



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



SOUTH ASIA
CENTRE

Research at LSE ■



South Asia Centre
Annual Report
2021/22



Our logo is a leaf from the *Ficus religiosa* (Sacred Fig), a tree found across the countries of South Asia. It symbolises social, cultural, religious, and ecological benevolence, embodying a shared geography. This intrinsic commonality, cutting across political boundaries and identitarian constructions, provokes intriguing curiosity about the ties that bind this complex region. In amplifying this, our logo ties the Centre to LSE's motto: *Rerum cognoscere causas*, 'to know the causes of things'.

The height and breadth of the *Ficus*, along with its dry season deciduous nature, gives it its innate popularity in South Asia — as provider of shade from the scorching sun in the summers, and warm, filtered sunshine in its cold winters. Its density and strength make it a nesting paradise for several kinds of birds, and its leaves provide fodder for two of South Asia's most important pack animals, the camel and the elephant.

The bark, leaves and figs of the *Ficus* have several medicinal attributes, and are used in Ayurvedic, Yunani and other alternative medical knowledge-systems, helping to treat open wounds, inflammations, ulcers, asthma, and digestive and heart ailments.

Its popular names include *arani*, *ashvattha*, *bo*, *bodhi*, *bodhidruma*, *beepul*, *esathu*, *pimpal*, *pipal*, *ragi*, and *shuchidruma*, among many others.

The logo has been designed by Oroon Das.

INTRODUCTION

Professor Alnoor Bhimani, *Director*



One notable initiative has been the growing significance – to commentators, decision-makers and students of South Asia – of the creation of **Big Data digital maps for Bangladesh and Pakistan**, funded by LSE's Knowledge Exchange & Impact (KEI) fund. This first of its kind in the world, free to use and very user-friendly research resource joins the Centre's recently updated India digital map which was installed two years ago. Along with being used by academics, researchers and students, the maps have seen particular usage by embassies/High Commissions, government agencies, think tanks and media personnel. All the maps are accessible via the Centre's website, and include free-to-download Excel spreadsheets of verified data.

This year will mark the beginning of the 75th independence anniversaries of India and Pakistan, to be followed by Myanmar and Sri Lanka in 2022/23. As we continue to celebrate the **50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence** through 2021 with a special logo, blogposts and events, we have similarly

The South Asia Centre has continued to expand its reach this year. A wide range of initiatives, activities and events that speak to emerging issues and engagements related to South Asia and its place in the world mark the past 12 months of the Centre's work, when our academic activities have distinguished us globally with their singularity and uniqueness in bringing to the fore several important milestones.

commissioned special logos for 'India @ 75' and 'Pakistan @ 75' which you will see later in this *Report*.

There have been other important South Asian anniversaries in 2021/22, not marked by most academic institutions globally. The Centre held a unique conversation on '**Internationalism & Empire**' to mark 'India @ 75' and 'Ireland @ 100', marking the centenary of the Republic of Ireland's independence from Great Britain. We are the only South Asia focused centre to mark this centenary with Ireland. A similar, academic discussion was also held to mark the 50th anniversary of the **expulsion of South Asians from Uganda**.

And in June, we were delighted to host Justice D Y Chandrachud, incoming Chief Justice of India, for a special '**India @ 75**' lecture titled 'Experiences with Adjudication: Reconciling Rights, Identities and Prejudices' to kickstart our events marking the anniversary of her independence.

The Centre's has successfully engaged **more LSE faculty, staff, students, alumni, and units in various roles in our activities** – as speakers, panelists, moderators, event Chairs and moderators – than ever before, publicising their work and involving them in new global conversations via our online events. This has been aided by our conscious decision to cover new themes and topics in the social sciences, ranging from cryptocurrencies to digitalisation, to womens' startups, to successful South Asian CEOs, to art activism. We are also continuing with some highly successful events series for the second year including 'Geopolitics beyond Borders' (with LSE IDEAS). The focus on 'Bangladesh @ 50' allowed us to curate several special events with LSE's Bangladesh experts Katy Gardner, Naila Kabeer and David Lewis.

The Centre has also been working closely with **LSE Library**, providing visibility to little known but important South Asia-related archival documents. As part of the special 'Bangladesh @ 50' series, the Centre was able to publicise the papers of Labour MP Peter Shore (who supported the independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan in 1971), with a special post from Library Curator Daniel Payne; an event on traces of history in South Asia (part of LSE Library's newly-launched archival project) is planned for 2022/23.

We continue the practice of hosting **Visiting Fellows** with an interest in South Asia to spend time at the Centre as Visiting Fellows. Dr Antonio Giustozzi (an LSE alumnus) has just joined the Centre, initially for a one-year period. His research specialism (Af-Pak security, and a special interest in the Taliban) will add to the Centre's academic activities covering the region. Whilst at the Centre, Antonio will be working on jihadism in the Indian subcontinent, particularly on the transition from 'jihadism' to 'government' in Afghanistan. Some of this will be published

in our blog as his research progresses. The Centre also benefits from the presence of Charles Wallace Trust Visiting Fellows: we will host 3 post-doctoral Fellows this year under the auspices of the Trust – one each for scholars from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar.

The Centre runs the yearly **Vera Anstey South Asia Essay Competition** for LSE students. The Competition was initially open only to full-time LSE graduate students, with a prize of £250 book vouchers from Waterstones and the promise of the winning essay being published on our widely-read 'South Asia @ LSE' blog. But the very keen interest from part-time, Executive and joint-degree graduate students when it was advertised in Michaelmas 2021 has meant that it is now open to all LSE graduate degree students. The title of this year's essay was 'How can South Asia contribute to Global Development?' with Elias Khoury (Department of Government) submitting the winning essay.

The **'South Asia @ LSE' blog** remains one of the most significant initiatives of the South Asia Centre. We have streamlined the publication of blogs to one per week, and now cover an increased range of countries, themes and topics. After submissions from within LSE, especial effort is being made to approach South Asia experts globally, and commission blogposts instead of relying on the publishing of what is sent to us, which has, over a period of time, helped in our being able to cover a wider range of topics, and countries like the Maldives and Nepal on which we had published very little earlier. This more focused approach has enabled the blog to become a platform for serious, reflective academic ideas, with some blogposts being shared more than fifty times in the first 24 hours of publication. It has also supported building networks between the LSE community and others working on shared areas of interest.

Over the January to December 2021 period, the Centre published a series of 12 specially commissioned blogposts commemorating the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence – including posts from LSE faculty and alumni. No other South Asia Centre globally has attempted anything similar to mark this anniversary.

This innovative and enterprising initiative has drawn significant attention to LSE expertise on Bangladesh, and the interdisciplinary research on the country thriving at LSE. Going forward, we plan to publish similar series of specially commissioned blogposts to mark 75 years of India's/Pakistan's independence.

As noted, this year has witnessed new activities, themes and initiatives leveraging the Centre's South Asia vantage point in ways that directly align with LSE's mission to educate and research issues of global concern and to engage greater diversity of thought. In this light, we now cover more pan-South Asia aside from single-country focused events, and our work speaks increasingly to interconnections between South Asia and the wider world. This *Annual Report* provides more details of the exciting activities the Centre has delivered this year and will continue to build upon.

“ There have been other important South Asian anniversaries in 2021/22, not marked by most academic institutions globally. The Centre held a unique conversation on ‘Internationalism & Empire’ to mark ‘India @ 75’ and ‘Ireland @ 100’, marking the centenary of the Republic of Ireland's independence from Great Britain [...] A similar, academic discussion was also held to mark the 50th anniversary of the expulsion of South Asians from Uganda. ”

YEAR IN REVIEW



26
Events



1
Prize
announcement



65
Blogposts



493,000
Blog visitors
(Jan-Dec 2021)



9,710
Facebook
followers



1,026
Instagram
followers



10,100+
Twitter
followers



13,984
YouTube
event views



4,529
YouTube
subscriptions



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, SAIMA NASAR, RICHARD REID, SANA AIYAR & BECKY TAYLOR AT "90 DAYS & 50 POUNDS": IDI AMIN, UGANDA & THE DISBURSAL OF SOUTH ASIANS', 19 MAY 2022.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JACKSON G LU, JANMEJAYA SINHA, ALNOOR BHIMANI & MUNAZZAH MALIK AT 'DO SOUTH ASIANS MAKE BETTER CEOs?', 2 MARCH 2022.

AFGHANISTAN

The sudden and unexpected withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 led, in a matter of days, to a complete takeover of the country by the Taliban – now having fought and wrested power from two global superpowers (the then USSR in the late 1980s, and the USA in the 2000s) in their sustained battle for control of Afghanistan.

The US withdrawal was the second major political development (after the Rohingya exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh) – at the other end of South Asia – in 2021, triggering the tragic and dramatic collapse of Afghanistan's nascent democracy, and the rise of the Taliban once again to the helm of the country.

As part of our **'Geopolitics beyond Borders'** series (in collaboration with LSE IDEAS), the Centre organised a panel discussion titled 'Afghanistan: Back to the Future?' three months after the event, hoping that there would be some clarity about developments in Afghanistan by then. With expertise from across the region – C Uday Bhaskar (Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi), Antonio Giustozzi (King's College

London), Michael Kugelman (Wilson Center, Washington DC) and Ayesha Siddiqi (SOAS) – and Christopher Coker (LSE) as Discussant, the event discussed Afghanistan's dramatic collapse, its impact on its own peoples (several of whom had left the country in the weeks following the Taliban's takeover of power), the security and humanitarian concerns for neighbouring countries, and the region in general. (Romain Malejacq (Radboud University, Nijmegen) was unable to participate at the last moment because of personal reasons.)

We decided to take stock again a year later, in May 2022 with **'Taliban & State-building in Afghanistan'**, this time with panelists living under Taliban rule in the country to get a better



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, C UDAY BHASKAR, CHRISTOPHER COKER, AISHA SIDDIQA, ANTONIO GIUSTOZZI & MICHAEL KUGELMAN AT 'AFGHANISTAN: BACK TO THE FUTURE' (PART OF OUR 'GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS' SERIES), 9 DECEMBER 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, ROMAN MALEJACQ, MEHBOOBA SERAJ & OBAIDULLAH BAHEER AT 'TALIBAN & STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN', 26 MAY 2022.

understanding of everyday life, and were lucky to be able to have Obaidullah Baheer (American University of Kabul) and Mahbouba Seraj (Women's Rights Activist in Kabul). Both have been visible and vocal voices on Western media, and the discussion focused on two important and urgent issues: the impact of the economic collapse of the country on its peoples (the West having frozen the economic assets of Afghanistan because it does not recognise the Taliban as a legitimate government) and the status and condition of women. Should the West engage with the Taliban now that they were in power and all viable political opposition groups had dissipated, at least for the moment,

if only for the welfare of the common people who were suffering because of a collapsed economy? Did the West have a plan for Afghanistan's future, a question Seraj asked repeatedly? And finally, the crucial expertise of Roman Malejacq (Radboud University, Nijmegen) – was the Taliban capable of building a nation-state that could survive in the contemporary world? Did the Taliban and their leaders/personnel have state-building intellect, capacity and vision?

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).

BANGLADESH @ 50

The LSE South Asia Centre is the only Higher Education institution in the world that has marked the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence since January 2021 – through events and a monthly commemorative blogpost. Several details appear in last year's *Annual Report* (2020/21), available on our website.

The Centre continued its activities to mark 'Bangladesh @ 50' till December 2021. Professor Naila Kabeer (LSE) curated a special event titled '**Gender & Labour Markets in South Asia: Feminist Economics Perspectives**', a conversation with fellow academics in South Asia interested in questions of gender and labour – Ashwini Deshpande (Ashoka University, India) and Haris Gazdar (Collective for Social Science Research, Pakistan). The event, which also generated a lot of interest amongst the online audience, discussed data, developments, challenges, policy interventions and recommendations in the gender-labour market in Bangladesh, as well as in India and Pakistan.

The question of gender and labour in Bangladesh was also discussed in an event on '**Women & the Future of Work in South Asia**' in December 2021, where Rubana Huq (Chairperson of the Mohammadi Group in Dhaka) spoke about the challenges and possibilities of being a woman leader of a successful corporate organisation. Likewise, Anir Chowdhury (from the Government of Bangladesh's Digital Data portal) was part of a panel discussion on '**Digitalising South Asia: Who Benefits?**' which discussed the increasing digitalisation of governance, reliant on the collection and secure storage of personal data of citizens as they are, and its success in countries where computer/internet availability and literacy varies widely across class and region. (More information on these two events is given in the 'South Asia' pages of this Report).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, ASHWINI DESHPANDE, NAILA KABEER & HARIS GAZDAR AT 'GENDER & LABOUR MARKETS IN SOUTH ASIA: FEMINIST ECONOMICS PERSPECTIVES', 25 NOVEMBER 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: UZMA QURESH, ALNOOR BHIMANI & PRHTIWIRAJ CHOUDHURY AT 'WOMEN AND THE FUTURE OF WORK IN SOUTH ASIA', 2 DECEMBER 2021.

BLOGS

We continued publishing our commemorative blogs covering different topics – both historical and contemporary – to celebrate Bangladesh @ 50.

- Long-time visitor to and patron of Brick Lane, social anthropologist Seán Carey wrote about the declining numbers and changing patronage of Bangladeshi restaurants in London's Brick Lane, the once go-to culinary haven for Bangladeshi/South Asian cuisine
- LSE alumnus Juli Qermezi Huang wrote a narrativised blog on women micro-entrepreneurs (in village/town and peri-urban locations) in pandemic/post-pandemic times with data from Sharmin Akter, Nargis Begum and Hafiza Akter Rani
- Mathilde Maitriot and Joe Devine published a blog on their research project which looks at challenges to inclusion in Bangladesh
- Chowdhury Dilruba Shoma wrote about the challenges faced by migrant workers in pandemic times
- LSE Library's Daniel Payne ended our series of special blogs with a post publicising the papers of then Labour Member of Parliament Peter Shore – a strong supporter of Bangladesh's independence movement in London who was posthumously awarded with the 'Friends of Liberation War' honour from the Government of Bangladesh in 2012 – held in LSE Library's Archives.

Recordings of these events, and the blogposts, are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).

INDIA

Albert Einstein said of Gandhi, leader of India's independence movement and father of the nation: 'Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this walked the earth in flesh and blood.' As India nears its 75th anniversary of independence, we started the year with an event on Gandhi (who spoke at LSE 90 years earlier, on 10 November 1931), still considered an icon of non-violent resistance against the British Empire – and, through the year, hosted events on other important anniversaries for India and Indians.

Gandhi remains one of the most important global icons for all generations. Are Gandhi's ideas and ideals being understood amongst younger generations? And is the global churn of politics impacting his iconic status any more or less? It seemed timely to have a discussion titled **'2021: Does Gandhi Matter?'** with a multi-generational panel, each with a different kind of finger on the pulse of time. Akash Banerjee (journalist, New Delhi), Faisal Devji (University of Oxford) and Mridula Mukherjee (retired from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) spoke eloquently about why and how Gandhi still matters, both because of the eternality of values of non-violence, dignity and righteousness, as also in the adaptability of his ideas for newer generations. The event was in collaboration with the National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK (NISAU), with their Chairperson Sanam Arora as Discussant.

This year also marked the centenary of the independence of the Republic of Ireland. The Centre curated a special panel on a less-known relationship between Indian and Irish nationalists in the early 20th century, both strategising to defeat their British colonisers, and gain independence. Martin Bayly (LSE) masterfully moderated this discussion with panelists Disha Karnad Jani (Princeton University), Michele Louro (Salem State University), Eunan O'Halpin (Trinity College Dublin), and Fredrik Petersson (Stockholm University) – each of whom brought their

own ideas to **'IRELAND@100-INDIA@75: Internationalism & Empire'**, on how freedom fighters in both countries networked with one another, and exchanged ideas about how to defeat their common coloniser.

The Climate Emergency is rightly of global concern, and economies like India that are so heavily dependent on coal/fossil fuels have a crucial role to play in mitigating climate crises, and in working towards lowering global warming. CoP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 provided a perfect reason for us to focus on this issue. Our panel on **'India: CoP26, Coal & the Years Ahead'** discussed the significance of India's intervention – at the last moment – for a crucial change in the Convention's Joint Statement, asking for the use of coal to be 'phased down' rather than 'phased out' – not only because of the role coal plays in the everyday lives of millions of Indians, but also in its economy. LSE economist Swati Dhingra engaged with panelists Vaibhav Chaturvedi (Council on Energy, Environment & Water, New Delhi), Navroz K Dubash (Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi), Shweta Narayan (Health Care without Harm, India), and Rahul Tongia (co-editor of *Future of Coal in India*), each of whom brought their own perspectival opinion on the pros and cons of India's insistence on the continuation of the use of coal – and what it meant for the country, as well as the world.

For Indians in Britain, August 2022 marked two anniversaries: her 75th year of independence, and the 50th anniversary of the expulsion of Indians from Uganda by then President Idi Amin. With 90 days to leave the country, many Ugandan Indians came to Britain, and made it their home. **“90 Days & 50 Pounds”:** **Idi Amin, Uganda & the Disbursal of South Asians**’ marked this event, and panelists Sana Aiyar (MIT), Saima Nasar (Bristol), Richard Reid (Oxford), and Becky Taylor (University of East Anglia) brought different perspectives of the debate to the discussion: the suddenness and complete loss of assets as Indians were forced to leave with very little, to a widespread feeling amongst Ugandans that Indians were racist towards Blacks/Ugandans whilst also being economically dominant.

We ended our academic year 2021/22 with a special lecture to mark 'India @ 75' by the incoming Chief Justice of India D Y

Chandrachud in June 2022, titled **‘Experiences with Adjudication: Reconciling Rights, Identities and Prejudices’**. Unlike all our other events through the year (which are online), this event was in fact held at LSE since post-Covid relaxation of regulations now allowed for international travel and face-to-face meetings. The lecture, which covered a wide range of issues relating to citizens’ rights in India as guaranteed in her Constitution, was moderated by Sanam Arora (Chairperson, NISAU UK – with whom we did this event in collaboration), Chaired by Centre Director Professor Alnoor Bhimani, and was followed by an expectedly animated discussion with the audience.

Recordings of these events (except the lecture by Justice Chandrachud) are available on the Centre’s website (please see back cover for details).



LEFT: JUSTICE D Y CHANDRACHUD & RIGHT: ALNOOR BHIMANI AT 'EXPERIENCES WITH ADJUDICATION: RECONCILING RIGHTS, IDENTITIES AND PREJUDICES', 22 JUNE 2022.

MYANMAR

On 1 February 2021, the military establishment in Myanmar wrested power from Aung San Suu Kyi in a dramatic coup, bringing her fragile and partially democratic government to an end. Several people left the country, while prominent political leaders and supporters of the National Unity Government (NUG) were restrained or imprisoned.

Myanmar has been integral to the dynamics of South Asia – the Rohingya exodus of 2017 which has seen almost a million people arrive in Bangladesh being a recent case in point. Although commonly included as part of Southeast Asia, Myanmar is in fact a significant connecting link between the two dynamic regions of 'south' and 'southeast' Asia.

But the dramatic coup in February 2021 has brought it centre stage for many new reasons for South Asia, given its strategic importance and location. Several events at the Centre through the year have looked at the crises unfolding in Myanmar from multiple perspectives.

A panel discussion titled **'Critical Voices from Myanmar: Contexts & Concerns after the 2021 Coup d'État'** discussed this rupture in democracy. Speakers included, most prominently, NUG member Ja Htoi Pan Maran and pro-Democracy activist Tayzar San, alongside Nyi Nyi Kyaw (Kulturwissenschaftliches Institute Essen) and Jayde Lin Roberts (Visiting Fellow at the LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre). The event was chaired by Hyun Bang Shin (Director, LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre, in collaboration with whom we did this event). The discussion was predictably concerned with the somewhat unexpected turn of events – after all, Aung San Suu Kyi had travelled to the International Court of Justice in The Hague in

December 2019 to defend the military *junta's* treatment of Rohingyas, in a shocking attempt to give the *junta's* behaviour some veneer of legitimacy – so her sudden ouster and arrest took even seasoned observers by surprise. But the discussion provided a platform to discuss several issues evident almost 10 months after the coup had happened.

The Centre did another event to mark one year of the coup in February 2022, which looked at an oft-neglected aspect of military coups and ruptures to democratic fabric: education of children. In collaboration with Prospect Burma (an educational charity based in the UK which works in the education sector in Myanmar), **'Myanmar: Education for the Future'** invited Sai Sam Kham (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Khin Ohmar (Human Rights activist), Martin Smith (Senior Advisor to Transnational Institute, Amsterdam), and Yin Min Tun (University of Manchester) to discuss this crucial issue, and as expected, it was obvious that a system already inadequate by decades of military control and latterly reliant on non-governmental organisations and external funding was once again dealt a severe blow. The event was moderated by Jürgen Haacke (LSE).

A recording of 'Myanmar: Education for the Future' is available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, YIN MIN TUN, MARTIN SMITH, JÜRGEN HAACKE, KHIN OHMAR & SAI SAM KHAM AT 'MYANMAR: EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE', 3 FEBRUARY 2022.



KHIN OHMAR AT 'MYANMAR: EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE', 3 FEBRUARY 2022.

NEPAL, PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA

The Centre has worked consistently to forefront all countries in South Asia through its events, blogs and other engagements. This year was no different and, in fact, Lent Term 2022 was especially rewarding for our events.

NEPAL

The tragic, and immensely destructive, earthquake in Nepal in 2015 has led the country on a path of rebuilding and preparation; mud structures, both historic and new, were severely damaged, and hundreds perished in this devastating earthquake.

Earthquakes of varying intensity are a regular feature in Nepal, sitting as it does on a tectonic faultline which makes her vulnerable to heightened seismic activity. Several academics and others have worked closely since then, as advisers and otherwise, as Nepal emerges from this catastrophe, stronger and better equipped for similar events in the future. Romola Sanyal (LSE) brilliantly moderated a discussion about Disaster management and re-building with panelists Nimesh Dhungana (University of Manchester), Katie Oven (Northumbria University), Shobhana Pradhan (BBC Media Action, Nepal), and Sara Shneiderman (University of British Columbia) for our panel discussion on **'Nepal: Rebuilding from Disaster, Preparing for the Future?'** Panelists discussed not only the various government initiatives that have been put in place to mitigate structural damage and loss of life, but also policy interventions that will prepare the government and its departments to deal with such incidents in future. We also learnt about how much the country has rebuilt in the years in-between.

PAKISTAN

Like in several other countries in the region, women in Pakistan struggle – at all levels of society – for more opportunities, and for equality. The annual 'Aurat March' (lit. 'Women's March') is unique to Pakistan, the only country in South Asia that comes out on the streets of the country, women and men (in solidarity), to reaffirm the rights of women in modern society. Typically, as the march has been gaining more and more attention, it has come under more scrutiny and surveillance. **'Pakistan: Protest, Solidarity & Democracy'** discussed this from different perspectives: the status and position of women in the Islamic canons; their legal and constitutional protections in modern society; their continuing struggle for rights and equality; the success of the annual 'Aurat March'; and how one can imagine a future vision. Moderated by the Centre's Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar, panelists included Asma Barlas (Ithaca College, New York), Ammar Ali Jan (historian and activist), Nida Kirmani (LUMS, Lahore), and Reema Omer (lawyer).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, ROMOLA SANYAL, KATIE OVEN, NIMESH DHUNGANA, SARA SCHNEIDERMAN & SHOBHANA PRADHAN AT 'NEPAL: REBUILDING FROM DISASTER, PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE?', 10 MARCH 2022.

SRI LANKA

The re-election, with a landslide majority, of the Rajapaksa brothers in Sri Lanka in 2019, has brought to the fore the latent ethnic tensions that continues to blight Sri Lankan politics and society. Even though the civil war ended in 2009, peace between the Tamil and Sinhala communities has been fragile and elusive, and Tamils continue to feel slighted by successive governments. Additionally, the open appeals to the majoritarian Sinhala population by the incumbent government, alongside praise of the military in ending the civil war, has rekindled

concern within the Tamil minority community about historic discrimination, human rights abuse and suppression. Our panel titled '**Sri Lanka: Has Peace Brought Reconciliation?**' presented different perspectives, and panelists Thiruni Kelegama (Oxford), Bart Klem (University of Gothenburg), Ambika Satkunanathan (Open Society Foundation Fellow), and Mahendran Thiruvarangan (University of Jaffna) discussed lingering issues with Rajesh Venugopal (LSE).

Recordings of these events are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).

SOUTH ASIA

As LSE's hub for all South Asian events and activities, the Centre's principal focus remains South Asia, and we often discuss issues that cut across individual nations in the region, and where comparative approaches can teach us more about how one nation may learn from another, as also what the world at large may learn from examples from South Asia.

GENDER

As our commemoration of 'Bangladesh @ 50' drew to a close, we invited famous feminist economist (and LSE colleague) Naila Kabeer to curate a discussion. **'Gender & Labour Markets in South Asia: Feminist Economics Perspectives'** looked at the nature of labour markets in India and Pakistan (alongside Bangladesh), its gender divides, and data on women's presence in different labour sectors. Part of the discussion also focused on what the data taught us about hurdles for women in certain sectors as also why some sectors were more welcoming, inclusive and accessible for women.

Ashwini Deshpande (Ashoka University, Sonapat) and Haris Gazdar (Collective for Social Science Research, Karachi) — both of whom have worked on similar themes, some in collaborative projects — were panelists, with Naila as Discussant.

This discussion heralded two other online discussions curated by Centre Director Alnoor Bhimani in Michaelmas and Summer Terms — all concerned with women in the workplace, in different roles of labour and leadership.

In December 2021, **'Women & the Future of Work in South Asia'** discussed women in the business sector in South Asia, and how

their increasing presence in the corporate world — at various levels — had been a marked development in South Asia across the spectrum, and how research and surveys had shown that a more gender-inclusive workforce had definite and irreplaceable advantages for the sector as a whole, as well as in individual industries. Prithwiraj Chowdhury (Harvard Business School), Rubana Huq (Chairperson, Mohammadi Group, Dhaka) and Uzma Quresh (The World Bank, Pakistan) represented both the academic/research as well as experiential perspectives in a wide-ranging discussion on the subject.

In Summer Term 2022, we brought together a panel to discuss the increasing presence of women leaders in yet another sector: academia. **'The Importance of Being a Woman Business School Dean'** invited Asma Hyder (IBA, Karachi), Leila Triki (South Mediterranean University, Tunis) and Rama Yelkur (Texas Woman's University) to discuss the challenges of being in a leadership role in an academic institution — a sector where women have had a significant presence for long across the world but not necessarily in very senior/leadership positions. The discussion touched upon a variety of issues, from vision to challenges to problem-solving in an intellectually fertile environment.

Both these discussions were chaired by Centre Director Alnoor Bhimani.

OTHER EVENTS

There were several events in which we looked at South Asia in comparative perspective, focusing on issues and topics of relevance and interest. The three listed below represent the approach we adopted to curate discussions that attracted global audiences in each instance.

In Michaelmas Term, a panel discussion on **'Digitalising South Asia: Who Benefits?'** looked at the now-ubiquitous reality of governments being reliant on digitalised Big Data of various kinds (including a variety of personal information about citizens) to deliver good governance on a mass scale – from delivering welfare schemes to e-voting systems. This wide-angled use of digital data has often been introduced at enormous cost, and in economies of varying wealth. Speakers Anir Chowdhury (Government of Bangladesh), Dibyendu Maiti (Delhi School of Economics), Ammar Malik (Harvard Kennedy School), and Jagath Seneviratna (ICTA, Sri Lanka) spoke at length on the costs and benefits of these large-scale Digitalisation methods, and its positives and negatives for both effective governance and target beneficiaries.

South Asia is home to variety, in every sense of the word, in every which way possible. In Lent Term, the Centre curated a fascinating discussion with an artist, a collector, and an academic on how the subcontinent's rich artistic heritage and practice(s) – including those with religious motifs – can and do have personal messages of belief and protest. In **'South Asia: Art, Religion & Activism'**, panelists Salima Hashmi (Pakistani artist), Santhosh Sadanadan (Dr B. R. Ambedkar University, Delhi) and Davinder S. Toor (Indian & Islamic Art Collector) discussed this – along with a wonderful display of Hashmi's works, even if

technologically interrupted in-between! – in the context of artworks in the time when they were produced, and its cadence and relevance in contemporary times.

Meanwhile, especially in the last two decades, South Asians are increasingly dominating the Western corporate world in leadership roles at the top level in several multinational companies, with India leading the way. It seemed an appropriate time to discuss: **'Do South Asians make better CEOs?'** The event invited CEOs of a major Pakistani Bank (Munazzah Malik, Habib Bank Ltd, Pakistan) and an Indian multinational (Janmejaya Sinha, BCG India), alongside an academic expert Jackson G Lu (MIT Sloan School of Management), to discuss this unique and edifying trend. The discussion covered a range of issues, from work ethics and flexibility, to cultural factors and aspirational mobility.

All three discussions were Chaired by Centre Director Alnoor Bhimani.

Recordings of these events are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST ASIA

South Asia has always been linked and interconnected closely with Southeast Asia – historically, for centuries through migration, trade and cultural exchange, and in more recent times through politics, economics and strategic issues. This year we decided to explore some of these connections with two events, one focused on the contemporary, the other on historical ties, in collaboration with LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, DAUD ALI, JEFFREY SAX, ELIZABETH LAMBOURN, WILLIAM DALRYMPLE & VIDYA DEHEJIA AT 'THE SPICE ROUTE: CONNECTED HISTORIES IN SOUTH & SOUTHEAST ASIA', 16 JUNE 2022.

In Michaelmas Term, we jointly curated an event on practices of South Asians in Southeast Asia, talking about how cultural habits continue, often in adapted forms, to inform and define diasporic identity – even when they have evolved amongst the diaspora to being something distinct, different from the ‘parent’ tradition. **‘Self and Space: South Asian Diasporic Practices’**, with panelists Seán McLoughlin (University of Leeds), Sandhini Poddar (Art historian) and Venka Purushothaman (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore), looked at these intercalated issues of self, being and identity in ‘foreign’ lands made home and hearth with sincerity. Seán (who has for long studied South Asians in Leeds, UK) brought his expertise to comment on broader questions of how South Asians negotiate identity through cultural-identitarian practices in foreign lands, even where there are deep historical connections. The panel was curated by Zehra Jumabhoy (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore).

In Summer Term, the panel on **‘The Spice Route: Connected Histories in South & Southeast Asia’** discussed exactly what the title says: historical connections, movement of peoples, spread of knowledges and cultural practices – all riding on trade along the ‘spice route’ between South/Southeast Asia. Historians Daud Ali (University of Pennsylvania), Vidya Dehejia (Columbia University) and Elizabeth Lambourn (DeMontfort University) spoke at length about these issues, and William Dalrymple (historian & writer) read out a portion of his forthcoming book, *The Golden Route*, which looks at these historical connections. Jeffrey Say (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore) was Discussant for this panel.

These events were in collaboration with LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore; recordings are available on the Centre’s website (please see back cover for details).

GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS

This series, which we started in 2020/21, curates focused conversations with experts on strategic geopolitical issues that have a direct impact on South Asia. The conversations last year focused on China and the US, and the impact of their strategic presence in the region. This year, in collaboration with LSE IDEAS (LSE's Foreign Policy think tank), we continued these crucial conversations, widening its ambit to include the economics of geopolitics as well.

As Afghanistan marked a year under Taliban rule, we organised a panel discussion on the impact of this event on Afghanistan, and its two significant South Asian neighbours, India and Pakistan. **'Afghanistan: Back to the Future?'** focused on what, if anything, 'Taliban 2.0' had learnt about governing the country, and how they were performing now that they found themselves in possession of the entire country. The overarching impression, after one year, is that the Taliban are more cautious, less extreme, and keen to make their governance work effectively — the only exception being their attitude towards girls/women, their education and presence in public. Antonio Giustozzi (King's College London) and Romain Malejacq (Radboud University, Nijmegen), both of whom have spent time with the Taliban in Afghanistan on earlier occasions, spoke about how they felt the Taliban was in much better governance form this time round. C. Uday Bhaskar (Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi) and Ayesha Siddiqi (SOAS) spoke about India's growing presence in the country and offers of support, and Pakistan's serious security concerns in light of the number of refugees streaming into the country from the borders, respectively. Michael Kugelman (Wilson Center, Washington DC) brought the strategic US equation in India/Pakistan in relation to Afghanistan; he complemented the US expertise of Christopher Coker (LSE IDEAS), who was Discussant.

In Lent 2022, we looked at the increasing tensions in the Indo-Pacific, and the role of South Asia (mainly India) there. **'QUAD-AUKUS & the Rise of the Indo-Pacific'** discussed India's strategic importance both for Western powers, as well as for others like Australia, through the QUAD-AUKUS alliances. China's increasing presence in the region, the concerns over Taiwan's independence, the irregular but noticeable activities of North Korea — all mean that the US, UK, Australia and others look at India as the only stable democratic power in the region to ally with to check various tensions.

Frédéric Grare (ECFR, Paris), Yuka Koshino (IISS, London), Harsh V Pant (ORF, New Delhi), and Peter Watkins (LSE IDEAS) took turns in discussing how India's geographical location and its growing prominence in the region, coupled with her own economic and political interests in the Indo-Pacific, made her the most desirable strategic partner for others with interests in the Indo-Pacific, to keep both China and North Korea in check. Christopher Coker (LSE IDEAS) was Discussant for this panel discussion as well.

The importance of economics, and its complex entanglement with South Asia's geopolitics, was the focus of the event in Summer Term 2022. Over the last couple of decades, China has steadily made financial investments in

Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan – effectively surrounding India in a 'Dragon's Ring' (which we discussed at an event in Michaelmas Term 2020). Now, a year and more later, we decided to look at the respective countries – **'Debate Economics? Foreign Investments & Loans in South Asia'** – and how they viewed these huge investments by a foreign power in their country. Sri Lanka's economy is on the verge of collapse, and Pakistan's under serious duress because of a combination of Chinese- and IMF-imposed payback conditions for investments and bailouts. Hassan Karrar (LUMS,

Lahore), Nadeem ul-Haque (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad) and Dushni Weerakoon (Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka, Colombo) discussed macroeconomic, fiscal and policy matters, and how the economic precarity may be addressed, most importantly, to lessen the impact on common people. Chris Alden (LSE IDEAS), whose expertise is in China, was Discussant for this event.

These events were in collaboration with LSE IDEAS; recordings are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, DUSHNI WEERAKOON, NADIMUL HAQUE & HASSAN KARRAR AT 'DEBACLE ECONOMICS? FOREIGN INVESTMENTS & LOANS IN SOUTH ASIA?' (PART OF OUR 'GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS' SERIES), 12 MAY 2022.

TOUGH TALK

This series of discussions, which we started last year (2020/21), has been one of our most successful series of events. Unlike our other events, 'Tough Talk' intentionally focuses on the difficult questions of the day that concern social scientists, and everyone else.

There has been an increasing interest in, and thus debates about, the position of the past in contemporary times. Never before has History been so much a part of daily life and politics, and has understandably led to robust debates and hardline positions on all sides. Crucial to this has been a heightened engagement with how History should be read, written (anew), explained, and perhaps apologised for?

These debates are happening globally, and South Asia has been no exception. Quite the contrary, South Asia's long colonial history provides a perfect site to discuss these topics, perched as we are in the former metropole, the capital city of the erstwhile Empire.

This year, we decided to focus on two core debates that have occupied historians and others as they grapple with what History means for us today. In Michaelmas Term 2021, our Tough Talk was titled **'Decolonising History: Method or Fact?'**, and focused on the most important of them all – the 'decolonisation' of History/historical knowledge. The Speakers were chosen carefully to represent both methodological and empirical arguments, including non-South Asianists to underline the global nature of the debate, as also the importance of practitioners learning from histories outside their own areas of research interest.

Among the Speakers, Caroline Elkins (Harvard University) was the first historian to prove that the official records of the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya were in fact intentionally incomplete because the British colonising administration had destroyed several important documents, thus rendering a fundamentally incomplete and biased archive for future historians (later acknowledged by the British government in a court of law); Priya Satia (Stanford University) and Kim Wagner (Queen Mary University of London) spoke about the importance of contextualising our current historical knowledge with more nuanced understanding of how History and archives can be (re)studied methodologically and empirically. David Arnold (University of Warwick) was the Discussant, holding the conversation together, reflecting and responding to various issues being discussed.

The other burning issue that concerns historians nowadays – **'Should we Apologise for the Past?'** – is one with direct political ramifications, as former colonies increasingly ask for formal apologies from colonisers, along with financial reparation and the return of 'loot'. Our Tough Talk in Lent 2022 invited Tom Bentley (University of Aberdeen), Vanessa Holburn (author of *The Amritsar Massacre*), Claus Leggewie (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), Rasul Baksh Rais (LUMS, Lahore), Ali Raza (LUMS, Lahore), Ali Riaz (Illinois



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, DAVID ARNOLD, PRIYA SATIA, KIM WAGNER & CAROLINE ELKINS AT 'DECOLONISING HISTORY: METHOD OR FACT?' (PART OF OUR 'TOUGH TALK' SERIES), 7 OCTOBER 2021.

State University), and Shalini Sharma (Keele University) to discuss this tangled question, both in the context of Empire and Colony (the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 1919 in India), but also in other uniquely South Asian contexts (Pakistan and Bangladesh). Leggewie spoke about the German government's formal apology to former colonies in Africa (like Tanzania), and Bentley talked about how 'apologies' from the

British government up until now are in fact not much more than expressions of regret. The discussion was Chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE), himself a historian.

Recordings of these events are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, CLAUD LEGGEWIE, SHALINI SINGH, RASUL BAKSH RAIS, ALI RAZA, ALI RIAZ, TOM BENTLEY & VANESSA HOLBURN (CENTRE) AT 'SHOULD WE APOLOGISE FOR THE PAST?' (PART OF OUR 'TOUGH TALK' SERIES), 20 JANUARY 2022.

FACT & FICTION

The Centre's new format of book discussions started last year under the 'Fact & Fiction' banner has been greatly appreciated by colleagues and viewers. Central to its dynamic has been a group of carefully chosen readers, each commenting on the book from their own perspectives, disciplinary or otherwise, with a formal presentation of the book's main arguments by the author. One aim of this format has been to make academic issues and concerns more accessible to our audience through the different views of the panelists, which has been greatly appreciated by them.

In November 2021, almost in sync with the Tough Talk on 'Decolonising History: Method or Fact?', our first book discussion was on Alex von Tunzelmann's very readable *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues That Made History* (2021), which discusses the very different attitudes that countries and their peoples have had to statues of individuals, from Gandhi in South Africa to Cecil Rhodes at the University of Oxford. The discussion, '**Statues: Can History be Toppled?**', focused on the twin questions of the reasons why statues evoke strong reactions among people (also the reasons/motivations of people to ask for them to be removed/toppled) and whether or not the removal of statues altered the perspective on the past, and how people lived with history. Panelists included Edward Anderson (Northumbria University), William Beinart (Oxford), Haroon Khalid (Pakistani independent author), and Alex von Tunzelmann (historian, and author of *Fallen Idols*), and the event was Chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE). Khalid brought an especially interesting perspective while discussing the near-regular damage to a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore, underlining how attacks on statues can also represent a denial of a factual historical past.

The other book discussion, in May 2022, focused on Gurharpal Singh and Giorgio Shani's recently published book titled *Sikh Nationalism: From a Dominant Minority to an Ethno-Religious Diaspora* (2021). A comprehensive and wide-angled book, the event was titled '**Sikhs: Minority, Diaspora, Nationalism**', and provided the perfect context for panelists Radhika Chopra (Delhi School of Sociology), Catarina Kinnvall (Lund University) and Pashaura Singh (University of California Riverside) to comment on the several intertwined and multi-layered issues involved in the birth, growth and emergence of Sikh nationalism both in India and amongst the large diaspora abroad. Authors Gurharpal Singh (SOAS, London) and Giorgio Shani (International Christian University, Tokyo) introduced the main arguments of the book, and the Discussant was Lou Fenech (University of Northern Iowa), the well-known expert on Sikhism.

Recordings of these events are available on the Centre's website (please see back cover for details).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WILLIAM BEINART, ALEX VON TUNZELMANN, EDWARD ANDERSON & HAROON KHALID AT 'STATUES: CAN HISTORY BE TOPPLED?' (PART OF OUR 'FACT & FICTION' SERIES), 18 NOVEMBER 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, LOU FENECH, RADHIKA CHOPRA, CATARINA KINNVALL, GIORGIO SHANI, GURHARPAL SINGH & PASHAURA SINGH (CENTRE) AT 'SIKHS: MINORITY, DIASPORA, NATIONALISM' (PART OF OUR 'FACT & FICTION' SERIES), 4 MAY 2022.

VERA ANSTEY STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

“ She was very good at games and very good in the social life of the School. What she saw in that fool Anstey I never could make out! She could buy and sell him & live by the profit in two seconds. Someone who came back — I can't remember the name — told me that she was running the whole economic department there in Bombay which I quite believe. ”

Lilian Knowles, Professor of Economic History to Director Professor William Beveridge, recommending Vera's hire at LSE in 1921.

This student essay competition was established in honour of Vera Anstey (1889–1967), alumnus and Reader in Economics. Vera had a lifelong interest in and association with South Asia, having lived in Bombay for several years, and upon her retirement from LSE in 1954, published *Introduction to Economics for Students in India and Pakistan* (1964).

Following the success of the competition last year with record submissions, we received several enquiries from part-time/joint degree students to ask if they could submit essays to the competition. This year, eligibility for submission has been expanded to include all registered, full-time LSE Masters students in any course/department (they do not need to be studying South Asia-related courses/modules to enter the competition), including MRes, One-year Executive Masters & Joint Masters students.

Elias Khoury (LSE MSc in Public Policy and Administration) won the first prize (£250 book vouchers from Waterstones) for his winning essay on **'How can South Asia contribute to Global Development?'**. His essay, titled **'South Asia: A Frontier for Sustainability on a Dying Planet'**, argued that the world at large, and especially countries in the Global North, should try and learn development strategies from South Asia which has pursued sustainable models despite challenges and problems, and achieved success.

Commenting on the winning essay, the jury said:

'This [essay] stood out for its wide range of ideas, its carefully substantiated argument, and its accessible, simple yet precisely focused writing style. The author also drew on a diverse and inclusive understanding of South Asia that did not rely only upon the most obvious or familiar examples.'

The essay was published on the Centre's 'South Asia @ LSE' blog on 13 June 2022.



ELIAS KHOURY (MSc IN PUBLIC POLICY & ADMINISTRATION, 2021–22), WINNER OF THE VERA ANSTEY STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

WORKING WITH LSE STUDENTS

The Centre has continued all its activities, and expanded into new areas in 2021/22. We continued to support Students Unions with advice and support for their activities, and to provide part-time employment and training in research skills.

STUDENT RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

In 2021, the Centre was provided with some funds from the Higher Education Impact Fund (HEIF) at LSE, which allowed us to hire Research Assistants to develop & update the digital maps of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Much of this work was completed in 2020/21, but **Talha Ahmad Wani** (MSc Economics, 2020–22) finalised all the data sets for the digital maps of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which went live in time to coincide with the Centre's celebrations to mark 'India @ 75' and 'Pakistan @ 75'. Talha had earlier worked on collating data for the Pakistan map as well. Data for the India Digital Map was done by **Anhad Chaudhry** (LSE MSc International Social and Public Policy, 2021–22).

The Centre is grateful to all students for their engagement with, and support of, the Centre and its activities.



TALHA AHMAD WANI (MSC ECONOMICS, 2020–22)

LSESU PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

The Centre has provided ongoing support to the **LSESU Pakistan Development Society**, especially for its flagship annual '**Future of Pakistan**' conference. This year was no different, and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar advised members of the Pakistan Development Society on various aspects of the conference, and acted as the Academic Chair on the day. The students put up a typically impressive show, with several high profile speakers including a brilliant Plenary Lecture by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, conversations with British-Pakistani Labour MP for Bolton Southeast The Rt Hon. Yasmin Qureshi, Minister for Health in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taimur Khan Jhagra, and an conversation between National Security Advisor Dr Moeed Yusuf and Dr Farzana Shaikh (Chatham House, London).



ANHAD CHAUDHRY (MSC INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL & PUBLIC POLICY, 2021–22)



JUSTICE SYED MANSOOR ALI DELIVERING THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON 'THE SUPREME COURT & EMERGING JURISPRUDENCE' AT THE 'FUTURE OF PAKISTAN' CONFERENCE 2022, ORGANISED BY LSESU PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY, 5 MARCH 2022.



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT TAIMUR KHAN JHAGRA & AMEN JALAL (DOCTORAND, LSE) IN CONVERSATION ON 'ADDRESSING PAKISTAN'S WEALTH INEQUALITY' AT THE 'FUTURE OF PAKISTAN' CONFERENCE 2022, ORGANISED BY LSESU PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY, 4 MARCH 2022.

RESEARCH RESOURCES

The Centre was able to utilise the residual amount from its Higher Education and Impact Fund (HEIF) in 2021 to launch create the world's first Digital Data Maps of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as part of its ongoing 'States of South Asia' Digital Map Project.

STATES OF SOUTH ASIA

The States of South Asia (SoSA) project was launched in Lent 2019 (with seed funding from LSE's Knowledge Exchange & Impact (KEI) initiative) with a pilot of the Digital Map of India. The purpose of these maps is simple: to collate political, economic, social, and demographic meta data from open and verified government and other sources, and make them available free of cost to researchers across the world.

Following the enormous success of the India Digital Map, we decide to develop similar maps for Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Two maps – both unique in the world as a digital research resource – were finalised and launched in 2021/22: **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**, and the **India** map was updated with the latest data. The launch of these maps overlapped in part with their independence anniversaries, and specially designed logos for '**Bangladesh @ 50**', '**Pakistan @ 75**' and '**India @ 75**' appear on the Home Page of each map to commemorate it.

Work to collate data for these maps was started in Lent 2021: LSE students were hired on hourly-paid contracts to work on a map each, and collate Big Data as a research resource. This provided the students with critical research skills training, both on the countries as well as in technical skills and logistics. Dipyaman Chakrabarti (PhD in International Relations, 2020-24) and Talha Ahmad Wani (MSc Economics, 2020-22) worked from scratch on the Bangladesh and Pakistan maps, collating and verifying data and sources assiduously; and Sahima Gupta (MSc International Social and Public Policy, 2020/21) and Anhad Chaudhry (LSE MSc International Social and Public Policy, 2021/22) updated the India map.

Work on the Digital Maps of Nepal and Sri Lanka are currently underway, and we hope to launch them in 2022/23.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, MRIDULA MUKHERJEE, SANAM ARORA, AKASH BANERJEE & FAISAL DEVI AT 'DOES GANDHI MATTER?', 30 SEPTEMBER 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MAHENDRAN THIRUVARANGAN, RAJESH VENUGOPAL, THIRUNI KELEGAMA, AMBIKA SATKUNANATHAN & BART KLEM AT 'SRI LANKA: HAS PEACE BROUGHT RECONCILIATION?', 17 MARCH 2022.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Last year, the Centre created a new tagline – ‘Unravelling South Asia to the World’ – which appears across all our social media platforms and e-communications. This has been spectacularly successful: it distinguishes our Centre across the United Kingdom (no other South Asia Centre/Institute has a tagline) and has helped focus and consolidate the conscious intention of all our activities in the minds of our audiences.

The success of a clear marketing and publicity strategy is evident, most easily, in the growing numbers of our followers across all social media platforms (see p. 4). All our events being online only has also helped us to curate events with panelists anywhere in the world, and reach a truly global audience. This has established the Centre and LSE as a leading voice on issues concerning South Asia. The Centre now receives enquiries from media outlets and television channels regularly seeking experts on various subjects relating to South Asia.

Another very important reason for the success of the Centre has been our genuine and visible commitment to cover all countries of South Asia, rather than focus on a few. While this has been a hugely challenging task, our efforts have been recognised both within LSE – from our academic colleagues and students – as well as outside. As the Centre’s list of events (pp. 36–40) show, we have covered not just individual countries in the region in our regular Events calendar but have also curated a series of unique events that look at the region of South Asia in comparative perspective (pp. 16–22), ranging from geopolitics, art/activism and digitalisation to women and successful South Asian CEOs.

‘SOUTH ASIA @ LSE’

Last year, the Centre reorganised the blog’s publication profile – publishing fewer blogs but with a concerted effort to cover more issues. ‘South Asia @ LSE’ remains the Centre’s flagship platform to make the latest research ideas available globally.

We continued with publishing our monthly ‘**Bangladesh @ 50**’ blogposts in the new academic year, with the final one in December 2021. The blogs, the topics/themes covered, as well as the idea of publishing commemorative blogs has been greatly appreciated by our readers, and we hope to publish a similar series on the forthcoming quadruple anniversaries of India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka 75th independence anniversary in 2022/23.

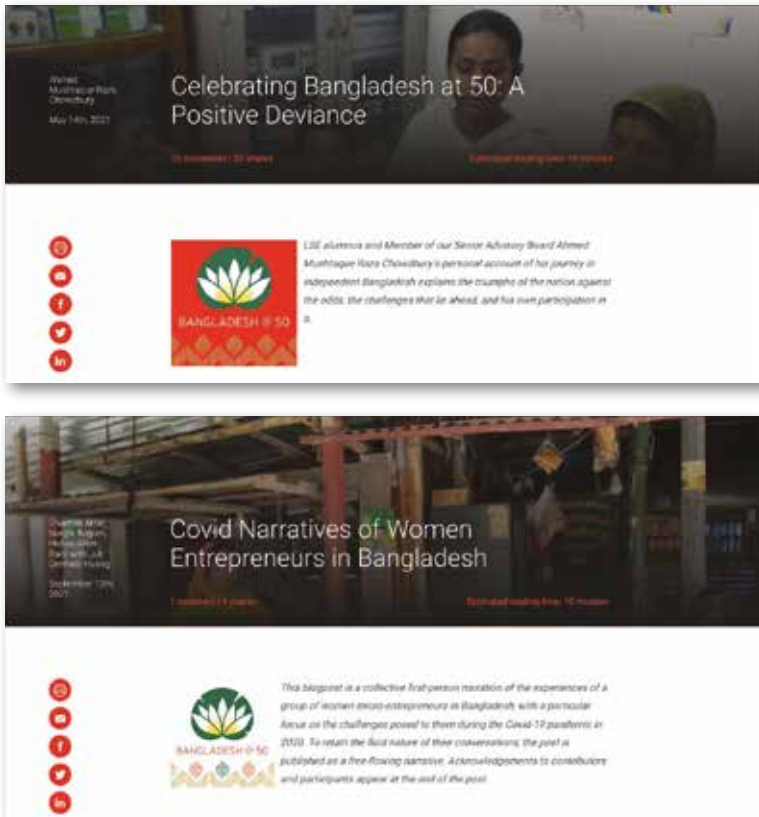
We were especially pleased to publish a blog by **Daniel Payne** (Curator for Politics and International Relations, LSE Library) on Labour MP Peter Shore’s Papers held in the LSE Archives, and an interview with women’s rights activist Sheepa Hafiza by **Professor Katy Gardner** (LSE Anthropology). The series also included two posts from alumni **Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury** (on Bangladesh’s progress over 50 years since her birth in 1971) and **Juli Huang** (on women micro-entrepreneurs).

The Centre published a total of **66 blogs in 2021/22**, covering a range of topics and themes covering almost all countries in South Asia.

The purpose of our blogpost is to present new, cutting-edge academic research on the pressing questions of the time in South Asia to a global audience in easily accessible language, and thus impact the public with informed knowledge. Cumulatively, the blogs are also a research resource for its readers.

The Centre's new strategy of publishing fewer, more focused, blogposts has proved to be unbelievably successful. In 2021/22, **'South Asia @ LSE'** was ranked amongst the top 10 most read LSE blogs (out of nearly 40 academic blogs), with ca 490,000 visitors/readers, a testament to the value that the global academic and lay reading community attributes to our blog.

See back cover for details to access the 'South Asia @ LSE' blog.



BLOGPOSTS COMMEMORATING 'BANGLADESH @ 50' BY ALUMNI AHMED MUSHTAQUE RAZA CHOWDHURY (TOP; 14 MAY 2021) AND JULI QERMEZI HUANG ET AL. (BOTTOM; 13 SEPTEMBER 2021), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

Nasser M MUNJEE (Chair, Advisory Board) (LSE BSc Econ 1974; MSc Econ 1975) is Chairman of Development Credit Bank, and Tata Motor Finance Ltd, both in India. Nasser is also on the Board of several public companies, and is involved with many others as Chairman, Member of the Board or Trustee including ABB Ltd, HDFC Ltd, Britannia Industries, Jaguar Land Rover plc, and the City of London.

Kaushik BASU (LSE PhD Economics 1976) is Professor of Economics and C. Marks Professor of International Studies at Cornell University. Basu has served as the Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist of the World Bank, and as Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India (2009–12). He has taught at the Delhi School of Economics and has been visiting professor at various universities across the world.

Craig J CALHOUN is University Professor of Social Sciences at Arizona State University. Prior to this, he was President of the Berggruen Institute in Los Angeles (2016–19); Director & President of LSE (2012–16) where he remains Centennial Professor. He has also been President of the Social Science Research Council in New York (1999–2012), and University Professor at NYU (2004–12).

A Mushtaque R CHOWDHURY (LSE MSc Demography 1979) was until recently Vice Chairperson of BRAC, Dhaka where he started his career more than 40 years ago. He was the founding Director of BRAC's Research & Evaluation Division, and was previously its Executive Director, alongside serving in several international organisations.

M Ali JAMEEL (LSE BSc Accounting & Finance 1991) is CEO, TPL Trakkers Pvt Ltd in Karachi. He has previously served as Chief Executive of Jahangir Siddiqui Executive Bank (1999–2001). Ali has also held several advisory posts in the IT and telecom sectors in Pakistan, and serves as Director, Executive Director and Non-Executive Director of several companies. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales.

Lata KRISHNAN (LSE BSc Economics 1981) is Founding Partner and Chief Financial Officer for Shah Capital Partners, USA. Krishnan co-founded SMART Modular Technologies (WWH) Inc. in 1989, and has also held corporate accounting and finance positions at Montgomery Securities, Arthur Andersen & Company LLP, and Hill Vellacott & Company in London, England. She has also held Director and Advisor posts on several Boards in the Finance and Accounts sectors.

Ratan N TATA is a businessman, philanthropist, investor and Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons (holding company of the Tata Group), the Mumbai-based global business conglomerate. He has been awarded the Padma Bhushan (2000) and Padma Vibhushan (2008) by the Government of India, and The Honorary Knight Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (2014) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his lifelong services to business and community.



SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED COMMEMORATIVE LOGOS OF NATIONAL FLOWERS OF BANGLADESH (WATER LILY; *NYMPHAEA NOUCHALI*), INDIA (LOTUS; *NELUMBO NUCIFERA* [*GAERTN.*]) & PAKISTAN (JASMINE, *JASMINUM OFFICINALE*), DESIGNED BY OROON DAS.

FACULTY ADVISORY GROUP

The Faculty Advisory Group are current academic faculty at LSE; some are alumni as well. They serve as everyday Advisors to the Centre, meet annually, and advise on important issues concerning the Centre. They have also been actively involved in several of the Centre's events.

Mahvish AHMAD (Assistant Professor in Sociology) teaches Human Rights and Politics at LSE. Prior to this, she has been Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Western Cape, and earlier was a journalist covering military and insurgent violence in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. Mahvish has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Cambridge, has co-founded the bilingual English-Urdu magazine *Tanqeed*, and co-convenes 'Archives of the Disappeared', a research initiative investigating the archiving and documentation of communities destroyed in acts of mass violence. She is currently completing a book manuscript on state violence in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Chris ALDEN (Co-Director, LSE IDEAS; Professor of International Relations) has published, most recently, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (2017; co-authored), and *New Directions in Africa-China Studies* (2019; co-edited). He has held Visiting Fellowships at the universities of Cambridge, Tokyo and Pretoria, and at the Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, the École normale supérieure (Cachan), and Centre d'études et de recherches internationales, both in Paris. LSE IDEAS is LSE's foreign policy think tank which has been voted the best university-affiliated think tank in the world by the 'Global Go to Think Tank Index' in 2019.

Christopher COKER (Co-Director, LSE IDEAS) was Professor of International Relations at LSE till 2019, and has a particular interest in military, defense and strategic studies, terrorism, and the US security policy. His most recent monograph is *The Rise of the Civilizational State* (2019), and his forthcoming monograph is titled 'Why War'? LSE IDEAS is LSE's foreign policy think tank which has been voted the best university-affiliated think tank in the world by the 'Global Go to Think Tank Index' in 2019.

Swati DHINGRA (Associate Professor of Economics) is an expert in international economics, trade policy, industrial organisation, and Brexit; she is also an Associate at the Centre for Economic Performance at LSE. Swati was awarded her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has been Fellow at Princeton University prior to joining LSE. Swati's research interests are in international economics, globalisation, industrial policy, firms in international trade, impact of trade agreements, and industrial development in India.

David LEWIS (Professor of Social Policy and Development) focuses on Bangladesh's politics and society, particularly on how the country has been impacted by four decades of international development policies. He has worked extensively on the roles of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society actors in South Asia – mainly in Bangladesh but also in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. More recently, David has published on the Rohingya humanitarian refugee crisis in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh.

Romola SANYAL (Assistant Professor of Urban Geography) is interested in architecture, urban geopolitics, urban theory, housing and citizenship rights. She has written on the politics of space in refugee settlements in the global South with a particular focus on Lebanon and India, and is interested in the relationship between forced migration and urbanisation.

Naufel VILCASSIM (Professor of Marketing, Department of Management) is an expert on the use of economic theory and econometric techniques to analyse substantive marketing problems. His research has focused on problems in the areas of the marketing mix, competitive interactions and market structure. Naufel is also involved in a research project in India on evaluating the efficacy of mobile video training of health care workers assisting patients of Tuberculosis in completing their treatment of drugs.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, SHWETA NARAYAN, NAVROZ DUBASH, SWATI DHINGRA, VAIBHAV CHATURVEDI & RAHUL TONGIA AT 'INDIA: COP 26, COAL & THE YEARS AHEAD', 27 JANUARY 2022.

EVENTS

30 September 2021

2021: Does Gandhi Matter?

Speakers: Akash Banerjee (journalist, New Delhi), Faisal Devji (University of Oxford), Mridula Mukherjee (retired from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Discussant: Sanam Arora (National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK – NISAU)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with the National Indian Students and Alumni Union UK (NISAU).

7 October 2021

TOUGH TALK

Decolonising History: Method or Fact?

Speakers: Caroline Elkins (Harvard University), Priya Satia (Stanford University), Kim Wagner (Queen Mary University of London)

Discussant: David Arnold (University of Warwick)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

21 October 2021

IRELAND @ 100 – INDIA @ 75

Internationalism & Empire

Speakers: Disha Karnad Jani (Princeton University), Michele Louro (Salem State University), Eunan O’Halpin (Trinity College Dublin), Fredrik Petersson (Stockholm University)

Discussant: Martin Bayly (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

28 October 2021

Panel Discussion

Digitalising South Asia: Who Benefits?

Speakers: Anir Chowdhury (Government of Bangladesh), Dibyendu Maiti (Delhi School of Economics), Ammar Malik (Harvard Kennedy School), Jagath Seneviratna (ICTA, Sri Lanka)

Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)

11 November 2021

Panel Discussion

Self & Space: South Asian Diasporic Practices

Speakers: Sean McLoughlin (University of Leeds), Sandhini Poddar (Art historian), Venka Purushothaman (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore)

Discussant: Zehra Jumabhoy (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

18 November 2021

FACT & FICTION

Statues: Can History be Toppled?

Speakers: Edward Anderson (Northumbria University), William Beinart (Oxford), Haroon Khalid (Pakistani independent author), Alex von Tunzelmann (historian, and author of *Fallen Idols*)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

25 November 2021

BANGLADESH @ 50

Gender & Labour Markets in South Asia: Feminist Economics Perspectives

Speakers: Ashwini Deshpande (Ashoka University), Haris Gazdar (Collective for Social Science Research, Karachi)

Discussant: Naila Kabeer (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

2 December 2021

Panel Discussion

Women & the Future of Work in South Asia

Speakers: Prithwiraj Chowdhury (Harvard Business School), Rubana Huq (Chiarperson, Mohammadi Group, Dhaka), Uzma Quresh (The World Bank, Pakistan)

Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)

9 December 2021

GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS

Afghanistan: Back to the Future?

Speakers: C Uday Bhaskar (Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi), Antonio Giustozzi (King's College London), Michael Kugelman (Wilson Center, Washington DC), Romain Malejacq (Radboud University, Nijmegen), Ayesha Siddiqi (SOAS)

Discussant: Christopher Coker (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LSE IDEAS.

13 December 2021

Panel Discussion

Critical Voices from Myanmar: Contexts & Concerns after the 2021 Coup d'Etat

Speakers: Nyi Nyi Kyaw

(Kulturwissenschaftliches institute Essen), Ja Htoi Pan Maran (NUG, Myanmar), Jayde Lin Roberts (LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre), Tayzar San (pro-Democracy activist)

Chair: Hyun Bang Shin (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LSE Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre.

20 January 2022

TOUGH TALK

Should we Apologise for the Past?

Speakers: Tom Bentley (University of Aberdeen), Vanessa Holburn (author of *The Amritsar Massacre*), Claus Leggewie (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen), Rasul Baksh Rais (LUMS, Lahore), Ali Raza (LUMS, Lahore), Ali Riaz (Illinois State University), Shalini Sharma (Keele University)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

27 January 2022

Panel Discussion

India: Cop26, Coal & the Years Ahead

Speakers: Vaibhav Chaturvedi (Council on Energy, Environment & Water, New Delhi), Navroz K Dubash (Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi), Shweta Narayan (Health Care without Harm, India), Rahul Tongia (co-editor of *Future of Coal in India*)

Discussant: Swati Dhingra (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

3 February 2022

Panel Discussion

Myanmar: Education & the Future

Speakers: Sai Sam Kham (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Khin Ohmar (human rights activist), Martin Smith (Senior Advisor to Transnational Institute), Yin Min Tun (University of Manchester)

Moderator: Jurgen Haacke (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with Prospect Burma.

10 February 2022

Roundtable

South Asia: Art, Religion & Activism

Speakers: Salima Hashmi (Pakistani artist), Santhosh Sadanadan (Dr B R Ambedkar University, Delhi), Davinder S Toor (Indian & Islamic Art Collector)

Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, EUNAN O'HALPIN, MARTIN BAYLY, MICHELE LOURO, DISHA KARNAD JANI & FREDRIK PETERSSON AT 'INTERNATIONALISM & EMPIRE', 21 OCTOBER 2021.



ANIR CHOWDHURY AT 'DIGITALISING SOUTH ASIA: WHO BENEFITS?', 28 OCTOBER 2021.

24 February 2022**Panel Discussion**

Pakistan: Protest, Solidarity & Democracy

Speakers: Asma Barlas (Ithaca College, New York), Ammar Ali Jan (historian and activist), Nida Kirmani (LUMS, Lahore), Reema Omer (ICJ)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

2 March 2022**Panel Discussion**

Do South Asians make better CEOs?

Speakers: Jackson G Lu (MIT Sloan School of Management), Munazzah Malik (Habib Bank Ltd, Pakistan), Janmejaya Sinha (BCG, India)
Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)

10 March 2022**Panel Discussion**

Nepal: Rebuilding from Disaster, Preparing for the Future?

Speakers: Nimesh Dhungana (University of Manchester), Katie Oven (Northumbria University), Shobhana Pradhan (BBC Media Action, Nepal), Sara Shneiderman (University of British Columbia)
Discussant: Romola Sanyal (LSE)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

17 March 2022**Panel Discussion**

Sri Lanka: Has Peace Brought Reconciliation?

Speakers: Thiruni Kelegama (Oxford), Bart Klem (University of Gothenburg), Ambika Satkunanathan (Open Society Foundation Fellow), Mahendran Thiruvarangan (University of Jaffna)
Discussant: Rajesh Venugopal (LSE)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

31 March 2022**GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS**

QUAD-AUKUS & the Rise of the Indo-Pacific

Speakers: Frederic Grare (ECFR, Paris), Yuka Koshino (IISS, London), Harsh V Pant (ORF, New Delhi), Peter Watkins (LSE IDEAS)
Discussant: Christopher Coker (LSE)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LSE IDEAS.

4 May 2022**FACT & FICTION**

Sikhs: Minority, Diaspora, Nationalism

Speakers: Radhika Chopra (Delhi School of Sociology), Catarina Kinnvall (Lund University), Giorgio Shani (International Christian University, Tokyo), Gurharpal Singh (SOAS, London), Pashaura Singh (University of California Riverside)
Discussant: Lou Fenech (University of Northern Iowa)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

12 May 2022**GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS**

Debate Economics? Foreign investments & Loans in South Asia

Panelists: Hassan Karrar (LUMS, Lahore), Nadeem ul-Haque (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad), Dushni Weerakoon (Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka, Colombo)
Discussant: Chris Alden (LSE)
Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LSE IDEAS.

19 May 2022**Panel Discussion**

'90 Days & 50 Pounds': Idi Amin, Uganda & the Disbursal of South Asians

Panelists: Sana Aiyar (MIT), Saima Nasar (Bristol), Richard Reid (Oxford), Becky Taylor (University of East Anglia)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

26 May 2022**Panel Discussion**

Taliban & State-building in Afghanistan

Panelists: Obaidullah Baheer (American University of Kabul), Romain Malejacq (Radboud University, Nijmegen), Mahboub Seraj (women's rights activist)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

9 June 2022**Panel Discussion**

The Importance of Being a Woman Business School Dean

Speakers: Asma Hyder (IBA, Karachi), Leila Triki (South Mediterranean University, Tunis), Rama Yelkur (Texas Woman's University)

Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)

16 June 2022**Panel Discussion**

The Spice Route: Connected Histories in South & Southeast Asia

Panelists: Daud Ali (University of Pennsylvania), William Dalrymple (historian & writer), Vidya Dehejia (Columbia University), Elizabeth Lambourn (DeMontfort University)

Discussant: Jeffrey Say (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore)

Chair: Nilanjan Sakar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

22 June 2022**INDIA @ 75**

Experiences with Adjudication: Reconciling Rights, Identities & Prejudices

Speaker: Justice D Y Chandrachud (Supreme Court of India)

Moderator: Sanam Arora (NISAU-UK)

Chair: Alnoor Bhimani (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU), UK.

THE TEAM



Alnoor Bhimani

Director



Nilanjan Sarkar

Deputy Director



Talha Ahmad Wani

Student Research Assistant



The logo for The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), consisting of the letters 'LSE' in white on a red square background.

THE LONDON SCHOOL
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