is secular, the society is not. Those who make this argument highlight that communal tensions and religious prejudices exist in the country. Recent polarised debates on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and wearing of the hijab in schools are testaments to this argument. In recent years, local leaders of Hindu right-wing political parties and groups have twisted “ocular insignificant” public symbols of minority communities into serious

issues and engineered communal tensions for political reasons.

Pakistan was officially proclaimed an Islamic state in 1956 with the adoption of its first constitution. It has also had its fair share of communal issues. In recent times, there have been media reports on the abduction of Hindu girls, forced conversion and forced marriage to their abductors. To combat unlawful conversion, the Sindh province – where most Pakistani Hindus live – passed a bill in 2016 outlawing forced conversions. Nevertheless, such treatment of the minorities continues

in the country. In March 2022, a Hindu girl, Pooja Kumari, was shot dead in Rohri town of Sukkur, a district in Sindh, for resisting abduction for conversion and forced marriage.

In 1972, Bangladesh's constitution declared it a secular state. After the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975, the country's Islamisation began. In 1979, the word 'secularism' was removed from the constitution and, in 1988, Bangladesh was declared an Islamic Republic. In 2011, secularism was restored by inserting the 15th amendment to the Bangladeshi constitution. Islam, however, was retained as the state's religion. Since the 1980s, Bangladesh has seen the spread of a radical version of Islam. A major reason for this development is the spread of Wahhabism across South Asia. The spread of radicalism, the emergence of militant groups and increasing social tensions have intensified violence against the Hindus and Buddhists in Bangladesh. According to Ain o Salish Kendra, a well-known rights group in Bangladesh, more than 3,600 attacks, like vandalism and arson, have occurred against the Hindu communities between 2013 and 2021.

The second is economic disparity. The decline in the socio-economic status of Muslim landlords in colonial north India was an important reason behind their support for the Partition. There was a vast economic disparity between the colonial elites and the people. Such economic divisions remain in contemporary India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In 1991, India abandoned its socialist model and adopted a new economic policy based on market liberalisation. Over the last 30 years, the new policy has created many millionaires and increased the size of the middle class. At the same time, it has widened economic disparity. A Pew Research Centre report estimated that there are around 134 million poor people in India, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing another 75 million into poverty. According to the Justice Rajinder Sachar committee report of 2006, the Muslims "face fairly high poverty levels"

and their conditions are only "slightly better" than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, has transformed itself from a "basket case" in 1971 to a development model in recent years. The country is expected to graduate from the Least Developed Countries list in 2026. From being an aid receiver, it is now an aid provider to small countries. Nonetheless, the country has failed to raise employment and living standards. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reported that more than 40 million Bangladeshis are malnourished. As a result of their circumstances, many Bangladeshis take irregular routes and try to enter developed countries illegally to earn a better living.

In 2021, Pakistan's external debt was around US\$85.6 billion (\$116.4 billion). Using the lower-middle-income poverty rate, the World Bank estimated that the poverty rate in Pakistan was 39.3 per cent in 2020-21. If one uses the upper-middle-income poverty rate, Pakistan's poverty rate jumps to 78.4 per cent. Moreover, the Bank gauged that 40 per cent of Pakistani households suffer from moderate to severe food insecurity.

The third is bilateral relations. The three former British Indian territories have not always shared friendly relations. Since the Partition, India and Pakistan have fought four wars (1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999) and witnessed military tensions along their shared border. One of the primary reasons for India-Pakistan tensions, which some analysts label as "the core" of the problem, is their conflicting claims on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Two-thirds of J&K is under India's administration; Pakistan administers some parts; and China controls a smaller portion. In 2019, Islamabad downgraded diplomatic relations and suspended bilateral trade with Delhi after the Indian government scrapped the special status of its administered J&K under Article 370 of the Indian constitution.

Although Bangladesh-India relations have commonly been friendly, there are contentious bilateral issues such as cross-border migration, the Teesta water-sharing and the Farrakka barrage. Fortunately, such problems do not severely impact their bilateral ties, especially with Sheikh Hasina, who is friendly to New Delhi, in power in Dhaka. In recent years, the CAA, which calls for "persecuted" Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh to be granted citizenship in India, adds to the litany of thorny issues between the two countries. Dhaka was not pleased with the mention of its name in the CAA gazette.

Pakistan-Bangladesh relations improved considerably under the rule of Ziaur Rahman (1977-1981) in Pakistan and H M Ershad (1983-1990) in Bangladesh. However, their bilateral ties soured in 2013 when Dhaka began prosecuting and hanging the perpetrators of the 1971 war. Between 2015 and 2016, both sides demanded the removal of diplomats due to suspected interference in domestic affairs, exacerbating bilateral tensions. After Imran Khan was elected Pakistan's prime minister in 2018, the two countries normalised relations. In 2020, Khan told Hasina that Pakistan is committed to "deepening fraternal relations with Bangladesh" and he lifted visa restrictions for Bangladeshi nationals in the following year. Now, with Khan no longer in power, it will be interesting to see how the two states relate to each other.

As the three countries emerge from the shadows of selective memories of the Partition and liberation war, they need to ensure a healthy domestic and communal relationship on their respective shores. However, this is easier said than done. After all, they have made little progress on social issues in 75 and 51 years respectively.

POLITICAL CHURNINGS IN PAKISTAN

IQBAL SINGH SEVEA



Photo courtesy of Mr Imran Khan's Twitter

Imran Khan's innings as Pakistan's prime minister came to an end when his government lost a no-confidence motion on 9 April 2022. Shehbaz Sharif was swiftly elected to replace Khan with the support of a coalition consisting of former political rivals. In response, Khan and his party, the

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), staged mass jalsas (rallies) and protests to call for immediate elections.

In the coming months, Pakistan will witness intense political, constitutional and ideological contestations. Sections within the governing coalition

are calling for electoral reforms that will overturn bills passed by the PTI, which allowed overseas Pakistanis – amongst whom Khan has substantial support – to vote. This reflects the fact that both Khan and the PTI should not be written off. Khan's message of fighting corruption and political

dynasts, together with his appeal to religious symbolism has won him a loyal base among the middle class, youth and the diaspora. In his public addresses since being deposed, Khan reiterated these issues and asserted that he was fighting for *haqiqi azaadi* (true freedom) against foreign powers and their local conspirators.

The call for *haqiqi azaadi* has been welcomed by some observers to challenge the hold of the military and established political elites. However, Khan's political rhetoric, coupled with his government's attempts to prevent the no-confidence motion from taking place, does not necessarily bolster democratic structures. There are two aspects of his political discourse which are salient in this regard. Firstly, all the economic problems of Pakistan are linked to corruption; politicians are presented as *chors* (thieves) and the main cause of Pakistan's ills. Here, Khan is echoing military leaders like Ayub Khan, who justified coups as the only recourse to save the country from self-serving politicians. Secondly, he has presented himself as the only leader who can save the country. This was reflected in his style of governance, which some had likened to a presidential rather than a parliamentary system. Khan has also made a conscious effort to appeal to the conservative sections of society. Such an interlacing of populism, religion and power has found support amongst sections of the middle class. In fact, it signals the emergence of a middle class that is aspirational, conservative, politically important and happy to support the rise of a strong man.

It is worth noting that Khan's attempt to dissolve the parliament to avoid the vote of no-confidence questions the legitimacy of the parliamentary processes. He invoked Article Five of the Constitution, which iterates that loyalty to the state is the duty of every citizen, to dissolve the parliament. The use of this clause implied that those who supported the no-confidence motion were conspiring against

Pakistan. These are serious allegations that question the legitimacy of the parliamentary processes. Since 1958, the unilateral dissolution of parliaments by presidents had stunted the development of democratic processes in Pakistan.

The PTI's fall was linked to disillusionment due to its inability to deal with a stagnant economy, rising foreign debt and soaring inflation. Significantly, Khan also lost the support of the military. The military is widely believed to have ensured that Khan and the PTI came to power in 2018. While the military has long played an important role in politics, Khan's lauding of his close relationship with it provided a new type of discursive legitimisation of the hybrid regime model. The military was now publicly associated with specific policies. Thus, sections within the security establishment were concerned that the PTI's inability to deal with the economic situation could potentially impact the military's legitimacy. The military was also concerned by Khan's rejection of, in his words, Pakistan's "humiliating relations" with the United States (US) and over-reliance on China. It has long been keen on balancing Pakistan's relations with China and the US.

Given that subsequent governments will need to make difficult economic choices like cutting subsidies, the military is likely to be concerned about being linked too closely with the government. Indications are that it will revert to a policy of publicly keeping a distance from the government. This does not mean that it will not exert political influence. On the contrary, recent statements by the Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Bajwa, on the importance of relations with the US indicate its preferred direction for Pakistan's foreign policy and strategic relations. Thus, the military will likely allow various parties to jostle it out in the political arena and not be actively involved in 'match fixing'. After all, the military does not have any easy political ally this time round.

The judiciary, however, seems to be willing to play a more active role in the political sphere. Khan became the first prime minister to lose a no-confidence motion when the Supreme Court overruled his attempt to dissolve the parliament. Notably, Chief Justice Umar Bandial had taken *suo moto* notice of the unfolding political developments. Since the vote, the Supreme Court has ruled that parliamentarians who defect will not be allowed to participate in no-confidence motions. This will have a major impact on the tussle for the chief ministership of the politically important province of Punjab. Bandial has also taken notice of the "perceived interference" by the current government in on-going investigations against them. The question to look out for in the coming months is to what extent will the Supreme Court use its authority to take notice of parliamentary affairs and the impact of such interventions.

When Khan came to power in 2018, it was only the second time in Pakistan's history that an elected government had handed the reins of power to an elected body. While he has energised sections of the public, the impact of his rhetoric and political actions on the credibility of the political process remains to be seen. However, it is clear that the political, ideological and constitutional debates that will play out in the coming months and the role of non-elected entities like the military and the judiciary will determine the future of the political process in Pakistan.

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THE BJP RIDING HIGH ON THE ROAD TOWARDS GE2024

DIEGO MAIORANO

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won in four of the five Indian states that went to polls in early 2022, including Uttar Pradesh (UP), India's most populous and politically important state. The impressive performance of the BJP appears even more remarkable if one considers the dislocation caused by the pandemic, the far from healthy state of the economy and rising social tension. This article argues that the ideological plank of the BJP, centred upon muscular Hindu nationalism and centralised welfare delivery, remains popular and is a very effective election-winning formula. With an eye to 2024, when the next general election takes place, it seems that the BJP's position as India's dominant party remains unassailable.

In March 2020, the Indian government announced one of the harshest COVID-19 lockdowns in the world with only four hours' notice. The lockdown left tens of millions of workers jobless, without savings or a roof over their heads. In May and June 2021, the country went through a devastating wave of COVID-19 cases, which, according to *The Economist*, resulted in 2.4 million deaths and was largely attributed to government mismanagement.

Unemployment – already at its highest level in decades before the pandemic – rose sharply, particularly in higher productivity sectors like manufacturing. Agriculture, where wages are significantly lower and just above subsistence levels, absorbed millions of distressed workers. Protests by the farmers engulfed the north of

the country for most of 2021, while inflation, as in much of the world, sharply eroded real wages.

Overall, India's economy has barely grown over the past two years. Economists estimate that as many as 230 million people might have been pushed below the extreme poverty line during the pandemic, reversing decades of improvement. However, the ruling BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, performed spectacularly well in state elections held in early 2022. It won an absolute majority in four out of the five states that went to the polls, including the biggest prize of all – UP.

The importance of UP in Indian politics is difficult to overstate. With an estimated population of 234 million people, it is by far the most politically relevant state on a national scale, sending 80 members of parliament to New Delhi. It is also one of India's poorest states economically and in terms of healthcare, education, infrastructure and state capacity.

Historically, this has contributed to an extremely high rejection rate of the ruling parties. No state government had been re-elected after serving a full term since 1957. The ruling BJP Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, secured a historic victory in 2022 by winning about 44 per cent of the popular vote and two-thirds of the seats.

What explains the gap between the harsh socio-economic conditions on the ground and political outcomes? Four self-reinforcing factors provide a possible answer.

First, Modi remains, by far, the most popular political leader in the country. The electoral campaign in UP – as has been the case for most state-level campaigns since 2014 – was centred around the personality of the prime minister, even though UP is one of the few states with a chief minister who has a solid support base and high approval rates.

Second, Adityanath has developed a governance model centred on two highly popular pillars. He has instituted what is difficult not to call a police state, with an aggressive crack down on petty criminality involving the apparent use of extra-judicial killings. Adityanath also reflects attempts to make India a Hindu state. From his campaign against 'love Jihad' – a conspiracy theory that claims Muslim men are attempting to tilt India's demographic balance by marrying Hindu women – to the ban on cow slaughtering, an economic activity largely in the hands of Muslims, the chief minister's Islamophobic rhetoric and actions have been either approved or, at least, tolerated.

Third, the BJP has put a strong 'new welfare' system that is highly centralised and largely based on the distribution of very tangible private goods, such as gas cylinders, cash and toilets. While this comes at the detriment of more important but politically less rewarding public goods such as investment in health and education, research shows that voters support the new welfare architecture.

Finally, the opposition in most Indian states lacks a coherent message that



Photo courtesy of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Facebook

could dislodge the BJP's messaging on Hindu nationalism and welfare. In UP, the main opposition party (the Samajwadi Party) did everything right. It secured its best performance ever; it successfully attracted most of the non-BJP votes by eroding the voter base of the other two main parties; it attracted disgruntled BJP party leaders; and it conducted an electoral campaign centred upon bread and butter issues such as economic dislocation, unemployment and rising consumer prices. However, it still failed to come anywhere near challenging the BJP machine.

What does the BJP victory in UP then signal for the upcoming national election in 2024? It strongly suggests that the BJP is invincible. This is partly due to its unparalleled financial

resources, as well as the severe erosion of democratic norms that is tilting the playing field in its favour. The UP results also show that the party is genuinely popular, particularly where it matters in the highly populous Hindi belt in the north of the country. The results confirm that the ideological planks of the BJP – Hindu nationalism and centralised welfare delivery – remain a winning formula.

The fact that the party managed to win convincingly not only in UP but also in the other states that went to the polls in 2022, is a strong indication that the voters are ready to put aside governance issues when casting their vote, including the disastrous management of the COVID-19 pandemic and the poor state of the economy.

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This article first appeared in the East Asia Forum on 15 April 2022.

FIFTY YEARS OF BANGLADESH-SINGAPORE RELATIONS: TAKING TIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

MOHAMMAD MASUDUR RAHMAN

This year, Bangladesh and Singapore celebrate 50 years of successful and friendly bilateral diplomatic ties. The last five decades have seen a flourishing bilateral relationship, and people-to-people engagement has reached new heights. Along with being an important trading partner for Bangladesh, Singapore is also a strategic regional partner.

Bangladesh is on the cusp of the new development phase, and Singapore has the potential to play an important role in this new journey. While Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the Least Developed Country status in 2026, a free trade agreement (FTA) with Singapore will prove opportune to ensure sustainable market access in the East Asian region, which benefits both countries. With the upwardly mobile market of 170 million people and a US\$400 billion (S\$542 billion) economy, it is time for Singapore to explore greater bilateral opportunities with Bangladesh.

Propelled by growth in trade and global supply chains, Bangladesh is now one of the fastest-growing emerging economies globally, with remarkable progress on its socio-economic front. On the other hand, having implemented 27 FTAs over the years, Singapore is a major proponent

of free trade. The city-state also plays a critical role in global supply chains and logistics. Over the 50 years of their bilateral ties, Bangladesh and Singapore have shared an amicable relationship, strengthening ties through cooperation in many areas.

In FY2020/21, Singapore was the third-largest importing partner of Bangladesh, accounting for about US\$2.4 billion (S\$3.23 billion) of Bangladesh's total trade. Singapore enjoys a trade surplus with Bangladesh – this amounted to about US\$2.2 billion (S\$2.96 billion) in FY2020/21.

The two countries have the potential to expand their trade relations significantly. For instance, Bangladesh's main imports primarily include capital machinery and intermediate goods, and its total import of these from the world in 2020 amounted to approximately US\$13 billion (S\$17.47 billion). Of this, it imported only US\$1.4 billion (S\$1.88 billion) worth of capital machinery and intermediate goods from Singapore – this accounted for only 10 per cent of its total requirement. Singapore's export of the same to the world during 2020 was about US\$220 billion (S\$295.64 billion).

Bangladesh primarily exports garment products. Singapore imported over

US\$3 billion (S\$4.03 billion) worth of garment products from the world in 2020, of which less than US\$200 million (S\$268.76 million) worth were imported from Bangladesh. In other words, Singapore only imported about six per cent of its total garment import requirements from Bangladesh, whose export of the same to the world in 2020 was over US\$35 billion (S\$47.03 billion).

With the proliferation of the Bangladeshi economy, Singapore is quickly becoming one of the country's leading investors in power, energy, transportation, logistics and ports. According to the latest statistics on the gross foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows for FY2020/21 from Bangladesh Bank (Central Bank of Bangladesh), Singapore is its fifth largest investor. Recently, Gentium Solutions, a Singapore-based company, in collaboration with a Dutch company, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladesh government to develop a shipyard in the Payra Sea Port area with an investment of US\$1.58 billion (S\$2.13 billion). If implemented, this is touted to be one of the highest FDIs into Bangladesh. The sea link between Chittagong and Singapore is Bangladesh's most vital cargo route and one of the most critical international business gateways.



Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore

In a major move that could help balance the skewness in trade and investment of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh government issued the 'Capital Account Transaction (Overseas Equity Investment) Rules 2022' on 16 January 2022. The new rules allow Bangladeshi export-oriented businesses to invest 25 per cent of their total assets in offshore investments. So far, 16 Bangladeshi companies have been granted approval to invest in overseas markets, and several of them, such as the Summit Group and Spectrum Engineering, are investing in Singapore.

There is a large Bangladeshi diaspora and semi-skilled labour living in Singapore. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh sent about 50,000 people to Singapore every year. The remittance inflow from the diaspora was US\$624 million

(S\$838.53 million) in 2020 – three times higher than its export value. Additionally, Singapore also receives a considerable number of medical tourists from Bangladesh.

While many of the small South Asian countries are struggling to balance their geopolitical ties with the two big powers, China and India, Bangladesh has found a new way to balance its interests – developing a deeper bilateral cooperation with the other East Asian countries, investing overseas and focusing on signing preferential trade agreements to boost trade, economic cooperation and investments.

Bangladesh and Singapore have inked many bilateral agreements, including a double taxation avoidance agreement, a bilateral investment agreement for promotion and protection of investment and an air service agreement. Both

countries are also regular participants in the Shangri-La Dialogue. Currently, both governments are considering an FTA to enhance bilateral trade and investment, which would be a significant milestone that would further deepen people-to-people connections and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Bangladesh and Singapore have come a long way in their bilateral ties since they established formal relations five decades ago. The time is now right for the two countries to take their relationship to the next level and reap the benefits of the full potential of their strong bilateral ties.

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EXPLAINING INDIA'S UKRAINIAN PREDICAMENT

YOGESH JOSHI

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is perhaps the most daunting external crisis India has faced under the prime ministership of Narendra Modi. New Delhi has steadfastly refused to join the Western criticism of Russian actions and instead has called for a stop to the violence and resumption of diplomatic negotiations. India's decision to abstain from successive efforts to blame Russia for the crisis in both the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the UN General Assembly has invited surprise and disdain from the United States (US), the European

Union and India's Quad partners in the Indo-Pacific. The West finds India's response baffling for a couple of reasons.

First, Russian actions impinge on the fundamental norm of territorial integrity and sovereignty. If Russia can do it against Ukraine, so can China in Asia. India's territorial dispute with China should have prompted India to stand with the global community. Second, given India's growing strategic closeness with the US and the Quad countries, its nonalignment on the Ukrainian crisis has isolated

it in the Indo-Pacific as all the other Quad members have sanctioned Russia for its aggression. Indeed, New Delhi's choices have forced India to be seen as siding with Russia and China, the global revisionist powers accused of violating some of the basic principles of contemporary world order. Even the influential sections of India's strategic community have expressed dissatisfaction with New Delhi's diplomatic manoeuvring. "All things do not make one giant right for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin", argued former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, to defy "the principles



Photo courtesy of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's website (<https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/>)

(of sovereignty and territorial integrity) which we hold dear”.

Why has India walked such a tricky tightrope over Ukraine?

Firstly, India is militarily dependent on Russia. Almost 60 to 80 per cent of India's military inventory is Russian in origin. Such dependency is a legacy of India's military relationship with the Soviet Union and its continued reliance on Moscow after the Cold War. Though India has diversified its military procurement to vendors such as France, Israel and the US, Moscow remains India's primary source of military equipment for several reasons. For example, some of the most technologically sensitive defence products could only be obtained from Russia, such as leasing Akula class attack nuclear submarines, as well as technical help needed for India's indigenous nuclear ballistic missile submarine force. Moreover, Russia's inclination to co-develop military equipment is equally attractive: the supersonic cruise missile Brahmos, which India recently exported to the Philippines, results from technological co-development with the Russian military industry.

Secondly, Russian equipment is, in some cases, simply the best and cheapest, as is the issue with the controversial missile defence system such as the S-400.

Thirdly, Russia's readiness to provide military equipment quickly and without many conditionalities have helped continue its stranglehold on India's military imports. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Moscow in the immediate aftermath of the 2020 Galwan Crisis for emergency military supplies is a case in point. Successive Indian governments have also continued to source military equipment from Russia to support India's strategic autonomy, lest excessive shifts towards Western sources may be viewed as bartering India's strategic autonomy.

However, military dependence is only part of the explanation. India has historically seen Russia as an essential factor in Asia's balance of power. During the Cold War, Sino-Soviet tension was a fundamental factor in India's grand strategy to deter China. Though the element of hostility has ceased between the two erstwhile Cold War adversaries, Moscow's unambiguous alignment with Beijing will be a significant force multiplier for China. Eurasia's two most considerable continental military powers will be tough for Indo-Pacific democracies to counter. Free-flowing energy supplies from Russia will resolve China's Malacca dilemma, and its relatively sophisticated military-technological complex can transform the Chinese military into a competent force. Moscow's active support for Beijing vis-à-vis New Delhi would be most distressing, both on the Sino-Indian border dispute. Moscow can delay or deny military equipment under pressure from Beijing or, worse, support Chinese actions on the border, both materially and diplomatically. The growing Moscow-Islamabad bilateral relationship has also been a thorn for New Delhi.

However, the logic of Indian reactions does not alleviate its predicament.

First, India's silence has contradicted its normative battle for upholding international law, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and unjustified use of force against China. It is currently embroiled in a significant confrontation along the Himalayan border with Beijing. The contradiction facing Indian decision-makers is simple but acute: if India won't stand for Russia's disregard of the values and norms of the international order, why would the world stand for India against its similar recriminations against China? Fighting over principles notwithstanding, India's material interests are also at stake. Greater dissonance with the West would create difficulties for India's growing alignment with not only the Indo-Pacific democracies but also

European powers such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany, which are critical to maintaining a favourable balance of power in Asia and India's fight against China.

Second, the Russian gambit and Western reaction will force Moscow to cling to Beijing more tightly, despite India's efforts to cushion Moscow's fall.

Third, Russian interests are independent of what India desires and, given its economic and diplomatic isolation, it will be forced to embrace China more tightly. Unlike Beijing, New Delhi neither has the financial nor the diplomatic heft to bail Moscow out of its difficult position. Unlike China, India has no axe to grind against the West in supporting Russia's actions.

In summary, Putin's gambit has underscored the need for India to move away from its military dependence on Russia. The uncertainty of Putin's Russia has constrained India's strategic choices rather than augmenting its strategic autonomy.

Dr Yogesh Joshi is a Research Fellow at ISAS and a Non-resident Global Fellow with the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Washington DC, United States. He can be reached at yogeshjoshi@nus.edu.sg.

THE FIRST INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA SUMMIT

CLAUDIA CHIA AND ZHENG HAIQI



Photo courtesy of MEA Photo Gallery Flickr

The inaugural India-Central Asia virtual summit on 27 January 2022 marked the first engagement at the leadership level. It affirmed that India is adjusting its stance and revitalising engagement with the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Shortly after, in April 2022, Indian President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a first-ever visit by an Indian president to Turkmenistan. This recent Indian interest in the CARs – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – stems from the imperative to be involved in developments in Afghanistan and curb expanding Chinese economic

influence in the region. Given the likelihood of increased Taliban involvement in the region, New Delhi has recognised the need to be more proactive in regional affairs and gamble for a stake in the evolving security matrix.

For the CARs, the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in August 2021 has led to a scramble for cooperation and international aid, along with border control measures, to mitigate the flow of Afghan refugees. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – the three CARs that share borders with

Afghanistan – often raise concerns about the presence of terrorist training camps in the border areas; each has strengthened border security to limit the crossover of militants from Afghanistan.

Another highlight of the summit was the joint call to give “priority attention” to connectivity projects and address the lack of overland connectivity between India and Central Asia. At the meeting, India proposed to set up a joint working group to discuss connectivity to the region through the Chabahar port in Iran. Notably, the

aspirations and ideas for connectivity projects between India and Central Asia have been in the works for a long time. From the Indian perspective, the familiar interpretations are of a “Greater Central Asia” linked to South Asia as part of the subcontinent’s expanded neighbourhood. For the last three decades, New Delhi has maintained cordial relations with the CARs with the primary objective of maintaining connections with the post-Soviet space and acquiring gas and oil resources from the energy-rich region.

In June 2012, India announced the ‘Connect Central Asia Policy’, introducing a broad-based approach consisting of 12 points to engage with the CARs in various sectors, ranging from information technology to energy. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited all five CARs in July 2015 and announced a slew of projects and agreements to strengthen India-Central Asia cooperation. Since then, New Delhi has announced several lines of credit to the respective CARs. In 2019, the inaugural launch of the India-Central Asia Dialogue at the foreign ministers’ level highlighted the need to create an institutionalised platform to promote economic ties. These major economic undertakings were primarily driven by Indian concerns about growing Chinese investments in Central Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative and political and security shifts in the American withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Interestingly, the India-Central Asia summit took place just two days after Beijing celebrated its 30th anniversary of establishing China-Central Asia diplomatic ties. Chinese President Xi Jinping promised US\$500 million (S\$672 million) in assistance to the CARs and pledged to grow trade to US\$70 billion (S\$94.9 billion) by 2030. Therefore, it would not be surprising if New Delhi faced pressure to counterbalance the Chinese presence and economic clout in its extended neighbourhood.

The summit rekindled interest in the 1,814-kilometre long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project. With the Taliban now in control of the Afghan resources, the group’s support would be required for South-Central Asian connectivity. Considering the potential dividends of US\$500 million (S\$672 million) annually to Afghanistan, the Taliban has publicly promised to oversee the implementation of TAPI. However, even if the Taliban could provide security guarantees within its territory, other security concerns in the region, such as the resurgence of secessionist movements and armed militancy in Balochistan, pose security challenges to the project. Moreover, the India-Pakistan rivalry on resource competition and divergent security interests make cooperation on a sensitive cross-border pipeline difficult.

On the economic front, current trade from the Central Asian region accounts for less than one per cent of India’s total global trade. Trade figures remain remarkably low despite bilateral engagement since the 1990s. While India has assisted the CARs through its Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme and the periodical organisation of business events and trade shows, its overall economic engagement and investment have been limited. Amongst the CARs, Kazakhstan is India’s largest trade partner, with the bulk of the trade consisting of uranium supply. So far, the initiatives between India and Central Asia have primarily been on a state-to-state basis with low levels of commercial or people-to-people contact.

Strengthening relations with the CARs would allow India to gain more friends and elevate its influence in the region dominated by China and Russia. With increased pressures from the international community, uncertainty from the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan and the Russian incursion into Ukraine in February 2022, a regional consensus

on security and stability between India and Central Asia may be easier to build now. In this regard, India should prioritise deepening security cooperation with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to contain security threats and build meaningful leverage for future contingencies.

Further, the economic integration between India and Central Asia fits nicely into the Eurasian paradigm envisioned in the Russian-led ‘Greater Eurasia Partnership’. Trilateral cooperation between India, the CARs and Russia could boost South-Central Asia connectivity while providing the CARs with an alternative partnership vis-à-vis China. With increased India-Central Asia interactions, the leaders of the CARs would have to tread carefully between New Delhi and Beijing to avoid being forced to choose between the two powers.

Ms Claudia Chia is a Research Analyst at ISAS. She can be contacted at claudiachia@nus.edu.sg. Mr Zheng Haiqi is a PhD Candidate in the School of International Studies, Renmin University, China, and an ISAS Non-Resident Fellow. He can be contacted at zhenghaiqi@ruc.edu.cn.

ISAS APPOINTS NON-RESIDENT FELLOW

As part of a new effort to strengthen our work and widen our reach, ISAS initiated the ISAS Non-Resident Fellowship. The aim of this fellowship is to bring together a vibrant community of South Asian scholars, analysts, journalists and practitioners from around the world.

ISAS extends a warm welcome to the following recently-appointed fellow:

Non-Resident Fellow



Mr Zheng Haiqi

PhD Candidate in School of International Studies
Renmin University of China

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT ISAS

ISAS would like to extend a warm welcome to its administrative colleague who joined us recently:



Ms Harpreet Kaur Grewal

(Joined on 4 April 2022)

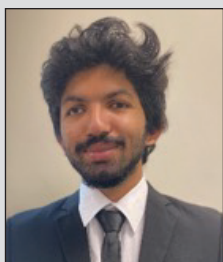
Assistant Manager, Editorial and Social Media
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia
Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies

The Institute looks forward to her contributions on the editorial team and in communicating knowledge and insights about it to policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society, in Singapore and beyond.

ISAS INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME 2022

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 2022. They are:



Mr Anirvin Narayan

National University of Singapore
Second Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 9 May – 29 July 2022



Ms M Soumiya

National University of Singapore
Third Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 9 May – 29 July 2022



Ms Neo Pei En, Phedra

National University of Singapore
Third Year – Bachelor of Arts
Internship Duration: 9 May – 29 July 2022

During such internships, the students participate in ISAS' seminars and events, where they interact with local and overseas-based participants. They 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 EVENTS

27
JAN

ISAS-SPF Panel Discussion (Webinar)

The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific



On 27 January 2022, ISAS and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), Japan, hosted a panel discussion titled 'The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific'. The panel discussion aimed to understand Russia's emerging role in the Indo-Pacific and its impact on the policies of the Quad and European countries in the region.

Dr Aleksei Zakharov, Research Fellow at the School of International Affairs, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, Higher School of Economics, National Research University, Russia, provided an overview of Russia's attempts to engage the Indo-Pacific region.

He mentioned that the driving force behind Russia's engagement was the desire to foster the development of its far east region and a search for alternate markets after sanctions were imposed by the West in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Dr Nivedita Kapoor, Post-doctoral Fellow at the International Laboratory on World Order Studies and the New Regionalism, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs Higher School of Economics, National Research University, Russia, and Mr Taisuke Abiru, Senior Research Fellow at the International Peace and Security Department, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan, provided their respective views of India and Japan's engagement with Russia, albeit to varying degrees. Both speakers stressed their respective countries' concerns about a Sino-Russian entente and its implications for their security situation and balance of power.

Brigadier General Olivier Kempf (Retd), Associate Fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research, France; and Editor of La Vigie, highlighted the nature of the threat for Europe and how it hopes to balance between the continental threat from Russia and maritime commitment in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, he expounded on the European perspective of Russia's engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

8
FEB

ISAS-SICCI Panel Discussion (Webinar)

Budget 2022 and the Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth and Macroeconomic Stability



ISAS, in partnership with the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SICCI), organised a panel discussion (webinar) on 'Budget 2022 and the Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth and Macroeconomic Stability' on 8 February 2022.

The first panellist, Dr Bornali Bhandari, Senior Fellow at the National Council of Applied Economic Research, India, focused on what the budget offered in the areas of agriculture, employment and education. Ms Radhika Rao, Senior Vice President and Economist, DBS Bank, Singapore, then spoke on macro perspectives in the areas of gross domestic product, spending and investments linking them to the broader policies announced in the budget. Mr Maneesh Tripathi, Vice Chairman, SICCI, the third speaker, spoke on the key budget announcements that are of interest to Singapore businesses. Dr Sachchidanand Shukla, Chief Economist at the Mahindra Group, India, delved into the fiscal space of the budget and presented the Indian corporate sector's views on them.

Finally, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics) at ISAS, spoke on the political orientation of the budget while drawing attention to the importance of the announcements made in the green space in the backdrop of India's COP26 summit commitments.

2
MAR

ISAS Panel Discussion (Hybrid) Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific



ISAS hosted a panel discussion on 'Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific' on 2 March 2022. The discussions focused on the shifting balance of naval power in the Indo-Pacific, the ensuing arms race and how it threatens the geopolitical and military stability within the region.

The panellists were Admiral Sunil Lanba (Retd), Former Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy; Admiral Tomohisa Takei (Retd), Chief of Staff, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense

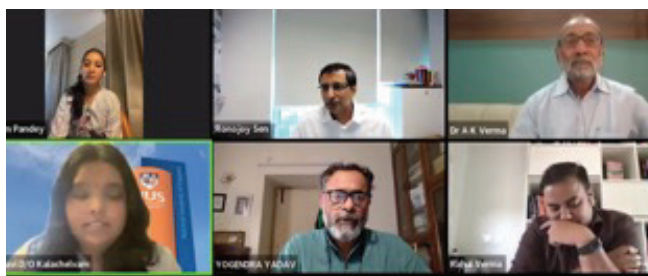
Force; Dr Chulanee Attanayake, Research Fellow ISAS; and Dr Euan Graham, Shangri-La Dialogue Senior Fellow, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore. Professor Kanti Prasad Bajpai, Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies and Director, Centre on Asia and Globalisation, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, moderated the event.

Admiral Lanba shared the Indian perspective behind the country's naval transformation while Admiral Takei explained the Japanese perspective and its approaches to dealing with the emerging security dilemma in the region. Dr Attanayake then touched on the small states in the Indo-Pacific and provided an insight into the roles of states like Sri Lanka in the region's maritime security landscape. Dr Graham looked at the issue from United States' perspective and expanded on the country's role and plans on working with regional institutions to promote stability the region.

Following the presentations, the speakers addressed questions from the attendees which covered various contemporary topics.

24
MAR

ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar) Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election: The Verdict and Beyond



On 24 March 2022, ISAS organised a panel discussion on 'Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election: The Verdict and Beyond'.

The panellists were Dr Rahul Verma, Fellow, Centre for Policy Research India; Dr Neelam Pandey, Senior Associate Editor, ThePrint, India; Dr A K Verma, Director, Centre for the Study of Society and Politics, India; and Mr Yogendra Yadav, Member, Swaraj India, Swaraj Abhiyan, Jai Kisan Andolan. Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics, society and Governance), ISAS, moderated the session.

In India's March 2022 state elections, Uttar Pradesh (UP) was the most keenly watched. It dominated predictions of most opinion and exit polls. The incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies were favourites to win and return to power in India's largest and most populous state. The election's second favourite was the Samajwadi

Party (SP). Though the BJP's tally of seats declined from the previous election held in UP in 2017 – the SP's tally increased significantly. Though the BJP had a comfortable majority, this increase in their opposition was of great interest, making the party re-think its on-ground tactics and how to preserve its profound influence within the state.

The panel analysed the reasons behind the BJP's victory and how this will impact UP's verdict on national politics. It also looked at the 2024 general elections, discussing UP's future trajectory and what is at stake for the upcoming elections.

20
APR

ISAS Distinguished Lecture

Post-COVID World Order: Global Initiatives, Strategies and Imperatives



On 20 April 2022, ISAS organised an in-person Distinguished Lecture titled 'Post-COVID World Order: Global Initiatives, Strategic and Imperatives'. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Dr A K Abdul Momen, delivered a lecture examining the geopolitical implications of the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Iqbal Singh Sevea, Director, ISAS, moderated the discussion session.

The lecture highlighted that the ripple effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is not only felt in the global healthcare

industry, but also in supply chains, global politics and social relations. It explored whether the pandemic is likely to tip the balance against global cooperation and multilateralism, and strengthen the forces of nationalism, populism and authoritarianism. Keeping Bangladesh at the forefront, the keynote speech examined the country's imperatives and opportunities.

During the discussion session, Dr Momen addressed several issues against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included the state of Bangladesh's healthcare sector and its management of the COVID-19 pandemic; the country's economic and growth development story over the years and its impending graduation from the United Nation's list of Least Developed Countries; the future of global and regional supply chains; contributions of and opportunities for Bangladeshi diaspora around the world; the impact of globally disruptive events like Russia's invasion of Ukraine; and Dhaka's foreign policy and balancing strategies. It was highlighted that a fundamental shift, with social and geopolitical reconciliation leading to people-centric development and security model in lieu of the existing state-centric model, is likely to ensue in a post COVID-19 world.

5
MAY

ISAS Seminar

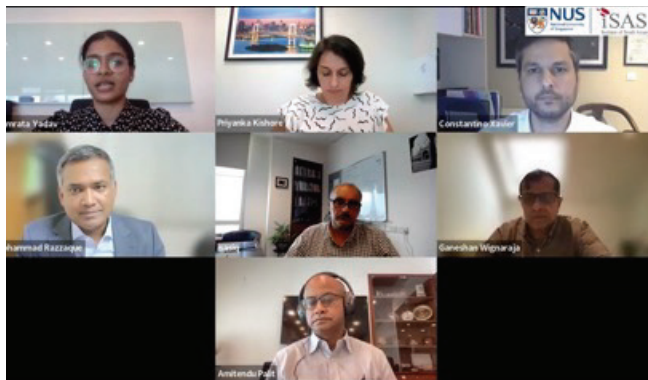
Imran Khan's Fall may be a New Beginning: Pakistan's Ongoing Tryst with Populism



ISAS organised a seminar on 'Imran Khan's Fall may be a New Beginning: Pakistan's Ongoing Tryst with Populism' on 5 May 2022. The guest speaker was Dr Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, Associate Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and Non-Resident Fellow at ISAS. Dr Rajshree Jetly, Visiting Fellow at the South Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, moderated the event.

Imran Khan was removed as Pakistan's prime minister through a drawn-out vote of no confidence. The opposition reasoned that Khan was unable to resolve the worrying economic situation in the country. With a weak parliament coalition and, most importantly, a failing relationship with the army, the vote of no confidence, though not new to Pakistan, ended up being passed successfully for the first time in the state's history. In the aftermath of the political crisis, one thing was evident – the unchanged nature of Pakistan and its relationship with its military.

Dr Akhtar noted that the military will continue to be a vital component of Pakistan, making it a hybrid regime as the military affects various instruments of the state. He further discussed the concerning increase in right-wing populist elements and how politics will be continued to be manipulated to the establishment's benefit in Pakistan. With increasing external debts and a fragile economy, it would be incredibly challenging for the current prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, to maintain stability within the country.

10
MAY**ISAS Panel Discussion (Webinar)****Bay of Bengal: Challenges of Progressing on Connectivity and Trade in Uncertain Times**

ISAS organised the panel discussion, 'Bay of Bengal: Challenges of progressing on Connectivity and Trade in Uncertain Times', on 10 May 2022. Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow; and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), ISAS, moderated the discussion.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Charter was signed in Colombo in March this year. Ironically, one of BIMSTEC's members – Sri Lanka – suffered from an economic and political crisis.

Ms Priyanka Kishore, Head of India and Southeast Asia, Macro and Investor Services at Oxford Economics, Singapore, began the discussion by pointing out the revival of the BIMSTEC. She highlighted that connectivity is central to BIMSTEC cooperation and its uniqueness lies in the partnership between the South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. This was followed by Dr M A Razzaque, Research Director, Policy Research Institute, Bangladesh, pointing out that BIMSTEC is directly related to the regional integration agenda. He argued that the recent global developments will reshape this regional agenda, especially for the Bay of Bengal region. Then, Dr Ganeshan Wignaraja, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at ISAS, and Senior Research Associate, Overseas Development Institute, United Kingdom, spoke of the coming of age of BIMSTEC, followed by outlining the importance of the infrastructural investment gap in the region.

Lastly, Dr Constantino Xavier, Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies, Centre for Social and Economic Progress, India, outlined that BIMSTEC needs more time and engagement to deliver on its intended agenda. He highlighted the varied goals and initiatives of the participating countries which makes strategising and harmonising among the countries essential.

8
JUN**ISAS Seminar****US-Pakistan Relations: How They Reflect and Affect Domestic Politics on Both Sides**

On 8 June 2022, ISAS organised a seminar titled 'US-Pakistan Relations: How They Reflect and Affect Domestic Politics on Both Sides'.

Professor Touqir Hussain, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Former Senior Diplomat of Pakistan, was the guest speaker for the event. ISAS' Director, Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, chaired the session.

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan's claim of the United States (US) having conspired to have him removed as the head of the government has no factual basis. Yet, the fact remains that Washington has long been imbedded in Pakistan's body politic. In the US, domestic politics has been entangled with the US-Pakistan relations since the beginning.

During his presentation, Professor Hussain focused on the linkage between domestic politics and United States-Pakistan relations on both sides. He looked at the historical perspective chronicling the passage of events that contributed to the chronic instability in their relationship.

Following the main presentations, Professor Hussain engaged the audience in an interactive and engaging discussion session. The event was attended by participants from the private and public sectors, the academia and the diplomatic community, including several South Asian Ambassadors.

ISAS EVENTS LISTING (JANUARY TO JUNE 2022)

ISAS Book Discussion	Regional Investment Pioneers in South Asia: The Payoff of Knowing your Neighbours	19 January 2022
ISAS Book Discussion	Governance by Stealth: The Ministry of Home Affairs and Making of the State	20 January 2022
ISAS-CPD Panel Discussion	Monitoring LDC Graduation Progress	25 January 2022
ISAS-SPF Panel Discussion	The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific	27 January 2022
ISAS-SICCI Panel Discussion	Budget 2022 and the Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth and Macroeconomic Stability	8 February 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	Modi's Midterm Test: 5 Indian States go to the Polls	9 February 2022
ISAS-Pakistan High Commission in Singapore Lecture	Pakistan's Capital Market Development	18 February 2022
ISAS Book Discussion	Whole Numbers and Half Truths: What Data Can and Cannot Tell us About Modern India	23 February 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	India and Digital Currencies: The Road Ahead	28 February 2022
ISAS-Workshop (Hybrid)	Quadrilateral Security Initiative and the Emerging Balance of Naval Power in the Indo-Pacific	2 March 2022
ISAS Joint Panel Discussion (Hybrid)	Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific	2 March 2022
ISAS Roundtable	Invasion of Ukraine: Dilemmas for South Asia	8 March 2022
ISAS-MEI Roundtable	India, the Middle East and the New Quad	9 March 2022
ISAS-AESCON Conference	Digital Connectivity and Opportunities for Asia and Europe	22-24 March 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election: The Verdict and Beyond	24 March 2022
SASP-ISAS Seminar	Afghanistan: The US-led NATO loss and Pakistan-backed Taliban gain	25 March 2022
ISAS-SASP Panel Discussion (Webinar)	Looking Ahead, Looking Back: The Challenge of Long Term Change in Uttar Pradesh	18 Apr 2022
ISAS Distinguished Lecture (Hybrid)	Post-COVID World Order: Global Initiatives, Strategies and Imperatives	20 April 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A South Asian Economic Crisis?	21 April 2022
ISAS Seminar (Hybrid)	Imran Khan's Fall May Be A New Beginning: Pakistan's Ongoing Tryst with Populism	5 May 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	Bay of Bengal: Challenges of Progressing on Connectivity and Trade in Uncertain Times	10 May 2022
ISAS Seminar (Hybrid)	US-Pakistan Relations: How They Reflect and Affect Domestic Politics on Both Sides	8 June 2022
ISAS Closed Door Session	India and China in a World Adrift	13 June 2022
ISAS Seminar	Sri Lanka in Crisis: Authoritarian Populism and People's Protests	15 June 2022
ISAS Panel Discussion	South Korea-India Economic and Strategic Ties under the Yoon Administration	27 June 2022

Note: Webinar unless otherwise stated

LATEST SPECIAL REPORTS AND SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS



In addition to the regularly online-published Briefs, Insights and Working Papers, ISAS brings out a series of publications that analyse current and frequently discussed developments in the South Asian region and its interactions with the rest of the world.

In the first half of 2022, we released five Special Reports and a publication under the South Asia Discussion Paper (SADP) series.

The first report, written exclusively by Narayan Lakshman, evaluates Dravidianism, as a transformational social movement in South India. Built around this notion of progressive social transformation and how its contours have shifted dramatically in response to profound changes in the political landscape, this report analyses and contextualises the tectonic shifts in Dravidian politics. It outlines their ramifications for the future of politics and policy in Tamil Nadu, the conception of citizenship and belonging in India.

The second report is a collaboration between ISAS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) on the ISAS International Conference on South Asia. Titled 'Five Fault lines: Reflections on South Asian Frontiers', the conference aimed to understand, reflect on and analyse the origins, evolutions and relevance of frontiers and boundaries in South Asia. This conference presented panellists from varied disciplines such as political science, sociology, anthropology, geography and history, who shared their analysis on colonial origins, postcolonial legacies and contemporary congealing of frontiers and borderlands in South Asia.

The third report is a by-product of the workshop on 'Regional Security Architecture in the Andaman Sea: Perspectives from Southeast Asia, India, and Beyond'. Jointly written by several scholars, this report presents perspectives from Southeast Asia, India and beyond on the regional security in the Andaman Sea. The report also seeks to understand and answer concerns over security importance, primary stakeholders' interests, threats and capabilities and how India and ASEAN can further enhance their cooperation in the Andaman Sea.

In the last 15 years of the Quad's existence, the most momentous shift for the Indo-Pacific's balance of power has been the emerging entente between Russia and China. Russia has found itself on the opposite side of the Quad, leading to a counter-coalition by Eurasia's continental powers. The fourth report by ISAS and Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), Japan, examines Russia's emerging role in the Indo-Pacific and its impact on the policies of the Quad and the European countries in the region.

The last report looks at the challenges faced by Nepal, which are reflective of the issues confronting all the small South Asian states. Prepared by ISAS and the Nepal Economic Forum, the report analyses Nepal's capabilities by transcending its limitations as a minor actor in global politics.

Titled 'The Ripple Effect of AUKUS: Arms, Allies and Anxieties in the Indo-Pacific', this issue of the SADP has been jointly brought out by ISAS and SPF. The announcement of AUKUS, a strategic alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (US) has been termed as a "profound geopolitical shift" globally. AUKUS reveals the conviction of these three parties that a conflict in Northeast Asia would be detrimental to the interests of the entire Indo-Pacific and must, therefore, be prevented. It also signifies the embrace of the balance of power logic in the US' approach towards the Indo-Pacific. The publication is shaped around the thoughts of experts who analyse the multi-faceted implications of AUKUS for the major stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific.

BOOKS

Palit, Amitendu, *Globalisation Impacts*, Springer, 2022

Datta, Sreeradha, *BIMSTEC: The Journey and the Way Ahead*, Pentagon Press, 2022

Rai, Vinod, *Not Just a Nightwatchman: My Innings in the BCCI*, Rupa Publications India, 2022

Hashim, Saiyed Raza; Mukherji, Rahul; and Mishra, Brajaraja, *Perspectives on Inclusive Policies for Development in India*, Springer, 2022

Ranjan, Amit; Pushpendra; and Chaturvedi, Shashank, *Migrants on the Move: Precarity in Times of the Pandemic*, Aakar, 2022

Kathuria, Sanjay, *Age of Ferment: Developments in Asia-European Trade Relations*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2022

SOUTH ASIAN DISCUSSION PAPERS

The Ripple Effect of AUKUS: Arms, Allies and Anxieties in the Indo-Pacific, Edited by Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; Ippeita Nishida, Senior Research Fellow, International Peace and Security Department, Sasakawa Peace Foundation; and Nishant Rajeev, Research Analyst, ISAS, June 2022

SPECIAL REPORTS

New Crossroads: Reinventing Dravidian Politics for the 21st Century, Dr Narayan Lakshman, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, ISAS, 1 February 2022

Five Fault Lines: Reflections on South Asian Frontiers, Dr Jasnea Sarma, Lecturer, University of Zurich, Switzerland and Non-Resident Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Claudia Chia, Research Analyst, ISAS, 21 April 2022

Regional Security Architecture in the Andaman Sea: Perspectives from Southeast Asia, India, and Beyond, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; Mr Nishant Rajeev, Research Analyst, ISAS; Ms Hoang Thi Ha, Lead Researcher, Political-Security Affairs, ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, NUS; Dr Sinderpal Singh, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the South Asia Programme, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, NTU; and Dr Ian Storey, Senior Fellow, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, NUS, 18 May 2022

The Bear in the Room: Russia and the Indo-Pacific, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; Ippeita Nishida, Senior Research Fellow, Security Studies Program, Sasakawa Peace Foundation; and Mr Nishant Rajeev, Research Analyst, ISAS, 30 May 2022

Nepal and the World, Ms Wini Fred Gurung, Research Analyst, ISAS; Mr Sujeev Shakya, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 June 2022

BRIEFS

888 The Fight Against Polio in Pakistan: Enduring Challenges and Recent Setbacks, Dr Imran Ahmed, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 January 2022

889 Protecting India's Data, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 January 2022

890 Repeal of the Farm Laws: Haste shows up Parliament's Failings, Dr Ronojoy Sen, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Politics and Governance), ISAS, 10 January 2022

891 Polling Dates in Five Indian States Announced: High Stakes for Political Parties, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 January 2022

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-
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-
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-
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-
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-
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-
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-
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-
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