



ASSOCIATION OF ASIA SCHOLARS

GLOBALISING ASIA

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India at 74

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We are pleased to place in your hands the Inaugural issue of AAS Monthly NewsLetter. The AAS, comprising alumni of the Asian Scholarship Foundation, is a Society, registered in New Delhi since November 2005.

AAS had begun as group of alumni already engaged in facilitating selection of Asia Fellows with various Indian and other institutions for their research. Since 2005, it has organised collaborative conferences, seminars, workshops as well as oral history studies and published several books and research papers. In the times of Covid-19, AAS has adapted to weekly online webinars addressing questions on regional and global transformations especially those grounded in the Asian landscape. This has expanded AAS way beyond its alumni.

The flagship publication of AAS is the triennial Sage Journal, *Millennial Asia* that was first published in 2010. This is soon to be made into a quarterly journal to accommodate the increasing submissions of high quality. Editors were prompt to offer it as a platform for addressing the world as we know it during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Next Issue of *Millennial Asia*, already in press, is a special issue addressing various aspects of how this pandemic is transforming regional and global trends and our way of life.

As we look forward to your response to this special AAS issue of *Millennial Asia*, we urge you to visit our website asiasholars.org and participate in our other events and initiatives. As for this inaugural issue of the AAS NewsLetter 'Globalising Asia', which is being launched on 15th August 2020, it seeks to

recognise the new enthusiasm of India having emerged as the fifth largest economy, a vibrant and self-confident society and an influential polity to reckon with much beyond its borders.

Indians today occupy important positions around the world — both in inter-governmental institutions as well as in multi-national corporations — and have great opportunity to provide clear direction in reshaping post-Covid-19 life. This is also an occasion where India's youth can showcase their innovative skills and out-of-the-box ideas.

This AAS Newsletter seeks to provide a platform for younger budding scholars to express themselves and engage with senior experts in AAS Webinars, Seminars, Publications and other academic initiatives.

This is where the AAS vision of 'Globalising Asia' aims at encouraging debates on opportunities and challenges that emerge from this continuing drift of global geopolitics towards Asian countries. This drift has only been accelerated by the pandemic. Asia, like ever before, has this historic responsibility in making the post Covid-19 world both humane and worth living. India certainly stands at the centre of this transformation.

AAS wishes to provide a platform for our audience to question extant narratives to deliberate over and disseminate ideas.

We look forward to your continued indulgence with us in all our academic endeavours and initiatives.

Prof Swaran Singh
Dr Reena Marwah
Editors

India at 74: Exploring Aatmnirbhar Bharat Narratives

As India celebrates her 74th year of independence amidst a global pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has continually emphasised on building an Aatmnirbhar Bharat. This was first announced in his 12th May, 2020 speech outlining strategy to combat the impact of the pandemic on India's economy.



by Ms. Ankita Ghosh

The Prime Minister's vision of Aatmnirbhar Bharat has witnessed new initiatives like changing the definition of MSMEs, boosting private participation in numerous sectors as well as increasing foreign direct investment especially in the defence sector. Apple has since then announced the start of the manufacture of one of their phones in India. Mr. Mukesh Ambani, CEO of Reliance Jio has also announced the creation of a home grown 5G Network.

Addressing a session celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Indian Industry on 2nd June 2020, Prime Minister Modi further elucidated his vision of Aatmnirbhar Bharat by listing five 'I's crucial for achieving his vision. The five 'I's stand for Intent, Inclusion, Investment, Infrastructure and Innovation. The Prime Minister again laid emphasis on the development of India's MSMEs, which he termed the country's "economic engines", which contribute to 49 per cent of India's exports.

On the 20th of June 2020, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, as one of the very first formal policies under the Aatmnirbhar Bharat program. This policy was introduced with the notion of providing aid and employment security to those worst affected by the pandemic, i.e. migrant labourers. It has been implemented in six states of the Indian republic as a 125 day campaign

providing over 25 different types of work opportunities to migrant workers. The scheme aims at providing employment to migrant workers while at the same time building the infrastructure of rural India.

Within this vision for an Aatmnirbhar Bharat lies India's Aatmanirbhar Krishi (agriculture). The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, has thus announced pro-agriculture policies including lessening the burden of agricultural loans.

Continuing with the theme of an Aatmnirbhar Bharat, the government on 29th July, 2020, launched its long-awaited New Education Policy. The vision document emphasises on an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach to education. It has been described as "knowledge based", "employment oriented" and "technology oriented" by supporters. However, earlier in the year, the country witnessed a major spike in the unemployment rate which has been further exacerbated by the effects of the ongoing pandemic and subsequent lockdown. While, the government's NEP is positively tailored towards instilling skills for employment, in the absence of sufficient jobs in the economy, this might backfire.

But above all, it is the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and border tensions with China that have gripped the nation's psyche. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the world almost to a halt, threatening to shrink the global world economy by 5.5 per cent (the worst slowdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s) with clear possibilities of enormous stress for the Indian economy and health sector. Besides, since early May this year, India has been grappling with border disputes erupting with China and Pakistan, and recently a new one, with Nepal.

As always, the Independence Day celebrations this year will commemorate the heroes of the nation representing excellence in various fields. Along with the Indian Army, especially martyrs of Galwan Valley, such recognition this year will be shared with India's brave "Covid warriors", i.e. doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers as also police personnel and civil society volunteers.

China's ratcheting up of tensions on the border in the midst of Covid-19 has especially united our nation in its fight against his pandemic. All this is likely to be addressed in the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech from the historic Red Fort. Recent months have witnessed one of the deadliest Sino-Indian clashes in more than four decades followed by disruptions in their economic relations. For the first time, border tensions have erupted at multiple points on the Line of Actual Control. These include Naku La (north Sikkim) in the East and multiple points in the Western sector including Pangong Tso, Depsang, Galwan Valley and Hot Springs. Their disengagement remains a work in progress. This has already resulted in India banning 59 Chinese Apps in the country and tightening regulations guiding Chinese investments in India. All this is reflection of not just domestic anger against China but also global trends of anger against China's 'wolf warriors' approach.

While India's relation with the world's second largest economy - China - continues to sour, it is pertinent to ask how feasible will be our Aatmnirbhar Bharat vision in this intensely globalised world economy? How would such a change in India's China policy open new avenues towards strengthening India's goal of self-reliance post Covid-19?

How will these changing equations impact the Indian economy? Can this economic rivalry increase the likelihood of another military skirmish on the border? While, supporters of a tough China policy are championing an anti-China sentiment under hashtags like #BoycottChina or #VocalforLocal, many see this policy as a new avatar of the old Make in India vision.

Indeed, the vision of a self sufficient India remains deeply grounded in Indian discourses and yet so diverse, which also makes it somewhat opaque and unclear. While, on the one hand, groups like Swadeshi Jagran Manch emphasise that if the government was serious about making the country self reliant, Chinese companies should not be given projects such as the Delhi-Meerut RRTS, on the other hand, the Finance Minister has reportedly said that, "self reliant India does not mean cutting off the rest of the world." The Prime Minister's Independence Day speech will perhaps offer some clarification.

At this stage, it seems, Prime Minister's Aatmnirbhar Bharat narrative will continue to attract diverse perspectives and remain a critical enterprise and a work in progress for a long time to come.

The author is currently pursuing BA (Hons) History with a minor in Sociology from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal.

Fighting the Infodemics of the Covid-19 Virus

The Covid-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented humanitarian emergency, accompanied by an unusual tsunami of misinformation, which makes it an imminent yet invisible disaster. As Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, the Director-



by Dr.Silky Kaur

fake news — fabricated for 'going viral' online by catching attention and bringing a certain novelty of unexpected information — is a major factor, underlying the neural basis of human behaviour. Fake news can undermine

General, World Health organisation (WHO) said aptly, “We’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic. Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous”. WHO defines 'infodemic' as “an over abundance of information — some accurate and some not — occurring during an epidemic” and “infodemiology as the science behind managing infodemics”.

credible news and also blur informational accuracy, resulting in uncertainty.

Infodemics cause the system of information to be chaotic and abrupt and therefore it becomes "hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it". In the situation of a pandemic it becomes crucial to have accurate information quickly but in the sea of misinformation it becomes hard to navigate for accurate and correct information. Misinformation proliferates further and faster and thus adds extreme complexity to the health emergency response”. The Covid-19 Infodemic has exacerbated the basic causes and drivers of conflict by affecting economies as well as societal balance. In UNSC’s high-level open debate on 12 August 2020, Indonesia stated that Covid-19 has “magnified the challenges” for countries who are conflict-ridden; additionally this pandemic has created “multidimensional disruption”. Such societies are burdened with an additional factor of distress in the form of misinformation.

Though misinformation was always part of human communications, the scale and speed with which it can spread is now unparalleled. It has become an unprecedented challenge for nations, societies, leaders and individuals. Sylvie Briand, architect of WHO’s strategy to counter the infodemic, says, “We know that every outbreak will be accompanied by a kind of tsunami of information, but also within the information you always have misinformation, rumours, etc”.

The Infodemic- Why and How?

The phenomena of Infodemic is the result of unprecedented global access to internet with exponential rise in social media posts, “creating an information epidemic or infodemic”. With no prior filtering of published material online, and the surge of misinformation, infodemic makes the pandemic worse by making it hard for people to find reliable resources. Therefore people feel anxious, depressed, overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet important demands.

Fighting the Infodemics

India, along with other countries, has endorsed the global call to fight this 'Infodemic'. India’s Permanent Mission to the UN stated that it supported the UN Communications Response initiative and the ‘#VERIFIED’ campaign” announced by the UN Secretary General on April 14, 2020 that calls for global action in fighting the Infodemic in the wake of Covid-19.

Pandemic conspiracies and its rumours have been killing people as well. Neuroscience suggests that

On 12 August 2020, India's Permanent Mission to

the UN highlighted that to ensure the humanitarian needs of conflict-ridden communities, it is of utmost importance for peace-builders to mobilize for identifying and countering misinformation. To combat the Infodemic of false information that often drives fear and division” it is crucial to achieve “community engagement and effective communication”.

UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, recently tweeted, “Our common enemy is #COVID-19, but our enemy is also an “infodemic” of misinformation. To overcome the #coronavirus, we need to urgently promote facts & science, hope & solidarity over despair & division”. WHO’s Infodemiology conference, themed ‘How Infodemics Affect the World & How they can be Managed’ in June 2020, stated that the menace of the Infodemic “has escalated to a level that requires a coordinated response” as “an infodemic cannot be eliminated but it can be managed”.

WHO's Strategy

With the Infodemic being a non-measurable invisible disaster, having correct and timely information is crucial for stopping its spread. WHO suggests “adaptation, development, validation and evaluation of new evidence-based measures and practices to prevent, detect and respond to mis- and dis-information”. These management practices will be helpful to “propagate, disseminate and amplify evidence-informed guidance for individuals and populations to take protective measure” in the long run, and would be helpful for sustaining long-term best practices for future preparedness and response.

WHO constituted a team of “myth-busters” who are working with social media giants to counter the spread of misinformation as well as Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN) for providing accurate information on Covid-19. Furthermore, WHO has come together to support the response to the Infodemic by developing global resources for fact-checking and misinformation management.

Computational social scientists have a major role in handling the misinformation crisis, elucidating “fundamental mechanisms that make us vulnerable to misinformation online” and by formulating “effective strategies to counter misinformation”. In the ultimate analysis, good governance and citizen participation will determine the success of nations in combating Covid-19.



The author is a Research Associate with Association of Asia Scholars (New Delhi). Views expressed are personal.

Webinar Session 10, 15 July 2020

Prof. T V Paul; Sino-Indian Rivalry: Explaining Anomalies



Association of ASIA SCHOLARS MILLENNIAL ASIA
An International Journal of Asian Studies

*Participants will be given E- certificate on request, who either made comments or asked questions during webinar

AAS Webinar Series: Session 10
15th July 2020 (Wednesday), 05:30-07:00 PM (IST)

THE CHINA-INDIA RIVALRY IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA
T.V. PAUL

**SINO-INDIAN RIVALRY:
EXPLAINING ANOMALIES**

Speaker:
Prof T V Paul
McGill Chair Prof
McGill University
Canada

Chair:
Dr. Reena Marwah
Secretary- General,
AAS

Registration Free

Webinar Host: Prof. Swaran Singh, President, AAS

Register in advance for this meeting @ <https://rb.gy/dhlskp>

[Link to webinar here.](https://rb.gy/dhlskp)

Prof. Paul spoke of the dynamics in the Balance of Power proposition amid the changing scenario of the global power system. He discussed two types of balancing viz. hard balancing (military build-up and formal alignment) and soft balancing (strategic partnerships and institutional mechanisms, while maintaining a non-military character) in the session.

The 1970s ushered in a change with India engaging in hard balancing against the U.S.-China-Pakistan alignment. This was viewed by India as an existential threat. The China threat was considered by the Bush administration rather seriously and India, a swing state at the time, was seen as a potential ally in balancing China. While elaborating on balancing behaviour, Prof. Paul called it a combination of hard and soft balancing along with hedging. It combines a distant hard balancing, with the help of Pakistan and military build-up, and with its economic penetration in South-East Asia to counter the U.S. globally and India regionally. He termed this combination 'under balancing'.

The India-China rivalry is seen as shallow revisionism since there are conditions of conflict,

however, they deter from military action due to a mutual recognition of the right to exist. There is also a tendency to manage rivalry and not let issues escalate beyond a point because of the potential for heightened conflict. He identified India's reluctance to form or join a hard balance coalition given its desire for strategic autonomy, despite abandonment fears that might drive India into such an alliance.

In the Question and Answer session, Prof. Paul argued that China's aggression is strategic and not ideological. Primarily, China is driven by state capitalism and not ideology. While answering questions pertaining to China's perception over its internal disputes in Tibet, he highlighted the importance of the region to domestic strategists for Chinese integrity and pointed towards how India's act of sheltering the Dalai Lama had endangered Chinese aspirations.

In conclusion, focusing on the 'Managed Sino-Indian Rivalry', Prof. Paul explained the shared economic benefits by virtue of cooperation on various issues. However, India falls short on resources when compared to China, and hence, has been unable to project a strong front.

by Edha Garg

Webinar Session 11, 22 July 2020

Dr. Stephen R. Nagy; Realignments in the Indo-Pacific: Debating Neo-Middle Power Diplomacy



Association of ASIA SCHOLARS
MILLENNIAL ASIA
An International Journal of Asian Studies

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AAS Webinar Series: Session 11
22 July 2020 (Wednesday), 11:30 AM-01:00 PM (IST)

**REALIGNMENTS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC:
DEBATING NEO-MIDDLE POWER DIPLOMACY**

Speaker:
Dr Stephen R Nagy
Senior Associate Professor
International Christian
University, Tokyo

Chair:
Prof Swaran Singh
President, AAS

Registration Free
Webinar Host: **Dr Reena Marwah**, Secretary-General AAS

Register in advance for this meeting @ <https://rb.gy/bb7y2z>

[Link to webinar here.](https://rb.gy/bb7y2z)

Dr. Nagy defined traditional understandings of middle powers, trifurcated into functional, hierarchical, and normative views. He introduced the term ‘neo-middle power diplomacy,’ which is critical for countries like India, Japan, and South Korea who now desire to be a part of the rule-making process. He believes that there are several areas where middle power countries can converge to maintain this rules-based functioning in denuclearisation. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific ensures that the integration process of economies throughout the region remains transparent and rules-based. According to him, the Indo-Pacific middle powers must collaborate to form institutions to overcome burgeoning issues and help regions evolve with stability by pooling their resources together. Non-traditional security is also an appealing alternative.

Dr. Nagy argued that issues between the US and China have led to the ‘securitisation’ of the Indo-Pacific, unwanted by the middle powers in the region. Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific countries will prioritize non-traditional security issues because they are crucial to stable economies.

The talk was concluded with a focus on four areas in which neo-middle power diplomacy will grow. These include traditional security (maritime security and surveillance over weapons of mass destruction), non-traditional security (humanitarian assistance in disaster relief, search and rescue missions), trade, and collective diplomacy (to tackle hostage diplomacy, economic coercion and border disputes).

An informative Question and Answer session followed the talk. In addressing the leading influence for the middle powers, Dr. Nagy elucidated that it will likely be a coalition and saw Japan as a natural choice in leading because of its economic capacity. The idea of a Cold War between the U.S. and China was also brought up, with specific focus on its impact on the maneuverability of smaller states and middle powers. Dr. Nagy believes that this is not an apt comparison given the economic integration between China, the U.S. and the rest of the world – something that was lacking between the Soviet bloc and the Western bloc.

by Aditi Singh

Webinar Session 12, 29 July 2020

Prof. Kanti Bajpai; Cycles of Cooperation and Defection in India-Pakistan Relations



Association of ASIA SCHOLARS MILLENNIAL ASIA
An International Journal of Asian Studies

*Participants will be given E. Certificate on request, who either made comments or asked questions during webinar

AAS Webinar Series: Session 12
29 July 2020 (Wednesday), 11:30AM-01:00 PM (IST)

EXPLAINING CYCLES OF COOPERATION AND DEFECTION IN INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS 1996-2016

Ploutledge Handbook of China-India Relations
Edited by Yan Jie and John Ross
Sage Publications

Speaker:
Prof Kanti Bajpai
Director of Centre on Asia and Globalization and Wilmar Prof of Asian Studies National University of Singapore

Chair:
Prof Swaran Singh
President, AAS

Registration FREE

Webinar Host: Dr. Reena Marwah, Secretary-General AAS

Register in advance for this meeting @ <https://rb.gy/lyoat8>

[Link to webinar here.](https://rb.gy/lyoat8)

Prof. Bajpai's presentation revolved around the cyclic periods of dialogue and disruption between India and Pakistan, beginning with Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee, followed by Musharraf and Manmohan Singh, and back to Nawaz Sharif and Narendra Modi. He discussed the period between 1996 and 2016, wherein Delhi and Islamabad were involved in three cycles of cooperation and defection, characterised by 'systemic' and 'domestic' factors.

The first cycle began in 1996 with Nawaz Sharif's promising reopening of negotiations with India on Kashmir, followed by the 6+2 dialogue. Then came the Kargil defection, where persistent international scrutiny and interference, bureaucratic pushback, economic and trade desires, and political normalcy were seen as the systemic and domestic factors for both the countries. Prof. Bajpai spoke of the desire for military stability, international responsibility, the search for South Asian leaders to establish international legitimacy and American diplomatic pressure as additional systemic factors encouraging cooperation. Internal divisions within the groups, however, led to defections.

Prof. Bajpai elucidated on the central agenda for each nation, and expounded on two schools of thought - monodic and dyadic, which explain the root cause of conflict. He shed light on the differing motivations for cooperative mechanisms in Pakistan and India, and its other manifestations. Additionally, he clarified the relevance of nuclear weaponisation in shaping relations. He also referred to various approaches of understanding: analysing the impact left by political leaders, and viewing the cooperation and defections as performative acts catering to the global audience.

In a two-hour long Question and Answer session, several probing questions were asked, and greater detail was offered pertaining to politically motivated acts in these cycles. The session ended with Dr. Reena Marwah's deliverance of the Vote of Thanks, wherein she extended her gratitude to Prof. Bajpai for combating the dominant narrative surrounding Pakistan's cooperative tendencies.

by Soumya Singhal

Webinar Session 13, 05 August 2020

Dr. Siegfried O. Wolf; Pakistan and the Future of Afghanistan



Association of ASIA SCHOLARS MILLENNIAL ASIA
An International Journal of Asian Studies

AAS Webinar Series: Session 13
05 August 2020 (Wednesday), 11:30AM-01:00 PM (IST)

*Participants will be given E-Certificate on request, who either made comments or asked questions during webinar

PAKISTAN AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

Speaker:
Dr. Siegfried O. Wolf
Director of Research, South Asia Democratic Forum, Brussels and Senior Researcher, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University (Germany)

Chair:
Prof Swaran Singh
President, AAS

Registration FREE

Webinar Host: **Dr. Reena Marwah**, Secretary-General AAS

Register in advance for this meeting @ <https://rb.gy/zes84o>

[Link to webinar here.](#)

Prof. Swaran Singh introduced Afghanistan and Pakistan's positions in the current politico-diplomatic landscape. In his view, Pakistan's portrayal of itself is that of a besieged nation trying to curb the terrorism it is subjected to and protect others from it. This has become particularly clear under PM Imran Khan, who has sought the role of mediator in the U.S.-Taliban relationship, thereby strengthening its diplomatic power.

Dr. Wolf further explained that intra-Afghan negotiations must be comprehensive and inclusive. A constructive Afghan peace process will only work when it involves a regional settlement and a reconciliation of all external factors: China, India, Russia, and Iran. Pakistan's interests in the Afghan negotiations are a matter of contention for India, since the Taliban is believed to have an anti-India stance. Any Indian presence in Afghanistan is viewed by Pakistan as an attempt to establish a Western front in the region. Accusations of harming Pakistan's economy through dams and re-channeling of water supply have also been leveled against India.

The Question and Answer session included

questions of probable economic recessions, the future of bilateral initiatives, and foreign policies of India, Pakistan and China and their effect on Afghanistan due to tensions in the South Asian region. Dr. Wolf emphasized the importance of internal and external inter-connectivity in Asia, given that initiatives like the BRI and CPEC are used as more than mere transportation corridors. Nevertheless, there exists a need to streamline operational capabilities and reassess engagement.

The trilateral relationship of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India may be interpreted as a successfully sustained peace effort with clearly defined interests. Crucially however, the situation in Afghanistan is far more affected by internal tussles with the Taliban than by foreign interventions. The Taliban's status as a non-constitutional body and its internal dysjunctions were put forth when discussing Track-II diplomatic engagements by countries. According to Dr. Wolf, the clash between the Afghan army and a new generation of Taliban appears to be persistent, and can only be restrained by the presence of foreign troops.

by Chudamani Iyer Akshara

Webinar Session 14, 12 August 2020

Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot; Where are India's Friends in the Muslim World?



Association of ASIA SCHOLARS MILLENNIAL ASIA
An International Journal of Asian Studies

AAS Webinar Series: Session 14
12 August 2020 (Wednesday), 11:30AM-01:00 PM (IST)

WHERE ARE THE FRIENDS OF INDIA IN THE MUSLIM WORLD?

Speaker:
Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot
Senior Research Fellow at CERIS-Sc Po/CNRS (Paris), and Prof, India Institute, King's College, London

Chair:
Prof Swaran Singh
President, AAS

Registration FREE

Webinar Host: **Dr. Reena Marwah**, Secretary- General AAS

Register in advance for this meeting @ <https://rb.gy/npv0nj>

*Participants will be given E-Certificate on request, who either made comments or asked questions during webinar.

[Link to webinar here.](https://rb.gy/npv0nj)

Prof. Jaffrelot referred to the recent remarks made by India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar. In his words, “Maybe we’re getting to know who our friends really are”. The speaker specifically focused on three key changes: first, the possible loss of Iran as a friend of India, second, the alienation of previously friendly countries, such as Turkey and Malaysia and third, new friends such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Prof. Jaffrelot described Iran as an extended neighbour of India, and shed light on the historical and cultural affinities between the two, and how American pressure has weakened this bond. He explained how oil trade has been the most affected by this, and how the U.S. forced Indian dependence on suppliers other than Iran. Speculating over Iran’s course of action given this animosity, he predicted that it is likely that Iran will turn to China.

Moving on to the second point, he expounded on how ideologically disparate countries rarely indulge in mutual friendships, and how in the context of India’s rising Hindu nationalism, this has impacted their relations with other Muslim countries, such as Turkey and Malaysia. The abrogation of Article 370, the CAA, the Delhi pogrom and the Ram temple were some examples he mentioned. Additionally, the rise of social

media has fostered “long distance nationalism”. Consequently, foreign relations have had a direct impact on nations’ foreign policies.

Prof. Jaffrelot then went on to talk about the final point concerning the Arab countries, who have turned out to be the most friendly. India has been successful in fostering relations with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Moreover, the Bush administration, the unreliability of Pakistan and economic considerations pushed Saudi Arabia closer to India. The UAE is primarily strategically motivated in its pursuit of relations with India.

The academically enriching presentation was followed by an engaging Question and Answer session. Prof. Jaffrelot analysed the sustainability of various government collaborations and Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations theory in the Indo-Pak context. He also discussed the economic motivations, interests and the power centres in the Muslim world. The session delved into the nuanced debate around the Kashmir issue, among others. The webinar concluded with Prof. Singh’s brief analysis of the lecture, followed by Dr. Reena Marwah’s gratitude towards the speaker and the participants.

by Neha Dadke

News in Pictures



AFGHANISTAN: Taliban prison break in Jalalabad; 29 dead, 400 prisoners escape. Credit: The Mercury News



INDONESIA: Mount Sinabung erupts again and repeatedly over days. Credit: Reuters



BELARUS: President Lukashenko (in power since 1994) wins with 80% votes against Tikhanovskaya who fled from Belarus. Credit: Al Jazeera



JAPAN: Japan marks 75th anniversary of atomic attack by the US. Credit: The Bangkok Post



CHINA: Worst floods, in 30 years hit China affecting 35 million people. Credit: Al Jazeera



LEBANON: Beirut ammonia gas explosion kills over 150 people, wounded 5,000. Credit: Al Jazeera



INDIA: A 2,300 kms submarine optical fibre cable network inaugurated by PM Modi in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Credit: Hindustan Times



RUSSIA: Announcing registering of first COVID-19 vaccine 'Sputnik V'. Credit: India Today



SAUDI ARABIA: Hajj 2020 with social distancing around Kaaba at Grand Mosque. Credit: Hindustan Times



SOUTH KOREA: South Korea and US to hold smaller military drills due to COVID-19. Credit: CAN

Feedback

Brilliant and versatile are the two words to best describe AAS Wednesday Webinars. They present a platform for topical themes to be debated among experts from various parts of India and the world. Kudos and many thanks to AAS for the opportunity of sharing my ideas with old and newfound online friends.

- Prof Joeje Santarita, Dean, Asian Centre, University of Philippines, Diliman Campus, Manila

I congratulate Prof. Swaran Singh, Dr. Reena Marwah and the AAS team for taking the initiative to organise weekly webinars by distinguished experts of global repute. These contribute towards enhancing critical thinking among scholars and policymakers on contemporary issues and have kept the academic spirit alive. I have attended many AAS webinars and find them quite engaging and enriching. One of the most positive points of these webinars is that each participant is given a chance to interact with the speakers.

- Prof. Nirmal Jindal, Principal, Satyawati College, University of Delhi, New Delhi

The Webinar by AAS organised on 12th August was most impressive and noteworthy. Dr. Christophe Jaffrelot, who spoke on 'Where are India's Friends in the Muslim World' explained contemporary dynamics of India's foreign policy from the global and regional perspectives. Prof. Swaran Singh, the Chair and Moderator, managed the program with acumen, professionalism and patience. The QnA session was especially lively and intense.

- Srinibas Pathi, Prof of Pub Admn, Mizoram (Central) University, Aizawl

Be it Asian issues, diaspora or India's growing proximity with the US or its antagonism with China and Pakistan, AAS webinars are a deeply academic endeavour to promote interactive and intellectual deliberations among its participants, and invite illustrious scholars of global eminence. I have greatly benefited by regularly participating in these webinars.

- Dr Chander Bhushan Nagar, Assoc Prof, National Defence Academy, Pune

Forthcoming...

Millennial Asia - Special Issue COVID-19: The Asian Experience

This Special Issue will comprise theoretically well-grounded and evidence-driven research papers on comparative issues of Asian countries.



Graphics and Design by:

Ms. Chudamani Iyer Akshara, Ms. Soumya Singhal

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