



Highlights

H.E. Mr. Vuong Dinh Hue, President, National Assembly of Vietnam delivered an address on 17 December 2021 on the 5th Anniversary of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2016-2021 and Announcement of Celebration of 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between India and Vietnam 1972-2022. Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister delivered an address on the occasion.



Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs delivered the Keynote Address on 15 December 2021 at the 8th Indian Ocean Dialogue, a track 1.5 flagship initiative of the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Dr. Gatot Hari Gunawan, Acting Secretary General, IORA spoke on the occasion. Ms. Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East) delivered the valedictory address.



On 6 December 2021, ICWA was honoured to receive a message of H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh to commemorate the first Maitri Diwas on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India-Bangladesh diplomatic relations. On this occasion, H.E. Mr. K. M. Khalid, State Minister of Culture of Bangladesh and Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs also spoke on India- Bangladesh relationship.



Ambassador Vladimir Norov, Secretary General, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation addressed the opening session of the international webinar held on 29 October 2021 to chart the future ahead for India and the SCO.

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Webinar on “ASEAN and the Political Crisis in Myanmar”, 01 October 2021

Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) hosted a webinar titled “ASEAN and the Political Crisis in Myanmar” on 1 October 2021. The webinar was chaired by Amb. Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, Senior Visiting Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi and Former Ambassador of India to Myanmar. Panelists included Prof. Kham Khan Suan Hausing, Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Mr. Angshuman Choudhury, Senior Researcher and Coordinator South East Asia Research Programme, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi and Dr. Rajen Singh Laishram, Department of Political Science, Manipur Central University, Imphal. The webinar discussed the ongoing political crisis in Myanmar and its socio-economic and security implications for the region. The speakers discussed the role that ASEAN needs to play and how effective has its responses been towards addressing the crisis.



26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group, 06 October 2021

The 26th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was held virtually on 06 October 2021 under the chairmanship of India. The Ministry of External Affairs had nominated ICWA as the chair from India of the IORAG for a period of two years 2019-2021. The 26th meeting of IORAG was attended by representatives of IORA Member States namely Australia, Bangladesh, French (France/Reunion), India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The IORA Secretariat and the IORA Regional Centre for Science and Technology Transfer (RCSTT) also attended the meeting. Dr. Hend Al-Tair, Director, Department of Science, Technology and Research, Ministry of Education, UAE delivered welcome remarks representing UAE as the Chair of IORA.

Two interactive sessions were held where speakers from India delivered the keynote address. First session was on ‘Financing Sustainable Blue Economy’ and speakers included Prof. V N Attri, Former Chair in Indian Ocean Studies, IORA and Prof Jo-Ansie van Wyke, University of South Africa, South Africa. Second session was on ‘Smart Ports and Digital Supply Chains’ and speakers included Dr. Vijay Sakhujia, ICWA, India and Dr. Jessica Fraser, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa. It was agreed to develop a set of recommendations on these themes for the consideration of relevant IORA Working/Core Groups (Blue Economy, Women’s Economic Empowerment, Maritime Safety and Security, Tourism, and Trade and Investment) and the Committee of Senior Officials. Issues of Gender and Women’s Economic Empowerment were also identified for further consideration. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Nivedita Ray, Director (Research), ICWA and was coordinated by Dr. Pragya Pandey, Research Fellow, ICWA. South Africa took over the chairmanship of IORAG for 2022-23 from India.

Webinar on Afghanistan “The Way Forward”, 20 October 2021



On 20 October 2021, ICWA organized a webinar on “Afghanistan: The Way Forward”. The panel was chaired by Amb. Rakesh Sood, Former Indian Envoy to Afghanistan and included Amb. Phunchok Stobdan, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group, New Delhi, Mr. Rana Banerjee, Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, Dr. Raghav Sharma, Associate Professor and Director, Centre for Afghanistan Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University and Ms. Nayanima Basu, Senior Associate Editor, The Print.

In his opening remarks, Amb. Sood provided a comprehensive overview of the situation in Afghanistan and stated that the Afghan situation tells us how certain narratives mould history. Taliban were seen as a terrorist organization. Dealing with terrorism was different from dealing with insurgency. The emergence of Taliban as a political actor began with the establishment of the political office in Doha. This initiated the legitimization process of the terrorist group. Doha agreement was celebrated across the world as a peace agreement. This narrative completely changed later and the Doha agreement was now seen as nothing more than a withdrawal agreement. He said, in the current scenario, the US may not take on an active role in terms of what was happening on the ground. Therefore, countries in the region have to act.

Amb. Phunchok Stobdan in his remarks said that Afghanistan is not a case of military failure. It was a clear case of eviction and a game was played by China and Russia to draw the United States into the Afghan trap. He argued that ethnographic assessment of Afghan culture is important. Taliban should be viewed from an ethnographic perspective. He observed that diplomacy is at a stalemate and the international community is committed to support Afghanistan but it depends on the behaviour of Taliban.

Mr. Rana Banerjee observed that Pakistan after the fall of Kabul showed a lot of triumphalism and that triumphalism relates to the concept of strategic depth. He said that the Durand line remains a problematic boundary between Pakistan and the Taliban. It was never accepted by the Taliban during their earlier stint in power. He argued that opening a line

with Taliban for India is not possible at the moment, as we cannot forget our past experiences. India can engage with Taliban indirectly. He suggested that India can think about humanitarian aid corridor with Afghanistan.

Prof. Raghav Sharma described how the current developments are perceived within Afghanistan. Rights are curtailed and Pashtun figures are erased and replaced with theocratic slogans of Taliban. He observed that dismantling of Afghan cultural identity is happening under Taliban. In Afghanistan, protests were undertaken by various groups such as women and journalists. Protests were not confined to urban areas alone. This underscores the fact that questions are being asked about the legitimacy of Taliban. He said that the cultural and political and intellectual journey which has taken place in recent years is under threat. Taliban is also struggling to adjust to the new social reality of Afghanistan.

Ms. Nayanima Basu spoke about her experiences of reporting from Afghanistan before and during the Taliban takeover of Kabul. She observed that international recognition for Taliban is difficult to get at present. Taliban needs recognition to get access to their foreign reserves of around ten billion dollars which has been frozen by US. She also said that communication and engagement with the Taliban are necessary for India to understand how they are going to use the aid given to Afghanistan.

Fourth ICWA-USI Webinar on Peacekeeping on “UN Peace Operations and Protection of Civilians”, 22 October 2021



The ICWA and United Service Institution of India (USI) hosted the fourth webinar on UN Peacekeeping on “UN Peace Operation: Protection of Civilians” on 22 October 2021. Maj. Gen. P.K. Goswami (Retd.), Deputy Director, USI delivered the welcome remarks, which was followed by the keynote address by Mr. David Haeri, Director of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division in the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO). The webinar was moderated by Col. (Dr.) K. K. Sharma (Retd.), Visiting Fellow, USI, and the panelists included Dr. Ali Ahmed, Indian Army veteran, former academic and a UN official; Dr. Cedric de Coning, Research Professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI); Brig. Dhananjay Joshi, Sector Commander, United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Maj. Gen. S. Asthana (Retd.), Chief Instructor, USI and Gen. B. K. Sharma, Director, USI also spoke. Closing remarks were delivered by Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, DG, ICWA. The webinar discussed how innocent civilians are caught in the crossfire during intra-state conflicts and deliberated on the multiple challenges and constraints in the implementation of the peacekeepers mandate. The discussions reflected on the importance of a multi-dimensional approach to United Nations Peace Keeping Operations and the need for an integrated approach taking into account all aspects of protection of civilians.

First India-Republic of Korea 2+2 Dialogue, 27 October 2021

On 27 October 2021, the first India-Republic of Korea 2+2 Dialogue was hosted jointly by ICWA and RIS with the Korean National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) and Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) of the Republic of Korea. The Dialogue was organised under the theme, "Reimagining India- Korea Relations in the Emerging Regional Order: Synergising the 'Act East Policy' and the 'New Southern Policy'" in five thematic sessions- including India-Korea Relations in a Changing Global and Regional Context: Strategic Perspectives, Re-contextualising India-Korea Economic Partnership in the Post-COVID International Economic Order, Way Forward: India-Korea Bilateral Relation.



The meeting was attended by Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA, Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS, Amb. Sripriya Ranganathan, Indian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Dr. Hong Hyunik, Chancellor, KNDA, Dr. Kim, Heungchong, President, KIEP, Amb. Chang Jae-bok, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India, Amb. Nalin Surie, Distinguished Fellow, Delhi Policy Group, Amb. Skand Tayal, former Indian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Prof. S.K. Mohanty, Professor, RIS, among other scholars from India and RoK.

The idea of the 2+2 Dialogue emerged during ICWA-KNDA Dialogue in 2018 with the aim of expanding the existing dialogue platform by also involving leading economic think tanks from both countries. In this regard, an MoU between ICWA/RIS and KNDA/KIEP was signed in October 2020. The Dialogue was an attempt to bring together academic and policy experts from the two countries to exchange views on the current state and future trajectory of India-Korea relations in a context where global, regional and bilateral environment have been undergoing significant transformation due to geopolitical and geo-economic factors and the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the Dialogue, the participants observed that the bilateral relations between India and ROK, rooted in historical linkages and cultural affinity and based on the shared values of democracy and market economy, have gone from strength to strength in the past two decades. The Special Strategic Partnership signed between the two countries in



2015, and greater convergence of interest and complementarities between India's Act East Policy and Korea's New Southern Policy (now upgraded to "New Southern Policy Plus") provides new opportunities to strengthen bilateral ties. Strong personal bonds between leaders of the two countries and growing historical and cultural linkages were also highlighted as important factors driving bilateral relations.

Conference on “SCO & India: The Trajectory Ahead”, 29 October 2021



The ICWA organised an online Conference ‘SCO & India: The Trajectory Ahead’ on 29 October 2021. Speakers at the inaugural session included Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA, Amb. Reenat Sandhu, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi and Amb. Vladimir Norov, Secretary General, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Beijing.

In her Welcome Remarks, Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh said that the conference was a follow-up to the 21st Heads of

State Summit held recently in Tajikistan and was held in the run up to the upcoming Heads of Government meeting in November in Kazakhstan. SCO was commemorating 20 years of its establishment and its importance as an effective regional voice was growing. Its decision-making process based on consensus had been useful for expanding its agenda and membership. The SCO family had grown with the inclusion of Iran as a new member and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt as observers. The expansion strengthens the organisation and also opens new prospects for enhanced economic and strategic dynamism. It was important to note that the online 19th Council of Heads of Government Summit was hosted by Hon’ble Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu.



Amb. Reenat Sandhu, Secretary (West), MEA, New Delhi, in her Special Remarks said that India has come a long way in its association with the SCO as an observer state in 2005 and then as a full Member State since 2017. India plays a positive and constructive role that contributes to growth and prosperity of the region. India values the ongoing cooperation in Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in countering terrorism, separatism and extremism, terror financing, illegal trafficking of drugs, arms and ammunitions. She said that India as the current Chair of SCO RATS (2021-22) hoped to contribute actively to the work of RATS and give a new direction and momentum to its activities. India had proposed to create three new pillars of cooperation within SCO - traditional medicine, S&T and Starts-ups and Innovation. India also organised the first-ever virtual exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage and translated ten books of regional Indian literature into SCO official languages - Russian and Chinese.

Amb. Vladimir Norov, Secretary General, SCO in his Opening Address noted that ICWA was an effective intellectual centre capable of generating productive ideas to improve SCO’s functioning and promote common interests in the international arena. He mentioned that the Afghan issue is at the top of the SCO agenda. SCO advocates the establishment of an independent, neutral, democratic and peaceful Afghanistan – an inclusive government with participation from all ethnic, religious and political groups of the Afghan society. Amb. Norov expressed appreciation for India’s active involvement in SCO activities since becoming a full member in 2017. India’s membership had

significantly broadened SCO's geographical reach and raised its profile and influence in the region and the world. He added that India had huge potential in terms of trade and economics, S&T cooperation, alternative energy sources, IT, tele-medicine, pharma, hospitality and tourism.

In the technical sessions, participants exchanged views on SCO in regional and global flux, and India-SCO engagement.

Webinar on “Reading the Fault Lines in the Gulf Region”, 01 November 2021

ICWA organised a virtual panel discussion on “Reading the Fault Lines in the Gulf Region” on 1 November 2021. The panel was chaired by Amb. Navdeep Suri and included Prof. Girijesh Pant, former Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and former Vice Chancellor of Doon University, Dr. Deepika Saraswat, Research Fellow, ICWA and Dr. Prasanta Kumar Pradhan, Associate Fellow and Coordinator of the West Asia Centre, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA). In his inaugural remarks, the Chair identified four major fault lines in the region and said that emergence of the Shiite crescent has exacerbated the Sunni-Shiite divide in the region. He said that over the years, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE have chosen to promote the notion of religious tolerance against Islamism promoted by countries like Turkey and Qatar. He also highlighted the recent spat between Saudi Arabia and UAE which was visible in a recent OPEC meeting.

Dr. Deepika spoke about how India is navigating the fault lines in the region in the face of emergence of the whole of the Gulf region as a new centre of geopolitical gravity. She said that energy sector and maritime security seem to have become the central focal points for the deeper partnership between India and the Gulf region.

In his remarks Dr. Prasanta Kumar Pradhan focused on how current dynamics of relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia is impacting the geopolitics of the region. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia claims to be the leader of the Muslim world due to being the custodian of the two holiest Muslim sites, while Iran claims to be the leader of the Shiite population around the world.

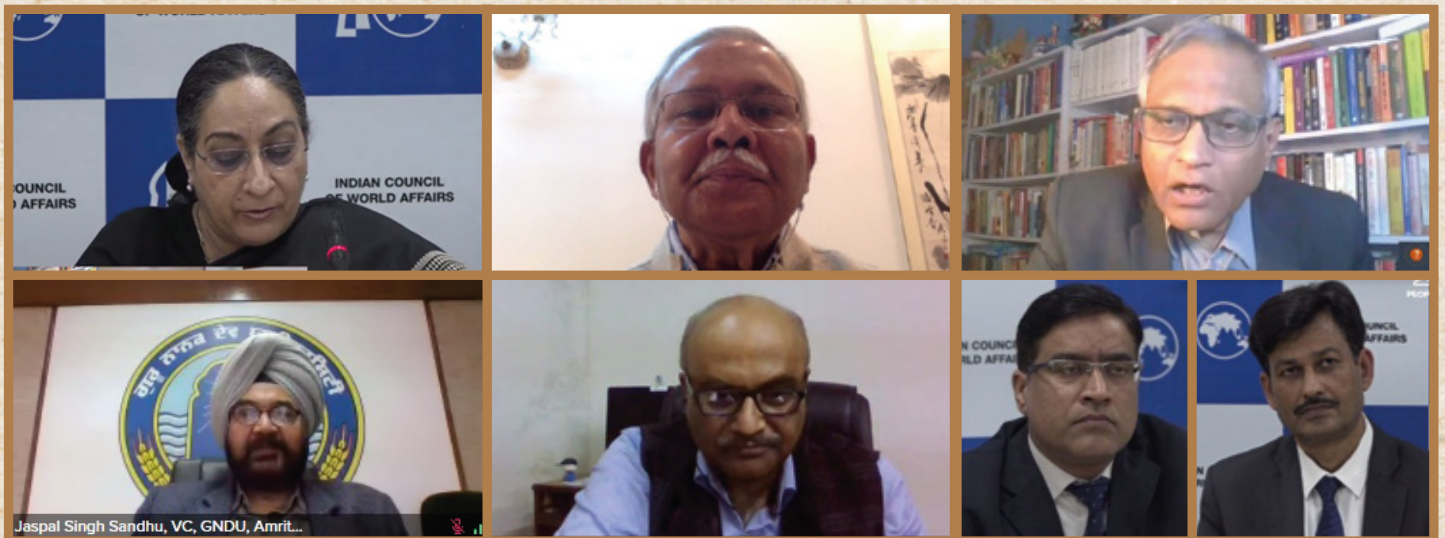
Prof. Girijesh Pant put forward an optimistic picture of the region. He stated that the intra-regional conflicts are likely to de-escalate with time because the cost of the conflict is getting high for every actor in the region. Countries in the gulf region would deescalate the tension gradually because the US is no more enthusiastic to provide security to the region.



Second ICWA- The Wilson Centre, Washington D.C. Closed Door Briefing under Chatham House Rules on ‘China-Russia Relations’, 10 November 2021

ICWA along with the Wilson Centre, Washington D.C. hosted the Second Closed Door Briefing under Chatham House Rules on China-Russia Relations on 10 November 2021. The participants included Mr. Abraham M. Denmark, Vice President of Programs and Director of Studies, Senior Advisor to the Asia Program, Senior Fellow in the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, Mr. Matthew Rojansky, Director of the Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Mr. Robert Daly, Director of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Amb. Ajai Malhotra, Former Ambassador of India to Russia, and Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Webinar on “China’s Position on Afghanistan: Regional Perspectives”, 15 November 2021



In collaboration with Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar, ICWA held a webinar on “China’s Position on Afghanistan; Regional Perspectives”. Remarks were made by Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA and Prof. (Dr.) Jaspal Singh Sandhu, Vice-Chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The discussion was chaired by Amb. Ashok Kantha and speakers included Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Head of the Department, Department of Political Science, GNDU and Dr. Athar Zafar, Senior Research Fellow, ICWA.

In her welcome remarks, Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh stated that, though a landlocked country, Afghanistan has great geographical significance. Historically, it has gone through several phases of contestation for power and influence. The withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 has created a situation of flux and uncertainty. India, as indeed several nations, is closely watching the developments in Afghanistan as these have implications not only for Afghanistan but also for its neighbours and the region. India hosted the “Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan” on 10 November 2021 which witnessed the expanded participation of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic,

Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. As far as China is concerned, it has been engaging with the Taliban even before the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan. On July 28, 2021, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met a Taliban delegation led by Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tianjin. China announced the provision of RMB 200 million worth of emergency humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, including an initial batch of 3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines. There have been commentaries, including from China itself, expressing doubt about the assurances given by the Taliban to China on countering terrorism.

In his opening remarks, Prof. (Dr.) Jaspal Singh Sandhu briefed about new initiatives taken at the GNDU and appreciated the collaboration with the ICWA. He shared his experience of visiting different provinces of China and his interactions with the Chinese University as a UGC official. Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, Senior Research Fellow, ICWA highlighted that ICWA is committed to its outreach activities with universities and think-tanks across India.

The experts highlighted that it is important to understand China's position on Afghanistan as well as the positions of other important regional stakeholders in Afghanistan, particularly Russia, Iran and Central Asian countries in the evolving situation in Afghanistan. It was noted that China may increase its foothold but in a calibrated manner and not rush to fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the US and the NATO forces.

ICWA Book Discussion on “Rising to the China Challenge: Winning through Strategic Patience and Economic Growth” by Gautam Bambawale, Vijay Kelkar, Raghunath Mashelkar, Ganesh Natarajan, Ajit Ranade, Ajay Shah, 23 November, 2021

On 23 November 2021, ICWA organized an online book discussion on “Rising to the China Challenge: Winning through Strategic Patience and Economic Growth” by Amb. Gautam Bambawale, Vijay Kelkar, Raghunath Mashelkar, Dr. Ganesh Natarajan, Dr. Ajit Ranade and Prof. Ajay Shah. During the meeting DG, ICWA, Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh delivered the opening remarks. The event was chaired by Prof. Madhu Bhalla, former Head and Professor, Department of East Asian Studies. After the Chair's remarks, authors of the book, Amb. Gautam Bambawale, former Indian Ambassador to China, Dr. Ganesh Natarajan, Executive Chairman and founder of 5F World, Prof. Ajay Shah, formerly with Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, and National Institute for Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) and Dr. Ajit Ranade, Group Executive President and Chief Economist at the Aditya Birla Group presented the context and main arguments in the book. Brig. Arun Sahgal, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group and Dr. Venkat Raman, Associate Professor, IIM Indore presented their analysis of the book as discussants.

Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, DG, ICWA noted that the book will significantly add to an informed understanding of China and enrich the knowledge of China's foreign policy approaches. She highlighted that the China challenge emerged from



Beijing's ambition to become a dominant Asian and global power. That has manifested itself in multiple domains, including economic, diplomatic, military, and technological spheres. Prof. Madhu Bhalla highlighted that the book's merit lies in its attempt to present an Indian perspective on dealing with its threatening neighbour in a complex and fast-changing world. It also highlights the limits of India's China policy. Previous approaches to India-China relations, with an emphasis on compartmentalisation of relations, no longer hold valid in the post-Galwan era. Amb. Gautam Bambawale informed that China's military action on India's northern border in the summer of 2020 is the context that inspired the authors to write the book. He noted that the widening gap in comprehensive national power between India and China encouraged China to undertake military adventurism in Eastern Ladakh. In the long term, India's repose to dealing with the China challenge should be focused on reducing the gap in comprehensive national power between the two, focusing on economic growth.

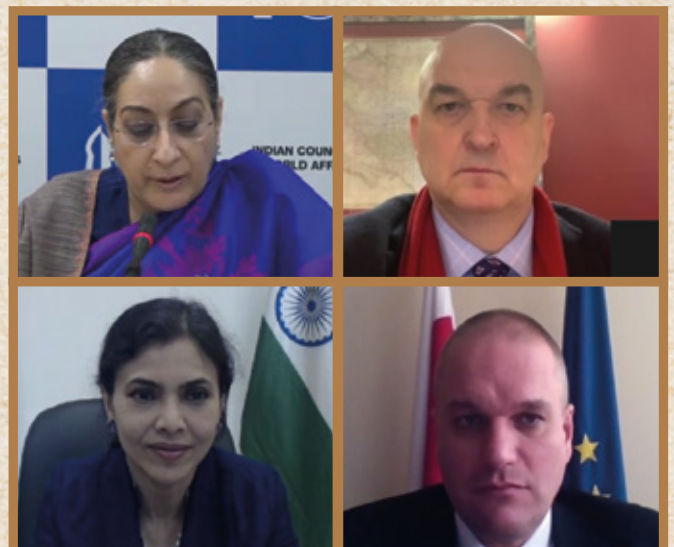
Dr. Ganesh Natarajan emphasized that India, in its long-term response to the China challenge, must choose its battles very clearly. India should avoid competing in sectors that China has a comparative advantage in like rare earth metals and must reduce its dependency on China. However, it should focus on telecom, automobile, vaccine/pharma industry, information technology, agriculture.

Prof. Ajay Shah said that it is unconscionable to think about a situation where China's comprehensive power would be way ahead of India after two-three decades. Hence the China challenge is a significant motivation for India to get a high GDP growth rate in the long run. Dr. Ajit Ranade underscored that the book advances the perspectives for rising up to the China challenge, not defeating, overtaking, or isolating China. In dealing with the China challenge, much of the rising has to happen on India's domestic front. The book provides a long-term perspective focusing on economic growth. Brig. Arun Sahgal (Retd.) highlighted that China is essentially a continental power and is a maritime constrained power. Hence the entire element of Chinese power is focused on its east front. Over the last few years, the Chinese perception of India has changed. China started believing that India has emerged as a credible challenger.

Dr. Venkat Raman maintained that in responding to the China challenge, India cannot take the Chinese path of economic development. While India is increasingly becoming part of anti-China coalitions, it is also part of groupings along with China in seeking a non-western international order.

8th ICWA-PISM Strategic Dialogue, 24 November 2021

ICWA held its eighth strategic dialogue with its MoU partner in Poland, the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) on 24 November 2021. For the Dialogue, three themes were identified – Changing Global Scenario – A Shift to Indo-Pacific; Understanding Regional Dynamics and India-Poland Bilateral Relations – Way Forward. Speakers in the inaugural session included Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA; Mr. Slawomir Debski, Director, PISM; Amb. Nagma Mallick, Ambassador of India to Poland; and Amb. Adam Burakowski, Ambassador of Poland to India. In the inaugural session, emphasis was laid on the fact that India and Poland have important role in setting the agenda for global debates, with Poland as a member of the EU and India as a major global power. It was emphasised that the pandemic has demonstrated many





strengths of India and Poland, as both countries move towards normalcy especially economic. Both the countries have very strong trade and investment ties, Indian investment in Poland especially in IT, textiles and pharma are significant. Poland remains an important political and trade partner for India, and, multilaterally, it is a crucial member of the EU.

The first theme was on Changing Global Scenario – A Shift to Indo-Pacific. Acceptance of Indo-Pacific as a strategic construct has shifted the geopolitical centre to this region not only because of economic reasons but also due to contestation between US and China. While the concept of Indo-Pacific remains fluid, EU's policy has added another dimension to the way the region is looked at with its focus on connectivity, trade and economics, and an assertive China. India's Indo-Pacific vision is premised upon the principle of 'ASEAN-Centrality' and its approach is based on cooperation and collaboration, given the need for shared responses to shared challenges in the region. As the primary objective of engagement with the Indo-Pacific partners is to build more resilient and sustainable global value chains by diversifying trade and economic relations, conclusion of BTIA between India and the EU could be a preferred path ahead.

In the second theme of discussion on Understanding Regional Dynamics - Belarus-Poland border issue and the Afghanistan were discussed. On the Belarus-Poland border it was highlighted that it cannot be called a migration crisis; rather, it is a border crisis. On Afghanistan, four fault-lines were identified - first, the Taliban and the rest of the country - where majority do not want to be governed by Taliban. Second, conflict between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front. Third, differences within the Taliban, particularly with the Haqqani group. Finally, looming conflict between the Islamic State of Khorasan and the Taliban - repeated attacks within the country indicate the Taliban's interim government is failing to ensure security in the country.

The third theme of the dialogue was India-Poland Bilateral Relations – Way Forward. Areas such as clean water technology, waste treatment technology and circular economy were discussed. Both countries need innovation in IT sector and revival of science and technology cooperation were identified as areas of cooperation. India and Poland can explore the possibility of close collaborations not only at the government-to-government level but also between the nodal institutes in both countries to develop new technologies for renewable energy. Poland should also consider joining the International Solar Alliance. Active engagement in start-up hubs and artificial intelligence can serve as a springboard for India and Poland to establish and create new and far-reaching solutions. It was highlighted that more awareness programs regarding the academic opportunities in Poland are required to enhance the opportunities of academic collaboration between the two countries. The establishment of a Joint Research Fund could be considered, which could finance collaboration in scientific cooperation in the field of climate change, space, international terrorism, artificial intelligence etc.

“Maitri Diwas: 50th Anniversary of India – Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations”, 06 December 2021

The event “Maitri Diwas: The 50th Anniversary of India-Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations” was held at Sapru House on 6 December 2021. On this day in 1971, India formally recognized Bangladesh. Hon’ble Prime Minister, Government of People’s Republic of Bangladesh H. E. Sheikh Hasina sent a special video message for the occasion. Welcome address was delivered by Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, DG, ICWA. Amb. Muhammad Imran, High Commissioner, Bangladesh High Commission, New Delhi delivered his remarks which were followed by the remarks of Mr. K. M. Khalid, State Minister of Culture, Government of People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India who spoke about the importance of the relations between India and Bangladesh and their steady upward trajectory. A short documentary film on “India-Bangladesh Relations” was also screened on the occasion.



In her welcome address, Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh mentioned that the year 2021 is of special significance in India-Bangladesh ties. This year marks a ‘Triveni’ of events of epochal significance - the golden jubilee of the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic ties. Amb. Muhammad Imran paid his tribute to Bangladesh’s Father of the Nation- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and all other leaders who laid the foundation of the ever-growing bilateral relations.



Mr. K. M. Khalid began his remarks by thanking the Prime Ministers of the two countries who decided in March this year to commemorate 6th December as the Maitri Diwas. He mentioned that today India is the largest development partner of Bangladesh. Both countries complement each other and offer bright prospects for reaping the economic benefits of their partnership. He said that he was confident that the two countries would overcome their shared challenges and solidify the partnership even further.

Mr. Shringla began his remarks by explaining the deeper connotation of the term “Maitri”. He saluted the leadership of Bangabandhu- one of the greatest leaders and historical figures of our times and a man who shaped the destiny of a nation. Mr. Shringla informed the gathering that India had recognised Bangladesh as a free and sovereign nation while it was still fighting its War of Liberation. He stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his message on the occasion of Maitri Diwas recalled and celebrated the foundations of our fifty years of friendship and looked forward to working with his counterpart PM Sheikh Hasina to further expand and deepen the ties. He went on to speak in detail about various aspects of India-Bangladesh relations presently. Talking about the bilateral relations during the pandemic, he said Bangladesh was one of the first destinations for Indian vaccines. He mentioned that Bangladesh was the first destination of PM Modi’s visit after the disruptions and lockdowns of the pandemic. The President of India also

participated in the Victory Day Celebrations in Dhaka on 16 December, which was also the Hon'ble President's first visit overseas since the COVID 19 pandemic. He stated that the challenges in the relationship between the two countries are being overcome and will continue to be resolved in the framework of mutual trust and cooperation. Both countries share commitment to counter destabilising forces, radicalisation and terrorism. Strengthening cooperation in order to tackle new challenges will go a long way in preserving social harmony.

In her message H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh mentioned that during the state visit of the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi to Dhaka in March 2021, the two Prime Ministers agreed to jointly celebrate Maitri Diwas in 18 selected cities worldwide, along with Dhaka and New Delhi. She paid homage to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and other national heroes and expressed gratitude towards the sacrifices of Indian Armed Forces and its people in the country's Liberation War. She recalled the generosity of Former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi and her government, leaders of other political parties and overall, the people of India towards the people of Bangladesh in 1971. Prime Minister Hasina said the partnership between India and Bangladesh- "has matured taking dynamic, comprehensive and strategic shape and is based on sovereignty, equality, trust and mutual respect." She stated that the core of the bilateral relationship now needs to concentrate on people to people contacts, trade, business and connectivity- which have become important despite restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

The panel discussion on 50th Anniversary of India - Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations was held after the opening session. It was chaired and moderated by Amb. Rajeev Mitter, Former High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh. The panelists were Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director, Asian Confluence, Shillong, Hasanul Haq Inu, Member of Parliament, Former Minister of Information of Bangladesh and Mr. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, Diplomatic Affairs Editor, The Economic Times.

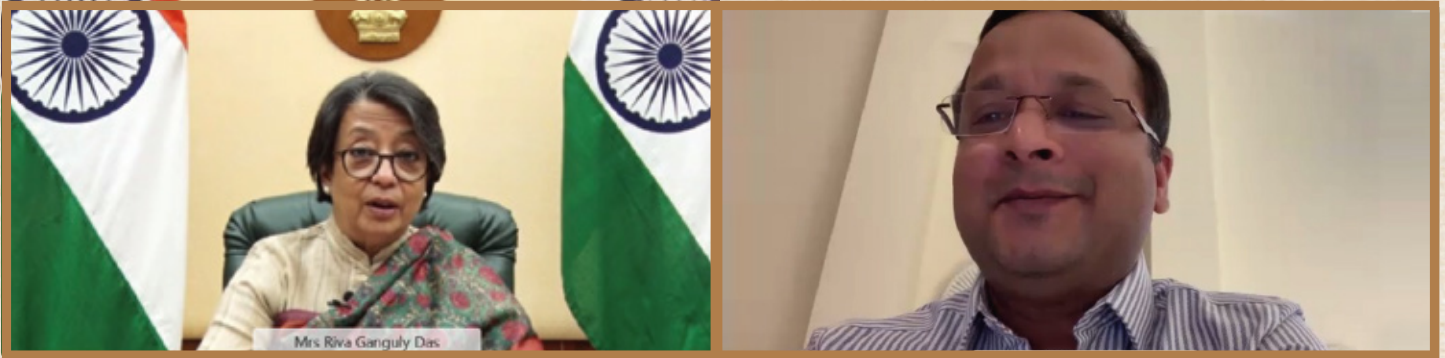
8th Indian Ocean Dialogue, 15 December 2021

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, hosted the 8th Indian Ocean Dialogue on 15th December 2021. The Indian Ocean Dialogue is the Track 1.5 flagship initiative of the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The Dialogue was held virtually on the theme - 'Post Pandemic Indian Ocean: Leveraging Digital Technologies for Health, Education, Development and Trade in IORA Member States'. The 8th IOD had a total of 19 speakers, constituting a multi-disciplinary group of academics, policy makers, diplomats, technology experts, naval analysts from countries including Australia, India, Iran, Mauritius, Oman, South Africa and Sri Lanka. The Dialogue was also attended by additional participants from Member States and Dialogue Partners of IORA. The programme was conducted over four technical sessions in addition to the inaugural and the valedictory sessions.



Opening Remarks at the Inaugural were delivered by Director General, ICWA Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh. In her remarks she emphasized that India's engagement with the littorals of the Indian Ocean is deep. She stated that India endeavours to strengthen relationships with its regional partners in a mutually cooperative manner under the vision of SAGAR or 'Security and Growth for All in the Region'. In his remarks, Dr. Gatot Hari Gunawan, Acting Secretary General of IORA mentioned that the pandemic has shown us how important technologies are to run the world; hence we must collectively support each other by sharing new technologies and maintaining a sustainable order in the Indian Ocean Region.

Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State of External Affairs, Government of India. He stated that India's vision of the Indian Ocean region is premised on the SAGAR doctrine as enunciated by



PM Shri Narendra Modi, encompassing political, security, economic and socio-cultural spheres. It envisions the Indian Ocean region and the greater Indo-Pacific as a region of peace and prosperity, based on a climate of trust and transparency, respect for international maritime rules, equal access as a right under international law, sensitivity to each other's interests, peaceful resolution of disputes and enhanced maritime cooperation. He highlighted the need for greater collaboration among IORA Member States for post pandemic recovery. He also noted the critical role of new and emerging technologies, and re-affirmed India's readiness to collaborate in this regard.

The first technical session on “Embracing e-Health to fight COVID-19” was chaired by Dr. Nivedita Ray, Director Research, ICWA, India. The session had speakers from Mauritius, India and Sri Lanka. There was agreement that digital health technologies like contact tracing applications, vaccine booking websites played an indispensable role in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. IORA provides a good platform to collate all the initiatives and learn from the experience of all the countries.

The second session on “Investments in e-Education” was chaired by Dr. Romeela Mohee, Commissioner of Higher Education Commission, Mauritius. Speakers in the session were from South Africa, Iran, Australia and Sri Lanka. Key challenges to education sector in the light of COVID pandemic were highlighted during the discussion. Establishment of university networks in the IORA region was suggested as a key step to advance E-learning.

The third session on “Development Through Digital Technologies” was chaired by Mr. Mohit Kapoor, Chairman, AI and Digital Transformation Committee, FICCI and Chief Technical Officer, Mahindra Group, India. Speakers in the session were from Mauritius, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Oman. It was noted that digital technology is becoming the most important pillar for businesses, health and in advancing the global development agenda as encapsulated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The last session on “Digital Shipping, Smart Ports and Trade” chaired by Dr. Prashantha Jayamanna, Vice Chairman, Sri Lanka ports Authority, Sri Lanka. Speakers at the session were from Iran and India. There was a consensus that technology is leading to a new phase of automation and security information which are important components of advancement in and the growth of the maritime industry. The valedictory address was delivered by Mrs. Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India. In her address, she emphasized the immense potential for IORA led cooperation among its members and dialogue partners to fully leverage new and emerging technologies. She also underlined the importance of sharing best practices and innovative approaches to solve shared challenges in the areas like Health, Education, Trade and Development.



“Celebration of 5th Anniversary of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2016-2021 and Announcement of Celebration of 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations Between India and Vietnam 1972-2022”, 17 December 2021

ICWA in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and the Embassy of Vietnam, New Delhi, organised an event “Celebration of 5th Anniversary of India-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2016-2021 and Announcement of Celebration of 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between India and Vietnam 1972-2022” at Sapru House on December 17, 2021. A high-level Vietnamese Parliamentary delegation led by H.E. Vuong Dinh Hue, President, National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, who were visiting India at the joint invitation of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, participated. Welcome remarks were delivered by Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, DG, ICWA, which was followed by addresses by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon’ble External Affairs Minister, Government of India and H.E. Vuong Dinh Hue, President, National Assembly, Vietnam.



Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA, in her welcome address, stated that Vietnam is one of India’s closest partners, trusted friend and an important pillar of its ‘Act East’ policy and the Indo-pacific Vision. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972, India-Vietnam partnership has grown to become a ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’ which was established in 2016. Bilateral relations are thriving in all areas of cooperation and both India and Vietnam remain committed to an open, efficient and rules based architecture. Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, India, in his address, noted that India and Vietnam have never stopped working to take ties to a higher level. He traced developments in the key pillars of the partnership notably - political and security, economics and investments, developmental cooperation, historical and cultural linkages, and defence cooperation. Dr. Jaishankar added that from the Indian perspective, Vietnam is a key partner both in the ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific context. The two countries had a substantial agenda already underway whether it is in commerce, connectivity or culture. Bilateral political and defence cooperation has also been steadily growing. He said the last five years of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership have been very productive and hoped that the next decade must be even more so. At a time of global uncertainty and post-Covid economic recovery, Dr. Jaishankar said the India-Vietnam partnership will be a significant stabilizing factor in



the Indo-Pacific. Keeping the national ambitions and global responsibilities in mind, India and Vietnam must forge ahead.

In his address, H.E. Mr. Vuong Dinh Hue, President, National Assembly of Vietnam, stated that the comprehensive nature of bilateral relations has been built upon trust with the ties enduring the test of time that have been further bolstered through high-level visits including by parliamentarians. Economic ties between the two countries have continued to thrive despite the hardships of COVID-19. He added that bilateral ties would thrive further with close people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Vietnam will not forget the support extended by India during the pandemic. Both countries support a rule-based multilateral order, avoiding use of force, settlement of international disputes via peaceful measures and aim to ensure maritime safety and freedom of seas by upholding United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for peace, stability, and justice in the region.



In his capacity as Vice-President, ICWA, EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar presented a photograph of Ho Chi Minh, former President of Vietnam addressing ICWA on 7 February 1958 to H.E. Mr. Vuong Dinh Hue, President, National Assembly of Vietnam.

9th CICA Think Tank Forum, 28-29 December 2021

ICWA participated in the online 9th Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Think Tank Forum on 28-29 December 2021 as the representative think tank from India. This was the Council's first participation in the Forum. This was also the first meeting of the Think Tank Forum as a permanent advisory body of CICA. The Forum was attended by experts from leading think tanks and research institutions of CICA Member States. CICA is a 27-member body for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia by implementation of confidence building measures.

The 9th CICA Think Tank Forum was hosted by the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, China. Ambassador Bhaskar Balakrishnan, Science Diplomacy Fellow, Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS); Dr. Athar Zafar, Senior Research Fellow, ICWA; and Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, Senior Research Fellow, ICWA, participated in the Forum which had the following three sessions: (i) Security challenges to CICA Member States in the post-pandemic era; (ii) Cooperation among CICA Member States on security in the digital era; and (iii) Views of CICA Think Tanks on transformation and upgrade of CICA.



ICWA PUBLICATIONS

Sapru House Soundings on Area Studies

Recent Development in Afghanistan: ICWA Reflections

Nivedita Ray & Anwesha Ghosh (Ed.)

(ICWA; KW Publishers; 2021)

Foreword

Recent Developments in Afghanistan: ICWA Reflections edited by Dr. Nivedita Ray and Dr. Anwesha Ghosh is part of the series on Sapru House: Soundings on Area Studies, and the outcome of the research work on the recent developments in Afghanistan at the Indian Council of World Affairs.

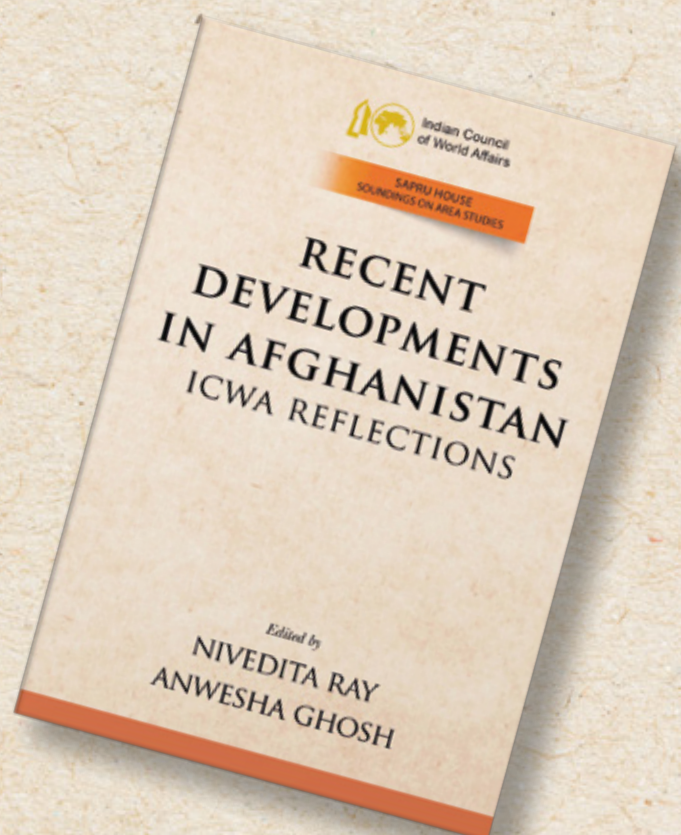
Given India's long-standing relations with Afghanistan, the country has been one of the core focus areas for the Council. There has been a constant endeavour in ICWA to bring out insightful analysis on the issues and developments pertaining to Afghanistan. This compendium attempts to bring together the research papers produced by the Research Faculty at ICWA on the developments in Afghanistan between July and November 2021.

The papers in this volume capture the key developments in Afghanistan, before and after the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021 and subsequently, it provides an overview of the responses of the regional

and global powers to the developments in Afghanistan namely - Iran, China, Qatar, US, Russia, the EU, the Arab World, Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, Latin America and the ASEAN.

We hope, this publication will enhance readers' understanding of the country and the region concerned and will act as an impetus for further study and research on the subject.

Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh
Director General
Indian Council of World Affairs



ICWA PUBLICATIONS

Issue Briefs

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1. Dr. Temjenmeren Ao, Building the Connectivity to Southeast Asia: The India – Myanmar – Thailand Trilateral Highway (October 2021)

Guest Column

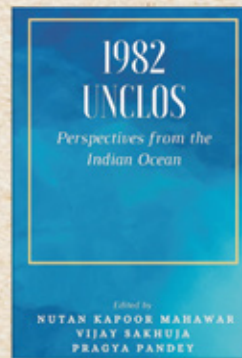
1. Amb. Kheya Bhattacharya, Normalization of Ties between Morocco and Israel: Its Genesis and Implication (25 November 2021)

Books



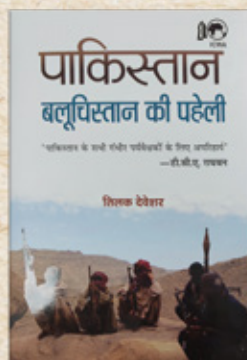
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Sapru House Soundings in Area Studies: Recent Development in Afghanistan: ICWA Reflections

Edited by Nivedita Ray &
Anwesha Ghosh
(Indian Council of World Affairs;
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INDIA QUARTERLY

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Editorial

Among other things, the recent pull-out by the United States from Afghanistan is yet another indication of global turbulence involved in a reset of geopolitical alliances. While the reset goes back to the end of the last century's global economic shifts the rapidity with which the old order is unraveling gives rise to many questions. These involve the tenacity and resilience of regional institutions, the ability of states to accommodate pressures from competing powers and the opportunities for middle/regional powers to shape the geopolitical future. Where, for example, does India place itself in a very complex world or the countries of South-East Asia? Which concerns are likely to shape partnerships? And how, in the breakdown of global consensus, are the global commons to be managed for future generations? Our present issue engages with each of these issues.

In a contribution to the debate on the distribution of global power in a post-Western world, an article from Russia looks at great power attributes and makes a case for India to untap its potential to become a great power. Another looks at the ability and efforts of regional institutions, such as the ASEAN, to retain their leadership positions as power shifts occur in its neighbourhood. As new institutions and partnerships emerge in Asia, states are also concerned about economic and political costs and benefits as with India regarding membership of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as two papers from two different perspectives indicate. While one author sees India's reluctance to sign onto the RCEP as a lost opportunity, the other indicates that opportunities in the Indo-Pacific offset the losses from the RCEP. Closer home, optimism over rejuvenating the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) speaks to concerns over the absence of trade intensity within

South Asia despite the potential for trade, calling for structural changes in trading regimes. At another level, concerns over human security, whether in relation to persistent forms of radicalisation in our neighbourhood, the increasing securitisation of the Arctic or the issue of rights to outer space, raise questions about the nature of global politics. In all cases, the authors argue, the tendency to securitise what are clearly development and human security issues or to claim exclusive rights to the global commons, leaves little room for a global consensus on alternative solutions. As the post-second world war consensus on global regimes breaks down, dealing with critical global challenges means that states must focus on possible future scenarios as well as on evolving an enabling global politics. Finally, this issue includes a short piece on the history of the Indian Council of World Affairs, an extract from a recently published institutional history of the Council by the author. As India engages with new challenges before it in the region and outside, this may be an appropriate time to reflect on why there was an early concern with foreign policy and the creation of institutions to sustain objective research.



Madhu Bhalla
Editor, India Quarterly

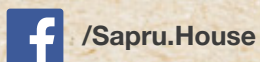
ABOUT ICWA

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was established in 1943 by a group of eminent intellectuals led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. H.N. Kunzru. Its principal objective was to create an Indian perspective on international relations and act as a repository of knowledge and thinking on foreign policy issues. The Council today conducts policy research through an in-house faculty as well as through external experts. It regularly organizes an array of intellectual activities including conferences, seminars, roundtable discussions, lectures and brings out a range of publications. It has a well-stocked library, an active website, and publishes the journal 'India Quarterly'. ICWA has over 50 MoUs with international think tanks and research institutions to promote better understanding on international issues and develop areas of mutual cooperation. The Council also has partnerships with leading research institutions, think tanks and universities in India.



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