



CHANAKYA
UNIVERSITY
Rooted in ideals • Ascending with ideas

**Subhas Chandra Bose Chair
of International Relations**

CU-SCB/2026-27/TLV-004
PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE -04

The Long View

Navigating the West Asian Crisis

In Conversation with

Prof. Harsh V. Pant

Guest host

Prof. Chetan Singai

Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations
Chanakya University, Bengaluru

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

The Long View Navigating the West Asian Crisis

In Conversation with
Prof. Harsh V. Pant

Director of Studies, Observer Research Foundation

Guest host
Prof. Chetan Singai

Dean, School of Law, Governance and Public Policy

The Long View | Episode-4

Navigating the West Asian Crisis

In Conversation with Prof. Chetan Singai and Guest, Prof. Harsh V. Pant

Chanakya University Podcast Transcript No. CU-SCB/2026-27/TLV-004

© Chanakya University, 2026

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 twenty-first-century international relations. Anchored in India's strategic culture, the Chair seeks to support the country's rising trajectory in global affairs through innovative thinking, rigorous inquiry, and policy-relevant scholarship.

The Chair promotes interdisciplinary research, develops advanced expertise in international relations, contributes to the articulation of an Indian conceptual vocabulary for global discourse, and fosters partnerships among scholars, practitioners, and institutions committed 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 particular emphasis on India's neighbourhood and regional strategic environment.

"The Long View: Conversation. Context. Consequence is a flagship podcast series launched by the Subhas Chandra Bose Chair on International Relations at Chanakya University. Debuting on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary in 2026, the series provides forward-looking, India-centric perspectives on global affairs, strategic autonomy, and Asian geopolitics.

The podcast series can be watched and followed on the website, YouTube page, and Spotify account of Chanakya University."

Published by: Chanakya University
NH - 648, Haraluru - Polanahalli,
Near Kempegowda International Airport,
Devanahalli, Bengaluru - 562165

Table of Contents

Key Takeaways..... viii

Editorial Note: ix

Transcript 1

Summary 6

Podcast Links 6

About the Guest 7

About the Host..... 7

About the Chair..... 8

Key Takeaways

- The West Asian crisis shows that too much dependence on one region or resource can create serious risks, so India needs to diversify its energy sources, partnerships, and supply chains.
- India's strategic autonomy comes from maintaining good relations with different sides, including Israel, Iran, the Gulf countries and the United States.
- India should not remain a bystander, rather it should become a builder by creating partnerships and helping shape economic and security arrangements in West Asia.
- Finally, young researchers should rely on serious research and credible sources rather than slogans, social media or activism. They must understand the deeper causes of conflicts before forming conclusions.

Transcribed and Edited by

Anu Maria Joseph

Anu Maria Joseph is a Non-Resident Fellow at the Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations. She holds a Master's in Political Science from Madras Christian College, Chennai. For the Chair, she co-coordinates the International Webinars and the activities of the Indian Journal on Neighbourhood Studies.

Previously, from 2022 to 2025, she worked as a Project Associate at the School of Conflict and Security Studies, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. At NIAS, she coordinated several international projects, such as NIAS Conflict Weekly under the International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI). She was also the coordinator of NIAS Area Studies-Africa.

Her primary area of research interest is peace and conflict issues, as well as governance in Africa and South Asia. She publishes regularly on the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Sudan. She has been the Assistant Editor of several annual volume collections of IPRI, including NIAS-IPRI Conflict Annual 2024, IPRI Series on Contemporary Conflicts: War in Gaza Vol 1, Africa Annual 2025, and NIAS-KAS Conflict Annual 2023. She also has a collection of publications in Indian media, especially The Hindu, on several major developments in Africa. On South Asia, she follows and tracks youth protests and regime changes in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Editorial Note:

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability, clarity and British English. Repetitions, fillers, false starts and obvious speech-recognition errors have been removed or corrected while preserving the substance and conversational character of the discussion. The views expressed by the participants are their own and do not necessarily represent those of Chanakya University or the Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations. The opening promotional teaser has not been repeated in the main transcript.

Transcript

Prof. Chetan Singai: Namaste, welcome to The Long View. Subhash Chandra Bose Chair on International Relations at Chanakya University initiates this podcast with Professor Harsh Pant, who is here with us to discuss an important and current issue that we are dabbling with in international relations, the West Asian crisis. Professor Harsh Panth, thank you for joining us.

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: Thank you for having me, Chetan.

Prof. Chetan Singai: Under the Subhash Chandra Bose Chair on International Relations, we are very keen to understand our extended neighbourhood. We consider West Asia as an extended neighbourhood, currently critical to the Indian regime and policy. What do you think of this current issue or crisis that is unfolding in West Asia? Is it an episodic escalation or something deep-rooted in the larger geopolitics?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: In West Asia, things never seem to stop. There is always one crisis that often leads to another and then another. It appears as if we never had a proper resolution to the fundamental structural problems behind it. This particular crisis should be seen as one node in a seemingly never-ending chain of events. There is so much history, identity politics, politics and geopolitics involved in the region. It is a jar bringing issues to the surface; often it overflows and, therefore, ends up in one crisis after another. Some people may assume that because President Trump has said that five-day reprieve, there will be some negotiations. But it cannot be considered as something that will put a lid on the jar. It may or may not resolve this particular crisis. But there are many more prices to come because the fundamental challenges in the region are not being resolved. It should not be perceived as an episode that will end with the resolution, but as another episode in a larger chain of events, which, unless the structural realities are confronted, acknowledged and managed, will not find peace and stability. For India, therefore, it becomes very critical because, as you mentioned, this is part of our extended neighbourhood. As India grows and its capabilities and appetite grow, our reliance on the Middle East continues to increase. It has become challenging to manage the energy crisis emanating from this problem; the same is the case with our large diaspora in the region and their security, because everything is interconnected. India has to confront the crisis that the US has unleashed on Iran because the security of sea lanes of communication and freedom of navigation are critical.

Prof. Chetan Singai: I would certainly want to come back to you on the energy crisis and the diaspora's current challenges. I am interested in knowing more about the structural issues associated with stability and instability in this, as you mentioned, an episode. It's a continuum on one hand. On the other hand, how do we look at this extended neighbourhood and India's priorities? Especially, as the chair of BRICS Plus, how would India reconcile, strategise, and navigate to ensure strategic autonomy? As an expert on the issue, what are your thoughts?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: There are multiple fault lines in the region: Israel and Palestine, Israel and Iran, the Arab states and Iran, and the US and Iran. In some ways, the region is structured around what most stakeholders in the region say—Iran as the problem from outside. India,



on the other hand, has managed so far to navigate this very complex situation with a certain degree of carefulness because our equities lie in all three stakeholders, whether it is Israel, Iran or the Arab states in the Gulf. Our equities are also with the US. India has been navigating this very complex quagmire for a very long time. For example, our ties with the Arab states, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, particularly in the last decade, have reached an extremely high point, with our energy, trade, investment, and people-to-people ties growing through the roof. On the other hand, our ties with Israel, especially in terms of technology, trade, and people-to-people engagement, have been growing expansively. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Israel just before this crisis began. We have had Iran in the middle somewhere, where India has been able to manage, protect and preserve traditional historical ties, despite Iran being seen as a problem in large parts of the world and being positioned as a disruptor in some ways, with the nuclear question and its proxies—Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis. It is also evident that India has maintained its channels of communication with Iran. Especially, investments such as the Chabahar project.

However, this balancing between the three conflict actors also highlights the core issues of India's strategic autonomy. The fact that India is the only country in the world that can talk with the US and Iran simultaneously signifies the heft it carries in a very volatile part of the world, where certain binaries are critical. It is important from India's perspective to preserve these multiple relationships and stakeholder engagement. Hence, we must look at the region as a whole and India's position as a whole.

Prof. Chetan Singai: From India's viewpoint, is it an opportunity or a missed opportunity in the current scope of operations? On one hand, we have, as you said, the quagmire, which creates the need to engage with all. On the other hand, we have to ensure our strategic autonomy. We are also looking at how India can use this as an opportunity to position itself. I am keen to know how BRICS would play a role. Or would it be, again, distancing itself to the extent that it has a limited scope to engage with?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: BRICS, certainly, will be an interesting platform to watch out for, for two reasons. First, India has the BRICS presidency this year. It will be hosting the BRICS summit later this year. The other is that BRICS has expanded, with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE and others entering the bloc. BRICS is no longer the five original members; it's BRICS plus. Which means, the contestation between these actors will also play itself out within BRICS. The ability of BRICS to manage this contestation will be an important part of the diplomatic exercise that India and others will have to manage. This also includes China. Because China is equally dependent on the energy flows from the region. Much like what happened in the G20, where India navigated the complex tightrope between the West and Russia, we shall see some of that diplomatic juggling here as well. But I don't anticipate a united BRICS approach to this. Because there are too many actors with divergent interests, particularly India and the Arab states of the Gulf, which have different views on what has gone wrong and how it can be made right.

Prof. Chetan Singai: This is very informative and also timely. There's been a lot of discussion in the past few days about the role of BRICS Plus. I'm sure that will be of great value for our viewers and listeners. How does this conflict affect India's energy and maritime security

issues, positively or negatively and meta to micro, as the LPG has become a household conversation? How is this conflict influencing or affecting India's maritime and energy security policies and approaches?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: At the global level, we have been talking about energy independence for so long. But when we look at the result of this conflict, we realise how dependent the world remains on one particular geographical choke point, the Strait of Hormuz. The fact that the world is concerned and unable to do anything about this crisis certainly alerts every country to diversify and depend less on a single geographical area. In this case, again, the Strait of Hormuz.

Prof. Chetan Singai: Sorry to cut you off here. This classic economic interdependency in international relations is something that we may now have to revisit.

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: Perhaps, we are revisiting it in every space. We say we cannot be overly dependent on China in economic matters. International actors have introduced strategies such as offshoring, friendshoring, and the China plus one, which are currently the driving standard operating procedures for many countries. The majority of countries seek a diversified set of economic partners in trade and investment. In India's case, we looked at the Russia-Ukraine war and said we are too dependent on Russia. We do need to diversify defence partnerships. People used to talk optimistically about economic interdependence. That was a point traditional realists used to make and would have made. But interdependence also creates vulnerabilities. During the post-Cold War era, *bonhomie* got lost in translation. Economic interdependence has its cost, whereas all we were doing was counting the benefits. And the costs are now becoming visible. In this particular case, energy independence has been a mantra for many countries. However, operationally, India is still dependent on certain countries and geographies; we have diversified to somewhere close to 30 countries. Currently, we depend on 40 to 50 energy sources. We try to balance between renewable and non-renewable sources of energy. However, our fossil fuel dependence on the Middle East remains at an all-time high. How do we navigate that, particularly in light of the weaponisation of that dependence? We have discussed and witnessed a similar case in the context of China, weaponising economic interdependence. Through the way Iran has played its cards by weaponising energy dependence, we can understand the Iranian perspective—the Iranian regime has nothing to lose. If they are dying, their motto is we will take you along with us. They are throwing all they have at it, and their leverage is the Strait of Hormuz and the disruption of the Strait of Hormuz. They try to externalise the cost of the conflict so that the global economy feels the pain and puts pressure on America and Israel to de-escalate the conflict.

This happened during the last few days, when Trump gave a pause to American attacks on Iran. India has expressed its concern and annoyance at the issue of a country single-handedly disrupting the global supply chain. A bigger issue is that there are not many countries that can prevent that from happening. While Trump called upon the US allies to do the bidding, whom he had not consulted before starting the war, they responded that this is not their war and refused to enter the war. The larger question remains: how do we resolve this conundrum? Until then, the costs to the global economy will continue to rise.



Energy prices are rising. We know that economies are faltering because inflation is rising. Inflationary pressures are there on the economy. Eventually, the global economic pressure will be unsustainable. Prime Minister Modi in Parliament described it as a long-haul challenge. He said that we may have enough resources at home to manage it for the foreseeable future, but even if the war stops today, restoring the energy supplies to the pre-war state will take time because the assets and pipelines have been destroyed. In that context, the energy landscape will take time to resolve itself, implying that the cost will have to be borne by ordinary people in the form of inflation or the deficiency of certain products and resources. It may also lead to a geopolitical dynamic in which countries compete for every resource.

Prof. Chetan Singai: That's insightful. On the one hand, we are discussing how to overcome interdependency. On the other hand, we are looking at the escalating globalisation of trade. This presents an interesting conundrum, as the curriculum is shaped along a spectrum, with two contrasting ends. This is how the world is being shaped through the conflict. We may have to revisit whether what we teach as international relations is the same as what we practice, and how we reconcile.

Having said that, energy remains the core of this conflict because of the notion of weaponisation. I'm sure your thoughts will open up to reflect upon critical raw materials. One important takeaway, in addition to the dependency-interdependency issue, is the dependency on critical raw materials. The question is whether we go for an alternative or create pathways to facilitate the potential threats of weaponisation of critical raw materials. To conclude, in the context of this conflict, I'm keen to know your views on what kind of a neighbour should India aspire to be, a balancer, a builder or a bystander?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: India cannot be a bystander, because the conflict is impacting not only our larger interests but also our day-to-day lives. Bystanding is no longer an option for India, given the stakes and the way this conflict has worsened and played out. We have been a balancer. We have tried to balance multiple stakeholders in the region, and that has paid off dividends. However, whether this will continue to pay dividends is contingent on what kind of regional architecture this conflict leaves behind. We have to start thinking about being a builder. We are not a party to the conflict, but we are the most serious bearers of the consequences. We have to build partnerships and regional architecture, whether it is security or economic. If we don't do it, then others will do it. In this case, China would be learning similar lessons. What role will they play in the future if such a scenario continues? In India, we are very cagey about shaping regional architectures. However, recently, it has started changing. We are now part of two regional Middle East-related platforms—I2U2, or India, Israel, UAE and US quadrilateral and India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This is a way to shape and build regional architecture, economic and strategic. There is no alternative for India but to move more assertively in that direction. If we are not going to do that, then we will continue to witness larger impacts on our foreign policy through indirect means. We should focus on building partnerships and shaping regional architectures in whatever domains we find comfortable, at least in the short to medium term, because this is going to be relatively more tricky or trickier than we have anticipated. The conclusion of this crisis is no guarantee that there won't be another crisis very soon.

Prof. Chetan Singai: That's very insightful. I want to ask you one last question, maybe a statement from you. When we see such conflicts emerging, we have analysts, activists and advocates who are proactively engaging across the globe. What would be your message to young researchers in this domain who are studying the neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood? How should they be exploring this conflict to study the neighbourhood in terms of your experiential insight in the last few decades?

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: For young researchers, I would say be true to yourself, to your profession, which is to do research based on serious sources. Don't go to YouTube for your information. Avoid thinking of the region or the conflict through the lens of slogans, because it often gives you very shallow answers. 'Down with Israel' or 'down with Iran' is not really the issue here. The issue is something more fundamental. Unless you understand the drivers of the conflict, your ability to shape the outcome of the conflict would be very limited.

Prof. Chetan Singai: Yes. That's something very important. The reason I asked the question was that during their early career or in their thought process, they tend to activism or advocacy, but with very limited analysis. Of course, that's also important as a learning curve and in terms of contribution. Thank you so much, Professor Pant, and we look forward to learning more from you on this conflict through your continuous writing that you do on a regular basis. Thank you once again.

Prof. Harsh V. Pant: Thank you for having me.

Prof. Chetan Singai: Thank you.



Summary

In this episode of The Long View, Chair Professor, Prof. Ashok Kantha in conversation with Amb. (Dr.) T. C. A. Raghavan, discuss India's neighbourhood policy and the shifting regional landscape: India's evolving relationship with Pakistan, engagement with Taliban-led Afghanistan, and how New Delhi positions itself within an increasingly fragile South Asian order. Drawing from decades of diplomatic experience, Dr. Raghavan examines India's foreign policy through a regional lens, asking not just how India deals with its neighbours, but how India fits within South Asia as a political and strategic space.

The episode reflects on a region marked by turbulence, from the coup and civil war in Myanmar to deep internal crises across multiple states. Institutions such as SAARC and BIMSTEC are arguably weaker today than a decade ago, leading to a thinning of the regional envelope that once enabled stronger bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Dr Raghavan outlines three key achievements of India's neighbourhood engagement, foremost among them the resilience and robustness of most bilateral ties and identifies three areas where course correction may be necessary.

The podcast conversation is a timely, candid and a strategic assessment of South Asia at a time of flux.

[Click here to watch ↓](#)



Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations

presents

The Long View

CONVERSATION • CONTEXT • CONSEQUENCE

Episode 04

Podcast Links

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9MrQ4DxgoI>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2kfkstmrDtJdkinP-gaeyYu?si=b20a465ec67f4641>

About the Guest

Prof. Harsh V. Pant is Vice President at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, and Professor of International Relations with King's India Institute at King's College London. A leading expert on Asian security and the Indo-Pacific, he has authored and edited several influential books on Indian foreign policy, regional politics and global governance, including *Power and Purpose: Rediscovering Indian Foreign Policy* in Amrit Kaal (Rupa); *India and Japan: A Natural Partnership in the Indo-Pacific* (OrientBlack Swan); *India, South Korea and the Asean: Middle Power Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific* (Routledge); *India and Global Governance: A Rising Power and Its Discontents* (Routledge); *Politics and Geopolitics: Decoding India's Neighbourhood Challenge* (Rupa). In Episode Four of Long View, Prof Pant discusses the implications of the Middle East conflict from India's perspective

About the Host

Prof. 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.



About the Chair

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.

Transcription Note: Audio transcribed using Turboscribe and edited by Ms. Anu Maria Joseph, Non-Resident Fellow, Subhas Chandra Bose Chair of International Relations, Chanakya University, Bangalore.





CHANAKYA UNIVERSITY

Rooted in ideals • Ascending with ideas

Chanakya University Global Campus

*NH-648, Haraluru, Near Bangalore International
Airport Devanahalli, Bengaluru - 562165*

www.chanakyauniversity.edu.in

