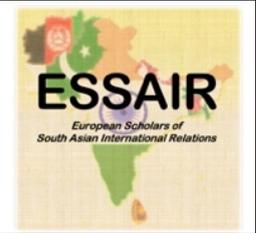# ESSAIR 2022:
Panel Abstracts & Keywords

Panel 1: Borders and State-Making

'Physical Borders, Religious Territories: Analyzing the Presence of Religion in South Asian Relations'

Astha Chadha (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University)

Despite over seven decades of independence, South Asia remains the most conflicted and least integrated region in the world. Once reason has been that the 1947 division of British India has still not found settled borders and reconcilable issues over conflicting history. It is also a region of significant political instability and probable security conflicts due to the presence of three neighboring nuclear powers. While seeking the answer to the question- *How religion has impacted the South Asian regional (in)stability and animosity among neighbors*, this paper examines the case of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The paper analyzes the cases of the three nations since independence and charts out the role of religion in conflicts as well as cooperation among them. The research then studies the presence of religion in foreign policies of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh towards each other. The paper argues that in foreign policy, religion operates distinctly in two ways- namely- implicitly as 'religion in foreign policy' and explicitly as 'religious foreign policy'. While the former is employed towards peacebuilding and cooperative efforts, the latter is employed to assert rivalry and disagreements with neighbors. The paper states that religion has played a significant role in carving conflicting identities in the region, not only through domestic politics, but by allowing nationalism to be undermined by identification with trans-border religious communities.

Keywords: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Religion, South Asia

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'Seeking a Different Kind of State: Filling a Political "Vacuum" after Global War in the Indo-Burmese Border-Worlds'

Aditya Kiran Kakati (University of Amsterdam)

Second World War (WWII) and impending decolonization had created spaces of stateless authority at the intersection of the India, Burma (Myanmar) and China. The transition from colonial rule to new nation-states through itinerant cross-border state policies of accommodating tribal minorities and border re-organization created inclusions, connectivity and closures. This created incompletely bordered-worlds in this former colonial frontier. Attempts in the late-1940s to re-consolidate fragmented British domains and lend greater legibility to the border-spaces, overlapped with post-colonial fantasies of creating neatly delineated nation-state spaces. Simultaneously, the territorial projects required cultural

arguments that ambiguously justified policies of intervention or abstention from legibility, sometimes juxtaposing geographical and cultural boundaries.

Moreover, a truculent imagery of the trans-border Naga 'tribal' population was hinged on a discourse of violent 'anti-state' conduct through activities such as head-hunting, internecine warfare, raiding, slavery and illicit commodity trade across borders. This article argues that communities living in 'vacuum' zones of state absence did not necessarily resist states, and nor did states always have an interest in being present. I revisit debates on 'Zomian' non-state spaces and offer contrary evidence to the idea that such zones were 'empty' and devoid of routinized state structures, and populations here sought to 'evade' states. I illustrate that communities here both invited and resisted states. Borders marking both community and territory were not static, nor legible except periodically. Ambiguous practices selectively securitized international border-zones. The outcomes show how exclusionary spaces between nation-states were created where conditions for armed resistance could emerge.

Keywords: conflicts, borderlands, decolonization, state-building, historical geography

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'"The Shadow of the Boys"': Challenging Key Rebel Governance Assumptions Through Assam's ULFA Insurgency'
Alex Waterman (GIGA, Hamburg)

Building on recent calls to challenge key assumptions in the rebel governance literature (Loyle et al, 2021), this article introduces an oft-overlooked case of rebel governance – that of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) – and uses it to challenge key assumptions held in the rebel governance literature. Often seen as far more disorganised in comparison to their Naga neighbours, who are often referred to in discussions of rebel governance (Suykens, 2016; Thakur and Venugopal, 2018), ULFA never established any formal territorial control, nor did it ever establish a governance apparatus comparable to the nearby Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland (GPRN). Yet 'the boys' held considerable sway over everyday life in Assam during the 1985-1991 period. Known for its moral policing, public works projects, 'Robin Hood' like taxation of Assam's lucrative tea gardens and cultivation of 'allies in the closet' to limit state repression (Saikia, 2000), ULFA 'really called the shots' across large swathes of everyday Assamese public and political life until at least 1990.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews, archival records and secondary literature, I show how ULFA rebel governance was built around five interacting dimensions that negated the need for territorial control; social embeddedness, reinforcing these ties as a 'Robin Hood' actor, the infiltration of state structures, and the penetration of both local and transborder economic networks. ULFA's rebel governance structures were eroded when military pressure disrupted the synergy between these five dimensions, forcing the group's militarisation, retreat away from rebel governance activities and ultimately its collapse.

Keywords: insurgency, Assam, rebel governance, civil wars

'Constructing National Scientific Identities at Home: Post-1990 "State Cultural Project" and State Institutions of Rising India'
Song Tang (University of Oxford)

In the study of rising powers, culture has been a long-neglected field. I argue in this paper that a changing 'Indian cultural self' has been represented, discussed, and challenged through the cultural production, sponsorship and censorship of state institutions along with India's rise after the 1990s. This 'state cultural project' is essential for understanding the national identities envisaged by India's cultural elites, providing a more subtle outlook of India's rise than the realist IR traditions.

This paper gives two in-depth case studies of state institutions' participation and intervention in science-related cultural production. The first case investigates India's nuclear ambiguity through the state-sponsored Kurukshetra Panorama & Science Centre (1998-), where nuclear was displayed juxtaposed with Mahabharat. Consistent with Vajpayee's 1998 speech in which he utilised Mahabharat to justify India's nuclear test, the exhibition showcased India's determination to solve its moral ambivalence. The second case takes a gendered perspective and explores state censorship of the documentary *Father, Son and Holy War (1995)*. The censorship reveals the fear of a 'feminine' state, which I connect with India's reluctance to be categorised as an 'unstable rising/nuclear power'. Together, the two cases underline that India's rise is an unfinished process of identity construction and projection, and that state institutions deal with both the aspirations for rise and the ambiguities in the 'rising India' identity.

Keywords: rising power identities, state institutions, culture and International Relations

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'Towards a New Way of Managing Stigmatised Identities in Nuclear Governance'
Aniruddha Saha (King's College London)

In studying global change and identity transformation in international politics, scholars have turned to norms as a social construction of behaviour regulation and identity management. This has led to a conceptualisation of stigma as attached to identities of global actors who refuse to follow normatively shared expectations of social conduct. However, the field of nuclear politics has largely ignored this research to particularly identify how non-compliant states manage their stigmatised identities — after engaging in acts of nuclear deviance against hegemonic norms. By combining and building onto the existing literature of International Political Sociology, constructivist approaches in International Relations, and nuclear governance, this paper asks the question: *How do stigmatised states justify and normalise nuclear non-compliance with dominant powers in the international system?*

In answering this research question, the paper uses the empirical case of India's nuclear test in 1974 and the imposition of stigma by the United States on India as a consequence. The paper argues that stigma should be understood not as an attribute or a process, but rather a position of relational power dynamics that recalcitrant states occupy in contesting dominant norms. Secondly, it conceptualises a new category of stigma management as 'stigma redaction',

whereby non-compliant nuclear states *occasionally* engage in corrective conduct to prevent its identity of being permanently cemented as 'rogue' by dominant powers. Furthering our understanding of how we perceive sociological deviance in international politics through an interdisciplinary lens, this work makes an epistemological and ontological contribution in the field of International Security.

Keywords: identity, norms, nuclear, social, stigma

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'Mapping India's Commitment Towards the WPS Agenda'
Smita Singh (Committee on External Affairs, Parliament of India)

UNSC Resolution 125 along with other ten resolutions delineated the contours of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, which affirmed the gender-specific dimensions of conflict and underscored the importance of women's participation in peace and security governance. National Action Plan (NAP) is regarded as a key indicator of a country's commitment towards mainstreaming gender in peace and security policies at the national/regional level. By the end of 2020, 89 countries have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) for implementing the agenda. India is yet to frame such a plan.

While India has been an ardent advocate of gender equality and has continuously endorsed the imperative of integration of WPS agenda in peace and security, its progress in implementation of WPS agenda into have remained inadequate. The paper explores the extent and magnitude of India's implementation of the WPS agenda using the 4 pillars, namely prevention, participation, protection and relief and recovery. For this purpose, the paper will be organized into three sections. In the first part, the evolution and development of the WPS agenda will be outlined. The second part will delve into the achievements, gaps and challenges faced by India in carrying forward the WPS agenda in its domestic policies. The final section will provide a comparative assessment of pathways for integration of WPS agenda by India and other South Asian countries.

Keywords: WPS agenda, National Action Plan, India, gender, South Asia

Panel 3: Regional Security Dimensions

'Regional "First Responder": India's Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief in South Asia and the Indian Ocean'
Saneet Chakradeo (XXXXXXX)

Over the last two decades, India has emerged as a prominent humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) provider, especially in its neighbourhood and the wider Indian Ocean Region. Through official statements, India has also consistently described itself as a 'first responder' during emergencies in the region. India's growing presence in the domain of humanitarian assistance coincides with the rise in its economic and military capabilities over the last two decades and its inclination to assume a position of regional and global leadership.

The paper aims to analyse the origins, interpretations, and objectives of India's 'first responder' rhetoric through a discourse analysis using official government documents and

speeches of policymakers. Historically, India has rubbed off its neighbours the wrong way while projecting its influence, and in this light, the 'first responder' rhetoric can be seen as an instrument to correct a hegemonic image in the region and promote a benign identity. By looking at various reports of the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, Parliamentary records, Union Budgets and other primary sources, the paper attempts to tease out India's foreign policy considerations in its HADR operations over the last two decades.

Keywords: India, HADR, foreign policy, South Asia, Indian Ocean

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'Security Dilemmas of Small States in a Militarizing Indian Ocean Region: A Case Study of Sri Lanka'
Harinda Vidanage (Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka)

Sri Lanka's national security imperatives are discussed in this article from its international relations perspective, focusing on the deepening and widening of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China, Assertive Indian Foreign policy compulsions and Indo Pacific Strategy unveiled by the United States, recent literature on Sri Lanka is yet to capture the complexities in framing national security of small state in South Asia. Increasing Defence cooperation and security agreements and relentless modernization of militaries across the region are creating a yawning gap of military capabilities between small states and dominant regional powers. In this widening gap of capabilities, the article traces Sri Lanka's challenges in drafting a security strategy and embedding it in a national security framework that must address contemporary challenges.

This article addresses the fundamental problem of international relations to understand security dilemma of small states that are struggling to navigate a complexities enforced by multitude of geopolitical and geo economic strategic architectures. Literature on Small State security and international relations is a must for South Asia which is dominated by literature on regional powers, geo strategy and militarization of regional commons. This article will address the gap in this specific literature of security articulations of small states in 21st Century in South Asian security environment, taking Sri Lanka as a case study.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, small states, security, BRI, Indo-Pacific strategy

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'Past Imperfect, Future Tense? Strategic Stability and South Asia Revisited'
Shounak Set (King's College London)

South Asia presents a unique template to examine strategic stability with the intertwining of issues of deterrence, nuclear proliferation, and regional nuclear dynamics. The region encompasses key features of the evolving world order – the rise of India and China, great power competition, expanding nuclear arsenals, and sub-conventional conflict. The paper argues that the conventional frameworks and tenets generally applied to South Asia merits a reappraisal in face of emerging technological, political, and structural developments. These discrepant trends on both empirical and conceptual terms have been steadily gaining ground and warrant a holistic engagement in tandem with the evolving extra-regional dynamics.

Central to the process is India – a rising power with incomplete accommodation in the non-proliferation order, a malleable nuclear doctrine, and steady nuclear (and conventional) modernization. Salient transitions include the induction of the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (2018), anti-satellite tests (2019) and cross-border punitive strikes (2015, 2016, 2019) by India under a centre-right dispensation; and the ongoing India-China Himalayan standoff. The paper surveys these diverse developments, identifies key drivers, and compares them with the conventional understanding of the strategic landscape of South Asia. An in-depth focus on India, the preeminent regional power is integrated with the broader global dynamics (power transition, proliferation of emerging strategic technologies, decline of arms control) to explain regional specificities. This provides salient analytical propositions – that contributes to deepening the understanding of the emerging regional and global order while broadening the conceptual and empirical foundations of strategic stability – and suggests recommendations for security policies.

Keywords: South Asia, strategic stability, deterrence, proliferation, India

Panel 4: India's Global Diplomacy

'"Everything is Fine in India": The Hindu Nationalist Effort to Build Legitimacy Among the Indian Diaspora'
Bidisha Biswas (Western Washington University) &
Siddharth Tripathi (University of Duisburg-Essen)

The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and his political party, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have long sought the support of Indian-origin communities worldwide. This paper will examine the ways they have used emotional appeals to craft enotional proximity with the diaspora in the USA and Europe. We will pay particular attention to the BJP's use of imagery, history, and its references to modernity as it builds global legitimacy for its Hindu nationalist project. What narratives does the current government construct about India, in terms of both memory and aspirations for the future? How do they try to elicit emotional responses, among diaspora members, to build support for its nationalist agenda? In turn, how do these emotions shape and reshape the political spaces between India and the countries where the diaspora reside? We seek to answer these questions through our research. By focusing on how state narratives build on historical memory to shape the diaspora's emotional linkages to the homeland, the study will illuminate the complex ways in which transnational emotional proximity is constructed.

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'The Jaishankar Doctrine and Indian Grand Strategy'
Ian Hall (Griffith University)

India was unusual among postcolonial states in having a grand strategy – a set of coherent understandings about the role the country ought to play in the world and the means to attain it – at the moment of independence. Jawaharlal Nehru's government argued that India was destined to reclaim its standing as a great civilisation and that parliamentary democracy, economic planning, and nonalignment were the best instruments with which to pursue that end. This strategy was sorely tested under Nehru and modified after it, as democratic rules and norms, planning, and nonalignment were all challenged and qualified. Yet the

understanding that India has a destiny to fulfil persisted, this paper argues. It is clear, for example, in the strategic thought of Subrahmanyam (S.) Jaishankar, who has served as both Foreign Secretary and Minister of External Affairs under the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government of Narendra Modi. But the Jaishankar Doctrine lays out a very different grand strategy to Nehru's, one in which an imported form of democracy is replaced by one portrayed as more authentically India, economic policy is shaped by strategic interests, and nonalignment and developing world solidarity is supplanted by a shifting set of partnerships with major and middle powers. This paper examines the ideological underpinnings of this Doctrine and its impact on India's foreign policy in the Modi era, especially in the management of New Delhi's relationships with its strategic partners and rivals.

Keywords: India, grand strategy, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Narendra Modi, strategic policy

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'India's Policy Towards Global Internet Governance: Understanding Causal Mechanisms of Stability and Change in India's Foreign Policy'
Tobias Scholz (King's College London / National University of Singapore)

This paper investigates stability and change in India's foreign policy by analyzing its evolving engagement in global Internet governance. While India remained skeptical of entering international partnerships and regimes in the early 2000s, from 2009 onwards, the country focused on utilizing plurilateral channels such as the BRICS to formulate its interests in Internet governance. In 2015, however, India not only exchanged plurilateral platforms with western nations but also emerged as a new proponent of multi-stakeholder Internet governance; a view it had previously opposed. While recent research on India's foreign policy has pertinently addressed actors, interests, negotiation behavior, and paradigms driving the country's external relations, there is a potential to better understand the causal mechanisms for foreign policy change.

As a policy field that shapes regional and global digital architectures, Internet governance offers a relevant case to investigate how the rising power India engages this policy field. Process tracing foreign policy from 1998 to 2021 will lead to identifying different domestic and international causal mechanisms of change and stability. In the pursuit of the analysis, this paper builds on field interviews with state and non-state elite representatives, governmental publications, newspaper articles, and publicly held speeches. Having previously been described as a swing state in Internet governance debates, this paper complements existing work with an agency-centered analysis. The project contributes to the conceptual literature of India's role and behavior as a rising power in the international system and will provide novel insights into the patterns of stability and change in India's foreign policy.

Keywords: beliefs; foreign policy; India; internet governance; policy change

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