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UNIVERSITY
Rooted in ideals • Ascending with ideas

Subhas Chandra Bose Chair
on International Relations

School of Law, Governance
and Public Policy



भारतीय वैश्विक परिषद्
Indian Council of World Affairs

National Workshop on
**India-centric Research
Design and Methodology
in International Relations**

3 Day residential workshop

16 to 18 July 2026



Ashok K. Kantha

Subhas Chandra Bose Chair Professor of International Relations
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Message from the Chair Professor

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all participants and resource persons to this National Workshop on India-centric Research Design and Methodology in International Relations, the first initiative of this kind to be organised under the aegis of the Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations at Chanakya University, Bengaluru.

The impulse behind this workshop is a simple but, I think, important one: methodological training in International Relations, as it reaches most young Indian scholars, teaches them to excel at a craft designed elsewhere, answering questions framed by others, using categories that carry someone else's assumptions about what counts as evidence, as causation, and as a legitimate research puzzle. This is not a plea for parochialism or for methodological exceptionalism. Good research design has universal elements, and no scholar profits from reinventing method for its own sake. But there is a difference between using rigorous tools and being used by them. A methodology curriculum that never asks what India's own strategic experience, its civilisational depth, and its distinctive position in the international order demand of a research question will keep producing scholars who are technically accomplished but substantively derivative. This workshop is built on the conviction that methodological rigour and an India-centric vantage point are not in tension with one another; the latter, done well, sharpens rather than dilutes the former.

That conviction feels considerably more urgent today than it would have even three or four years ago, because the tools of research itself have changed. I have written recently about how AI systems can answer questions of international law with complete confidence while reproducing, without acknowledgment, a distinctly Western reading of the relevant legal provisions. The bias, I concluded, was not malicious; it was structural, a consequence of training data that is overwhelmingly Western in authorship and institutional origin. What troubles me is not simply that these tools carry hidden assumptions, but that they are now woven into the ordinary practice of research.

This poses a genuinely difficult question, one to which I do not have a tidy answer: how much can we lean on these tools before we begin to lose our own agency and creativity as researchers, and before our very habits of enquiry start to absorb assumptions that are not

ours? I do not think this workshop can resolve that tension in three days, and I would be doing participants a disservice if I pretended otherwise. But I do think it is a question every emerging scholar must consider, rather than allow the pace of an easier draft to answer it by default.

We expect that during three days of this intensive and interactive workshop, the participants will explore a substantive agenda: from theory and research design, through quantitative and qualitative approaches, to the craft of writing and the ethics of knowledge production, in the company of resource persons whose own work shows these are live, workable concerns in serious scholarship.

I extend my warm thanks to the resource persons and participants alike, and look forward to a workshop, and a body of scholarship, that takes India's own requirements, priorities, and idioms seriously as the starting point of enquiry, not as an afterthought to it.



Ashok K. Kantha



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About Chanakya University

Chanakya University, located in Bengaluru, is an innovative global higher education institution established in 2022. The university's mission is to serve society by providing outstanding education, fostering knowledge development, and making direct contributions to practical fields.

Chanakya University aspires to be India's foremost for-purpose university, on a steadfast mission, in pursuit of expanding frontiers of knowledge, nurturing world-class scholarship and advancing high-impact research.

We are committed to the creation of a foremost knowledge movement in which students rise higher with ideas and achieve sustained success with abundant wisdom (jñāna), indomitable will (ichhā) and meaningful action (kriyā).



About Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)

Partner



भारतीय वैश्विक परिषद्
Indian Council of World Affairs

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 conference, seminars, roundtable discussions, lectures and brings out a range of publications. It has a well stocked library, publishes the journal 'India Quarterly', and is active on social media. ICWA has over 100 MoUs with leading international and national think tanks, research and academic institutions to promote better understanding on international issues and develop areas of mutual cooperation. The Council's international partnerships are focused on dialogue and joint activities like research publications, while its national outreach is focused on creating awareness of and scholarship on issues pertaining to foreign policy and international relations.



About the School of Law, Governance and Public Policy

The School of Law, Governance and Public Policy (SLGPP) is an advanced interdisciplinary academic space dedicated to applied learning and research in law and public policy. The School integrates legal education with governance, public administration, economics, and policy studies to enable students to understand law as a central instrument of governance and social transformation.

Anchored in constitutional values, Indian intellectual traditions, and informed by global perspectives, SLGPP emphasises rigorous scholarship, ethical reasoning, and policy relevance to address contemporary public challenges.

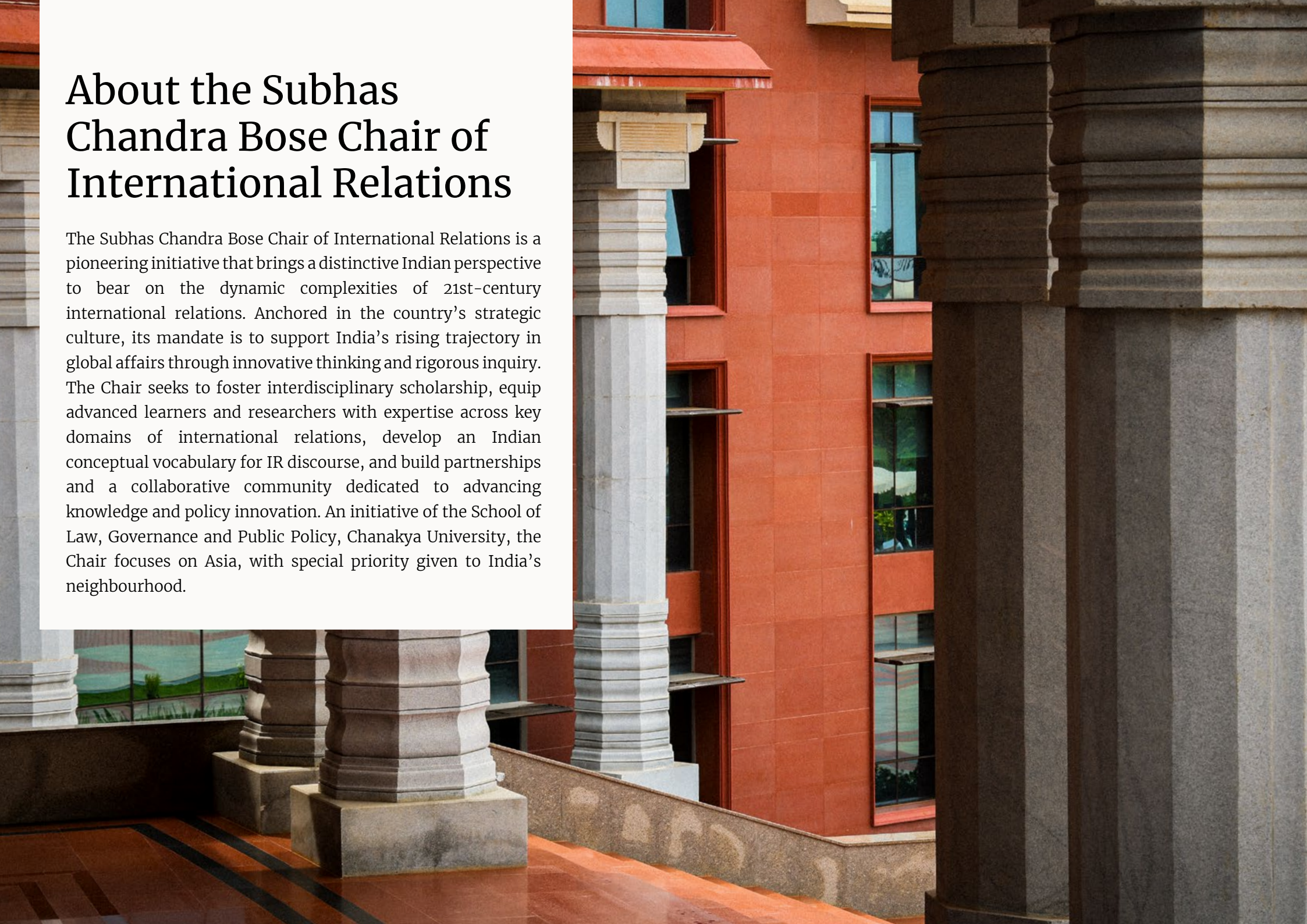
Through its undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes—including the five-year integrated B.A., LL.B. (Hons.) and B.B.A., LL.B. (Hons.), the one-year LL.M. (Corporate and Commercial Laws), M.A. in Public Policy, and Ph.D.—the School adopts an innovative pedagogy centred on experiential and research-led learning.

Legal and policy clinics, internships, moot courts, drafting and policy labs, field engagement, and sustained public dialogue form the core of its applied approach. Graduates are prepared for diverse careers in legal practice, corporate and regulatory roles, public policy and governance, civil services, academia, and the social sector, emerging as competent, socially responsible, and policy-ready professionals.



About the Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations

The Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations is a pioneering initiative that brings a distinctive Indian perspective to bear on the dynamic complexities of 21st-century international relations. Anchored in the country's strategic culture, its mandate is to support India's rising trajectory in global affairs through innovative thinking and rigorous inquiry. The Chair seeks to foster interdisciplinary scholarship, equip advanced learners and researchers with expertise across key domains of international relations, develop an Indian conceptual vocabulary for IR discourse, and build partnerships and a collaborative community dedicated to advancing knowledge and policy innovation. An initiative of the School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Chanakya University, the Chair focuses on Asia, with special priority given to India's neighbourhood.



Advisory Council



Dr. Arvind Gupta

Chair Person,
Director, Vivekananda
International Foundation



Ashok K. Kantha

Member,
Inaugural Chair Professor, Subhas
Chandra Bose Chair of International
Relations, Chanakya University



Prof. Amita Batra

Member,
Professor of Economics,
Jawaharlal Nehru University



D. B. Venkatesh Varma

Member,
Former Permanent Representative of
India to the United Nations



Prof. Harsh V. Pant

Member,
Vice President,
Observer Research Foundation



Prof. Rajat Kathuria

Member,
Dean, School of Humanities &
Social Sciences, Shiv Nadar Institution
of Eminence



N. Parthasarathi

Member,
Former Ambassador of
India to Myanmar



Pankaj Saran

Member,
Former Deputy National Security
Adviser



Srinivas Pulavarti

Member,
Director (India), The Asia Group



Dr. T. C. A. Raghavan

Member,
Former Director General, Indian
Council of World Affairs



Prof. Chetan Singai

Member-Secretary,
Professor & Dean, School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Chanakya University

SCB Chair Team Members



Ashok K. Kantha

Inaugural Chair Professor,
Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of
International Relations



Prof. Chetan Singai

Professor & Dean, School of Law,
Governance and Public Policy



Dr. Charu Ratna Dubey

Assistant Professor, School of Law,
Governance and Public Policy



Dr. Nishit Kumar

Assistant Professor, Subhas Chandra
Bose Chair of International Relations



Dr. Sanket Sudhir Kulkarni

Assistant Professor, Subhas Chandra
Bose Chair of International Relations



Dr. Uday Nitin Patil

Chanakya–Bose Fellow,
Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of
International Relations



Krutika Reddy

Doctoral Scholar, School of Law,
Governance and Public Policy



Saurabh Kaushik

Research Fellow, Subhas Chandra Bose
Chair of International Relations



Anu Maria Joseph

Non–Resident Fellow, Subhas Chandra
Bose Chair of International Relations

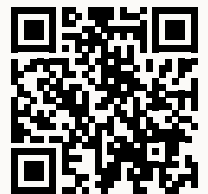
University Campus Map

Building a Sustainable Future

116 Acres



Virtual Campus Tour ►



To Reach Chanakya University

Scan for Google Map Directions



**Kempegowda International
Airport**



BLR Airport → Chanakya University
Scan for Google Maps directions

19 Km from
Chanakya University



**SMVT Bengaluru
Railway Station**



SMVT Bengaluru → Chanakya University
Scan for Google Maps directions

43 Km from
Chanakya University



Majestic Bus Station



Majestic Bus Station → Chanakya University
Scan for Google Maps directions

42 Km from
Chanakya University

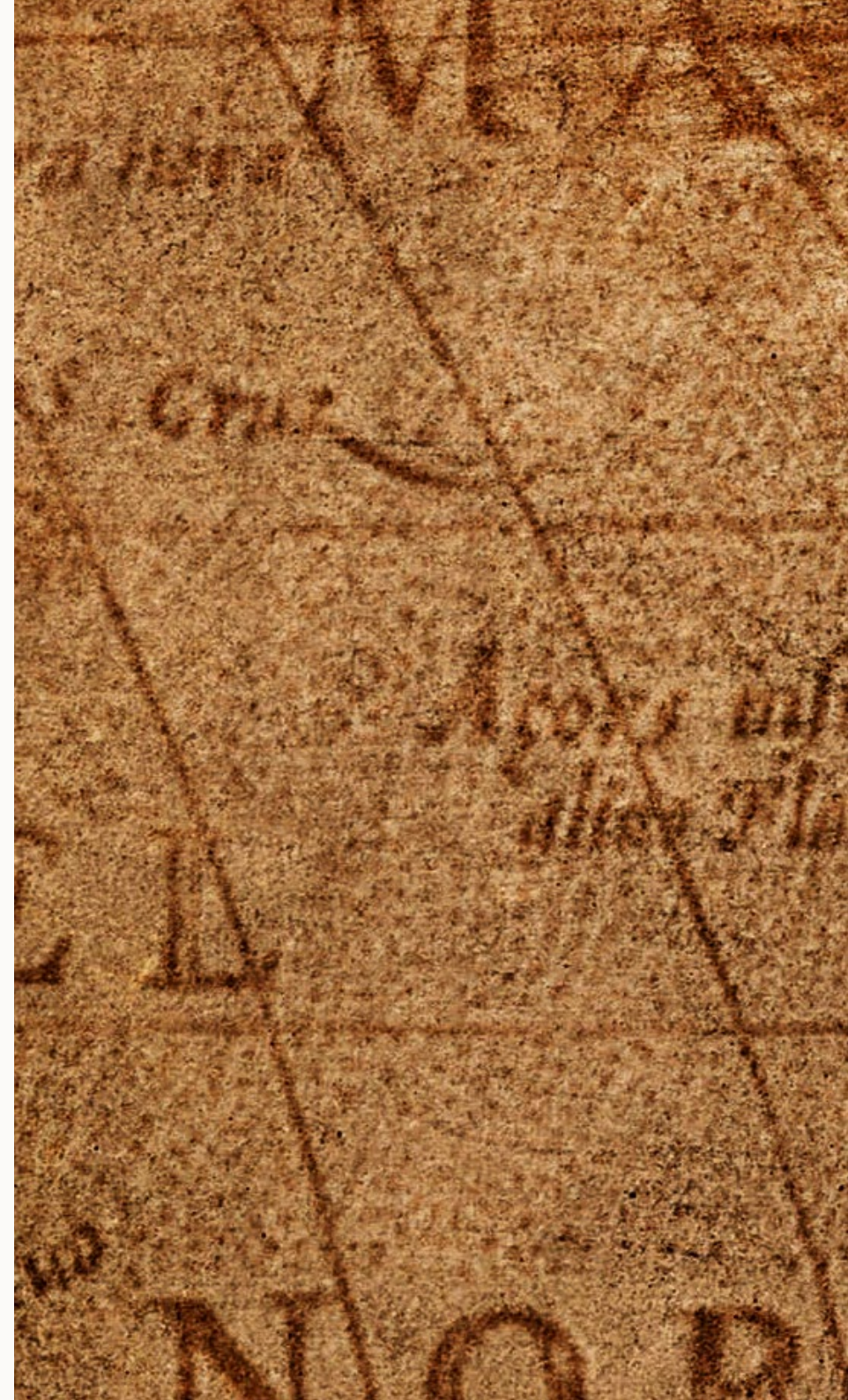
Thematic Area

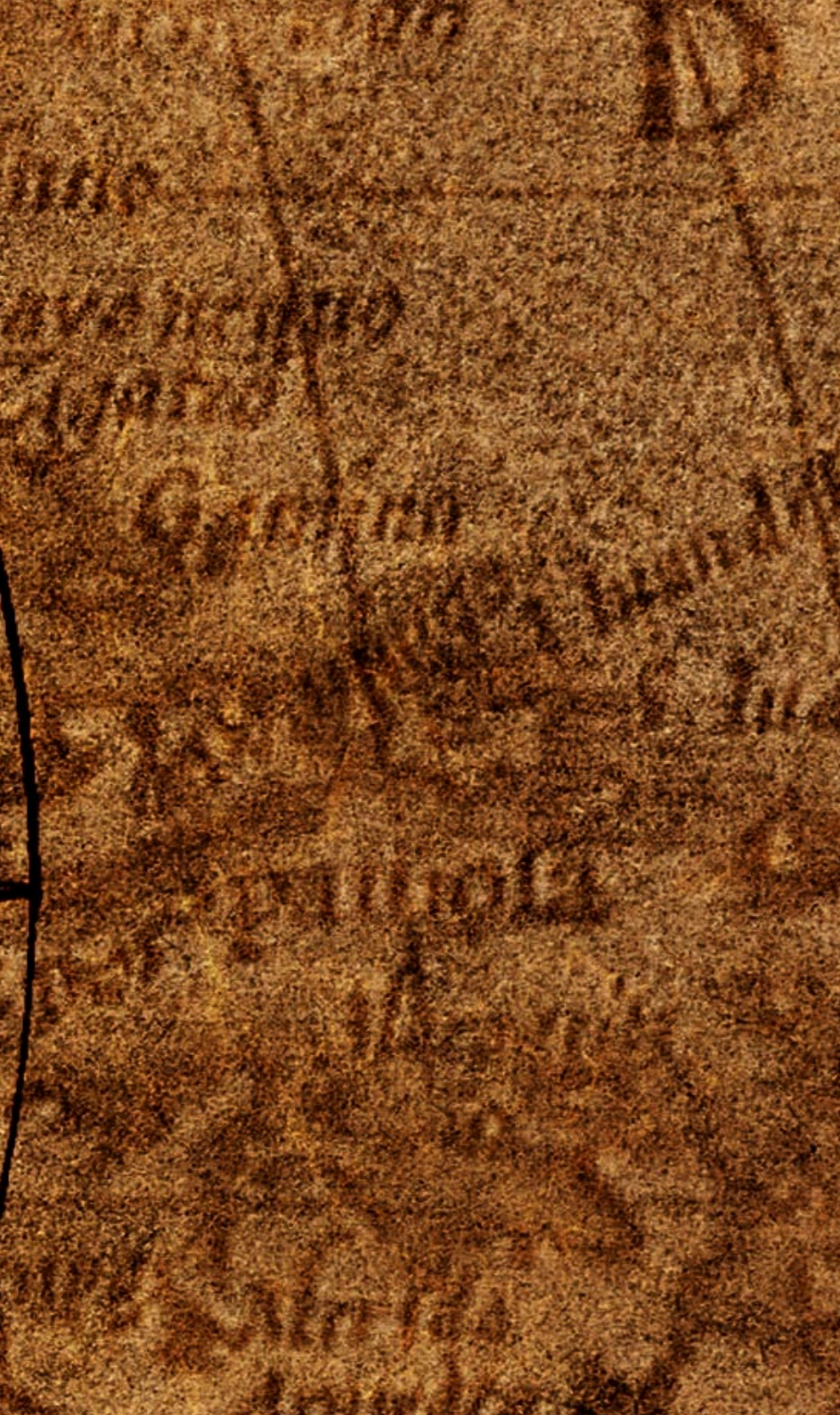
The proposed workshop is situated within the thematic area of “India-centric Knowledge Production in International Relations.” It focuses on the methodological approaches that allow researchers to formulate research studies based on Indian perspective, strategies and positioning within the world order.

Programme at a Glance

International Relations is a discipline shaped by grand theories, contested concepts, and competing explanations of global order, state behaviour, and the forces that shape relations among states. Yet early academic training often fails to equip emerging scholars with the tools needed to translate theoretical engagement into systematic research design. Many scholars often begin with strong moral questions, policy interests, or broad theoretical curiosities, but struggle to transform these into clear, methodologically grounded, and evidence-based research projects.

As debates intensify over how research in International Relations is conducted, the assumptions it rests on, the methods it prioritizes, and what counts as valid evidence, the need for foundational training becomes urgent. This workshop is designed to address that gap. It provides structured and accessible exposure to the principles of India-centric research design in IR. It introduces participants to both quantitative and qualitative approaches while emphasizing hands-on training over technical complexity. By foregrounding the relationship between theory, evidence, and argumentation, the workshop aims to strengthen methodological pluralism and promote reflective, evidence-based scholarship within the discipline.





Relevance to India's Foreign Policy Goals

The workshop is highly relevant in light of India's current foreign policy considerations. India has been following an approach that emphasizes issues such as strategic autonomy, multipolarity, and the role of India as a leader. Engagement of India on different regional and global platforms shows its intent to influence international norms and be able to make independent decisions. To fulfil this mission, apart from the need for strategic expertise, one has to consider the importance of the policy-relevant research component. Academic studies are important to provide foreign policies with analysis and new perspectives that are based on solid empirical data. Still, the quality and relevance of the contributions depend greatly on the ability of the scholars to conduct meaningful research. By developing the skills of young scholars, which will allow them to produce methodologically sound research in policy-relevant topics, the workshop contributes significantly to building an environment in which India's foreign policy can thrive. Scholars who will have the opportunity to join the discussion and contribute with the knowledge acquired in India become valuable resources for the country.

Target Participants

The workshop is designed for a select cohort of 20 participants. Early career researchers, such as PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and assistant professors in International Relations or allied fields, who are at the advanced stages of a journal article or edited volume contribution are invited to participate

Aim

The workshop aims to cultivate rigorous, publication-oriented research design practices among emerging scholars in International Relations by strengthening their capacity to:

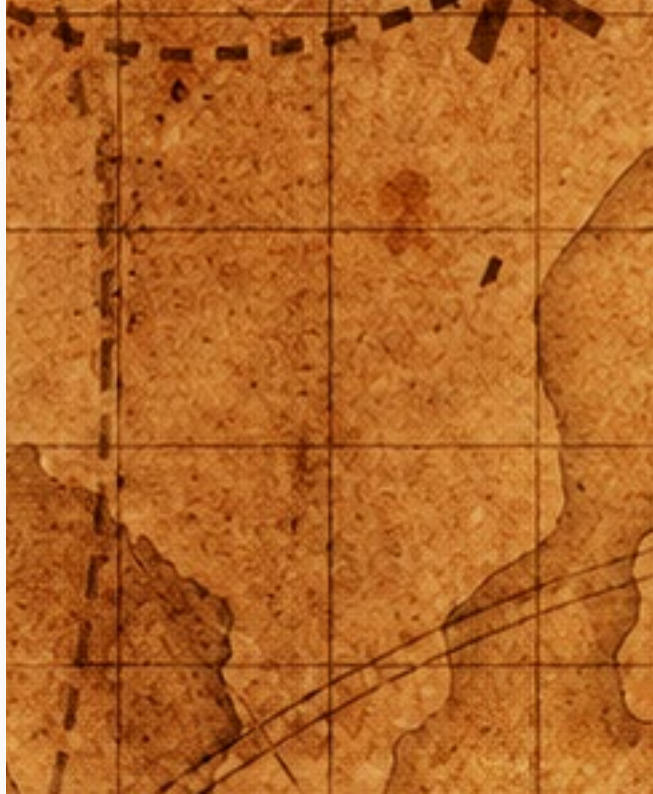
1. Formulate analytically precise and theoretically grounded research questions,
2. Develop critical and methodologically robust perspectives on India-centric international relations,
3. Systematically connect theoretical frameworks to appropriate methodological choices, and
4. Construct logically coherent, evidence-based arguments suitable for peer-reviewed publication.

The workshop further aims to contribute to the development of a sustained network of early-career scholars in International Relations, with a shared focus on advancing India-centric methodological and theoretical contributions to the field. In doing so, it seeks not only to refine individual research projects but also to strengthen the broader ecosystem of knowledge production in IR from an Indian perspective.

Expected Outcomes

The main objective of this workshop is develop a network of IR scholars whose research methodology is more India-centric. In addition to this, this workshop is designed to have the following output:

1. “Workshop Proceedings on India-centric Research Methodology on IR,” compiled from the lectures given by speakers of the workshop.
2. Publications from participants (working papers, blogs, articles, etc.)
3. An audio-visual repository of “India-centric Research Methodology on IR”



Proposed Structure

The programme is organized into four integrated modules:

1. Theory, Concepts, and Research Design: Foundations of inquiry: research puzzles, causation, conceptual clarity, and the architecture of explanation in IR.
2. Quantitative Approaches and Empirical Inference: Large-N research, datasets, statistical reasoning, and the logic of hypothesis testing are introduced through applied and interpretive exercises rather than mathematical formalism.
3. Qualitative, Comparative, and Mixed Methods: Case studies, process tracing, comparative designs, and methodological pluralism, with attention to strengths, limitations, and complementarities across approaches.
4. Writing, Ethics, and Knowledge Production: Argument construction, academic writing, positionality, research ethics, and the broader politics of knowledge in International Relations.

By foregrounding India-centric research design and methodological rigor, this workshop addresses critical gaps in academic training while aligning with India’s broader geopolitical and foreign policy objectives.

3 Days

10 Resource Persons

20 Participants

Schedule

Time	Session & Theme		Speakers
09:00 – 09:30	Registration		Organisers
09:30 – 09:50	Workshop Opening	Inaugural Session	Vice Chancellor Registrar, Deans
09:50 – 09:55	About Partner Organization – ICWA	ICWA Representative	Dr. Teshu Singh
09:55 – 10:00	Group Photo		Organisers
10:00 – 11:00	Session I Why Research Methods Matter in International Relations: Building India-Centric Scholarship	<i>Why methodology matters in producing rigorous and credible IR scholarship; Framing research questions from Indian strategic and civilisational perspectives; Understanding the gap between Western IR frameworks and Indian policy realities; Building methodological rigour for India-based knowledge production in IR; From academic inquiry to policy impact in India</i>	Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break		Organisers
11:15 – 12:15	Discussion	Participant's paper (04 papers)	Discussants: Dr. Anurag Tripathi & Dr. Saurav Sarmah

12:15-13:15	Session II Foundations of International Relations Research: Ontology, Epistemology, and India-Centric Knowledge Frameworks	<i>Ontological and epistemological positioning in IR research; Indian knowledge traditions and civilisational approaches; Rethinking concepts such as state, sovereignty, order, power, dharma, and neighbourhood from Indian perspectives</i>	Dr Anurag Tripathi Associate Professor, Christ University, Bangalore
13:15 – 14:30	Lunch		Organisers
14:30 – 15:30	Session III Major Theoretical Approaches in IR: Indian Perspectives	<i>Kautilyan realism, Gandhian ethics and idealism, non-alignment and strategic autonomy, postcolonial and subaltern approaches to International Relations; linking Indian theoretical traditions to research questions and research design.</i>	Dr. Sriparna Pathak Professor, O.P. Jindal Global University
15:30 – 15:45	Tea Break		Organisers
15:45 – 16:45	Discussion	Participant's paper (04 papers)	Discussants: Dr Teshu Singh + Dr Sanket Kulkarn
16:45 – 17:00	Closing – Day One	Remarks by organizers	Organisers

Time	Session & Theme		Speakers
10:00 – 11:00	Session IV Designing Research in International Relations: Comparative and Policy-Oriented Approaches from India	<i>How to design research questions in IR using case studies, comparative methods, policy inquiry, and India-relevant research contexts.</i>	Dr. Nanda Kishor M S Head & Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, Pondicherry University
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break		Organisers
15:45 – 16:45	Discussion	Participant's paper (04 papers)	Discussants: Prof. Sriparna Pathak + Dr. Nishit Kumar
12:15 – 13:15	Session V Methods of Research	<i>Qualitative methods in IR: Quantitative methods in IR: datasets, surveys, polling, statistical interpretation, conflict and economic indicators; Mixed-methods approaches for complex international and strategic questions; Selecting appropriate methods for India-centric and policy-relevant research problems; Methodological challenges in studying India's neighbourhood, China, strategic affairs, and foreign policy</i>	Prof. H S Ashok Professor of Psychology, School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Chanakya University

13:15 – 14:30	Lunch		Organisers
14:30 – 15:30	Session VI Writing Research Proposals and Policy Briefs: India-Centric Approaches to Knowledge Production	<i>Structuring research proposals through India-relevant research questions and problem framing; Grant writing in the Indian ecosystem (ICSSR, ICWA, ICHR, ICPR, Ministry grants, state institutions, think tanks, CSR-supported research); Writing policy briefs for Indian policymakers and strategic communities</i>	Dr Rityusha Mani Tiwary Assistant Professor Shaheed Bhagat Singh College University of Delhi
15:30 – 15:45	Tea Break		Organisers
15:45 – 16:45	Discussion	Participant's paper (04 papers)	Discussants: Dr Rityusha M Tiwary + Dr Uday Patil
16:45 – 17:00	Closing – Day One	Remarks by organizers	Organisers

Time	Session & Theme		Speakers
09:30 – 10:00	Special Address	Chanakya University	Dr. S. Somanath Hon'ble Chancellor Chanakya University
10:00 – 11:00	Session VII Ethics and Responsible Knowledge Production in India-Centric IR Research	<i>Ethical fieldwork, data transparency, responsible interviewing, archival ethics, multilingual source use, and maintaining scholarly integrity in Indian and international research contexts.</i>	Prof Chetan Singai Dean, SLGPP, Chanakya University
11:00 – 11:15	Tea Break		Organisers
11:15 – 12:15	Session VIII Data Sources and Evidence in International Relations Research: Indian and Global Resources	<i>Understanding evidence in IR research; Using Indian archival and policy repositories: National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML), Parliament archives, MEA Annual Reports, PIB, Ministry documents, state archives, Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha debates; Think tank and institutional sources; Using government data; Digital humanities, OSINT, media tracking, and AI-assisted research tools for IR scholarship</i>	Dr. Dattesh D. Parulekar Assistant Professor, Goa University
12:15 – 13:15	Discussion	Participant's paper (04 papers)	Discussants: Dr. Dattesh Parulekar + Dr. Charu R Dubey

13:15 – 14:30	Lunch	Organisers
14:30 – 15:30	Interaction with participants and speakers on Indian Knowledge System, Indian thoughts, and conceptual values for contemporary times.	GV Shivakumar Director, INDICA Kautilya Centre for Policy, Governance and Leadership Coordinator: Saurabh Kaushik
15:30 – 15:45	Group Photo	Organisers
15:45 – 16:15	Valedictory & Closing remarks	Ashok K Kantha Chair Professor, Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations, Chanakya University
16:15 – 16: 20	Workshop Report	Dr. Nishit Kumar Convener, Workshop
16:20 – 16:30	Vote of Thanks	Prof. Chetan Singai Dean, School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Chanakya University

Resource Persons



Ashok K Kantha

Shri Ashok K Kantha is the Chair Professor of Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations. He is an Honorary Fellow and former Director (2017–22) of the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; a Distinguished Fellow at Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi; and Chair of the Core Group on China of the Confederation of Indian Industry. A career diplomat, Kantha was Ambassador of India to China (2014–16). Prior to this, he was Secretary (East) at Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). His previous assignments include High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, High Commissioner to Malaysia, Joint Secretary (East Asia), MEA, Consul General in Hong Kong, Deputy Chief of Mission in Nepal, Director (China), MEA, and Director (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan), MEA. Earlier, Kantha served in different capacities at Indian Missions in Singapore, China and the USA, and at headquarters in New Delhi.

Resource Persons



Srikanth Kondapalli

Srikanth Kondapalli is Professor in Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. He is Dean of School of International Studies, JNU from 2022-24. He was Chairman of the Centre for East Asian Studies, SIS, JNU from 2008-10, 2012-14, 2016-18, 2018-20 and in 2022. He is Chair Professor under the Chair of Excellence of Ministry of Defence in 2022 to 2024. He is educated in Chinese studies in India and China with a Ph.D. in Chinese Studies. He learnt Chinese language at Beijing Language & Culture University and was a post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow at People's University, Beijing from 1996-98. He was a Visiting Professor at National Chengchi University, Taipei in 2004, a Visiting Fellow at China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, Beijing in May 2007, an Honorary Professor at Shandong University, Jinan in 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2025; at Jilin University, Changchun in 2014 and at Yunnan University of Finance and Economics, Kunming in 2016 and 2017, a Non-Resident Senior Fellow at People's University since 2014 and a Fellow at Salzburg Global Seminar in 2010. He wrote two books:

China's Military: The PLA in Transition in 1999 and China's Naval Power (2001)

He wrote two monographs, and co-edited six volumes:

Asian Security & China (2004), China and its Neighbours (2010), China's Military and India (2012), China and the BRICS: Setting up a Different Kitchen (2016), One Belt One Road – China's Global Outreach (2017) and China and Covid-19 – Domestic and External Dimensions (2020)

and a number of articles in journals and edited volumes – all on China. He served MP-IDSA for 12 years and received the K.Subramanyam Award in 2010 for Excellence in Research in Strategic and Security Studies. He is a guest faculty at Indian armed forces units, including at the National Defence College, Army War College, College of Air Warfare, College of Naval Warfare, and College of Defence Management, in addition to ITBP, BSF, Internal Security Academy and National Police Academy. He is a distinguished fellow at several think-tanks, including Vivekananda International Foundation and Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies. He supervised more than 30 Ph.D. researchers at JNU and is also an academic advisor for Ph.D. researchers at Al Farabi Kazakh National University and Ablai Khan University at Almaty and Tamkhang University (Taipei). He was the Editor of JNU SIS International Studies Journal (being published by the Sage).

Resource Persons



Anurag Tripathi

Dr. Anurag Tripathi is an Department of South and Central Asian Studies, Central University Punjab, Bhatinda. He specializes in international relations, focusing on Indo-Eurasian dynamics. He has been a Visiting Professor at L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan. He also served as a Research Associate at the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM), New Delhi. Dr. Tripathi completed his MA, MPhil, and PhD from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His PhD focused on Kazakhstan-China relations from 1991 to 2009. He has published widely, with works in Economic and Political Weekly, Deccan Herald, and Indian Outlook. He co-edited two volumes on foreign policy with the United Service Institution, New Delhi. Dr. Tripathi's research includes major power dynamics in Central Asia, focusing on China's rise. He has led ICSSR-funded projects on Indo-Central Asia relations and climate change in Eurasia.

Resource Persons



Sriparna Pathak

Dr. Sriparna Pathak is a Professor of China Studies, and the founding Director of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies at O.P. Jindal Global University, (JGU) Haryana, India. She also serves in the capacity of the Associate Director of the Jindal India Institute. She teaches courses on Foreign Policy of China as well as Theories of International Relations. In 2022, she published a book titled 'Drifts and Dynamics: Russia's Ukraine War and Northeast Asia'. Her previous work experience covers Universities like Gauhati University, Don Bosco University; the Ministry of External Affairs, where she worked as a Consultant for the Policy Planning and Research Division, working on China's domestic and foreign policies; think tanks like Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi and Kolkata respectively, and the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research in New Delhi.

Resource Persons



Nanda Kishor M S

Dr. Nanda Kishor M. S. is Head and Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Studies at Pondicherry University, where he also holds the Sri Aurobindo Chair and coordinates the Centre for Gandhian Studies and SAP-DRS II. He previously headed the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations at Manipal Academy of Higher Education. He earned his M.Phil. and Ph.D. from University of Hyderabad and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Leiden University, supported by the Erasmus Mundus programme. His teaching and research focus on geopolitics, India's foreign policy, West Asia, terrorism, and strategic studies. A recipient of several prestigious fellowships, including UNHCR, DAAD, and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), he serves on advisory boards and research institutions in India and abroad. His acclaimed book *Reimagining India in the Geopolitics of the 21st Century* reflects his scholarship, while four forthcoming books further expand his contributions to international relations, Indian strategic thought, and Kautilya's statecraft.

Resource Persons



H S Ashok

Prof Ashok comes with tremendous amount of experience with over 4 decades at Bangalore University. Prof Ashok is a distinguished Teacher, Trainer, Counsellor and Researcher. His specialization is in Psychometric analysis, Research methodology and Indian psychology. He has guided many students in their Doctoral theses. As an honorary professor at CESS, Prof. Ashok led a project on Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education.

Resource Persons



Rityusha Mani Tiwary

Dr Rityusha Mani Tiwary is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi. She is the associate editor of China Report and an honorary fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi. Her research focuses on China studies, India–China relations, Asian geopolitics, international political economy, science and technology governance, and Global South politics. She has published widely on Chinese domestic governance, technology policy, and regional and global political economy. She has contributed to academic journals, edited volumes, and policy discussions on China’s evolving role in Asia and the world. Her current work explores the intersections of political economy, technological transformation, and global governance, with particular attention to China and the Global South.

Resource Persons



Dattesh D. Parulekar

Dr. Dattesh D. Parulekar is Assistant Professor of International Relations and Area Studies at the School of International and Area Studies, Goa University. His expertise includes Indian foreign policy, Indo-Pacific maritime strategy, Global South studies, and geopolitics, with a focus on West Asia and the Polar Regions. He has served as a Visiting Faculty at premier defence institutions, including the Naval War College, National Defence College, Defence Services Staff College, Army War College, and Indian Naval Academy. Internationally, he is associated with John Naisbitt University (Serbia), the Asian Institute for Diplomacy and International Affairs (Nepal), and universities in Brazil. He is a Non-Resident Fellow at the Middle East Institute, New Delhi, a Distinguished Fellow at the Indo-Pacific Studies Centre (Australia), and collaborates with leading strategic think tanks in Japan and Sweden. A prolific scholar and strategic commentator, he regularly contributes to international journals, policy forums, and global publications on foreign policy, maritime affairs, and strategic studies.

Resource Persons



Shivakumar G V

Shivakumar G V is Director of the INDICA Kautilya Centre, where he focuses on integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into contemporary frameworks of governance, policy, and leadership. At the Kautilya Centre, he works toward building a scholar–practitioner ecosystem that advances IKS-informed approaches in public and institutional domains. He engages in research, dialogue, and program design across areas including statecraft, ethics, leadership, and decolonization, often drawing from Itihasa–Purana traditions. His research work centers on developing civilizational frameworks rooted in concepts such as Purushartha, translating textual, practitioner-led, and lived traditions into actionable insights for institutions and communities. With an MTech in Computer Science from IIT Mumbai and 25 years of IT Industry experience in technology and learning systems design, Shivakumar seeks to explore IKS through a blend of modern and traditional rigour, and brings its best to contemporary pursuits.

Resource Persons



Chetan Singai

Dr. Chetan B. Singai is Professor and Dean at the School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Chanakya University, Bengaluru. With over 15 years of experience in academia, policy advisory, and governance research, his work spans law, higher education governance, public policy, and sustainability. He served as the Chief Consultant to the Drafting Committee of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, contributing to one of India's most significant education reforms. Recipient of the Social Justice Medal from the Chief Justice of India, Dr. Singai has been recognised for his contributions to advancing equity and justice in governance. He is an Erasmus Mundus Scholar and has held prestigious visiting faculty appointments, including with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Europe.

His research focuses on the intersections of constitutional values, legal frameworks, and policy design, with emphasis on institutional autonomy, accountability, and systemic reform. Internationally, he has collaborated with leading universities and think tanks across Europe, North America, and Asia. An active public intellectual, Dr. Singai regularly writes for national and international platforms, bridging academic research and policy action to create governance systems that are just, inclusive, and future-ready.

Discussants



Anurag Tripathi

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THE KORAKI WHEEL STANDS AS A MASTERPIECE OF INDIAN ARTISTRY,
A TESTAMENT TO HUMAN CURIOUSITY, DEVOTION AND VISION.
THE STRUCTURE EMBODIES AN ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE OF ASTRONOMY,
A WISDOM BEING TRANSMITTED TO THE NEXT GENERATION.
EACH RAY OF THE WHEEL REPRESENTS THE DAYS OF THE YEAR,
THE POSITION OF THE SUN CHANGES TO INDICATE THE
SEASONS AND MARKS THE PASSAGE OF TIME.
THE WHEEL IS A SYMBOL OF THE CYCLE OF LIFE, A REMINDER OF THE
ETERNAL RHYTHM OF NATURE AND HUMANITY.
THE CHAKRA INSPIRES CURIOUSITY AND DISCOVERY,
A REMINDER OF THE VALUE OF OBSERVATION AND LOGIC.
IT STANDS AS A TESTAMENT TO HUMAN VISION,
A REMINDER OF THE VALUE OF OBSERVATION AND LOGIC.



ON THE COASTLINE OF PURI, ODISHA, RISES THE SUN TEMPLE OF KORAKI,
A TESTAMENT TO HUMAN CURIOUSITY, DEVOTION AND VISION.
THE TEMPLE IS AN EMBODIMENT OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM OF ASTRONOMY,
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Workshop Participants



Navodita Kumari

Navodita Kumari is a Research Scholar in International Relations at the Department of Political Science, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. Her research primarily focuses on the evolving dynamics of India-United Arab Emirates relations and their broader geopolitical implications for India's engagement with the Gulf region.

Abstract

Topic: Rise of Paradiplomacy as an Emerging Diplomatic Framework in India-UAE Relations

The past decade has witnessed a remarkable expansion in the scope and intensity of diplomatic engagements between India and the UAE. The shared economic visions, similar security concerns, compatible regional geopolitical outlooks, and most importantly, political willingness on both sides have shaped this partnership on the foundations of trust, confidence, and mutual understanding. In addition to this, the framework of paradiplomacy have played a key role in deepening their collaboration in diverse areas like food security, renewable energy, connectivity and infrastructure, among others. It is beyond doubt that energy, economy, and expatriate community have been the three major pillars of the bilateral relations for decades, but the years spanning 2014-2024 have witnessed more engagements between Indian states and the federation of the UAE in different fields such as education, health, clean energy, space, connectivity, trade and investment, among others. This paper aims to explain the rise of paradiplomacy as an emerging diplomatic framework in the India-UAE relations. The paper starts by giving a brief account of the shifting paradigm in India-UAE relations since 2014. The paper then goes on to explain the theoretical underpinnings of Paradiplomacy, along with its growing relevance in the contemporary global order. Moving forward, the paper underscores the enhanced collaboration between the UAE and Indian federal units like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Kerala beyond labour migration and remittances by focusing on core areas like food security, renewable energy, trade, investment, and infrastructure. To fulfill its objectives, this paper has followed both quantitative and qualitative approaches and has relied on data from the policy documents, bilateral agreements, and memoranda of understanding concluded by the countries involved in the study.

Keywords: India, United Arab Emirates, Paradiplomacy, shifting paradigm, emerging diplomatic framework.

Workshop Participants



Priyanka Yadav

Ms Priyanka Yadav is currently employed as a Research Associate in the Indo-Pacific Vertical at the Centre for Aerospace Power and Strategic Studies (CAPSS) in New Delhi, India. At CAPSS, she is working on a research project titled 'Framing India, South Korea, and Australia as Middle Power Architects of Indo-Pacific Security: Potential and Pitfalls'.

She recently submitted her PhD at the Centre for East Asian Studies (Korean Division), School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her thesis, titled 'Strategic Convergence Between India and the Republic of Korea in the Indo-Pacific, 2010–2022', examined the structural drivers of India–South Korea alignment in the Indo-Pacific region. The research focused on bilateral security cooperation within the framework of US–China strategic competition, the growing significance of multilateral institutions and minilateral engagements, and the role of middle powers like South Korea in a changing Indo-Pacific order.

Abstract

Topic: Multiplexity: China and the Transformation of the Global Order

The United States has functioned as the principal architect of the post-Cold War multilateral order. Over time, China has emerged as its most consequential beneficiary, rising within international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, now China has focused on becoming a power capable of reshaping them. This paper argues that China's expanding global stature represents not a direct confrontation with the existing international system; rather, China is engaged in a gradual, calibrated revision of the global order, with China-led institutions particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

Central to this argument is the framework of 'Chinese exceptionalism' (zhongguo liwai lun), which positions Chinese leadership as civilizationaly distinct and therefore entitled to its own standards of sovereignty, development and international conduct, even while operating inside Western-built institutions. This exceptionalism is operationalised by China through four interconnecting instruments: i) an expanding economic footprint that creates structural dependency among smaller states; ii) a deepening and increasingly assertive military presence in the contested waters of the Indo-Pacific; and iii) the exercise of political influence in regional and multilateral forums. These instruments, cumulatively, erode the assumptions and asymmetries that have historically sustained US-led primacy in the region.



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The paper's central theoretical argument is that this behaviour can be understood through Amitav Acharya's concept of 'multiplexity', a vision of global order organised not around a single hegemon but around overlapping, plural centres of authority. Through institutional pluralism, by building parallel multilateral bodies similar to Western architecture, and by enhancing South-South cooperation that casts China as a fellow developing power rather than a rising hegemon. The paper's distinctive contribution lies in arguing that China's use of exceptionalism is itself a feature of multiplexity in action, and thus, this approach allows China to gradually refashion the global order without triggering the immediate reaction that would challenge the US hegemony.

Lastly, the paper discusses India's response as merely an effort to counter China; it should also focus on becoming an active and influential player within this evolving multiplex order in the Indo-Pacific. This paper adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in constructivist international relations theory and employs three methods. First, conceptual analysis synthesises Acharya's theorisation of multiplexity with the indigenous Chinese concept of exceptionalism, treating them as mutually reinforcing rather than separate analytical lenses. Second, case-based examples examine specific instruments of Chinese strategy in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and maritime posturing in the South China Sea. These institutions aim to strengthen the gradualist, deniable character of Chinese revisionism. Third, discourse analysis of Chinese government white papers, leadership speeches and state media traces how language such as 'community of shared future', 'South-South cooperation' and 'Asia for Asians' recasts hegemonic ambition as solidarity. The paper concludes with a comparative assessment of the Indian strategic foreign policy framework against this theoretical framework. The paper follows an interpretive and theory-building approach given the paper's aim to explain the meaning and legitimacy of Chinese assertive behaviour alongside material power, while acknowledging the limitations of relying on public Chinese discourse.

Workshop Participants



Bagmita Borthakur

Bagmita Borthakur is a PhD Scholar in International Relations at Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS Pilani). She is a Research Fellow with the India–Korea Forum, Seoul, South Korea and is affiliated as an Emerging Leader with the Indo–Pacific Studies Centre, Australia. Bagmita is a former research intern at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, and a former faculty member of Political Science at Dispur College, Guwahati. She is the Assistant General Secretary of the Northeast Forum for Education and Research, and her work focuses on India–Japan engagement in Northeast India. As a researcher and public speaker, she remains actively engaged in fostering dialogue on Northeast India within Indian Foreign Policy and International Relations.

Abstract

Topic: Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to India in the post-2014 period

Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to India has, in the post-2014 period, increasingly been directed toward Northeast India as part of the strategic convergence between India's Act East Policy and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision. Large-scale connectivity infrastructure projects have been funded across the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. However, despite the scale and strategic significance of this convergence, the existing literature has paid limited attention to three critical dimensions : the paper examines three interconnected dimensions that remain underexplored in the existing literature: donor visibility, lived experiences of infrastructure development, and the absence of institutionalised paradiplomatic mechanisms in India's northeastern borderlands.

This paper addresses these three dimensions through fieldwork conducted in Northeast India. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, field observation, and textual analysis of official documents from Japan's MoFA and India's MEA. The research finds that donor visibility, the extent to which Japan is recognised and associated with ODA-funded infrastructure by local populations, is significantly negligible. Japanese branding, public communication, and institutional presence at project sites are minimal, and awareness of Japan's role as a funder is largely absent among the communities most directly affected by these projects.

The second finding concerns lived experiences of infrastructure development. Community responses to Japanese ODA-funded infrastructure are, on the whole, neutral and shaped more by prior developmental deficits, local political dynamics, and expectations of the Indian state than by any awareness of Japan's involvement. This finding complicates both celebratory donor narratives and critical dependency-theory framings, suggesting that the developmental experience of ODA is mediated by a complex set of local filters that IR scholarship has yet to fully theorise.



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The third and most theoretically significant finding pertains to paradiplomacy. Northeast India's sub-state actors remain largely marginalised from the architecture of India-Japan bilateral engagement. Despite the geographic and strategic centrality of the Northeast to Act East Policy, the mechanisms for sub-state participation in foreign policy remain ad-hoc. This paper argues that effective realisation of India's connectivity and development agenda in the Northeast requires the institutionalisation of paradiplomacy through a decentralised foreign policy structure which grants northeast states formal roles in bilateral negotiations and diplomatic outreach relevant to their immediate neighbourhood. Theoretically, this paper contributes to the emerging literature on decentralisation of Indian foreign policy. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of ethnographic and qualitative fieldwork in generating ground-level IR knowledge that macro-level foreign policy analysis consistently undermines. The paper argues that bilateral engagement in Northeast India cannot be adequately understood, or effectively governed, without bringing the experiential into the analytical frame.

Keywords: Northeast India, Donor visibility, Paradiplomacy, Act-East Policy

Workshop Participants



Vivek Mehra

Vivek Mehra is a PhD scholar at Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, currently in his coursework semester. His research focuses on Indo-US relations, with a broader interest in South Asian strategic affairs. He has qualified the UGC NET examination in Political Science and authored a research paper titled “Balancing the Dragon: India’s Strategic Responses to China’s Defense Diplomacy in South Asia.” Vivek is keen to engage with scholars and practitioners in the field of international relations and India’s strategic autonomy.

Abstract

Topic: Placing Myanmar in India’s Act East and Neighbourhood First policies from 2014 to 2025

India’s ties with Myanmar have always been complex, yet the period from 2014 to 2025 highlighted this relationship more clearly and frequently uneasily. New Delhi’s Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, Myanmar occupies a critical position in relation to key strategic issues for India the advancement of its landlocked North-Eastern Region, the control of cross-border insurgencies, and the handling of a more assertive China on its eastern border.

In this paper we look at the way India has gone about handling these various pressures in side by side, and what that says of the choices a rising power is forced to make when it must square its normative duties with the hard realities of security and economic imperatives.

India’s approach to Myanmar, broken down into three distinct eras, the ramping up of ties following Narendra Modi’s 2014 victory, the disruption of the 2017 Rohingya exodus and the constraints that have been in place since the military took over in February 2021. Yet for all these changes, there is an underlying constancy to how New Delhi has handled matters. Indian officials have avoided any sudden change, be it in the form of outright condemnation or unqualified strategic backing. Their preference has been for a more measured kind of engagement. This means they have put in the work to keep relations with Naypyidaw’s leadership on an even keel, pushed ahead with energy and connectivity projects and worked with local security forces on border and insurgency issues. Any public criticism has been kept to a minimum, expressed only in the careful wording of multilateral statements or through the back channels of diplomacy.

The analysis to address three lines of inquiry. To start with, we look at how the Act East and Neighbourhood First frameworks were put into practice in the form of hard policies on the ground, be it for infrastructure corridors, river and port works, energy ties or development partnerships. Then there is the matter of the Rohingya crisis and the 2021 coup: how have they reshaped India’s diplomacy and the way it presents its bilateral ties to the public? Finally, we consider the strategic thinking that drives India’s stance on Myanmar in light of the intensifying rivalry with China and the emergence of new mini lateral formations in the Indo-Pacific.



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The methodological procedures in this study involve process tracing significant events, the detailed description of official documents, parliamentary discussions and media commentaries, which also involve the analysis of specific speeches in the form of discourse analysis and the examination of leadership statements from both countries. The strategy is deliberately focused on India: it looks at the way the internal political dynamics and governance challenges in the border regions and development requirements in the Northeast effect New Delhi's choice of actions rather than considering India as just one of many external actors.

The paper claims that India's approach is more effectively viewed as multilayered instead of solely reactive. Connectivity investments serve two main functions connecting the Northeast to Southeast Asian markets and decreasing strategic reliance on sea routes susceptible to external influence. At another level, collaboration on security with Myanmar's government, despite the coup, reveals real concerns regarding insurgent networks and trafficking routes that cannot simply be ignored by severing connections. At the normative level, India has utilized precise language and multilateral platforms to handle reputational costs while keeping operational options open. The paper provides a systematic, ten-year overview of a relationship that is often mentioned in policy discussions but seldom examined with thorough academic focus. It proposes an India focused framework that links foreign policy actions to governance in border areas, regime-security issues, and competition among regional powers placing India Myanmar relationships within this broader context.

Workshop Participants



Nitin Narayanan

Nitin Narayanan is a Doctoral Candidate at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, India. He graduated with a Master's in Defence and Strategic Studies from Kurukshetra University, India. His research interests include Indian Foreign Policy, Strategic Culture, Neoclassical Realism, Grand Strategy, and the international relations of the Gulf.

Abstract

Topic: The Architecture of Multialignment: Indian Strategic Culture and Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific

This paper argues that India navigates the new geopolitical reality in the Indo-Pacific region through multialignment to maintain strategic autonomy, a core aspect of Indian strategic culture. The international order is undergoing a structural transformation into an increasingly multipolar world marked by great-power competition, the erosion of rules-based order, and the weakening of multilateralism. In an Indian context, it is important to unpack how they have responded to this transformation, using a theoretically and empirically appropriate approach.

Using Neoclassical Realism as the primary theoretical framework and incorporating Indian strategic culture as a key intervening variable, this paper contends that systemic pressures alone are insufficient to explain Indian foreign policy behaviour. Rather, it is the interaction between systemic stimuli and Indian strategic culture, particularly the preference for strategic autonomy, non-entanglement, and calibrated engagement, that shapes how the Indian Foreign Policy executive perceives the stimuli and selects policy. As traditional multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, the G20, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation face constant gridlock, declining effectiveness and remain captive to geopolitical agendas, India has turned to minilaterals.

Specifically, we argue that, as traditional multilateral institutions face gridlock and declining effectiveness in an increasingly restrictive international system, India has turned to flexible issue-based minilateral groupings as instruments to maintain strategic autonomy and navigate the geopolitical headwinds. Moreover, these minilaterals offer India the advantage of pursuing targeted strategic, economic and technological objectives without being bound by commitments or ideological alignment that formal alliances require. Interestingly, these minilaterals function not merely as a pragmatic workaround to institutional dysfunction and geopolitical pressures but rather as a natural expression of Indian strategic logic.



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Empirically, this paper compares four key minilateral arrangements in which India participates, including the Quadilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), India/Israel/UAE/US (I2U2), and the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI). The QUAD addresses security, maritime order, and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific. The CSC addresses subregional maritime and non-traditional security issues in the Indian Ocean littoral. I2U2 minilateral focuses on economic and technological convergence of the member states across the Middle East and South Asia. SCRI is focused on reshaping global supply chain architecture in light of post-pandemic experiences and strategic supply chain decoupling. Furthermore, they demonstrate how India's strategic cultural preferences for autonomy and emphasis on issue-based partnerships shape its security, economic, and technological cooperation.

Methodologically, the paper utilises process tracing of elite discourse, policy documents, and institutional evolution across these minilaterals to disaggregate the causal mechanism linking an increasingly restrictive international system to Indian threat perceptions, strategic cultural schema, and choice of partners and formats. We also code the data to isolate the key indicators of strategic cultural influence. This methodological approach helps us move beyond simple correlation and trace the within-case causal mechanisms through which systemic stimuli are filtered through the intervening variable of strategic culture to produce this foreign policy of multi-alignment through minilaterals. Furthermore, this demonstrates how India seeks to manage China's rise and the erosion of multilateralism by weaving a web of overlapping minilateral coalitions that maintain its strategic autonomy while positioning it as a central actor in the emerging Indo-Pacific regional order.

Workshop Participants



Dr Ramnath Reghunadhan

Dr Ramnath Reghunadhan is Assistant Professor at Department of Social Sciences, School of Social Sciences, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) University, Vellore, India. Dr Ramnath was selected for the IIT Madras Institute Research Award 2022 by the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (India) for the PhD work, the “Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award 2019” by the Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi (India), and the Huayu Enrichment Scholarship program by the Ministry of Education (Taiwan). Dr Ramnath has published three books with Springer Nature (Palgrave Macmillan).

Abstract

Topic: Navigating the Digital Grid: Great Power Rivalry and Southeast Asia’s Developmentalist Trajectory

The paper examines Southeast Asia’s developmentalist trajectory amid intensifying India-China-US competition, integrating digital dimensions to reveal how great power rivalry shapes regional growth amid digital vulnerabilities, evidenced by ASEAN’s attraction of over 225 billion USD in FDI inflows since 2020, 10 per cent of global totals; with the US maintaining a 19 per cent stock share, China surging to 8 per cent flows by 2021, and India emerging via targeted digital partnerships. China’s Belt and Road Initiative dominate with 12 billion USD annual infrastructure commitments (2015-2021 average), disbursing four to five billion USD yearly in ports, energy, and rail; outpacing Japan’s 2.5 billion USD; fuelling state-led export industrialisation akin to East Asian miracles but raising debt traps in Laos and Cambodia, where loans exceed 50 per cent GDP.

The US counters through quality-focused investments and alliances like the Quad and Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, emphasising resilient supply chains and cyber-secure tech, commanding over 60 per cent of ASEAN’s cloud market via AWS and Microsoft against Huawei/ZTE’s 40 per cent telecom penetration. India’s role in the region has been relatively small, though focused, earlier with the Look East policy from the 1990s to 2014, after which it transitioned towards an Act East policy. The ASEAN-India relations blossomed from a sectoral and dialogue partner in the early 1990s to a summit-level partner and strategic partner in the 21st century. The upscaling of relations with the Act East policy saw further agreements and focus on cooperation and engagements through priority towards “peace, stability and prosperity” in the Southeast Asian region.



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The elevation towards a comprehensive strategic partnership, maritime cooperation, food security and nutrition, as well as the development of ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025 (ADM 2025) are all avenues for further avenues and pathways. This (re)prioritisation entails more challenges in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially with the focus on Digital Silk Road (DSR), which specifically prioritises digital public infrastructure, fintech, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI), etc. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, grounded in a postmodernist approach, concepts of complex interdependence by Keohane and Nye and spatial fix by David Harvey. Ultimately, Southeast Asia reconfigures power diffusion, blending authoritarian efficiency, liberal standards, and indigenous innovation for cyber-resilient growth in a multipolar order.

Workshop Participants



Manish Jaiswal

Manish Jaiswal is a PhD Scholar in the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation Policy at the Central University of Gujarat (CUG), India. He is also a DGCA-certified drone pilot and currently serves as Assistant Editor for Palgrave Studies in Strategic Warfare. Previously, he worked as an Assistant Public Relations Officer and Research Assistant at the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS). Prior to that, he served as a Research Assistant at Indian Aerospace Defence News (IADN).

Abstract

Topic: Yoga and Soft Power: From Ancient Practices to Soft Power Tool

In his notable work, Joseph Nye defines soft power as the ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion or payment. In the contemporary global order, India has strategically leveraged its civilisational heritage to enhance its international influence. A prominent manifestation of this approach is the Modi administration's integration of Yoga into its foreign policy architecture, particularly under the Panchamrit framework. This philosophy rests on five pillars named Samman (dignity), Samvad (dialogue), Samriddhi (shared prosperity), Suraksha (security), and Sanskriti evam Sabhyata (cultural and civilisational linkages) positioning India as a proactive and culturally confident global actor.

The elevation of Yoga as a soft power instrument gained significant momentum with India's successful proposal at the United Nations in 2014, leading to the declaration of June 21 as the International Yoga Day (IYD) in 2015, co-supported by 177 nations of UNGA. The initiative transformed an ancient Indian spiritual and physical practice into a global cultural phenomenon. The 2023 IYD theme, "Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (One Earth, One Family, One Future), epitomised this vision. A landmark event on the UN North Lawns in New York, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with the UN General Assembly President and New York Mayor, saw participation from over 135 countries and earned a Guinness World Record for the largest number of nationalities in a single yoga session. Subsequent years witnessed sustained institutionalisation and expansion of Yoga diplomacy.

The 2024 IYD, themed "Yoga for Self and Society," featured massive events in Srinagar, while 2025's "Yoga for One Health, One Earth" aligned the practice with global sustainability and public health goals. Andhra Pradesh achieved a new Guinness record with over 300,000 participants in Visakhapatnam. In 2026, the 12th IYD under the theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing" further broadening its appeal, with events at 100 iconic locations across India, high-altitude sessions by the armed forces, and a major global online yoga initiative will organised by the Ministry of AYUSH. Beyond commemorative events, India's Yoga



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strategy encompasses multiple dimensions such as cultural diplomacy through Indian missions abroad. Integration with tourism by Yoga hubs in Rishikesh, Kerala, and Varanasi, educational programs, wellness tourism, and collaboration with global institutions. Partnerships with organisations such as the Art of Living Foundation and the diaspora community have amplified reach, particularly in the United States and the Global South. The Ministry of AYUSH has played a central role in standardising teacher training, promoting evidence-based research, and synergising Yoga with Ayurveda and traditional knowledge systems.

This research paper examines the evolution of Yoga from an ancient Indic practice to a calibrated instrument of India's soft power. It analyses the strategic objectives, implementation mechanisms, and outcomes of Yoga diplomacy within the broader Panchamrit framework. The study further identifies challenges including balancing authenticity with commercialisation, addressing cultural appropriation concerns, and ensuring measurable impact. By projecting values of harmony, holistic well-being, and inclusive globalism, Yoga diplomacy strengthens India's image as a responsible and culturally rich. Ultimately, it contributes not only to India's foreign policy goals but also to addressing pressing transnational issues such as mental health, non-communicable diseases, and sustainable development. This paper will try to find how civilisational soft power, when strategically deployed, can complement hard power capabilities and elevate a nation's global standing in the 21st century.

Keywords: Soft Power, Cultural Diplomacy, Yoga, Panchamrit, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

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Sakshi Kumari

Sakshi Kumari is a research student at Lady Shri Ram College for Women. Her research spans international relations, governance, and gender studies, with a primary focus on gastrodiploamacy, her project on leveraging culinary heritage for economic growth and soft power. A recipient of the Tata Pankh and LIC Golden Jubilee scholarships, Sakshi has presented her research at forums like BITS Pilani and received Policy Appreciation from the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture. Her methodological expertise includes mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative semiotics with quantitative surveys. She is right now also working as a research associate with her professors.

Abstract

Topic: Spice, Sovereignty, and Soft Power: A Mixed-Methods Approach to Indian Gastrodiploamacy

Gastrodiploamacy is a new and effective method of building relationships with different cultures and communities through food. With its rich and diverse culinary heritage, India is an obvious location for gastrodiploamacy. It is often said that India's vast array of spices shaped the course of European exploration; in fact, European explorers set sail from Europe for India in search of spices and made it to India by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope. Previous research has explained the usage of gastrodiploamacy as a tool to boost soft power of a nation, it has mainly covered the gastrodiploamacy policies of Malaysia, Thailand, Peru, Japan focusing on national branding, conflict cuisine and gastro-nationalism. However there has not been thorough research on how to employ gastrodiploamacy to boost the soft power of India. There are two main objectives of this paper, firstly bringing back the diverse food traditions of India, helping the small and middle business owners in this field while also employing it in gastrodiploamacy to enhance our soft power. This research aims to analyse and study the demands of producers and consumers in the food and dining industry. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The research design is divided into three key phases: a Semiotic Analysis, a Quantitative survey, and Qualitative interviews and group discussion.

The Semiotic analysis would include studying trends of analyse Documentaries and various Television shows along with the menus at the international summits and conferences held in India and abroad. For the Quantitative aspect, we are targeting at least 200 surveys, which would include 100 from consumers and 100 from producers. This would be further divided into categories such as Gender, Age and Economic Backgrounds. This is also to note that age would be 40% from the (18-30) age bracket, 40% from (31 to 50) and only 10% above the age of 50. This would be based in the urban landscape (tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3). The remaining 10% would include all other stakeholders such as Hotel Management Students and esteemed chefs, academicians and diplomats. For the



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consumers, a similar sample would be targeted except that foreigners and tourists would also be included. We would also try maintaining equitable representation from North, South, East and West Indian cuisines.

The gender categories would include both heteronormative as well as queer categories. The economic backgrounds of the respondents would also be taken into account divided into the annual income of less than 6 lakhs, above 6 but below 12 lakhs, above 12 lakhs but below 50 lakhs and 50 lakhs and beyond, however the question will be made optional. For the Qualitative aspect, we would be conducting 15 individual or focused group interviews with an intent to seek chefs of either marginalised cuisines or from the rural areas. We have also included 2 Interviews from IFS officers to better understand the limitations India might face in actually executing these ideas on ground. The reason we have chosen a mixed approach is that our research is representative and hence the policy we recommend does not only end up benefitting a few. Since we have accommodated both rural and urban areas, it will give us a diversified perspective to look at the problems people face in their everyday lives.

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Nawreen Akhtar Chowdhury

I am Nawreen Akhtar Chowdhury, a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. My research area focusses on South Asian politics, India's foreign policy, Indo-Bangladesh relations, border studies and the geopolitics of Northeast India. I hold a master's degree in political science from the aforementioned department. My academic interest also includes migration, regional security, geopolitics and cross-border cooperation. Along with my research I have worked as field investigator in ICSSR sponsored project based on Northeast India. I also have the experience of working as Junior Project Fellow in the Department of Education in Social Science, NCERT, New Delhi.

Abstract

Topic: Political shift in Bangladesh: possibilities, prospects and implications for Northeast India

The recent political shift in Bangladesh, brought about by the overthrow of the Sheikh Hasina led government in August 2024 by a student led protest has subsequently led to tensions and debates among the scholars and policy makers in India specifically and South Asia as a whole. For a long time since 2009, Bangladesh had remained a stable neighbour for India with only minimal tensions over the years. And now as the political situation sees a shift, the implications over India's northeast, which sees a knitted territory with Bangladesh, remains strategically vital. This paper examines the changing political dynamics in Bangladesh and the evolving domestic and foreign policy of the country since its political shift in 2024. It also sees the possible prospects and challenges of these dynamics over the Northeast India Region (NER).

The study analyses the historical evolution of the Indo-Bangladesh relations from the time of Bangladesh liberation in 1971 and traces the political development in terms of foreign policy and bilateral relations including the highly crucial issues of illegal migration, Land boundary Agreement and enclaves, economic ties, regional geostrategic ties with China and many that exists in the present. This comparative analysis is done to grab a greater idea of implications of ideological and political shifts that highly determine a country's domestic as well as foreign relations. It emphasizes upon how the Hasina government had maintained a balance in terms of political, economic and security issues since 2009 along with minimal tensions over the years till 2024 and tries to see the later developments to find a critical perspective of the changes that have come to existence.

However, after the political shift in Bangladesh and the establishment of an interim government under economist Muhammad Yunus, Northeast India saw a reorientation of Bangladesh's foreign policy. The bilateral talks with Pakistan and China seem not much welcoming for New Delhi in recent times and the Northeast India Region finds itself in a vulnerable position. For Northeast India, who share a 1,880 km long border with Bangladesh means a way of connectivity,



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trade and large-scale dependency of the population and economy. This remains vice versa for Bangladesh as well whose connectivity with countries like China, Bhutan and Nepal highly depends on the Northeastern Region of India. For Northeast India, the political shift carries strategic, socio-economic and political implications and hence the study remains crucial in terms of understanding geopolitics and bilateral relations among India and Bangladesh.

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative and analytical approach to bring out the necessary ideas and books, newspaper reports, policy documents, journals, articles remain crucial sources of information. The findings of the paper give an idea of the reasons for the influence that Northeast India faces both as a moment of uncertainty and as an opportunity. The future possibilities mentioned are speculative and do not claim to certainly occur in future. However, the comparative analysis of the historical development and the recent occurrences bring out both positive as well as negative prospects in terms of development in the northeast region through the lens of the geopolitics of Indo-Bangladesh relations.

Key Words: Indo-Bangladesh relations, Northeast India, geopolitics, political shift, changing dynamics.

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Faareha Usmani

Dr. Faareha Usmani is a Non-Resident Fellow (NRF) at the SCB Chair on IR at Chanakya University, Bangalore and has previously worked as a Research Intern at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi. She holds a PhD in Political Science and her research focused on India's Act East Policy towards the ASEAN nations. Her other research interest areas include International Relations and India's Foreign Policy, India's Maritime Prospects, Soft Power, Southeast and East Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, and has contributed several informative articles and pieces on these themes.

Abstract

Topic: From Ancient Sea Routes to Contemporary Naval Diplomacy: India's Maritime Relations with Southeast Asia

In an age shaped by geopolitical competition and regional rivalries, India and Southeast Asia have emerged as a strong example of friendly relations within a shared neighbourhood. While the two sides are extensively engaging through trade deals and strategic partnerships today, the foundation of their friendly relations however lies in their age-old civilizational bonds. Initial interactions between India and Southeast Asia began through maritime ventures, which later evolved into established trade networks. Their maritime ties therefore constitute one of the most significant networks of interaction and trans-regional connectivity of pre-modern Asia, that in present times have translated into naval diplomacy, with the two sides advancing their maritime relations through naval exercises, dialogues and capacity building programmes aimed at enhancing regional stability.

Furthermore, in the current geopolitical environment, it has become essential for both India and Southeast Asia to collaborate given the growing strategic relevance of the Indo-Pacific. Such cooperation is crucial for creating a strong naval presence based on mutual partnership rather than power competition and for collectively preventing Chinese hegemony in the region. Since the inception of the Act East Policy, India has been actively engaging with the ASEAN nations through the 3 Cs that is Commerce, Culture and Connectivity and remarkably, their maritime linkage intersects with all three. India's vision of strengthening its relations with Southeast Asian nations today is therefore being materialised not only through dialogues and diplomacy but also through reflecting on their ancient maritime ties.

In light of the above discussion, this study provides an analysis of evolution of India's maritime linkages with Southeast Asia, from the ancient sea routes to present day naval engagements. It examines the role and relevance of maritime partnership in contemporary India-ASEAN relations and the contribution of



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the Act East Policy in advancing their naval cooperation. The study has been divided into three parts. The first part discusses the beginning of these maritime ventures and the discovery of sea routes that facilitated trade. It discusses the period of disruption in these maritime connections and their subsequent revival. The second part focuses on the present-day India-Southeast Asia maritime partnership, with a detailed account of China's positioning in their relations, its historical maritime relations with Southeast Asia and contemporary claims in the South China Sea.

The study also compares the maritime approaches of India and China towards Southeast Asia, highlighting how India's engagement is based on partnership and mutual cooperation rather than regional rivalry and power competition. The third part examines India's increasing naval engagements with individual ASEAN countries since the inception of the Act East Policy and discusses initiatives and projects undertaken by India in this domain. Lastly, the conclusion explores the limitations of India's naval engagements and the factors contributing to them. The research methodology adopted for this study is qualitative in nature and based on historical, analytical and explanatory approaches. It uses both primary and secondary sources. The study is significant as it highlights that in an era of regional rivalries and complex geopolitical dynamics, India and Southeast Asia's relations showcase friendly relations built on historical foundations and a shared vision of enhancing regional stability. Moreover, with 2026 designated as the India-ASEAN Maritime Year, the study is both timely and relevant, highlighting India's evolving role as a maritime power in the region.

Workshop Participants



Dr. Bhavana K R

Dr. Bhavana K. R. is Assistant Professor in the Department of Ayurveda Samhita and Siddhanta at Government Ayurveda Medical College, Mysore. She holds an M.D. (Ayu) in Ayurveda Siddhanta and an M.A. in Sanskrit. In 2017, she was selected as a Fellow of the Asia Pacific Leadership Program at the East-West Center, Honolulu, where she engaged with an international cohort and Hawaiian healers along with delivering several talks on Ayurveda. She has presented papers in several international seminars including Gyanabharatam. She has several publications in PUBMED and SCOPUS indexed journals. She has also authored a book, “Alankaras in Caraka Samhita.”

Abstract

Topic: Developing a Traditional Medicine Capacity Index for Comparative Analysis of National Health Diplomacy Capacities

Most countries of the world have a traditional medicine whose capacity in universal health coverage is often neglected. The World Health Organization has increasingly recognized its role in achieving universal health coverage and promoting culturally appropriate healthcare. Moreover, traditional medicine is often regarded as purely cultural subject. While few countries like China had a national policy for traditional medicine, many countries do not even recognise their traditional healing system. The study intends to develop a preliminary composite index to measure the institutional strength and developmental integration of traditional medicine across countries. Current global health indicators focus largely on biomedical systems and overlook traditional medicine. An India-centric framework can fill this gap and provide new tools for comparative international research.

This study proposes the development of a Traditional Medicine Capacity Index (TMCI) as a comparative framework for evaluating the strength and readiness of traditional medicine systems across countries. India's long-standing experience in institutionalizing Ayurveda, can help to create a multidimensional tool to measure national capacities related to traditional medicine. The framework incorporates indicators across five domains: existence and recognition, human resources, education and research infrastructure, healthcare integration, and international engagement. Each domain is represented through measurable indicators that permit cross-national comparison. A pilot application of the index is proposed using selected countries with established traditional medicine systems to examine feasibility and comparative utility.

Methodology: A total of four domains are selected to evaluate the status of traditional medicine in nine countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Equal weights are assigned to all four domains due to the exploratory nature of the study. The four domains are:



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Existence and Recognition: a. Presence of Traditional medicine (herbal/ ritualistic/ mixed); b. Legal status;

Education and Human Resource: a. Recognized Degree/ diploma; b. Number of healers per million population;

Public policy: a. Insurance coverage; b. Inclusion of traditional medicine in national health policy;

Economic contribution: a. Market size; b. Medical tourism;

Inclusion Criteria: Nine countries were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Availability of data; 2. WHO recognition; 3. Geographical diversity; 4. Differing policy environments; 5. Differing levels of TM integration;

Workshop Participants



Priyanka Chugh

Priyanka Chugh is a Doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. A UGC-NET Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) awardee (2022), her research examines Sino-Indian relations, strategic affairs, and South Asian geopolitics, with a focus on India's counterbalancing strategies in the twenty-first century. She has presented research papers at national and international conferences and has published in peer-reviewed journals, besides contributing to an edited academic volume. Her broader research interests include international relations theory, security studies, foreign policy analysis, and emerging geopolitical dynamics in Asia.

Abstract

Topic: Digital Hegemonies in the South: Algorithmic Governance and AI-Driven Education in China and India

Global South is not a single unified unit as perceived; rather, in the technological-driven world, the region has garnered increasingly significant digital hierarchies. The central focus of this proposed study is to examine how the rapid expansion of AI-driven technologies in the emerging southern powers of the Indian and Chinese education sectors is producing new forms of power, dependence, and inequality. In formative years, Beijing has positioned itself as a technological leader with AI innovation advancement in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and smart education with state-led technological governance and investments.

This allows the nation to grow increasingly shaped digital standards, educational platforms and knowledge systems not only domestically but across parts of the developing world, thereby occupying a role that resembles the dominance historically associated with the global north. Within this changing landscape, India presents a significant and complex case study. On the other hand, the emergence of India as a major hub for digital education and private Edtech expansion via platforms such as Unacademy, BYJU's, and Vedantu.

A comparative analytical study of China and India is explored in this research with an emphasis on how AI-driven STEM educational platforms reproduce new postcolonial hierarchies through algorithmic governance, technological capability, language politics, and control over digital ecosystems. The study draws inferences from postcolonial theory, digital sovereignty, and critical algorithm studies to analyse how technological leadership within the global south may itself generate unequal relations of power, influence and dependency. Ultimately, the research argues that the rise of AI-driven education is not only transforming learning systems but also reshaping geopolitical and epistemic hierarchies within the global south, where countries, such as China, increasingly function as centres of technological authority while countries like India navigate both competition and dependence in the evolving digital order.

Workshop Participants



Srishti Bera

Srishti Bera is a Ph.D. scholar in International Relations at Chanakya University, Bengaluru. Her research focuses on Israeli foreign policy, India-Israel relations and national security, with broader interests in West Asia. She holds a Master's degree in International Relations with distinction from Amity University and a Bachelor's degree in Communicative English and Journalism from the University of Calcutta. She has served as a Teaching Assistant and actively engages in research, academic writing, and discussions on geopolitics and international affairs.

Abstract

Topic: Indo-Israel Relations in the 21st Century: Divergences, Legitimacy Paradox and Hard Power for Strategic Stability

With Israel's operation against Gaza, Iran and the Axis of Resistance intensifying recently, particularly after the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, there was a sharp decline in the image of Israel in the international arena and other countries. The diplomatic rupture, reputational decline and loss of legitimacy and condemnation on global platforms like the United Nations had led to the fall of Israel's ranking on the Brand Finance Global Soft

Power Index, followed by the global surveys by Nira Data as a part of its 2026 democracy and country perception research calling the Jewish state as the most disliked country in the world.

Meanwhile, India who had an initial and official policy of two-state solution and strongly advocated for the Palestinian cause has shown unwavering diplomatic support either by abstaining from resolutions which were against Israel or remaining silent. India's affinity is not just confined to diplomatic response but also deepening of the defence ties and building of a special strategic partnership. This unconditional support amidst global condemnation is not just due to Israel's defence and weapon transfer and deepened defence collaboration but also the significance of soft power being operated in the recipient country, India. But similar soft power form has seen in Israel's traditional allies too but didn't lead to same result.

Under specific conditions, we see the hard power collaboration and transfer and cooperation in the security domain successfully generate soft power and develop political influence in the recipient country, India. According to Joseph Nye's explanation, soft power is the capability to attract or influence other states or people without the use of any element of coercion. Hard power is 'the ability to get others to act in ways that are contrary to their initial preferences and strategies' (Nye, 2011, p.11). This is the ability to coerce, through threats and inducements ("sticks" and "carrots"). In his work *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*, he explained that excessive use of hard power leads to the erosion of soft power and positive image.



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The strengthening of the bilateral relations amidst war doesn't fit in any of the frameworks, neither can the framework explain the exceptional pattern amidst the international normative pressure on Israel for its disproportionate attacks. Although the Indians have polarised view of Israel, the public opinion polling of the last decade has a favourable view of Israel which is likely to be the impact of Israel's military prowess, unapologetic counter terrorism operations and, advance and cutting-edge technology. My study aims to explain the divergence where Israel systemically loses legitimacy worldwide whereas developing a deep partnership has garnered support from the third largest home to the Muslim population in the world, India. I will try to explain the legitimacy paradox within the framework of power, specifically Joseph Nye's conventional definition of soft power and, I would further diverge from it and shed light on hard power collaboration generating soft power where the power operation has a different mechanism. My work attempts to explain how India's dependence and reliance on Israel's defence equipments create an exceptional case of material foundation for bilateral legitimacy resilience and further delve to how India is a fertile ground where Israel is not just projecting its soft power but it the Indians who are receptive to them that helps Israel maintain a relatively stable image, strategic trust and generate political influence.

Keywords: India, United Arab Emirates, Paradiplomacy, shifting paradigm, emerging diplomatic framework.

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Arpit Awasthi

Arpit Awasthi is a Doctoral Researcher at the School of Design and Innovation, Mahindra University, Hyderabad working to extend “designerly ways of knowing” beyond aesthetics towards complex challenges in governance, public policy, and state capacity. He reframes Design Thinking and Systems Thinking, anchored in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), as rigorous instruments for building culturally grounded policy institutions and adaptive governance. Extending this into international relations, he draws on Kautilya’s Arthashastra, Mandala theory, and Shadgunya to develop an indigenous grammar of statecraft and geopolitical strategy, and to counter narrative warfare by reclaiming intellectual sovereignty over India’s civilisational story, advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Abstract

Topic: Dharmic Doctrines for India’s International Relations: A Design Methodology

India still tends to study its own place in the world through ideas that were not made here. Realism, liberalism, the whole familiar toolkit, all of it grew out of European and American history, and that history is baked into it. The assumptions these theories make about the state, about power, about how order holds together, do not always sit comfortably on India. And that is a strange situation, because we are one of the oldest civilisations on earth, with a very long memory of how to run a state, yet we keep explaining our own decisions in a language borrowed from somewhere else. My research starts from a question that is almost embarrassingly simple: why can’t India read the world through its own ideas? I think it can, and I am trying to build a proper way of doing that. I call it Civilisational Design Thinking, and it leans on four things that have to work together.

There is our own knowledge tradition to begin with, which is far richer than people assume. Kautilya’s Arthashastra is the obvious starting point, the great Indian manual on statecraft, but it is hardly alone. There is the long passage on a ruler’s duties in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, there is Kamandaka’s Nitisara, the Shukraniti, and a whole body of older writing on what a king owes his people. Every one of them has something concrete to say about power, alliances, war, and good government. Then there is dharma, the simple but stubborn idea that power always carries duty and restraint with it. That is really what marks Indian thinking off from a cold, win-at-all-costs view of power.

Systems thinking comes next, and it lets me treat these ideas as one connected whole, a working model of statecraft, instead of a pile of clever sayings. And design thinking does the job most Indian scholarship quietly skips: it takes these old ideas and makes them usable, so that someone actually working in policy can pick them up and do something with them. The point underneath all of this is plain enough. A country that has thought about statecraft for two thousand years has no good reason to borrow its ideas wholesale from anyone. What matters to me is using this framework, not just talking about it. I start with careful,



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trustworthy editions of the original texts, not the tired and often shaky translations that too many people still lean on. From those I pull out the central ideas and sharpen them into clear categories.

Systems thinking then shows how those categories hang on one another, and design thinking shapes them into a doctrine, by which I just mean an organised, dependable way of reasoning that a strategist or an official could actually pick up and use. And then I test the thing honestly. I take a handful of real, recent examples from Indian foreign policy, how we handle our immediate neighbours, how we keep working relationships going with many countries at once even when some of them are rivals, how we think about deterrence, and I read each of them through my framework. Then I put that reading right next to what a standard Western theory would say about the very same situation. I do this deliberately, because the honest objection to any homegrown approach is that it might just be saying old things in older-sounding words. I treat the question of whether my framework genuinely adds something as a thing I have to prove, not assume, and I am quite willing to say plainly where it comes up short as well as where it earns its place. If it works, two things follow. One is the beginning of a real Indian doctrine for national security and foreign policy, grown from our own categories rather than imported ones. The other is a method other researchers can borrow and reuse, a repeatable way of turning India's civilisational knowledge into serious tools for studying International Relations and global governance.

Workshop Participants



Sanchita Agarwal

My name is Sanchita Agarwal, and I am currently pursuing a Master's in International Studies at Christ University. I am a Research Intern at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), where I work on issues related to international relations and policy research. My interests lie in geopolitics, strategic affairs, diplomacy, and global governance. I am passionate about evidence-based policy research and look forward to contributing to discussions on contemporary international issues.

Abstract

Topic: Decoding Debt: Sovereign Risk, Collateralized Lending, and Chinese Infrastructure Finance in Africa

The growing financial footprint of China in Africa has become one of the most contentious aspects of today's global political economy. This paper looks at Chinese lending to Africa, sets it in the context of the debt-trap diplomacy debate and critically questions the political and economic implications of Chinese funded infrastructure projects.

The paper does not simply reject or endorse the debt-trap thesis but rather examines the structural conditions facilitating debt vulnerability and limiting fiscal autonomy in the context of Chinese lending and development assistance; it also recognizes cases where Chinese lending creates new opportunities for expanding infrastructure capacity that have historically not been offered by multilateral lenders.

The paper reviews the historical development of Sino-African ties from the Cold War era when they were united by ideological support to the era of anti-colonial cooperation in the South, via the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), to the transformative period on the eve of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since 2013. This path is indicative of a structural change from relations based on a common postcolonial identity to a one-sided economic arrangement based on creditor-debtor relations with hidden contractual conditions, contingent asset exposure and hidden debtors.

A key component of the paper's argument is a study of the debt-for-asset deal, which relies on strategic infrastructure such as ports, railway lines and hydroelectric projects being pledged as collateral for Chinese concessional and commercial loans. Such deals have raised substantive issues regarding long-term sovereignty, and often include clauses designed for the loaned bank to remain confidential, cross-default, and to be given preferential creditor status, which exempts them from usual restructuring procedures. Does this architecture reflect China's purposeful geopolitical leverage or the unintended outcome of institutional path dependency in its model of financing the overseas expansion?

The paper uses three comparative case studies to assess dynamics empirically. For Djibouti, debt burden from China and the opening of China's first overseas naval base are tied together in the field of infrastructure financing and military-strategic positioning. In Zambia, the opacity of loan conditions made it



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difficult to engage with the IMF and G20 Common Framework in debt restructuring, and the country was in a state of acute debt distress. The Standard Gauge Railway, Kenya is a case study in infrastructure gaps, lost revenues and renegotiation under fiscal constraints. The cases point to a set of debt outcomes that are structurally linked and determined by the capacity of the borrowers, the design of the project, and the creditor relations.

The new climate differs from the Paris Club days in that today there are Chinese policy banks as well as Western commercial creditors, multilateral institutions and private bondholders with varying norms of disclosure and restructuring incentives. It is not only China's lending that is a cause of debt distress, but limited coordination between the two types of creditors, the paper concludes. The evidentiary basis relies on qualitative document analysis of loan agreements, records from debt sustainability assessments by the IMF and World Bank, and records from the negotiations associated with debt restructuring, used in some cases, and published in some datasets, from AidData. The study ends with a broader consideration of its implications for the International Debt Architecture and India's rising profile as an alternative development finance actor in the Global South. It should also claim that a precondition for tackling Africa's sovereign debt challenge by designing effective multilateral responses is to analytically disaggregate the debt-trap discourse.

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Dr. Kiran GSK

Dr. Kiran is currently working as an Assistant Professor at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), Bengaluru. Kiran completed his PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, where his research examined India's maritime security strategy and capacity-building engagements in the Indo-Pacific, working at the intersection of international relations, maritime governance, and non-traditional security—with a focus on marine resources and illicit maritime activities. Dr. Kiran has been an MHRD fellowship recipient for both his master's and doctoral studies and was a visiting scholar at the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS), as well as a G20 Fellow with the Centre for Financial Accountability. His work has been recognised through competitive awards, including a European International Studies Association (EISA) mobility grant, an IIT Guwahati travel grant, and an exchange fellowship with the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS) at Kyoto University, Japan (declined due to COVID-19). Dr. Kiran's research has also been presented and published in several leading international conferences and journals. His current research builds on his doctoral work by focusing on transboundary fisheries governance in the Bay of Bengal, working at the intersection of ocean equity, maritime justice, and community-based approaches to maritime security and sustainable resource management.

Abstract

Topic: Guardians of the Bay: Community Equity, Maritime Justice, and the India-Bangladesh Fisheries Conflict

Recent incidents along the India-Bangladesh maritime boundary indicate a rise in the transgressions and detentions of fishermen. They also highlight the rising instances of Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing and the need for policy instruments that are holistic, equitable, and effective to safeguard the interests of the coastal communities and ensure sustainable fishing practices in the Bay of Bengal. Unlike other maritime spaces in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Bay of Bengal is largely dominated by small-scale artisanal fisheries. While transgressions and illicit fishing have long been issues of contention, securitisation of the maritime domain, changing geopolitics, and regional dynamics largely affect the fishing sector, coastal communities, their livelihoods and food security.

As ocean governance mechanisms gain increasing attention in global policies, the Bay of Bengal, an environmentally significant and biodiversity hotspot, continues to suffer from degradation of its marine ecosystem. Perpetuating transboundary illicit fishing practices are typically seen through contested and unsettled maritime borders. In this regard, India-Bangladesh maritime cooperation presents an interesting paradox: despite a settled maritime boundary, transboundary resource management continues to be a source of conflict. The ambulatory nature of marine resources compels fishermen to search for better



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catches, putting them at the crossroads with law enforcement agencies and other communities dependent on dwindling resources.

The region is not devoid of mechanisms to address overfishing and illicit fishing. From Regional Fisheries Management Organisations like the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) to cooperative mechanisms such as BIMSTEC and BOBLME, from naval exercises to coast guard cooperation, countries in the Bay of Bengal are involved in various mechanisms to address IUU fishing. Notwithstanding these policies and legal instruments, existing measures have limitations and are inadequate to deal with illicit fishing practices. Against this backdrop, it is pertinent to ask what pathways can strengthen sustainable fishing and broader ocean governance beyond traditional intergovernmental approaches. One key way is by adopting a more holistic set of mechanisms focused on improving ocean equity, benefitting coastal communities and sustainable fisheries. Equity here means creating enabling conditions such as effective participation of coastal communities in decision-making, empowering local communities, and recognition of indigenous knowledge that integrates these actors as key stakeholders in sustainable ocean governance.

Notwithstanding their critical role in combating IUU fishing, coastal and fishing communities face persistent discrimination that marginalises their role in sustainable ocean governance policies and practices. Leveraging mechanisms towards equitable fisheries by engaging coastal communities is not just about combating IUU fishing but also about maritime justice and the use of indigenous knowledge. Marine conservation is not just about conserving biodiversity; it is also about safeguarding the rights of local communities. An inclusive role for fishing communities aligns with the national interests of India and Bangladesh by transforming the vulnerable waters of the Bay of Bengal into growth engines for blue economy and increasing resilience. Involving coastal communities should not be seen merely to counter illicit fishing, but as measures to integrate knowledge systems that act as guardianship for conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. Fishermen transgressions along the India-Bangladesh maritime boundary are largely seen as localised events. However, given the contemporary fragility of relations and emerging geopolitical uncertainty, these events could escalate tensions and endanger regional peace.

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Shanky Chandra

Shanky Chandra is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chinese Studies at Doon University, India. He earned his B.A., M.A. in Chinese Language and Literature, and M.Phil. in Comparative Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His research focuses on modern and contemporary Chinese science fiction, particularly the works of Liu Cixin and Science and Technology in China. He received the Chinese Government Scholarship to study at Beijing Language and Culture University and completed advanced Mandarin teacher training at the National Taipei University of Education, Taiwan. He was a senior visiting scholar at Beijing Normal University and Harvard GSAS under the Harvard-Yenching Institute fellowship.

Abstract

Topic: Reading the Strategic Mind: Chinese Science Fiction, Military Periodicals, and the Making of China's Strategic Culture

This paper argues that China's strategic culture is not formed solely through official policy documents or military doctrine but is actively shaped through a diverse ecosystem of popular literature — including science fiction (SF) and defence-oriented periodicals — that cultivates strategic imagination, technocratic values, and long-horizon thinking among China's youth and professional classes. Understanding this ecosystem is essential for Indian scholars seeking to comprehend the depth of Chinese strategic thinking. Strategic culture — the shared assumptions and modes of thought that shape a state's approach to force and long-term statecraft — is typically studied through elite discourse and institutional behaviour. This paper proposes a complementary approach: reading popular and speculative literature as windows into the informal transmission of strategic norms.

In the Chinese case, this is particularly productive. Since the late 1990s, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has actively promoted SF as part of the national project of scientific modernisation — the 'Chinese Dream' — fusing technological ambition with civilisational pride and state purpose. Simultaneously, a robust ecosystem of defence-oriented periodicals — Bingqi Zhishi (兵器知识, Weapons Knowledge), Shijie Junshi (世界军事, World Military), Xiandai Junshi (现代军事, Modern Military), and Junshi Wenzhai (军事文摘, Military Digest) — has cultivated scientific temperament and strategic awareness among millions of young readers. These publications, with no close equivalents in India's mainstream publishing ecosystem, form a crucial bridge between technical knowledge, military doctrine, and popular imagination.

The paper examines three interlocking themes. First, technological determinism and technocratic legitimacy: Chinese SF and military periodicals consistently portray scientists, engineers, and technocrats as the core agents of national power. Works such as Liu Cixin's Remembrance of Earth's Past trilogy celebrate the fusion of scientific rigour with state purpose, while also exposing the moral fragility of technocratic systems — a tension mirroring real debates within



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China's modernisation project. Second, long-horizon strategic thinking: the Chinese strategic imagination, reflected in SF narratives spanning centuries or millennia, encodes a preference for civilisational timescales that contrasts sharply with the shorter cycles of democratic political cultures. Third, civilisational identity and global rivalry: Chinese SF largely ignores India while centring China's competition with the West and abstract extraterrestrial civilisations — an absence that itself reveals the hierarchy of threats in Beijing's strategic imagination.

Methodologically, the paper draws on content analysis of Chinese SF texts and military periodicals, supplemented by interviews with Chinese SF authors, to construct a thick description of China's popular strategic imagination. It engages with epistemological debates about integrating heterodox sources — fiction, speculative scenarios, popular science writing — into IR analytical frameworks and proposes a methodology of techno-strategic reading suited to the study of non-Western strategic cultures. The paper concludes with implications for Indian scholarship and policymaking. India lacks an equivalent ecosystem of popular techno-strategic literature, and Indian SF has remained largely detached from defence and technology themes. The consequences are material: China's gap between speculative fiction and real capability is narrowing — the recent confirmation of sixth-generation fighter prototypes by the Chengdu Aircraft Corporation is a case in point — while India's strategic imagination remains anchored in older frameworks. Indian IR scholars must develop methodologies capable of reading China's informal knowledge ecosystems.

Workshop Participants



Syed Insha

Syed Insha is a PhD scholar and Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. Her research title is, 'Conceptualising Rajadharma in Smriti, Niti, and Arthasastra traditions'. Her research interests include Classical Political Philosophy, Indian Political Thought, Western Political Thought, and Methodological Orientations. She has been working as a Visiting Faculty in University School of Liberal Arts, GGSIPU, Dwarka for the past two years. She has presented papers in both National and International Conferences, been part of methodological workshops, and has publications in both Scopus indexed and UGC care listed journals.

Abstract

Topic: Manusmriti, Sukranitisar and Arthasastra as the three dominant Smriti, Niti and Artha tradition in understanding Indian statecraft

Dharma comprises one of the most significant and pivotal aspects of the ancient Indian polity and is considered to be the highest ideal 'The transcendental moral law' governing and guiding both king and the subjects to attain their best selves. The word dharma is derived from the root word 'dhr' meaning 'to sustain' or 'uphold'. It is based upon the idea that wherever whatever lies is sustained, upheld and supported. The concept of dharma evolved out of 'rta' which implies both the law of righteousness and cosmic equilibrium combining in itself the notion of an integrated whole in which gods, men and nature participate (Chatterjee, 1986).

Dharma is perhaps the most comprehensive concept in the entire history of Hindu political thought. The various dharmas are classified into sadharanadharma (dharma common to all), varnadharma (related with one's station in life), asramadharma (related to the stages of life) and so forth. Further, the plan for societal development and overall progress of the individual could only be possible when the duties of king were performed in accordance with the guiding principle of dharma. Rajadharma which is popularly defined as duties of king is considered to be the head of all the dharmas as it was the institution of kingship that was expected to maintain stability in society. Since king was the benevolent agency conducive to moralise, guide and protect the subjects, he was the forbearer of dharma as it was nothing but the tradition of rajadharma that gave king the paramount space to be the forerunner of ancient society.

Sphere of the duties of king was extended to almost all the walks of life and in this backdrop, methodological analysis of trajectory of duties of king needs to be assessed in order to make conducive sense of functioning of ancient Indian polity. Contemporary understanding of the 'rule of law' can best be understood in an implied manner if one essentialises the past. Indian polity is essentially a continuous story of one event leading to another and present can only be comprehended by understanding the past. Ancient Indian polity and the literature of the given time have always considered the idea of dharma and rajadharma of prime significance because it was the idea of righteousness enlightening the duties of the king that fundamentally propounded the notion of stability in



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ancient Indian society.

The fundamental idea that shaped the duties of the king was dharma and dharma had an ontological notion; it had a social dimension as it resonated with both artha (wealth) and kama (pleasure). It was indubitably the Trivarga (three ideals of life) namely, dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth) and kama (pleasure) that influenced the functioning of ancient Indian polity. Dharma is one of the four objectives of life (Purushartha namely dharma, artha, kama and moksha) but it is argued by scholars that without dharma no other objective could be attained. It is discernible then that the concept of dharma lies at the core in ancient Indian texts which played an inexplicable role in guiding ancient polity of India. It is from the above premises regarding significance of dharma in Indian political thought that this research intends to conceptualise the principles of rajadharma in three traditions of Smriti, Niti and Arthasastra. The research seeks to highlight the duties of king in domains of order building, nyaya and yogakshema and encapsulates how does the duties of king in these domains depict changes in three ancient texts of Manusmriti, Sukranitisar and Arthasastra. The research hypothesises that it was the three-fold principles of Trivarga inclusive of dharma, artha and kama that profoundly influenced the change in the duties of king from one text of Manu to Sukra and to Kautilya. Ancient Indian texts of Manusmriti, Sukranitisar and Arthasastra represents the three dominant Smriti, Niti and Artha tradition and provide detailed descriptions of the duties of king in varying circumstances.

Workshop Participants



Dheeraj Kumar Mehar

My name is Dheeraj Kumar Mehar. I am pursuing a Master's degree in Politics with specialization in International Relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. I completed my graduation from Kota University with History, Sociology, and Political Science and my schooling from Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Jhalawar with PCM. My academic interests include international relations, global politics, and foreign policy. My goal is to improve my academic writing in simple English and contribute to policy research in international relations. I aspire to grow as a professional scholar and make meaningful contributions to global academic and policy debates.

Abstract

Topic: From the Arthashastra to the G-20: Tracing the Practical Relevance of Indian Diplomatic Thought

This research shows how India's own ideas can be used to study international relations. In the contemporary era, international relations theories are dominated by Western theories and Western scholars, which reflect their own perspectives on international relations. These theories like realism, liberalism, Idealism and neoliberalism explain how power politics works but these theories are developed in western societies which do not always fit in India's history and culture. India has a very old tradition of thinking about politics and society. This study shows how the politics of India's old traditions and culture help us understand world politics, or international relations. The research begins with the history of international relations in India. It helps us to understand the ideas and thinking of Indian leaders or political thinkers in the past, present, and future. Thinkers like Kautilya wrote Arthashastra, Arthashastra talk about power and statecraft, a theory of realism resembles the power politics of the Arthashastra. Gandhi spoke about non-violence and truth, which can be used in conflict resolution, and with the help of non-violence, we can demand our legitimate rights in front of a powerful government. Nehru gave the idea of non-alignment, which helped India to stay independent in world politics or not to align with any powerful bloc in a bipolar world. The research also highlights India's role in global forums like United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the G-20 which reflect India's tradition and values of cooperation which applied to modern diplomacy. These examples show India's own way of looking at world politics.

The methods used in this research are simple. It uses reading books, articles, research paper, policies, and expert seminars. It also compares Indian ideas and theories with Western theories. It also talks about Indian universities and scholars which are trying to develop new way of thinking to look at world politics. This new way of looking at international relations reflects India's history, culture and traditions. The study also talks about challenges like many students still study western theories, these theories are part of their syllabus. Their main focus is on western theories which shows less focus on Indian way



Workshop Participants

of thinking in international relations. Study also suggests that Indian universities should give greater priorities to Indian theories of international relations. The findings that ideas of India's theories of international relations theory can give a different perspective on world politics. For example, Gandhi's idea of non-violence gives a different perspective to solve disputes between countries peacefully. Kautilya's ideas can be used to understand power politics with ethics. Nehru's nonalignment can show how a small country can stay independent with sovereignty. These ideas are important for today's era like war like situations for examples, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Iran-Israel war. In conclusion, this research says that India centric approach is needed in today's era, like the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Iran-Israel war. An India-centric approach is needed because Western theories are dominating in international relations. These theories reflect western culture, which is not applicable in the Indian subcontinent. This study hopes to encourage Indian students to develop an Indian perspective to understand international relations. By doing this, India can contribute more to world politics and academic theories.

Workshop Participants



Vasundhra Sehgal

Vasundhra Sehgal is a PhD scholar at the Department of Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Her PhD thesis is titled 'Security, Trade and protection of International law: India and ASEAN in the Indo-pacific'. She is interested in studies in and around the Geopolitics of Indo-pacific region, ASEAN studies and Political theory.

Abstract

Topic: From Mare Liberum to Mare Clausum: Evolution, Contestation, and Contemporary Governance of the International Law of the Sea in the Indo-Pacific

The International law of the seas has evolved through principles of Mare Liberum and Mare Clausum. This paper examines how these competing doctrines continue to shape contemporary maritime governance in the Indo-pacific, particularly in the politics of South China Sea. This paper analyses the evolution of maritime law beginning from the perspectives of Hugo Grotius and John Selden to the development of UNCLOS in 1982 and beyond.

In the contemporary politics of Indo-pacific region, India and ASEAN play a vital role in advocating freedom of navigation and maritime cooperation through mechanisms like multiple ASEAN-led forums, informal strategic forums like Quadrilateral security Dialogue (Quad) and Indo-pacific Oceans initiative. This paper examines the diplomatic initiatives taken by ASEAN to establish a binding Code of conduct and evaluates the challenges it has faced in the process. It tries to identify loopholes and ambiguities within International maritime Law including competing interpretations of historic rights, artificial island construction and militarization of certain territories. Further, it focusses on the principle of 'due regard' under UNCLOS, and the limitations imposed by the pacta tertiis doctrine on third party obligations.

It will also discuss the growing importance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as instruments for balancing environmental protection with maritime governance. By integrating classical legal theories with contemporary geopolitical developments, the study argues that the future of international law of the sea lies not in choosing between Mare liberum and Mare Clausum, but in developing cooperative, rules-based mechanisms to address security, environmental and economic challenges in the Indo-pacific.

This study utilizes qualitative, historical and analytical methods and will primarily rely on secondary sources including treaties, conventions, scholarly books and articles, policy reports and official documents issued by international organizations and governments. Engaging with the interpretation of key legal texts, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the conduct of parties in the South China Sea and Principles of customary international law, the analytical component of this paper examines how these principles operate in contemporary

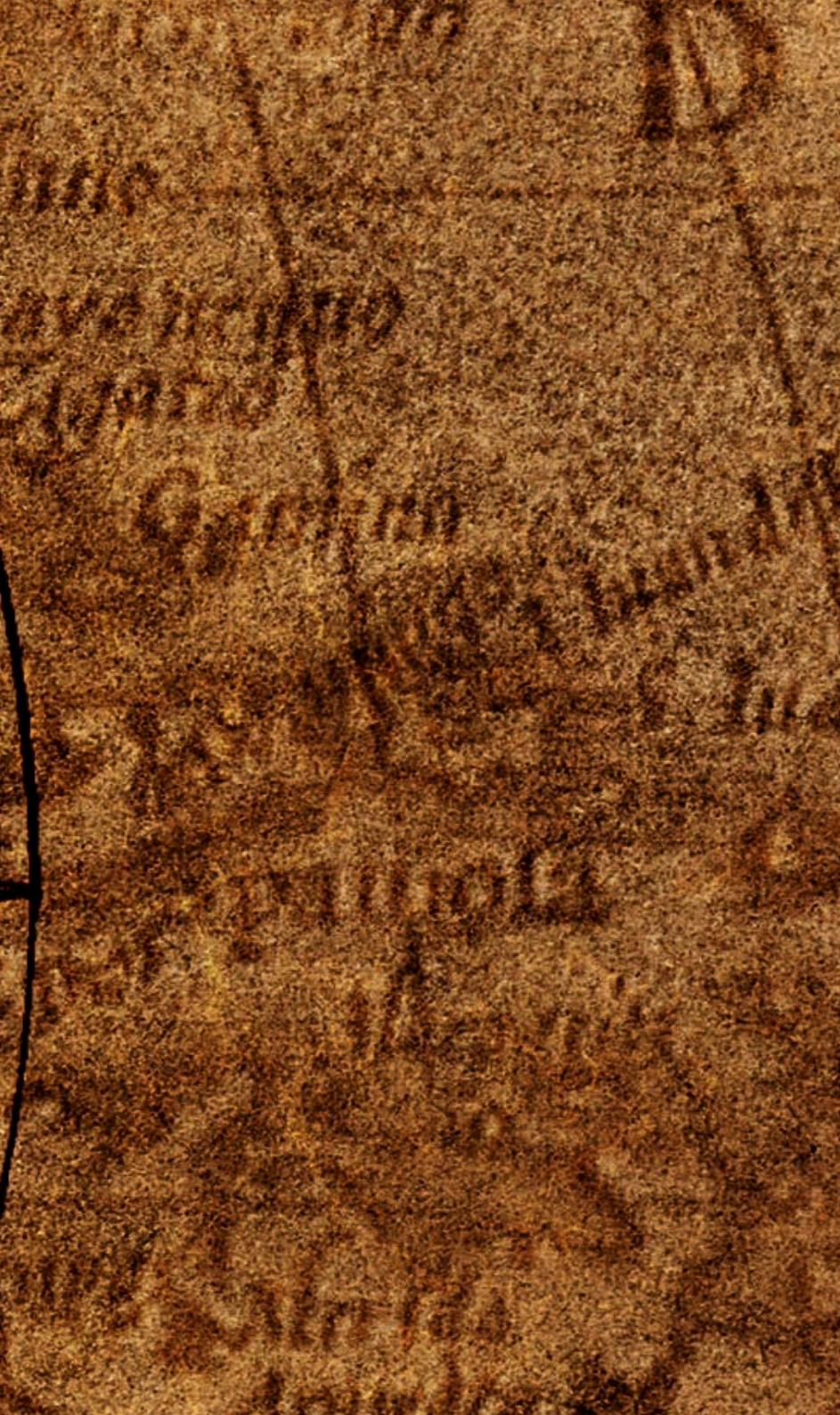


Workshop Participants

Indo-pacific politics.

South China Sea, here, is used as a case study to assess competing maritime claims and the interaction between law and regional politics. By evaluating India's initiative in the region along with ASEAN led mechanisms the current status of rules-based order is assessed. A comparative approach is adopted to study classical theories of maritime governance with contemporary challenges in an attempt to synthesize existing legal and policy structure to provide an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the current maritime governance.

With the shift in Economic power from the West to East due to the rise of China and the Indo-Pacific acting as the pre-cursor to the global supply chain, it is certain that the protection of Indo-Pacific region will account to the protection of world trade in general and India's economy and defence in specific. That is why the role of India and ASEAN nations becomes very crucial. It is important to protect the interests of the ASEAN to subsequently protect India's maritime security and trade, and to uphold the International Legal Order. The cultural and strategic ties that India shares with ASEAN are crucial in acknowledging the role of Southeast Asia in the protection of the Indo-Pacific region. The south Asian region, if controlled and regulated by China or any other single player in the region, will pose a threat to the world security, trade and international law. Thus, it is important that India along with ASEAN protect this region thereby enhancing the prevalence of international rules-based order, world trade and economic and political stability in the Indo-Pacific.



Code of Conduct

1. Possession and/or consumption and/or distribution of Alcohol, Cigarettes, Narcotic Drugs or psychotropic substances is a statutory offence.
2. Bullying in any form including online or verbal bullying or physical bullying is a statutory offence.
3. Physical altercation and/or Physical violence with fellow students, university staff or security staff is a statutory offence.
4. Hacking of email account of students or staff; tampering with CHANAKYA UNIVERSITY IT system is a statutory offence.
5. Sexual harassment is a statutory offence.
6. Engaging in discrimination of any sort against students, staff or faculty based on race, caste religion, gender, ethnicity, language, etc. is a statutory offence.
7. Creating public nuisance in the neighborhood triggering criminal Justice system is a statutory offence.
8. Abetting the sale of prohibited material to fellow students through financing or other means is a statutory offence.
9. Indulging in all forms of gambling or betting, using the campus network is a statutory offence.

PoSH Guidelines

The University has a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and shall provide for timely and adequate compliance of the directions in this regard contained in the UGC Regulation.

Regulation

1. **Applicability and Commencement**

This Regulation shall apply to all Students, Employees (irrespective of their Tenure, Position, Designation or Gender) and Visitors (in whatever capacity) of the University /workplaces

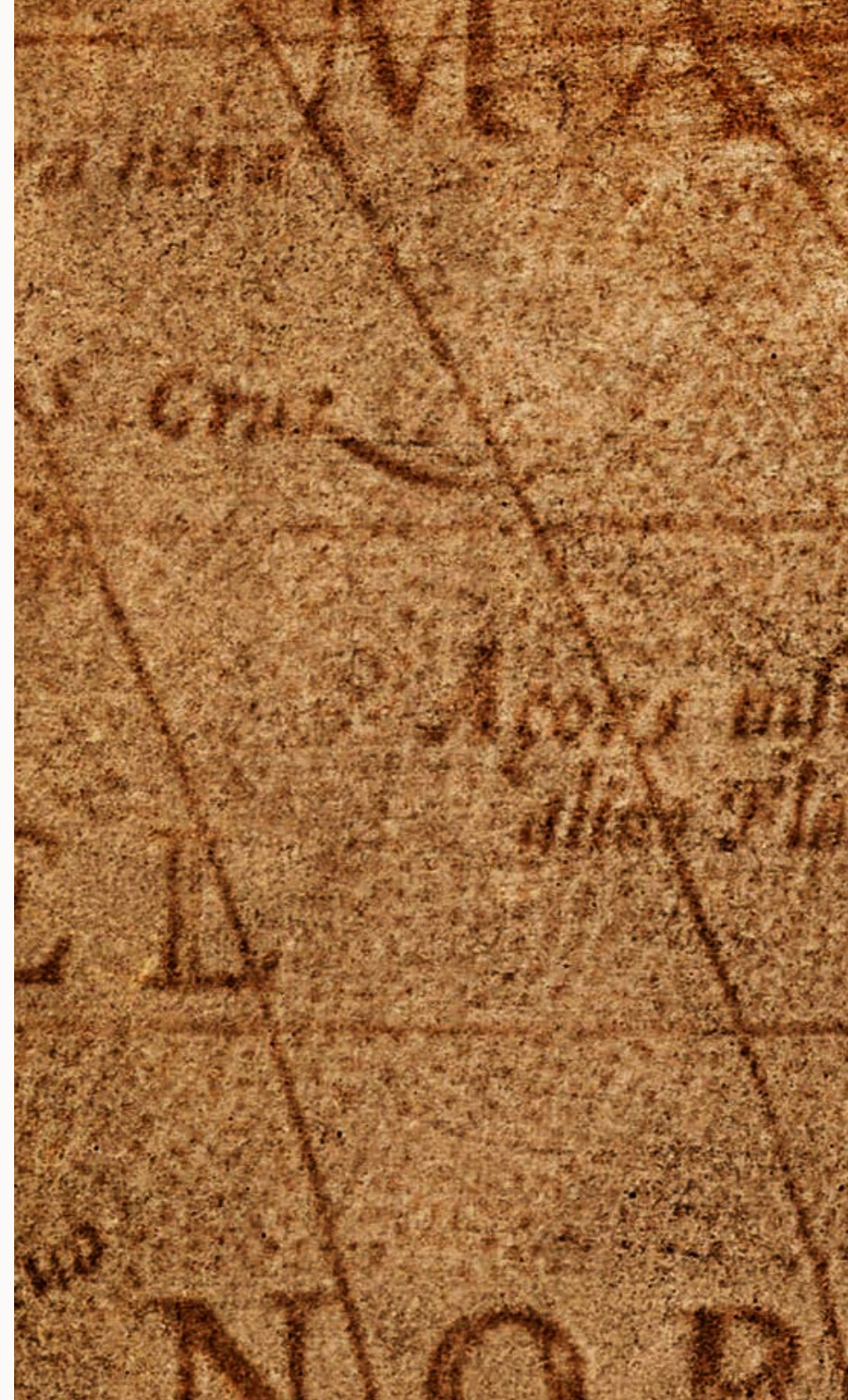
2. **Definition**

In this Regulation unless the context otherwise requires, all the terms specified or contemplated herein shall have the same meaning and interpretation of such term/s as contained in Section 2 of the UGC

Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)

The Internal Complaints Committee shall be the primary authority responsible for dealing with and to adjudicate on any complaint or grievance in the nature of sexual harassment and shall function with full autonomy and power to make recommendations and/or to pass punitive orders in accordance with this Regulation.

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