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INDIA-SINGAPORE RELATIONS: THE NEXT PHASE

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IQBAL SINGH SEVEA

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

The latter half of 2024 has been an exciting and busy period at ISAS, as our scholars continue to engage with pivotal developments across South Asia.

In 2025, India and Singapore will celebrate 60 years of diplomatic ties, a milestone underscoring a deepening partnership. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2024 visit to Singapore, following his re-election, reaffirmed Singapore's centrality to India's 'Act East' policy. The elevation of bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has paved the way for enhanced collaboration in economic, defence and people-to-people exchanges. Our feature article explores the progress in these areas, highlighting initiatives that have strengthened the relationship and prospects for future cooperation.

South Asia's regional cooperation framework faces significant challenges. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has struggled to maintain relevance, due to stalled initiatives and infrequent summits. However, our analysis highlights how food security, a core priority of the SAARC Charter, remains an area for potential collaboration. The SAARC Food Bank, Agriculture Centre and Seed Bank are critical initiatives aimed at addressing food shortages, fostering climate-resilient agricultural research and ensuring seed security in the face of natural disasters and climate change. These initiatives demonstrate how regional cooperation can tackle the pressing challenges of undernourishment and environmental change.

Bangladesh recently underwent a political shift as student-led protests ousted Sheikh Hasina's government in August 2024. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus now leads an interim administration focused on reforming public administration, the judiciary and the electoral system. As elections are not expected anytime soon, Yunus needs to navigate diverse stakeholder interests, including the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), student movements, the military and Islamist groups. While the BNP has, thus far, found it expedient to support Yunus, it prioritises early elections over reforms. Meanwhile, fragmented student organisations are demanding broad

structural changes. Despite the military not wanting to play a direct political role now, it has its own interests and can effectively be the kingmaker. In this issue, we explore the challenges Yunus faces in balancing multiple interests and the implications these may have on the political future of Bangladesh.

In Sri Lanka, the election of Anura Kumara Dissanayake as President in September 2024 marked a political transformation. His National People's Power (NPP) party, which emerged as a response to widespread anti-establishment sentiment, campaigned on promises of systemic change, renegotiation of International Monetary Fund terms and anti-corruption measures. However, since the election, the NPP's stance on critical issues, including power devolution and economic policies, has softened. This issue examines whether Dissanayake's government can deliver on its promises amidst domestic and international pressures.

On the India-China front, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, briefed the parliament on progress in resolving the border stand-off in eastern Ladakh, which began in 2020. While China agreed to disengagement at six friction points in October 2024, significant challenges persist. India continues to demand military de-escalation, including troop withdrawals and infrastructure dismantling along the border, as prerequisites for normalising relations. Meanwhile, China prioritises the resumption of economic ties. We explore India's strategic approach to balancing security concerns with commercial interests.

ISAS marked its 20th anniversary with several notable events. In July 2024, President Tharman Shanmugaratnam graced our dinner reception. His presence was a tremendous honour for the Institute. We were also honoured to have Emeritus Senior Minister and ISAS' founding Patron, Mr Goh Chok Tong, and Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and ISAS' current Patron, Mr Heng Swee Keat, at the occasion, which included ISAS' stakeholders, constituents and partners. In September 2024, DPM Heng graced ISAS with his presence at the Singapore-India Forum, where he delivered the keynote address, initiating discussions on enhancing trade and business cooperation. In addition to this, we organised our annual International Conference on South

Asia in New Delhi. This conference was entitled 'India and South Asia: Addressing Defining Challenges of the Century'. Mr M Rajeshwar Rao, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, delivered the keynote address for the conference, which involved speakers from the public and private sectors, and the research fraternity in India.

ISAS also hosted several impactful events in recent months. In October 2024, ISAS welcomed Minister for Home Affairs and Law, Mr K Shanmugam. The visit highlighted ISAS' research priorities, initiatives and its role in fostering stronger ties between Singapore and South Asia through meaningful exchanges and discussions on regional developments. ISAS' seminars and panel discussions covered topics such as Sri Lanka's elections, the future of Bangladesh, the India-Singapore partnership in digitalisation and technology, and the impact of United States (US)-China dynamics on South Asia. Notable among these was a panel discussion held in New Delhi, titled 'The United States Presidential Election: Impact on India and South Asia'. The panel discussed the impact of Donald Trump's return to the US presidency, focusing on US-China relations, South Asia, global conflicts and the Indo-Pacific.

ISAS has maintained its commitment to scholarship with a rich output of publications over the past six months. These included four books on topics like the European Union's security role in the Indo-Pacific, India's Near East history, the aftermath of Bangladesh's Liberation War and India-China dynamics in Southeast Asia. Two South Asia Scans examined Indo-US defence cooperation and Sri Lanka's economic resilience, while our Special Reports explored India's economic policies and Quad-ASEAN climate and critical minerals collaboration. Additionally, a South Asia Discussion Papers publication addressed food security, focusing on nutrition, malnourishment and climate change in the region.

As we look ahead, ISAS remains committed to providing rigorous analysis of South Asia's challenges and opportunities.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

INDIA-SINGAPORE RELATIONS: The Next Phase

IQBAL SINGH SEVEA

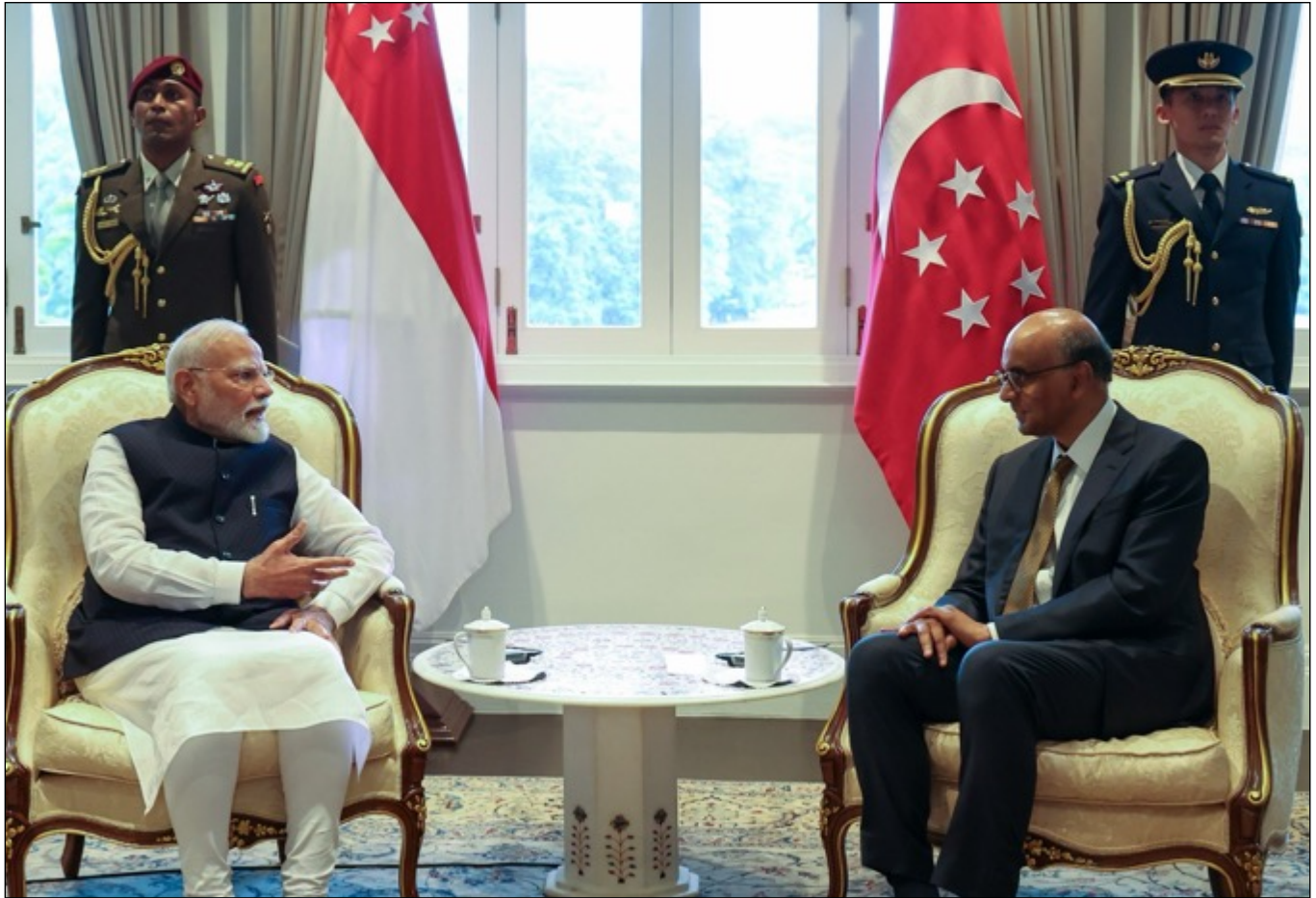


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In 2025, India and Singapore mark 60 years of bilateral diplomatic relations. The relationship between the two countries has grown steadily over the decades and is now poised to enter a new phase characterised by, in the words of Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, a "forward-looking agenda". The multiple ways in which the relationship stands to be deepened and broadened are clear from the discussions that took place and agreements reached when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Singapore in September 2024. The fact that Modi visited Singapore so

shortly after returning to power for a third term is symbolically significant in itself and reflects the centrality of Singapore to India's reinvigorated 'Act East' policy. During this visit, Wong and Modi agreed to elevate the ties between the two countries to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

India and Singapore have forged important economic, defence and people-to-people connections. With investments worth US\$167.47 billion (S\$224.95 billion), Singapore is amongst the top two sources of foreign direct investment into India.

Trade between the two countries has also continued to grow and they aim to achieve a trade target of US\$50 billion (S\$67.2 billion) by 2030. In addition, India and Singapore have established important channels of defence cooperation through a series of military exercises and exchanges. These include the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX). Held annually since 1994, SIMBEX is a naval exercise that facilitates interaction on various facets of maritime security. Looking ahead, both countries are expanding their defence cooperation to include cyber defence

and security. For instance, the First Cyber Policy Dialogue between India and Singapore was held in Singapore on 17 October 2024. At the Dialogue, both sides shared their threat assessments and discussed means of bilateral cooperation to tackle cyber threats.

New channels for diplomatic relations have also emerged. Notably, the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR), which was initiated in 2022, has emerged as an important platform for ministers from India and Singapore to exchange views and identify areas of cooperation. The recent meeting between Wong and Modi in Singapore was preceded by meetings between key ministers under the umbrella of the ISMR. Four memorandums of understanding (MoU) were agreed upon by the relevant ministers. These related to the semiconductor industry, cooperation in skill development, increasing the interoperability of India and Singapore's digital economies and greater collaboration in the healthcare sector.

The next phase of the India-Singapore bilateral relationship will build upon such strong foundations and respond to the evolving international order. The COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have drawn global attention to the vulnerabilities of supply chains. Moreover, the escalating competition between the United States (US) and China is also affecting international supply chains. While the impact of incoming US President Donald Trump's promise to impose tariffs on China remains a moot point, it is clear that countries like India have been positioning themselves to benefit from a 'China Plus One' strategy. Trade and strategic competition are also increasingly being mapped onto the domain of technology. The competition over semiconductors clearly illustrates how technology is firmly intertwined with contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic contestations.

To develop its semiconductor industry and limit reliance on China, the US government enacted the CHIPS Act of 2022, which imposed export controls that targeted China's semiconductor industry; allocated funding to support domestic semiconductor manufacturing; and restricted investments in China's semiconductor industry. Concomitantly, the US expanded its technological partnership and



Photo courtesy of Search / X

cooperation with India. Thus, India stands to potentially benefit from the push for the diversification of supply chains, particularly so in the domains of manufacturing and technology.

Global technological competition, the diversification of supply chains and the aim of establishing itself as an advanced manufacturing base have led India to position itself as a semiconductor hub in the making. The India Semiconductor Mission, which was launched in 2021, seeks to build the country's capacity to produce semiconductor chips through incentives, direct government support and attracting private investment. The task ahead for India essentially involves building a semiconductor ecosystem. Here, Singapore can be a particularly important partner. With several wafer fabrication plants, packaging and testing units, and large investments in research, Singapore has an established semiconductor ecosystem and has proven to be an important part of the global supply chain. In fact, Singapore produces almost 11 per cent of the world's semiconductor chips. With its broad experience, investment capacity and cutting-edge research, Singapore can play a role in facilitating the development of India's semiconductor industry. The recently signed MoU on semiconductors envisages Singapore playing such a role in supporting India's drive to develop into a semiconductor manufacturing hub. At the same time, the Singapore companies will be able to gain access to the Indian market.

With the potential to create one million new jobs, India's push to develop its semiconductor industry is also linked

to its broader need to create jobs for its young population. Apart from being the most populous country in the world, India is a young country. Approximately 43 per cent of its population is under the age of 25. To ensure that this young population is a demographic dividend, India needs to create jobs. Given the technological and digital transformations that are taking place in the manufacturing sector globally, many of these jobs will invariably need to be in the advanced manufacturing sector. This, in turn, will be contingent upon workers acquiring skills related to digital technology and artificial intelligence, amongst others. Given Singapore's experience in skills training, upskilling and providing cutting-edge technical education to its population, it will prove to be an important partner for India in this regard.

Overall, India and Singapore are well-placed to strengthen their economic, diplomatic and strategic relations. The "forward-looking agenda" of the next phase of the relationship will involve cooperation in sectors like advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and the green transition, and India and Singapore stand to gain by working together.

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COOPERATION FOR FOOD SECURITY:

Urgent and Possible under the SAARC

PUSPA SHARMA



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The Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) lists eight objectives of the Association, the first of which is “to promote welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life”. People’s welfare and quality of life are determined by several factors – a fundamental one being the achievement of food security. In turn, as a multidimensional concept that encompasses food availability, access, utilisation and stability as prerequisites, the achievement of food security is determined by multiple factors. Accordingly, several initiatives have been taken under the SAARC for food security in the region, although they are by no means exhaustive.

The first of these initiatives was the establishment of the SAARC Food Security Reserve in 1987, just two years after the establishment of the Association. The Reserve was established with the objective of providing a SAARC member access to food grains in the Reserve in the event of an emergency caused by natural or human-made calamity, and if the member’s national food grain reserve was insufficient to help it cope with the food crisis. The agreement came into force in 1988, but the Reserve remained unutilised due to procedural and practical difficulties.

In 2007, the agreement to establish the SAARC Food Bank was signed, which

came into force in 2013. The SAARC Food Bank replaced the earlier SAARC Food Security Reserve. The objective of the agreement on the Food Bank was widened to cover not only food shortages during emergencies but also during normal times. However, as with the Reserve, the Food Bank also remained unutilised. Nonetheless, efforts were being made to make the Food Bank operational.

Although the SAARC has been considered to have become largely non-functional, the SAARC Food Bank Board was holding its meetings and seeking ways to make the Food Bank operational. In 2020, a trial shipment/ transaction of food grains from the

SAARC Food Bank was considered for a step-by-step testing of the whole process. However, before this could be implemented, Bhutan drew food grains from the SAARC Food Bank Reserve maintained by India during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has made the SAARC Food Bank operational. It remains to be seen whether this would lead to normal operations of the SAARC Food Bank.

Regional cooperation for agriculture and rural development, which is essential for food security, is also a focus area of SAARC. The SAARC Agricultural Information Centre was set up in the early years of the SAARC's establishment. It started functioning from 1988. The Centre was renamed the SAARC Agriculture Centre in 2007, along with an enhanced mandate for agricultural research and development, policy planning and knowledge management. Some important initiatives have been taken under the SAARC's agriculture development mandate.

In 2007, the SAARC Chief Veterinary Officers' (CVOs) Forum was formed. Since then, a focus of the Forum has been on controlling transboundary animal diseases and building capacities on epidemiology activities. According to the SAARC Secretariat, the CVOs Forum has successfully supervised the exchange of high yielding buffalo germplasms – Nili Ravi of Pakistan and Murrah buffalo of India – to the SAARC member states. The Forum is working on establishing a SAARC Vaccine Bank and a SAARC Gene Bank.

Another notable initiative taken by the SAARC was the signing of the agreement to establish the SAARC Seed Bank in 2011 with the aim of achieving collective seed security in the region. The agreement, which includes the Material Transfer Agreement, came into force in 2016. The importance of the SAARC Seed Bank for seed security, which is the essence of food security, need not be overemphasised, more so in the context of climate change and natural disasters that have exacerbated seed variety losses.

Climate change and natural disasters have impacted South Asia's agriculture and food security in a number of other ways. To address climate change impacts overall, including in the food and agriculture sector, the



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SAARC leaders have committed to strengthening regional cooperation as reflected in a number of decisions, statements and declarations under the SAARC process. An agreement on the rapid response to natural disasters, which is in force since 2016, also exists within the SAARC cooperation framework.

The urgency of building and acting on these and other various initiatives that have a bearing on South Asia's food security is more pronounced today. The region has the largest number of undernourished people in the world. It is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change and natural disasters. Amidst such urgency, the SAARC should have been more active than ever. Unfortunately, the SAARC has been relegated to an organisation of least importance by its leaders. According to the SAARC Charter, meetings of the heads of states or governments of the member countries are supposed to be held at least once every year. However, only 13 such meetings have been held so far since the establishment of the Association in 1985. The last summit was held in 2014, a decade ago.

Thus, the SAARC appears to have lost its relevance when evaluated in terms of the summits. However, as briefly discussed above, some activities, including in relation to food and

agriculture, were continuing at lower levels, at least until 2019/2020. There were also initiatives for cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the activities that have taken place at the lower levels have been less than desired. Most of them also appear to have stalled in the past few years.

Given the current geopolitics in the South Asia region, it might be difficult to see progress in the SAARC at the summit level in the near future. However, progress can and should be made in areas that are less contentious and need urgent attention. Food security is one of them. This entails cooperation in all areas that relate to food security both directly and indirectly. The foundations for this purpose exist within the SAARC. These need to be strengthened and operationalised effectively in the true spirit of promoting people's welfare in the South Asia region.

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POST-SHEIKH HASINA: Shaping Bangladesh's Political Future

IQBAL SINGH SEVEA



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On 5 August 2024, student-led protests against autocratic governance and corruption in Bangladesh culminated in the fall of Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League-led government, which had ruled the country continuously for 16 years. Following Hasina's hasty departure to India, an interim government, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, was appointed. Yunus has indicated that instead of merely holding the fort until an election, the interim government aims to lay the foundations of a "new Bangladesh" by initiating a series of reforms.

In line with this, Yunus has appointed commissions to review Bangladesh's public administration, judiciary, police administration, the Anti-Corruption Commission, electoral system and constitution. The recommendations of

the commissions will be taken up by a National Consensus Commission tasked with implementing the reforms. As can be expected, this will prove to be a lengthy process. Thus, elections are unlikely to take place before the end of 2025. While Yunus enjoys widescale popularity, he does not have political legitimacy. Governing for an extended period without an election will require him to balance a broad range of political players. Yunus' situation is compounded by the fact that he will need to make difficult economic choices that may be unpopular. Thus, the political future of Bangladesh will depend on how the interim government negotiates between various stakeholders with different socio-political visions. These include the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), student movements, the military and Islamist movements.

The BNP, which has been the Awami League's main political opponent, is keen to capitalise on the anti-Hasina groundswell. The BNP's leadership is aware that it is currently the only political organisation that has an established ground network across the country. Thus far, the party's leadership has found it expedient to support Yunus and the interim government. It is keen to be seen as a party fighting authoritarianism and corruption. There are, however, growing calls from within the party to push for an early election. It is felt that the party needs to seize the moment, lest it be challenged by new political formations. Moreover, there is a recognition that given the political flux, the BNP needs to gain power to be able to plug into established forms of patronage politics. The BNP is also concerned by Yunus' push



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for reforms and is increasingly, albeit in a calculated manner, pushing for elections to be held before the implementation of any reforms. A more assertive stance by the BNP could result in a tussle with the interim government and result in more open political conflict.

On their part, many of the students who led the protests are firm in their demand for broad-based structural political reforms. Both the BNP and the Awami League are seen as responsible for the development of the political system against which they had risen. Thus, an early election that results in the victory of the BNP will not necessarily be welcomed. Instead, sections of the students are calling for an overhaul of the political structure, judiciary and state administration. Some are even calling for the country's first-past-the-post electoral system to be replaced by a proportional representational system. Such reforms will require amending the constitution. Recognising the need to assuage the students, Yunus has included their leaders in the interim government and commissions. However, the students themselves are not a uniform group and do not have an established political organisation. While attempts are afoot to establish a student-led political organisation, this will require time and financial resources.

Separately, Yunus may find himself having to balance the demands of the students against the need to not

alienate figures associated with the Awami League. While the Awami League may have dissipated for the moment, several figures associated with the party remain influential and are likely to be part of future political dispensations. Yunus has promised to try political figures responsible for the violent crackdown on students and those accused of corruption. The need to gain some form of support from the members of the Awami League may, however, limit how far he pushes ahead with this.

The Jamaat-e-Islami, which is an Islamist movement that actively participates in elections, is another movement seeking to influence Bangladesh's political future. While the movement's ability to partake in the political sphere was periodically restricted by Hasina, it has established a network of educational, religious and welfare institutions. The movement also openly supported the student protests. Looking ahead, to play a major role in defining the political agenda, the movement needs to adapt to the new context and respond to the demands of the protestors. As it stands, the movement has never gained more than 10 per cent of the popular vote in elections. Despite its lack of political success, the Jamaat-e-Islami is likely to act as an influential pressure group in the coming months.

While the military is currently not keen to formally assume political control, it will play a crucial role in shaping

Bangladesh's political future. Military chief, General Wakar-uz-Zaman, has expressed his unequivocal support for the interim government and its plans. Despite this, the military will effectively serve as a kingmaker. Yunus and the interim government will need the military's support to push through reforms. However, the demands for structural reforms may complicate relations between the military and the interim government. For instance, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which has been accused of violence against the protestors and the disappearance of those who opposed Hasina, is made up of members from various branches of the military. The RAB has long been alleged to have committed human rights abuses and was even sanctioned by the United States in 2021.

Overall, Yunus and the interim government will need to balance the interests of various stakeholders in the coming months. If the interim government fails to do so, there is every possibility of the political contestations playing out in the streets again. This may well push the military to play a more political role.

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ELECTIONS AND THE NPP'S RISE TO POWER:

What's Next for Sri Lanka?

RAJNI GAMAGE



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On 21 September 2024, Anura Kumara Disanayake, leader of the National People's Power (NPP), was elected as Sri Lanka's 9th Executive President. Securing only 42 per cent of the vote at the presidential elections, the NPP went on to win a super-majority at the general elections held in November 2024.

The NPP alliance, which formed in July 2019, secured only around three per cent of the vote at the last presidential elections. Since 2022, the NPP rapidly ascended to popularity by providing leadership to the anti-establishment anger within the spontaneous mass protests which ousted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa from power

for policy missteps that led to the economic crisis that year.

The NPP was able to capture the demands for a 'system change', stemming from a growing political legitimacy deficit of the ruling political elite, despite not organising or actively leading these protests. Its small presence in parliament, having only three members of parliament (MP) since the last parliamentary election, does not have a record of corruption in power and spoke out consistently against corruption and the declining state of Sri Lanka's political culture.

The electoral results demonstrated the metamorphosis of the NPP.

Disanayake is also the leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the main political party within the NPP, which is an alliance of otherwise smaller associations. The JVP subscribed to a Marxist-Leninist ideology and led two largely youth insurgencies in 1971 and 1988-89. The NPP's move towards a more centre-left discourse appealed to broader constituencies, including the business communities and middle classes. During its presidential campaign rallies, the NPP signalled that it would continue the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme that Sri Lanka had entered in 2023, although promising to renegotiate its terms

to be more favourable to vulnerable sections of the people.

The NPP also took a much more accommodative stance on the issue of power devolution within the Provincial Council system. The JVP, and even the NPP, had in the past, strongly opposed the 13th Amendment and Provincial Council system, in line with its anti-Indian and pro-Sinhala Buddhist nationalist stances. In the 2024 elections, the NPP adopted a more inclusive platform. In the November general elections, the NPP performed relatively well in areas where minority communities are numerically high such as the North, hill-country and Central Colombo.

Following his presidential victory, Dissanayake dissolved the parliament and formed a three-member cabinet overseeing 15 ministries, comprising the three existing NPP MPs. One of these MPs, Dr Harini Amarasuriya, was appointed as the 16th Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. Subsequently, snap general elections were scheduled for 14 November 2024.

Despite strong criticisms by the NPP towards the IMF programme and the economic agenda of the past government, after the election, continuities with the existing Central Bank Governor and Treasury Secretary indicate no major policy departures. During the election campaign, Dissanayake had promised to lower taxes and increase public sector salaries. The NPP has indicated that it will pursue alternative revenue-raising means for the state but initiatives on this front remain unspecified so far. Despite the NPP not undertaking a dramatic reversal of the Ranil Wickremesinghe government's reform programme, some of its recent policy decisions indicate some of its more left-oriented ideological stances. These include the decision to not privatise Sri Lankan Airlines, which had been part of the past government's state-owned enterprise reforms.

During the election campaigns, the NPP promised a transformational shift in the political culture and ensured transparency, accountability, and efficient use of public finance to benefit 'national interests' and not just a small group of elites. Once in government, the NPP has attempted to carry out this mandate through publicised demonstrations to prevent



Photo courtesy of Twitter

wastage of state resources and make the government more accessible to the people. The resignation of some state officials who were involved in, or alleged violation of the law, was followed by new appointments. Dissanayake also promised to deliver justice on several high-profile incidents, such as the 2015 Central Bank bond scam and the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks.

Meanwhile, balancing relations with India and China is a key challenge for the new government. Upon coming to power, the government stated that it will review all Indian-related connectivity projects, and this comes on the back of Dissanayake promising to cancel Adani's US\$440 million (S\$602.8 million) wind power project in Sri Lanka during the presidential campaign. Successive Sri Lankan governments have also faced pressure from the 'Western bloc' over progress on transitional justice and reconciliation, and the state of human rights. In order to qualify for preferential trade access such as the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus scheme, the new government will have to provide assurances on these fronts. Since coming to power, the government has continued the policy of opposing the 51/1 resolution of the United Nations Human Rights Council and stated it will not agree to any resolution that extends the powers of the collection of external evidence mechanisms. The developments on the foreign policy fronts are among the key tests for the new government.

The NPP has indicated that it will pursue structural reforms for a new constitution, the key among which are abolishing the executive presidency and carrying out electoral reforms. The NPP has a two-thirds majority which is required to pass such structural reforms in parliament.

The NPP's ability to govern in a stable and effective manner depends largely on the performance of the opposition political forces, which are increasingly fragmented and unlikely to form a united front against the NPP. The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (whose candidate was runner-up in the presidential election) and the (formerly Wickremesinghe-led) 'gas cylinder' coalition or New Democratic Front represent support for more liberal economic reforms, while Sinhala Buddhist and economic nationalism find representation within the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, led by Namal Rajapaksa, and the Sarvajaya Balaya, led by media tycoon, Dilith Jayaweera. While many of these opposition parties and actors are delegitimised by the 2022 mass protests and economic crisis, their experience in governance and networks of patronage indicate that they can pose a formidable challenge to the NPP.

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AFTER THE LADAKH DISENGAGEMENT: Commercial and Security Imperatives in India-China Ties

C RAJA MOHAN

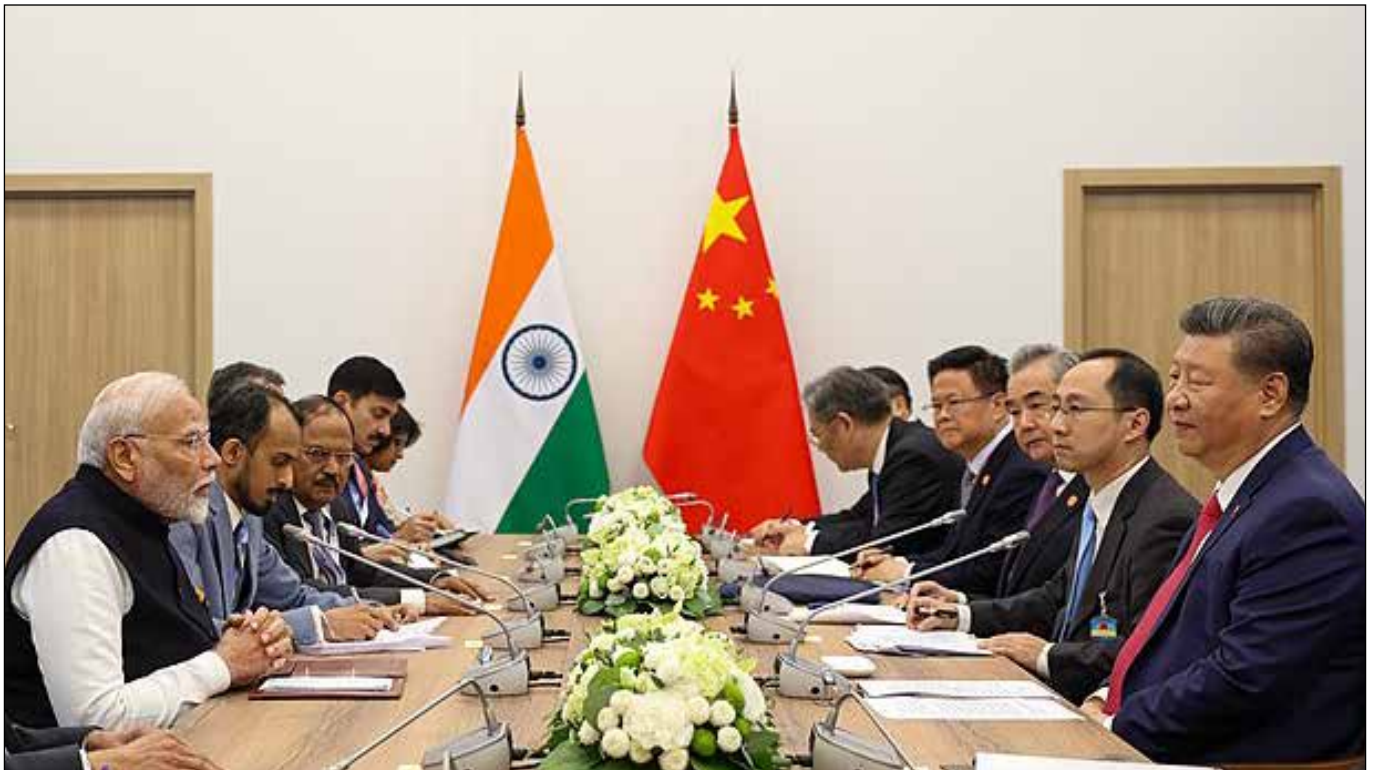


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In early December 2024, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar presented similar written statements to both houses of the parliament, summarising the situation on the eastern Ladakh border after an extended military standoff between the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army since the spring of 2020 and signalled cautious optimism about rebuilding normal relations with China.

Four years of a deep chill in bilateral relations followed Beijing's surprising incursions in eastern Ladakh during the spring of 2020 and the death of several soldiers in the Galwan valley clashes of that summer. Unfreezing

this relationship has been hard, with Beijing holding the military upper hand on the border.

However, India held steady with its demand for restoring peace and tranquillity on the border that was disturbed by the sudden, and as yet unexplained, Chinese decision to move a large number of troops to the line of actual control (LAC) in violation of many previous agreements for military confidence building on the border. It also imposed several economic measures limiting commercial ties with China and putting political dialogue on ice.

New Delhi insisted that the state of the border reflects the state of the relationship and rejected the Chinese argument that the border situation should not come in the way of normal economic ties and political engagement. China finally relented with an agreement on 21 October 2024 to complete the military disengagement from the six friction points on the LAC just before Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Chinese president Xi Jinping on the margins of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia.

The two sides have now agreed to resume talks at the level of foreign secretaries and the special



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representatives on the border question (conducted at the level of national security advisers), signalling the resumption of a broader political dialogue. As Jaishankar put it, “The disengagement has now been achieved in full in Eastern Ladakh through a step-by-step process.... With the task of disengagement completed, it is now our expectation that discussions would commence in regard to the remaining issues that we had placed on the agenda.”

Over the last four years, the only dialogue between the two sides has been about the military situation on the border.

Expectations for a rapid expansion of political and economic cooperation between the two countries, however, must be tempered. Much military work remains to be done on the border. On its part, New Delhi would like to see the ‘disengagement’ of troops from close positions followed by a military ‘de-escalation’.

Over the last four years, both sides have deployed a large number of troops on the frontier and have constructed a wide range of facilities to support them. India would like to see the withdrawal of the troops to their traditional peace time locations and dismantling of the infrastructure. China, on other hand, is in a rush to resume bilateral commercial cooperation and would like New Delhi to lift the restrictions it imposed on the economic engagement in 2020.

Beijing’s focus on restoring full commercial ties has found a strong and surprising resonance in the Indian business community that is

pressing the government to open up to Chinese imports and or investments. This would seem to make sense, given the massive dependence of the Indian industry on cheap Chinese inputs. They suggest that India’s export success is tied to the import of intermediary goods from China. This idea found reflection in the annual *Economic Survey of India* published in July 2024.

There is a strong resistance, however, to this from the national security ministries, including foreign, defence and home. Critics of the call for easing the conditions for economic cooperation with China argue that such near-term instrumentalism could turn out to be a disaster for the Indian economy. They point to the fact that China is in the middle of a massive export boom – the so-called ‘Second China Shock’ – as Beijing puts priority on production for external markets rather than domestic consumption. China is also importing less from the world. Most countries in the world, including its Asian neighbours, are trying to cope with Beijing’s dumping by erecting barriers against Chinese imports. Opening up to China now could decimate Indian manufacturing, especially its small and medium enterprises. It will also help explode India’s trade deficit with China – currently running at more than US\$100 billion (S\$134 billion) a year.

Addressing an international gathering in New Delhi, Jaishankar said (without referring to China), that national security considerations will continue to be a key factor in the consideration of commercial engagement with China. As reported by Rezaul H Laskar in

Hindustan Times, Jaishankar stated, “Like it or not, we are increasingly in an era of leveraging, if not of weaponisation. Policymakers, therefore, have to place national security filters when it comes to economic decisions, including those of investment. This is the trend the world over and we would ignore it at our own peril.”

As the ‘commercial versus security’ debate unfolds in India, it is unlikely that New Delhi will be hustled into a deeper commercial embrace with China. There is another important reason for India to hold its nerve for now – it is the prospect for an intensified trade war between Donald Trump’s America and China.

As the geo-economic and geopolitical contest between Washington and Beijing intensifies, India would want to see if the new geopolitical dynamic encourages China to make nice with its neighbours by modifying its recent muscular approach to border disputes and is more amenable to balanced trade relationships.

New Delhi’s focus for now remains riveted on military de-escalation on the border. That does not mean there is no room at all for other valuable steps in unfreezing the bilateral relationship. Small steps such as the restoration of direct flights, easier grant of visas and bilateral consultations on the changing regional and global geopolitical environment could set the stage for more substantive moves in the months ahead.

Professor C Raja Mohan is a Visiting Research Professor at ISAS. He can be contacted at crmohan@nus.edu.sg.

ISAS NON-RESIDENT SENIOR FELLOWS AND NON-RESIDENT FELLOWS

New Appointment

As part of our ongoing efforts to expand ISAS' work and extend our global reach, we are pleased to announce the appointment of a new scholar as a Non-Resident Fellow. This fellowship aims to foster a dynamic community of scholars, analysts, journalists and practitioners from around the world who focus on South Asia.

We are delighted to welcome:



Dr Vinay Kaura

Assistant Professor
Department of International Affairs and Security Studies
Sardar Patel University of Police,
Security and Criminal Justice
Rajasthan, India

Reappointments

In addition, ISAS is pleased to confirm the reappointment of the following Non-Resident Senior Fellows and Non-Resident Fellows for a further term of one year, from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026:

Non-Resident Senior Fellows



Professor Katharine Adeney

Professor of Comparative Politics
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Nottingham
United Kingdom



Dr Narayan Lakshman

Senior Associate Editor
The Hindu



Professor Sreeradha Datta

Professor, Jindal School of International Affairs
O.P Jindal Global University
Sonapat, India



Dr Li Li

Deputy Director and Senior
Research Professor
Tsinghua University
Institute for International Relations
Beijing, China



Professor Robin Jeffrey

Emeritus Professor, La Trobe University; and
Emeritus Professor
Australian National University



Professor Nalin Mehta

Dean, School of Modern Media
University of Petroleum and Energy Studies; and
Advisor, Global University Systems, India



Mr Sanjay Kathuria

Visiting Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and
Economic Progress
Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University; and
Visiting Faculty, Ashoka University, India



Mr Nitin Pai

Director, Takshashila Institution
Bangalore, India


Dr Nishchal N Pandey

Director, Centre for South Asian Studies; and
Convener, Consortium of South Asian
Think-Tanks
Kathmandu, Nepal


Professor Louise Tillin

Professor of Politics
King's India Institute
King's College London
United Kingdom


Mr Sujeev Shakya

Chair, Nepal Economic Forum


Dr Ganeshan Wignaraja

Visiting Senior Fellow
ODI London

Non-Resident Fellows

Dr Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

Associate Professor
National Institute of Pakistan Studies
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad
Pakistan


Dr Anuradha Rao

Founder, CyberCognizanz
Singapore


Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed

Associate Professor
National Defense College of the
United Arab Emirates
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates


Dr Jasnea Sarma

Lecturer in Political Geography
University of Zurich
Switzerland


Dr Chulanee Attanayake

Sessional Lecturer and PhD Researcher
School of Social Sciences, Media,
Film and Education
Swinburne University of Technology
Victoria, Australia


Dr Jivanta Schoettli

Assistant Professor,
Dublin City University; and
Director, Ireland India Institute
Dublin, Ireland


Dr Avinash Paliwal

Senior Lecturer, International Relations; and
Deputy Director, South Asia Institute
SOAS University of London


Dr Suruchi Thapar-Björkert

Docent and Associate Professor
Department of Government
University of Uppsala, Sweden


Dr Manjeet Pardesi

Senior Lecturer in International Relations
Asia Research Fellow,
Centre for Strategic Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
New Zealand

The Institute looks forward to their continued contributions in advancing the understanding of the South Asian region, and in sharing valuable knowledge and insights with policymakers, the business community, academia and civil society in Singapore and beyond.

SINGAPORE'S PRESIDENT GRACES ISAS' 20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER



ISAS had the distinct honour of hosting Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam as the Guest-of-Honour for our 20th anniversary dinner on 11 July 2024.

The event was also graced by our founding Patron, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, and our current Patron, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat. Close to 200 distinguished guests from the public and private sectors, diplomatic corps, academia, research community and non-governmental organisations joined the celebration.

President Tharman's address captivated the audience with its inspiring and insightful perspectives. He highlighted the critical role of collaboration between India and Southeast Asia in fostering a new era of opportunity, equity, and sustainability. His reflections on addressing global trends, particularly the rise of industrial policies, were both thought-provoking and impactful.

A memorable highlight of the evening was the presentation of ISAS' specially curated artwork, 'Tree of Life', to President Tharman. This piece celebrates the richness of South Asian culture and its enduring significance.

Reflecting on two decades of excellence, ISAS has grown into a respected institution for research and analysis on contemporary South Asia. Its work continues to deepen understanding of the region's complexities and their implications for Singapore and the rest of the world.

Here's to many more years of meaningful contributions and impactful work!



MINISTER K SHANMUGAM VISITS ISAS



On 28 October 2024, ISAS was delighted to play host to Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law. The visit was an invaluable opportunity to highlight ISAS' research priorities, initiatives and its growing influence in fostering a deeper understanding of South Asia's dynamics and their relevance to Singapore. It also served as a platform to engage the minister on pivotal developments shaping the relationship between Singapore and South Asia and to discuss ISAS' strategic role in strengthening bilateral and multilateral exchanges in the region.

The ISAS research team engaged Minister Shanmugam on a broad range of topics critical to the Singapore-South Asia partnership. These included discussions on the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable, a key forum for enhancing bilateral cooperation; India's impressive growth potential

and the opportunities it presents for Singapore; and the significance of state-level developments in India, which have direct implications for trade, investment and people-to-people ties.

Mr Shanmugam's visit reinforced ISAS' commitment to being a bridge between Singapore and South Asia through rigorous research, thought leadership and strategic dialogue. It also underscored the importance of continued collaboration in addressing shared challenges and harnessing emerging opportunities for mutual benefit.

ISAS PANEL DISCUSSION AND CONFERENCE IN INDIA

On 28 November 2024, ISAS hosted a panel discussion on 'The United States Presidential Election: Impact on India and South Asia' in New Delhi, India. The event featured Ambassador Nirupama Rao Menon, former Foreign Secretary of India and former Indian Ambassador to the United States (US) and China, and Mr Ashok Kumar Mirpuri, Head of International Policy & Governance at Temasek International, and Singapore's former Ambassador to the US.

The panel discussed the potential impact of Donald Trump's return to the US presidency, focusing on US-China relations, South Asia, global conflicts and the Indo-Pacific. It highlighted multilateralism concerns and the role of the smaller South Asian states amid US-China rivalry. Trump's transactional approach was noted for bolstering US-India ties in defence, security and technology during his first term.

A day later, ISAS held its annual International Conference 2024, themed 'India and South Asia: Addressing Defining Challenges of the Century', in New Delhi. This year's event marked ISAS' 20th anniversary, underscoring two decades of fostering insights into South Asia.

During his keynote address, Mr M Rajeshwar Rao, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), emphasised the need for robust climate financing, sector-specific data development and India's efforts through the RBI Climate Risk Information System.

The discussions during the plenary sessions covered India's evolving role in global governance, influenced by geopolitical tensions and supply chain dependencies, particularly on China for pharmaceutical inputs. The insights on trade and connectivity focused on the impact of supply chain securitisation and the shift from globalisation to alternative economic structures. The climate change session highlighted South Asia's vulnerability, India's leadership in climate politics and the critical role of data and private sector involvement.

The conference concluded with a synthesis of panel highlights, reflecting on South Asia's critical challenges and opportunities in shaping the 21st century.



ISAS RECENT EVENTS

8
AUG

ISSD PUBLIC FORUM

Singapore and India: Partners in Technology and Digitalisation



On 8 August 2024, the India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue hosted a public forum on 'India and Singapore: Partners in Technology and Digitalisation'.

The event explored opportunities for bilateral collaboration in technology and digitalisation. Comprising panellists from India and Singapore, the event examined India's progress in digital public infrastructure and its potential to strengthen

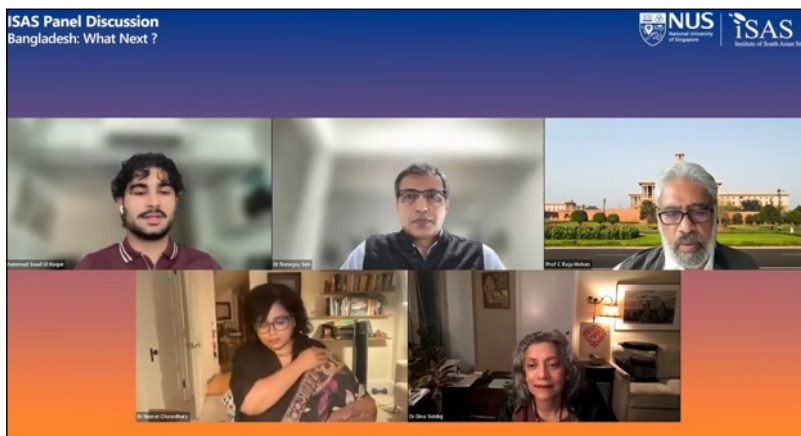
ties with Singapore. It also called for ethical digital development; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics education; and initiatives like the 'Alliance for Action' against online harms, particularly targeting women. At the same time, it addressed the strategic role of technology in governance and geopolitics, focusing on privacy frameworks and cross-border payment systems like India's Unified Payments Interface and Singapore's PayNow. Lastly, it emphasised digital well-being, inclusive governance and cybersecurity, urging joint efforts to tackle online harms and promote responsible technology use.

The forum concluded with discussions on replicating India's *Aadhar* system in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, regulating digital initiatives, and leveraging technology for climate change and water management solutions.

15
AUG

ISAS SEMINAR

Bangladesh: What Next?



ISAS hosted a seminar titled 'Bangladesh: What Next?' on 26 September 2024, featuring Professor AI Mahmud Titumir from the Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Professor Titumir addressed Bangladesh's ongoing socio-political instability following recent uprisings, asserting that any discussion about the country must adopt an aspirational perspective. He highlighted concerns over economic policy reconstruction, noting a critical disconnect between the policymakers' understanding of nominal and real economies, which often leads to implementation challenges.

The seminar also examined the erosion of political institutions and underscored the importance of equitable power distribution in shaping Bangladesh's development. Professor Titumir advocated for sustainable strategies focused on restoring and rebuilding institutions, emphasising that successful nation-building requires production-oriented economic policies and progressive socio-political frameworks.

5
SEP

ISAS-SIPF-SBF FORUM

Singapore-India Forum: The Next Phase



On 5 September 2024, ISAS, in collaboration with the Singapore India Partnership Foundation and the Singapore Business Federation, hosted the Singapore-India Forum titled 'The Next Phase'. The event drew nearly 250 participants and featured a keynote address by Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and ISAS' Patron, Mr Heng Swee Keat.

During his address, Mr Heng highlighted the enduring Singapore-India partnership as a model for fostering growth and cooperation in an increasingly contested world. He expressed confidence that continued bilateral exchanges

will unlock new opportunities for collaboration, benefiting not only both nations but also the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Asia and beyond.

The forum included panels featuring leaders from the public and private sectors. Discussions centred on strategic areas of collaboration, such as business connectivity, digitisation, artificial intelligence, sustainability, decarbonisation, green hydrogen and food security – topics aligned with priorities from the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable and other bilateral initiatives.

3-4
OCT

ISAS-KAS WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC FORUM

Cyber Resilience in the Indo-Pacific



On 3 and 4 October 2024, ISAS and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore (KAS-Singapore), co-organised a workshop titled 'Cyber Resilience in the Indo-Pacific'. The event brought together experts from Europe and Asia to examine the cyber threat landscape and assess cybersecurity strategies in Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and India.

The workshop explored the vulnerabilities posed by intersecting intense security competition and rapid

digitalisation in the Indo-Pacific. It highlighted gaps in current approaches, complexities of emerging cyber threats and the diverse cybersecurity architectures of the four countries.

A key takeaway was the introduction of 'Resist, Recover, and Adapt' indicators, which the participants used to evaluate the nations' ability to: resist cyberattacks on digital infrastructure, recover through cybersecurity mechanisms and adapt by allocating resources, coordinating inter-agency efforts and engaging internationally.

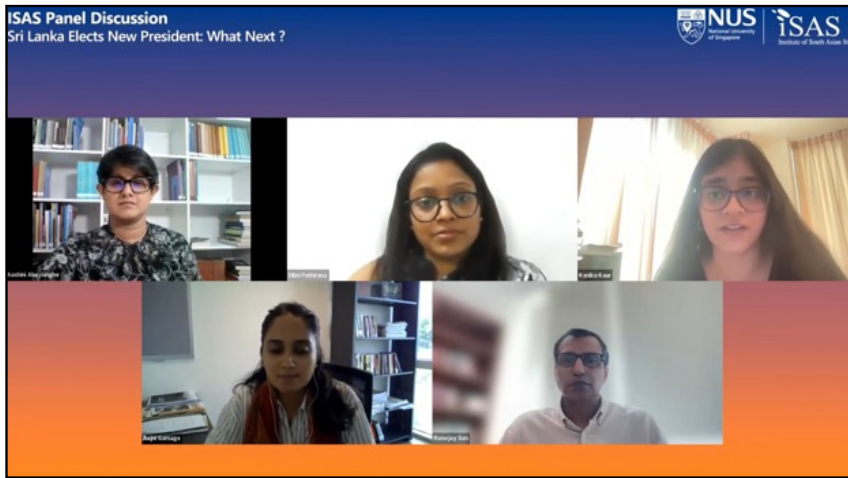
On 3 October 2024, ISAS and KAS-Singapore hosted a public forum, 'Cyber Security in the Indo-Pacific,' addressing challenges like advanced persistent threats, critical infrastructure attacks, disinformation, deep fakes and artificial intelligence-cyber hybrid threats.

Both the workshop and panel discussion stressed the importance of mitigation strategies, building domestic institutional capacity and fostering international collaboration to enhance cyber resilience.

15
OCT

ISAS PANEL DISCUSSION (ONLINE)

Sri Lanka Elects a New President: What Next?



ISAS hosted an online panel discussion 'Sri Lanka Elects a New President: What Next?' on 15 October 2024. The panel featured Ms Subhashini Abeysinghe, Economist and Research Director at Verite Research; Dr Dilini Pathirana, Senior Lecturer at the University of Colombo; and Dr Rajni Gamage, Research Fellow at ISAS.

Ms Abeysinghe focused on Sri Lanka's economy, particularly the International Monetary Fund's bailout programme and its governance diagnostic assessment, which highlighted governance weaknesses and corruption risks. She emphasised the need to strengthen accountability institutions.

Dr Pathirana examined the geopolitics of foreign investment, a pivotal issue in the election. She underscored the significance of Chinese and Indian investments and discussed the president's pledge to cancel Adani's wind power project, a move with substantial geopolitical ramifications, particularly for India-Sri Lanka relations.

Dr Gamage analysed the post-election political landscape, noting fragmentation among minority parties and internal divisions in major political groups. She predicted the rise of smaller political camps, potentially allowing the government greater flexibility in forging alliances.

17
OCT

ISAS-SAU ROUNDTABLE (ONLINE)

Governing Regional Commons in South Asia: Prospects for Cooperation and Inclusion



The joint roundtable on 'Governing Regional Commons in South Asia: Prospects for Cooperation and Inclusion' was co-organised by the Department of International Relations and the Institute of South Asian Studies at South Asian University (SAU) and ISAS on 17 October 2024. Held in a hybrid format, the in-person session took place at SAU.

The opening session, chaired by Dr Jayashree Vivekanandan, Chairperson of the Department of International Relations at SAU, featured remarks by Professor Sanjay Chaturvedi, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies at SAU, and Associate Professor Iqbal Singh Sevea, Director of ISAS.

The panel presentations included insights from Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow at ISAS; Dr Dhananjay Tripathi, Associate Professor at SAU; Dr Puspa Sharma, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS; and Dr Medha Bisht, Associate Professor at SAU.

The roundtable concluded with an interactive discussion, chaired by Dr Vivekanandan, fostering dialogue on cooperation and inclusion in managing shared resources across South Asia.

13
NOV

ISAS-NIICE PANEL DISCUSSION (ONLINE)

The Political Economy of Neighbouring Countries' Investments in Nepal



On 13 November 2024, ISAS and the Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE) jointly hosted an online panel discussion titled 'The Political Economy of Neighbouring Countries' Investments in Nepal'. The panel discussion featured Dr Puspita Sharma, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS; Professor Nisha Taneja

from the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations; Dr Guo Bingyan, Associate Professor at Sichuan International Studies University, China; and Dr Pramod Jaiswal, Research Director at NIICE.

The online event examined the state of foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign investments in Nepal, with a focus on its economic engagements with India and China. The speakers analysed the strategic drivers of these investments, their economic impact on Nepal and the broader geopolitical implications for South Asia.

Discussions also explored Nepal's role in regional trade and connectivity, addressing the challenges of balancing India and China's influences while maintaining economic sovereignty and sustainable growth. The key obstacles to FDI and sectors attracting investment in Nepal were also highlighted.

14
NOV

ISAS-EAI LAUNCH EVENT

China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy



On 14 November 2024, ISAS and the East Asian Institute (EAI) launched a joint series, focusing on China and India and their roles in shaping the global economy. As the world's first and third-largest economies by purchasing power parity, China and India hold significant global influence. This collaboration between two NUS research

institutes aims to examine their growth strategies and policy-driven impacts on the global economy.

Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and National Development, Ms Sim Ann, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the importance of China and India as economic powerhouses and urging Singapore and the region to deepen engagement with both countries to foster regional growth and development.

The discussions then shifted to global economic perspectives. Representatives from the International Monetary Fund, Dr Steven Barnett and Dr Ranil Salgado, presented insights on the economic outlook and reform priorities of the two nations.

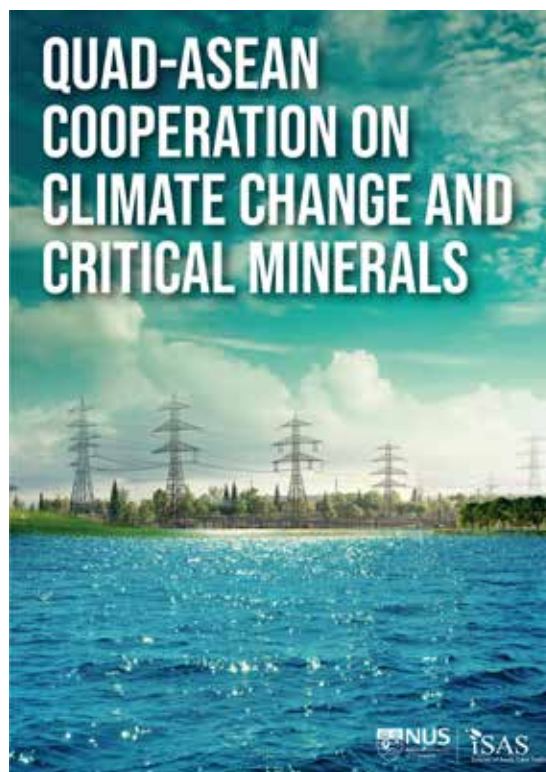
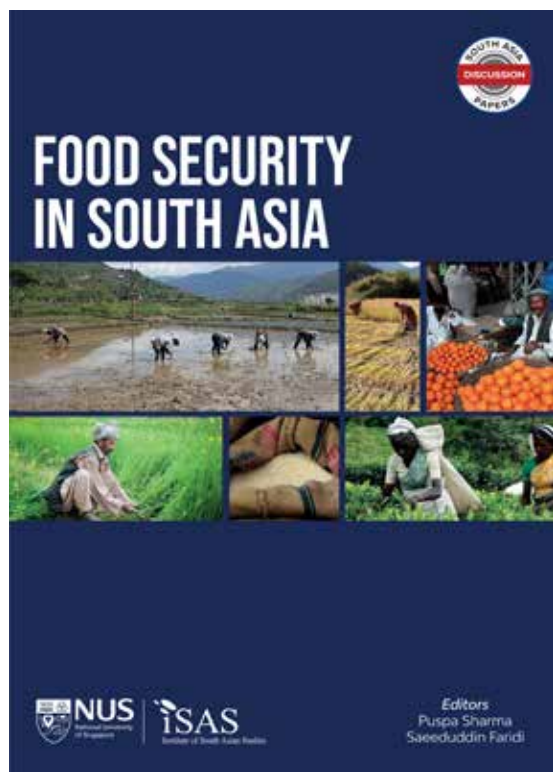
Expert commentaries were provided by Mr Teh Kwee Chin of GIC and Dr Taimur Baig of DBS Bank.

The launch was followed by an inaugural by-invitation workshop titled 'China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy', co-hosted by ISAS and EAI.

ISAS EVENTS LISTING (JULY TO DECEMBER 2024)

ISAS 20 th Anniversary Celebration	ISAS 20 th Anniversary Dinner Reception	11 Jul 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion	Asia after Europe: Imagining a Continent in the Long Twentieth Century	12 Jul 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion (Hybrid)	India Budget FY2025: Prospects and Challenges	25 Jul 2024
ISAS Dialogue	India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD) 2024	7-8 Aug 2024
ISSD Public Forum	Singapore and India: Partners in Technology and Digitalisation	8 Aug 2024
ISAS-Pathfinder Foundation Panel Discussion (Online)	Domestic Politics of South Asia: Special Focus on Sri Lanka	12 Aug 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion (Online)	Bangladesh: What Next?	15 Aug 2024
ISAS Closed Door Session	The United States' Policy in the Indo-Pacific: A Singapore Perspective	21 Aug 2024
ISAS Seminar	The US Presidential Elections and its Impact for South Asia	30 Aug 2024
ISAS-SIPF-SBF Forum	Singapore-India Forum: The Next Phase	5 Sep 2024
ISAS-ODI Panel Discussion (Online)	The 2024 Elections in Sri Lanka: Political and Economic Prospects	18 Sep 2024
ISAS Seminar	Bangladesh: What's at Stake?	26 Sep 2024
ISAS Seminar	China in South Asia: Approach and Implications	1 Oct 2024
ISAS-KAS Public Forum	Cyber Resilience in the Indo-Pacific	3 Oct 2024
ISAS-KAS Workshop	Cyber Resilience in the Indo-Pacific	3-4 Oct 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion (Online)	Sri Lanka Elects a New President: What Next?	15 Oct 2024
ISAS-SAU Roundtable (Online)	Governing Regional Commons in South Asia: Prospects for Cooperation and Inclusion	17 Oct 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion (Online)	Two States: Reading the Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana Verdicts	18 Oct 2024
ISAS Interactive Session	Visit by Mr K Shanmugam, Minister for Law and Home Affairs, Singapore	28 Oct 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion (Online)	India's 'One Nation, One Election' Plan: Challenges and Implications	7 Nov 2024
ISAS-SASP Seminar	Geopolitical Relevance of Small States: Sri Lanka and Regional Geopolitics	8 Nov 2024
ISAS Closed Door Session	Interactive Session with HE Dr Shilpak Ambule, High Commissioner of India to Singapore	11 Nov 2024
ISAS-NIICE Panel Discussion (Online)	The Political Economy of Neighbouring Countries' Investments in Nepal	13 Nov 2024
ISAS-EAI Launch Event	China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy	14 Nov 2024
ISAS-EAI Workshop	China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy	14 Nov 2024
ISAS-NTU Seminar (Online)	After Populism, Piety and Politics in Pakistan	21 Nov 2024
ISAS-KAS Roundtable	Sri Lanka after the Elections: Governance in a Time of Crisis	26 Nov 2024
ISAS Panel Discussion	The United States Presidential Election: Impact on India and South Asia	28 Nov 2024 (India)
ISAS International Conference on South Asia	India and South Asia: Addressing Defining Challenges of the Century	29 Nov 2024 (India)
ISAS Panel Discussion (Online)	Maharashtra Musings: An Analysis of the Assembly Election Result	3 Dec 2024

LATEST SPECIAL REPORTS, SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS AND SOUTH ASIA SCANS



ISAS continues to deliver in-depth research and analysis on critical issues shaping South Asia and its global interactions through its diverse publications. These works provide valuable insights into regional challenges, propose actionable policy solutions and reinforce ISAS' standing as a leading institute on South Asian affairs.

The Special Reports series delves into transformative regional issues. The report on 'QUAD-ASEAN Cooperation on Climate Change and Critical Minerals' examines the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue's expanding focus on delivering public goods, with ASEAN playing a crucial role in climate change mitigation and securing critical minerals. Another report, 'New Economic Policies in India: Their Economic Implications and Investment Prospects', highlights India's post-COVID-19 economic transformation, including production-linked incentives aimed at boosting manufacturing, while identifying challenges and opportunities for investment, particularly from Singapore.

ISAS brought out a South Asian Discussion Papers publication titled 'Food Security in South Asia'. This set of papers examines global food insecurity through indicators such as hunger, undernourishment, child stunting and the affordability of healthy diets. The papers underscore the need for policy measures to enhance food security and nutrition standards across South Asia, with contributions from authors addressing their respective countries.

A recent South Asia Scan, 'Partnership and Beyond: Explaining Shifts in India's Defence Cooperation with the United States', explores the strengthening India-United States defence partnership. The report highlights India's strategic focus on countering Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and along its Himalayan frontier, while also examining challenges to sustaining this evolving relationship. Another Scan, 'Supply Chain Disruptions and Resilience of Sri Lankan Exports', analyses Sri Lanka's vulnerabilities within global supply chains, emphasising the need for export diversification and policies to mitigate risks arising from external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Through these publications, ISAS continues to provide important perspectives on South Asia's complexities and its engagement with the global community.

BOOKS

Mehta, Nalin, *The New BJP Modi and the Making of the World's Largest Political Party*, Routledge, 2024

Paliwal, Avinash, *India's Near East: A New History*, Hurst, 2024

Ranjan, Amit, Hashmi, Taj, Abbas, Mazhar, *The Aftermath of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971: Enduring Impact*, Routledge, 2024

Ranjan, Amit, Chatteraj Diotima, Ullah, Ahsan, AKM (ed), *India and China in Southeast Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2024

SOUTH ASIA DISCUSSION PAPERS

Food Security in South Asia, Edited by Dr Puspa Sharma, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Saeeduddin Faridi, Research Analyst, ISAS, December 2024

SOUTH ASIA SCAN

Joshi, Yogesh; and Rajeev, Nishant, South Asia Scan No. 22 – *Partnership and Beyond: Explaining Shifts in India's Defence Cooperation with the United States*, Institute of South Asian Studies, October 2024

Abeyasinghe, Tilak; and Gunarathna, Nethmini, South Asia Scan No. 23 – *Supply Chain Disruptions and Resilience of Sri Lankan Exports*, Institute of South Asian Studies, December 2024

SPECIAL REPORTS

New Economic Policies in India: Their Economic Implications and Investment Prospects, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), ISAS; Mr Vinod Rai, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS; Ms Divya Murali, Research Associate, ISAS; Ms Shavinyaa Vijaykumar, Former Research Analyst, ISAS; and Ms Mekhla Jain, Former Student Assistant, ISAS, 28 October 2024

QUAD-ASEAN Cooperation on Climate Change and Critical Minerals, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Saeeduddin Faridi, Research Analyst, ISAS, 29 November 2024

BRIEFS

1134 Operation Azm-i-Istehkam Launched: Pakistan Combats Terrorism, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Charukeshi Karikalan, Research Intern, ISAS, 5 July 2024

1135 Rs18.9 Trillion Budget Announced: Pakistan's Economic Dilemma, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS; Ms Charukeshi Karikalan, Research Intern, ISAS, 12 July 2024

1136 Modi's Foreign Policy 3.0, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 July 2024

1137 India's Strategic Dance with Europe Amidst Geopolitical Shifts, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Paarth Endlaw, Research Intern, ISAS, 17 July 2024

1138 Modi in Moscow: What Gives?, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 July 2024

1139 Nepal's Political and Economic Challenges, Dr Puspa Sharma, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 July 2024

1140 Student Protests in Bangladesh: Implications for the Hasina Government, Dr Mohammad Masudur Rahman, Trade Remedies Analyst, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, New Zealand, 24 July 2024

1141 Fatal Silence: Press Freedom and Perilous Journalism in Pakistan, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Charukeshi Karikalan, Research Intern, ISAS, 25 July 2024

1142 Quota Protests in Bangladesh: Causes and Consequences, Ambassador Tariq Karim, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 July 2024

1143 Union Budget 2024: The NDA's First Budget in its Third Term, Mr Vinod Rai, Distinguished Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 31 July 2024

1144 Exploring New Frontiers: UK-India Technology Security Initiative, Dr Karthik Nachiappan, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Mriganika Singh Tanwar, Research Analyst, ISAS, 1 August 2024

1145	The Supreme Court Judgement on PTI's Reserved Seats Case, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Muhammad Saad UI Haque, Research Analyst, ISAS, 2 August 2024
1146	Climate Crisis in the Highlands: Impact on Pakistan's Mountainous Regions, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Ms Charukeshi Karikalan, Research Intern, ISAS, 6 August 2024
1147	Indian Budget FY2024/25: Aid to the Neighbours, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 August 2024
1148	A Country in Turmoil: Political Violence in Bangladesh, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 August 2024
1149	From Protest to Revolution: A New Era for Bangladesh?, Dr Imran Ahmed, Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 August 2024
1150	India's Options in Post-Hasina Bangladesh, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 August 2024
1151	The Sino-Indian Border: The Indian Army and the Balance of Forces, Dr Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 August 2024
1152	Indian Foreign Minister's Visit to the Maldives, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 August 2024
1153	Bangladesh Crisis: Implications for India-Bangladesh Economic Ties, Dr Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow and Research Lead (Trade and Economics), ISAS, 13 August 2024
1154	Arzu Rana Deuba's Visit to India: No Guarantee of Smooth Bilateral Relations, Dr Amit Ranjan, Research Fellow, ISAS, 23 August 2024
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