



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



SOUTH ASIA
CENTRE

Research at LSE ■



South Asia Centre
Annual Report
2024/25



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 Naufel Vilcassim, *Director*



The dynamism of South Asia, as a collective of nation-states and a region, is unmatched in the world today. A quarter of the world's population lives there, its location is a strategic geopolitical vantage point, and its demographic profile remains its strength, despite several challenges. The political and economic engagement of the Global North with South Asia underlines its indispensability in anchoring the new world order

The Centre's activities through the last year has reflected this importance of South Asia. Focusing, as we have always done, on individual countries and the region, our events and activities have amplified the interconnected issues confronting the region within the framework of our core mission to publicise LSE's expertise and resources relating to the region.

This year provided a rare opportunity when LSE Library – for the first time in its nearly 130-year history – lent rare archival documents relating to Dr B R Ambedkar and other alumni involved with the *Constitution of India* to an external exhibition. **'After the Assembly: Constituting India'** (SOAS Gallery, 17 July–20 September 2025), part of an AHRC-funded project led by Professor Rochana Bajpai (SOAS) aligned perfectly with our ongoing series of activities and blogposts to mark the 75th anniversary of the *Constitution of India*. Dr Nilanjan Sarkar (Deputy Director) and Daniel Brambilla-Payne (Curator for Politics and International Relations, LSE Library) produced an exclusive display of documents from the Library's archive. The exhibition was inaugurated jointly by LSE President Larry Kramer and SOAS Vice Chancellor Adam Habib. See pages 15–19.

Earlier, in February, the Centre organised a hugely successful **public meeting at the India International Centre in New Delhi** with President Larry Kramer, including a conversation with LSE alumnus Nasser Munjee (LSE BSc Econ 1974; MSc Econ 1975; Chair of our Centre's Senior Advisory Board) and Gopal Sankaranarayanan (LSE LLM 2002; Advocate in the Supreme Court of India). The event drew a full house (and more, who were standing!), and was followed by an informal interaction between the audience and Larry over tea and refreshments. *More details and photographs on pages 15–17.*

The Centre's weekly **'South Asia @ LSE'** blog remains a unique academic platform focused on South Asia among Higher Education institutions in the United Kingdom, and with an annual readership close to 500,000, is ranked 8th (out of 40+ blogs at LSE) for the last 4 years in a row. The blog focuses on publishing (and publicising) new academic ideas and research focused on countries and the region by LSE academics, research scholars, students, and others, contributing to the most recent debates in the social sciences and simultaneously establishing LSE as the leader of South Asia-related academic activities in the United Kingdom. *Details of various blogposts are available throughout this Report.*

Leadership in the South Asian academic circuit in the UK is also underlined by our steering of the **UK–South Asia Network**, an initiative of the Centre where we collaborate with other institutions for public events. This is especially important in furthering LSE's intellectual and other resources relating to South Asia. Of note in this academic year was a talk on **'Afghanistan: Life with Taliban Laws'** by Visiting Fellow Obaidullah Baheer, which we co-hosted with the SOAS South Asia Institute in December 2024.



At LSE, we often collaborate with other units and departments for events; it is great for everyone, and we are able to combine resources for maximum impact. But it is a differently nice to be able to collaborate with new initiatives at LSE — this year, with **LSE Press**: we started the year with a book discussion on LSE Professor Emerita Naila Kabeer's long-awaited *Renegotiating Patriarchy: Gender, Agency and the Bangladesh Paradox*, which was published by LSE Press earlier in the summer.

The **'Vera Anstey South Asia Student Essay Competition'**, open to all registered Masters students at LSE, remains our most cherished activity, engaging the newest generation of thought leaders trained at LSE with pressing questions relevant for

South Asia. Eva Nappert's winning essay (now published as a blog; please see pages 42–43 for details) suggested the appointment of women as leaders was crucial to revitalising (SAARC), arguing that 'evidence links women's participation to more sustainable and effective policymaking'.

This year brought to an end our longstanding association with the **Charles Wallace Bangladesh Trust**, who sponsored their final Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow at the Centre. Professor M Morshedul Islam from the University of Chittagong spent 8 weeks in the summer working on digital divide, safe internet practices and the use of ICTs in Bangladesh's education sector, engaging with academics at LSE and availing of the Library's resources.

Finally, a word on **social media**: over the last year and more, 'X' (formerly Twitter) has become increasingly less desirable with academics in the Global North. This created an important dilemma for the Centre because 'X' continues to be very popular in South Asia, used by academics and laypeople alike. Given our objective of publicising LSE *in* South Asia, we have remained on 'X' but are now also on several other social media platforms used by many (see pages 53–54), allowing us to reach a wide range of people across the world interested in our activities.

 As I complete my first year as Director of the Centre and look ahead to the next, I am delighted that we continue to champion LSE – through our weekly blogs, calendar of events, collaborations, social media, and activities that puts the dynamics of South Asia, and its countries, at the heart of everything. 

We will continue on this mission in the years ahead. Expanding our **in-country activities** is important to reaffirm our commitment, and to create academic platforms powered by the complex social science questions about South Asia that concern us at LSE; next year, we are planning an event in Sri Lanka. At LSE, we will also support the first-ever **LSE South Asia Graduate Students Conference** which will be curated and led by our amazing students.

We look forward to your interest, engagement and support.

YEAR IN REVIEW

 16
Events

 1
Prize announcement

 52
Blogposts

 431,973
Blog reader views

 10,742
Facebook
followers

 1,341
Instagram
followers

 10,974
Twitter/X
followers

 5,743
YouTube
subscriptions

 3
Visiting Fellows



LSE PRESIDENT LARRY KRAMER AT INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH 2025. PHOTOGRAPH BY DALJIT SINGH © LSE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION INDIA; USED WITH PERMISSION.



'AFTER THE ASSEMBLY: CONSTITUTING INDIA', SOAS GALLERY, 17 JULY–20 SEP 2025. PHOTOGRAPH © NILANJAN SARKAR; USED WITH PERMISSION.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan continues to hold attention in South Asia as the Taliban introduce new policies and laws to further consolidate their power. We were delighted to curate 3 events on Afghanistan, host a Visiting Fellow and publish blogs focused on the country.

In October, we organised a panel titled **'Afghanistan: Life with Taliban Laws'** with long term Afghanistan observers, and those living currently in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Speakers included Kathy Gannon (Harvard Kennedy School), Ali M Latifi (Journalist and Asia Editor, *The New Humanitarian*), Saad Mohseni (Director, MOBYgroup), and Mahbouba Seraj (Founder and Director, Organisation for Research in Peace and Solidarity). The discussion was expectedly fascinating as Ali and Mehbouba, speaking from Afghanistan, made a strong case for Afghans to return to the country to push back from within, rather than from outside. Kathy and Saad, both living outside the country, spoke about the view from outside and how it was important to keep talking about Afghanistan so that the world does not move on to other news.

Ayesha Jahangir's ***Afghan Refugees, Pakistani Media and the State: The Missing Peace*** (2024) provided the opportunity to discuss an important issue concerning Afghan diaspora/refugees: Pakistan had recently announced the forcible repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees since the two countries share a porous border, with historical, unregulated movement of people in both directions. Omar al-Ghazzi (LSE), who specialises in the geopolitics of global communications (especially in relation to news media and popular culture) was Discussant alongside panelists Sanaa Alimia (AKU, London), Syed Irfan Ashraf (University of Peshawar) and Sonja Kretzschmar (University of Bundeswehr Munich). They discussed the many relevant questions the book raises (and addresses) from different perspectives – especially the role of the media in (mis)representing the issue of Afghan refugees, leading on to a discussion on vested media narratives and identity-making of the 'Other' that blights so many countries. Sanaa brought an especially relevant perspective, given her research on how Afghans and Afghan refugees had changed urban Pakistan. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, MAHBOUBA SERAJ, KATHY GANNON, SAAD MOHSENI AND ALI M LATIFI AT 'AFGHANISTAN: LIFE WITH TALIBAN LAWS', 23 OCTOBER 2024.

In December, the Centre co-hosted an on-site event at SOAS (with SOAS South Asia Institute as part of the UK-South Asia Network) – with Visiting Fellow Obaidullah Baheer (see below) on **'The West, the Taliban and the Future of Afghanistan'**. The moot question was: is continuing international engagement with the Taliban morally justifiable? If yes, how can they be designed to support the emergence of alternative publics inside Afghanistan. The discussants were Quhrmaana Kakar (LSE) and Graeme Smith (International Crisis Group, London), with Director Naufel Vilcassim and SOAS SSAI Director Subir Sinha as Co-Chairs. *This event was in collaboration with SOAS South Asia Institute, and part of the UK-South Asia Network.*

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.

VISITING FELLOW

Obaidullah Baheer, *Adjunct Lecturer at the American University in Kabul and Doctorand at The New School, in New York.* Whilst at the Centre (October–December 2024), he was conducting research on the impact of cultural codes on Taliban policies, if they are amenable to change, and what possible ways (if any) are available to engage with them. Obaidullah's wider research is on how the world might engage with Islamist groups (like the Taliban in Afghanistan) that come to power. During this Visitorship, he published a blog, and participated in an on-site event titled **'The West, the Taliban and the Future of Afghanistan'** (mentioned above).



VISITING FELLOW OBAIDULLAH BAHEER SPEAKING ON 'THE WEST, THE TALIBAN AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN', SOAS, 4 DECEMBER 2024 (IN COLLABORATION WITH SOAS SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE, PART OF UK–SOUTH ASIA NETWORK)

SELECT BLOGS ON AFGHANISTAN

We were delighted to publish two blogposts on Afghanistan, one looking back at its glorious historical past and the other on its recent crisis of legitimacy, leading eventually to the collapse of the Republic.

- **'I am the King of Afghans ...'** (11 November 2024) by Obaidullah Baheer focused on Pir Roshan (16thc) and the long historical and cultural past of Afghanistan, wondering how a country rich in cultural traditions, hard-working people from versatile tribal groups and fierce loyalties become so politically fragile.
- **'Afghans, NOCs and Pakistan beyond 2024'** (30 December 2024) by Sahibzada Muhammad Usman looked at the issues surrounding the government of Pakistan's policy decision to deport all unregistered Afghan refugees from Pakistan.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has been working through months of Interim Government, marked by bouts of civic violence. As it looks to 2026 for national elections to elect a new government, some are concerned with new forms of intolerance and the lack of accountability. Our events and blogs this year have covered all this, and more.

We started the year with Naila Kabeer's long-awaited monograph titled ***Renegotiating Patriarchy: Gender, Agency and the Bangladesh Paradox*** (2025), published by LSE Press. Focused on Bangladesh's remarkable pro-poor, gender-equitable social progress despite poverty, poor governance, patriarchy and Islamic conservatism, Naila's book reflected her long-time research and interest in gender and its socio-economic (in)equalities in the country. Panelists Sajeda Amin from Bangladesh, Urvashi Butalia from India and Ayesha Khan whose work focuses on Pakistan – along with Hilary Standing (University of Sussex) who was Discussant – engaged with the book and wider questions arising from it, especially in the context of its dynamic argument of how Bangladesh had achieved such levels of gender parity despite other adversities, especially in comparison to other countries in South Asia. *This event was in collaboration with LSE Press.*

In January 2025, a hybrid event titled '**Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia**' discussed the significance of state institutions to protect constitutional provisions and the vitality of democracies thereby, ensuring their resilience. Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh) spoke about Bangladesh's constitutionally guaranteed institutions and the changes being considered by the Interim Government following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League government (in August 2024), with Tarun Khaitan (LSE), Yasser Kureshi (Oxford) and Dinesha Samararatne (Colombo), who spoke about India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively – a discussion of great relevance given the transgression and bypassing of constitutional guarantees in so many countries around the world. A relevant and consequential point was also about the fragility and ineffectiveness of such institutions when the leadership chose to break with customary practices. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim chaired the event, drawing attention to the importance of written Constitutions in South Asia. *This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, and in collaboration with LSE Law School.*

The following month (February 2025) marked 6 months of the Interim Government being in power, as Bangladesh's promised transition to a new democracy moved forward. **'Bangladesh: 6 Months On'** took stock of details on the ground: long-time observer and commentator on Bangladesh Paul Staniland (Chicago) was Discussant with panelists David Bergman (Journalist, *Netra News*), Imtiaz A Hussain (Independent University Bangladesh) and Amena Mohsin (Dhaka) focusing on progress made over the last 6 months. As it happened, a group attacked an demolished 32 Dhanmondi (the former residence, later museum, of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) as the event was happening, a reminder of the continuing volatility in society.

THE CHARLES WALLACE BANGLADESH TRUST POST-DOCTORAL VISITING FELLOW

Mohammad Morshedul Islam, Professor of Communication and Journalism at the University of Chittagong. As part of his Visitorship at the Centre (July–August 2025), Morshed worked on digital divide, safe internet practices and beneficial use of ICTs, focused particularly on secondary school students in Bangladesh. He published a blog (**'Cyberbullying among University Students in Bangladesh'**, 4 August 2025); he will participate in an online event in the next academic year, and will also submit a Working Paper based on his research at the Centre. Sadly, Morshed was the last Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow under this scheme at the Centre; the Trust has ended its funding of Visiting Fellows from Bangladesh to the United Kingdom.



MOHAMMAD MORSHEDUL ISLAM, LSE, AUGUST 2025.

PHOTOGRAPH © M MORSHEDUL ISLAM; USED WITH PERMISSION.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NAILA KABEER, NILANJAN SARKAR, SAJEDA AMIN, HILARY STANDING, AYESHA KHAN AND URVASHI BUTALIA AT 'BANGLADESH: THE GENDER PARADOX', 16 OCTOBER 2024.

SELECT BLOGS ON BANGLADESH

- **'Climate Change and Human Trafficking in Bangladesh'** (16 September 2024) by Aminur Rahman and Quazi Arunim Rahman examines the connected crossover between climate migrants and human trafficking in rural Bangladesh, where the impact of climate emergencies is felt with the most severity.
- **'Bangladesh: The Freedoms of 2024'** (16 December 2024) by Kazi A S M Nurul Huda looks at the new dangers for common people as unknown vistas open up for the country after the fall of the Awami League government in August 2024.
- **'The Logic of Bangladesh–India Ties'** (20 January 2025) by Ismail Ali examines the deteriorating bilateral relations between the two countries, made particularly complex by India providing asylum to Sheikh Hasina.
- **'Bangladeshi Creative Subcultures and Cultural Resilience in Toronto'** (24 February 2025) by Golam Rabbani discusses the creative subcultures in the Bangladeshi diaspora in Toronto as it finds new homes abroad.
- **'Natural Resources, Sustainable Development and Indigenous People in Bangladesh'** (21 April 2025) by Asif Ali Mahmud Akash examines the wisdom of indigenous people about sustainable use of natural resources in combating climate emergencies and mitigating disaster.

INDIA

This year was important for India's democracy, marking the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of India, declaring it a Republic for all time to come. LSE President Larry Kramer visited India in February 2025, and the Centre organised a special event in Delhi to formally launch the LSE Research and Education Foundation India.

The Centre planned a series of events to mark the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the *Constitution of India*, still the longest written and only illustrated Constitution in the world. We wanted to mark this milestone not only because of its significance for India but also because it's chief architect, Dr B R Ambedkar was an LSE alumnus, having been awarded his PhD in 1923: as Chair of the Drafting Committee, Ambedkar oversaw debates of 299 members of the Constituent Assembly from November 1946 (till its adoption on 26 January 1950), through 11 sessions totalling 166 days at the cost of INR 6.4 million (approx.).

We commissioned a special logo to mark the occasion, a series of 12 blogposts examining different aspects of the Constitution and its continuing importance in India's democracy and, as always, organised on-site and online events.

In January 2025, a hybrid event titled **'Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia'** led by Tarun Khaitan (LSE) discussed the significance of state institutions to protect constitutional provisions and the vitality of democracies thereby, ensuring their resilience. Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh), Yasser Kureshi (Oxford) and Dinesha Samararatne (Colombo) spoke about Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively – a discussion of great relevance given the transgression and bypassing of constitutional guarantees in so many countries around the world. A relevant and consequential point was also about the fragility and ineffectiveness of such institutions when the leadership chose to break with customary practices. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim chaired the event, drawing attention to the importance of written Constitutions in South Asia. *This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, and in collaboration with LSE Law School.*

In February, we travelled to Delhi as part of LSE President Larry Kramer's official tour to India. The Centre organised a special event to officially launch the **LSE Research and Education Foundation–India** (LSE REF–India) in the C D Deshmukh Auditorium at India International Centre, New Delhi. Chair of the Centre's Senior Advisory Board Nasser Munjee (LSE BSc 1974, MSc 1975) and Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India Gopal Sankaranarayanan (LSE LLM 2002) joined Larry on stage for the public meeting, which was followed by a more informal interaction between members of LSE and the 300+ attendees over refreshments. The choice of venue was intentional: in his Introduction, Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar mentioned that among early visitors to this very venue was the economist and educator Sir Sydney Caine (Director of LSE from 1957–67) who visited the IIC in 1964 for a seminar on interdisciplinary studies and social change. The venue thus built on a long history of association and interaction between LSE and India. *The event was organised in collaboration with LSE REF–India.*

Earlier, in October 2024, we convened a panel discussion on **'South Asia: Paternalism and Public Healthcare'**, focusing on paternalist attitudes toward women patients in medical systems in South Asia, looking at its impact on doctor-patient communication, decision-making, exploitation (financial), cultural-patriarchal factors, and what may be a path forward towards a more patient-centred healthcare approach. Panelists included Deen Dayal Reddy (USA) who spoke about his research in India, along with Indika Karunathilake (Colombo), and Rishita Nandagiri (King's College London) who was Discussant. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

One of the Centre's principal purposes is to publicise and draw attention to the wealth of South Asia-related archival materials in LSE Library, which we have been doing consistently for several years through events, blogposts and other activities. This year provided us with a unique opportunity: for the first time in the history of LSE Library, a set of archival materials was lent to an exhibition outside LSE when the Centre collaborated with Rochana Bajpai (SOAS) for **'After the Assembly: Constituting India'** (SOAS Gallery, 17 July–20 September 2025), part of her AHRC-funded 'Pluralist Agreement and Constitutional Transformation (PACT)' project. Daniel Brambilla-Payne (Curator for Politics and International Relations, LSE Library) selected a set of documents relating to LSE alumni who had participated in the making of the



LSE PRESIDENT LARRY KRAMER IN CONVERSATION WITH NASSER MUNJEE (CENTRE) AND GOPAL SANKARANARAYANAN (RIGHT) AT INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH 2025. PHOTOGRAPH BY DALJIT SINGH © LSE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION INDIA; USED WITH PERMISSION.



A PACKED AUDITORIUM AT INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH 2025 FOR THE PUBLIC MEETING WITH LSE PRESIDENT LARRY KRAMER. PHOTOGRAPH BY DALJIT SINGH © LSE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION INDIA; USED WITH PERMISSION.



LSE PRESIDENT LARRY KRAMER AND SOAS VICE-CHANCELLOR ADAM HABIB AT THE INAUGURATION OF 'AFTER THE ASSEMBLY: CONSTITUTING INDIA', SOAS GALLERY, 22 JULY 2025. PHOTOGRAPH © NILANJAN SARKAR; USED WITH PERMISSION.



DISPLAY OF DOCUMENTS FROM LSE ARCHIVES AT 'AFTER THE ASSEMBLY: CONSTITUTING INDIA', SOAS GALLERY. PHOTOGRAPH BY BENJAMIN DIX © THE PACT PROJECT, SOAS; USED WITH PERMISSION.

Constitution of India. These included not just B R Ambedkar but also Renuka Ray (née Mukerjee) and K T Shah. Also on display was the singular copy of Ambedkar's *The Problem of the Rupee* (1923) presented by him to his supervisor Edwin Cannan. An essay in the forthcoming catalogue of this exhibition will also include information on D N Sinha, Hansa Mehta and G L Mehta, all of whom also served in the Constituent Assembly.

Earlier in March, as part of our very successful 'Fact & Fiction' series, we hosted an online book discussion on the recently published ***India's Near East: A New History*** (2024) by Avinash Paliwal (SOAS). Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar and LSE REF–India Co-Director Abhilash Puljal co-chaired the event, with panelists Sreeradha Datta (JGU, Sonapat) who has published on India-Bangladesh relations, and Khin Zaw Win (Tampadipa Institute, Yangon), activist and commentator, who provided a valuable perspective from the 'other' side, given Myanmar's strategic importance as a country that traverses both South and Southeast Asia. *The event was organised in collaboration with LSE REF–India.*

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, SREERADHA DUTTA, KHIN ZAW WIN, AVINASH PALIWAL AND ABHILASH PULJAL AT 'INDIA: THE EASTERN FRONT', 5 MARCH 2025 (IN COLLABORATION WITH LSE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION INDIA).



SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED LOGO TO MARK 75 YEARS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA © LSE SOUTH ASIA CENTRE. LOGO DESIGNED BY OROON DAS.

'CONSTITUTION OF INDIA @ 75' BLOGS

'South Asia @ LSE' is the Centre's flagship blog with nearly 500,000 visitors annually, and ranked 8th out of 40+ LSE blogs. The Centre commissioned a series of special blogposts (January–December 2025) to mark 'Constitution of India @ 75', cutting across disciplines, themes and perspectives to examine the uniqueness and radicalism of the text when it was compiled, its continuing relevance and ownership by citizens of India.

- **'Fraternity or Political Love: Looking at the Preamble of the Constitution of India'** (13 January) by Aakash Singh Rathore discusses the idea of *maitri* (fraternity), introduced by Ambedkar in the Preamble, and the fundamental nuance it brings to the codification of India as a Republic.
- **'The Linguistic Cosmopolitanism of the Constitution of India'** (17 February) by Javed Majeed unpacks the text of the *Constitution* through a nuanced analysis of its language and conscious choice of terms and phrases, to reveal the fundamentally cosmopolitan imagination of the nation.

- **'The Election Commission and the Constitution of India'** (17 March) by Zoya Hasan outlines how increasing control of the Election Commission (guaranteed in the *Constitution*) by the Executive is impacting its capacity to fulfil its task.
- **'Reclaiming the Constitution through its Founding Mothers'** (14 April) by Achyut Chetan is particularly special because he talks about the women members of the Constituent Assembly (the 'Founding Mothers') and their contributions which made the *Constitution* a more nuanced, inclusive, equal and better document.
- **'Tools of Justice in the Constitution of India'** (12 May) by Kalpana Kannabiran focuses on what happens when we read Articles (in the *Constitution*) on 'Non-Discrimination' and 'Liberty' alongside one another, arguing with illustrative legal judgements, the faultlines, challenges and opportunities embedded in an intersectional reading of the text.
- **'Narrativising India's Constitution: Where Dalit Experientiality meets Theory'** (16 June) by Prashant Kumar reflects the youth's view on how the *Constitution's* anchoring in universal equality was unacceptable to may at the time.
- **'Ambedkar's Constitutionalism after 75 Years'** (14 July) by Mangesh Dahiwalé discusses the central tenets of Ambedkar's constitutionalism, arguing how the man and his core ideas need to be recalled loudly at this time.
- **'Civilising the Hindu "Rashtra": Decoloniality's Tryst with Nativist Palingenesis'** (11 August) by Tarun Khaitan argues against the idea that the current Constitution needs to be repudiated because of its 'foreign' influences.

Upcoming blogposts in this series will look at federalism, art, and equality and discrimination.

MYANMAR

As Myanmar continues to be torn by civil war and local territorial military groups gain control over more and more areas, an election is promised by the *junta* in 2026 ostensibly to restore democratic order. As always, earlier issues (like the plight of the displaced Rohingyas) is overtaken by newer stories.

Avinash Paliwal's much-awaited book *India's Near East: A New History* (2024) on India's eastern borders, its complex relationship with Bangladesh and Myanmar, the basis of its 'Look East' policy, started off our book discussion events in Winter Term. Avinash's masterful summary was followed by extensive comments from Sreeradha Datta (JGU, Sonapat) whose research is on Indo-Bangladesh relations, and Khin Zaw Win (Tampadipa Institute, Yangon), veteran commentator and activist in Myanmar who opened up the book's Indian perspective from the 'other' side. Both panelists brought to the discussion an especially unique flavour, giving it a more rounded texture since Bangladesh and Myanmar have been historically connected to India in different ways. *This event was in collaboration with LSE REF-India.*

We ended the academic year with a discussion on the Rohingyas – somehow, it seemed as though the hectic pace of global events, as well as those in South Asia, seemed to have pushed the Rohingyas out of news columns and discussions even as their plight got worse rather than better. **'Rohingyas: Have We Forgotten Them?'** was curated in the hope of drawing attention to this pressing humanitarian crisis from which the world seems to have moved on. Panelists Mabrur Ahmed (Restless Beings UK), Tun Khin (Burmese Rohingya Association UK), Ronan Lee (Loughborough University-London), and Shafiur Rahman (Independent Journalist), each of whom has worked closely with the Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh, discussed the various complex issues that continue to mar their lives in both countries; Penny Green (QMUL) was Discussant and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar chaired the event.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MABRUR AHMED, NILANJAN SARKAR, PENNY GREEN, RONAN LEE, TUN KHIN AND SHAFIUR RAHMAN AT 'ROHINGYAS: HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THEM?', 4 JUNE 2025.

SELECT BLOGS ON MYANMAR

- **'Back to "Normal": Rethinking State–Society Relations in Myanmar'** (12 August 2024) by Htet Hlaing Win argues that successive governments in Myanmar have, in fact, never wanted to serve the people, taking cue from pre-modern rulers who believed in serving and protecting religion over people.
- **'Myanmar's Predicament: Civil War and Foreign Encroachment'** (9 December 2024) by Khin Zaw Win examines the changing geopolitical dynamics of Myanmar, with China and the US showing increasing interest in the country, already fractured by the ongoing civil war.
- **'Strategic Gamble: The Arakan Army, Rakhine and India'** (10 March 2025) by Tin Shine Aung discusses how Myanmar's civil war impacts neighbouring countries like India, for instance with the capture of Paletwa (in Chin State of Myanmar) by an Ethnic Armed Group.
- **'Imperial Entanglement: Burmese Pilots in the Battle of Britain'** (5 May 2025) by Thurein Naing tells the little-known story of four Burmese pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain.

NEPAL

The Centre curated two events that highlighted the complex nature of Nepal's economy: one on the lack of disaster relief for the country's returning labour force during the Covid-19 pandemic; the other on its emerging status in regional trade in South Asia.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant the return of migrant labour to Nepal, exposing the unjust lack of support and provisions for them. Led by Principal Investigator Nimesh Dhungana (Manchester), the project titled 'Demanding a Just Recovery from Below: The Role of Grassroots Accountability Activism in Safeguarding Labour Migrants' Rights in the Pandemic Era' (funded by AFSEE-LSE) was the starting point for a panel discussion titled '**Nepal: Disaster, Labour Justice & Rights**'. The wide-ranging discussion looked at innovative forms of solidarity and rights-based movements as competing frames, as newer political strategies are invented for a just recovery from the pandemic. Panelists included co-investigators of the project Narayan Adhikari (Accountability Lab Nepal, Kathmandu), Kripa Basnyat (ILO Nepal) and Flora Cornish (LSE), with Neha Choudhary (ILO Ethiopia) and Banhishikha Ghosh (University of Sunderland-London) as Discussants. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NIMESH DHUNGANA, NILANJAN SARKAR, BANHISHIKHA GHOSH, KRIPA BASNYAT, NEHA CHOUDHARY, NARAYAN ADHIKARI AND FLORA CORNISH AT 'NEPAL: DISASTER, LABOUR JUSTICE AND RIGHTS', 19 MARCH 2025.



BLOGPOST ON LABOUR EXODUS FROM NEPAL BY VIDHU PRAKASH KAYASTHA (2 SEPTEMBER 2024), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

In May, we engaged with an important query: why is regional trade between countries of South Asia so low, when there is such enormous potential for economic prosperity for all nations if they could be able to work together despite political tensions in **'South Asia: Regional Trade & Prosperity'**. Panelists included Yurendra Basnett (ADB, Manila) who spoke on Nepal, along with Pankhuri Gaur (Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries, Delhi), and Asanka Wijesinghe (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka), with Swati Dhingra (LSE) as Discussant. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar were Co-Chairs.

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.

SELECT BLOGS ON NEPAL

- **'How Development Failures Fuel Labour Exodus in Nepal'** (2 September 2024) by Vidhu Prakash Kayastha discusses the various factors that have led to labour migration from Nepal, and why this will continue unless there are radical changes to the system.
- **'Transitional Justice in Post-Conflict Nepal'** (9 June 2025) by Meena Bhatta examines Nepal's post-conflict 'Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' that were established to heal wounds and close a painful past, and why they have failed.

PAKISTAN

The Centre's focus on Pakistan has continued apace, and we were delighted to have started the academic year with an event with our Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow. Other events and blogposts reflected Pakistan's importance in the region.

With Aisha Jalil (NUST, Islamabad) who had been Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow at the Centre last year (January–April 2024), we convened a panel discussion in October 2024 on **'South Asia: Paternalism and Public Healthcare'**, focusing on paternalist attitudes toward women patients in medical systems in South Asia, looking at its impact on doctor-patient communication, decision-making, exploitation (financial), cultural-patriarchal factors, and what may be a path toward a more patient-centred healthcare approach. Panelists included Indika Karunathilake (Colombo), Deen Dayal Reddy (USA), and Rishita Nandagiri (King's College London) who was Discussant. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

In January 2025, a hybrid event titled **'Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia'** discussed the significance of state institutions to protect constitutional provisions and the vitality of democracies thereby, ensuring their resilience. Yasser Kureshi (Oxford) spoke about Pakistan's constitutionally guaranteed institutions, with Tarun Khaitan (LSE), Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh) and Dinesha Samararatne (Colombo), who spoke about Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka respectively – a discussion of great relevance given the transgression and bypassing of constitutional guarantees in so many countries around the world. A relevant and consequential point was also about the fragility and ineffectiveness of such institutions when the leadership chose to break with customary practices. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim chaired the event, drawing attention to the importance of written Constitutions in South Asia. *This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, and in collaboration with LSE Law School.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, AISHA JALIL, INDIKA KARUNATILAKE, DEEN DAYAL REDDY AND RISHITA NANDAGIRI AT 'SOUTH ASIA: PATERNALISM AND PUBLIC HEALTHCARE', 9 OCTOBER 2024.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, SANAA ALIMIA, OMER AL-GHAZZI, SONJA KRETZSCHMAR AND AYESHA JAHANGIR AT 'PAKISTAN: AFGHAN REFUGEES, IDENTITY-MAKING AND STATE POLICY', 27 NOVEMBER 2024.

An online book discussion, part of our very successful 'Fact & Fiction' series, focused on the vexed question of Afghans (especially refugees) in Pakistan, since the government of Pakistan had recently announced the forcible repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees; the two countries share a porous border, with historical, unregulated movement of people in both directions. Ayesha Jahangir's ***Afghan Refugees, Pakistani Media and the State: The Missing Peace*** (2024) provided the opportunity to discuss not just this bilateral issue but also the role of the media in (mis)representing it, enabling a discussion on vested media narratives and identity-making of the 'Other' that blights so many countries. Omar al-Ghazzi (LSE), who specialises in the geopolitics of global communications (especially in relation to news media and popular culture) was Discussant alongside panelists Sanaa Alimia (AKU, London), Syed Irfan Ashraf (University of Peshawar) and Sonja Kretzschmar (University of Bundeswehr Munich). They discussed the many relevant questions the book raises (and addresses) from different perspectives. Sanaa brought an especially relevant perspective, given her research on how Afghans and Afghan refugees had changed urban Pakistan.

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.

SELECT BLOGS ON PAKISTAN

The Centre receives a regular stream of research-based blogs focused on Pakistan. The following is a select list representing the variety of topics we covered in 2024-25:

- **'Are Elections Characterised by Rent-Seeking in Pakistan?'** (30 September 2025) by Muhammad Zeeshan Younus examines 'rent-seeking' in Pakistan's elections, its unregulated campaign funds that far exceed limits set by the Election Commission.
- **'Pakistan: A Civilian Nuclear Program to fight Natural Disasters?'** (25 November 2024) by Syeda Saba Batool argues for the benefits of a civilian nuclear program to fight climate emergencies that have adversely impacted Pakistan in recent times.

- **'Making Sense of Khan-era Politics in Pakistan'** (3 February 2025) by Ayaz Ahmed Siddiqui looks at the enduring popularity of Imran Khan, Pakistan's beleaguered former Prime Minister and one-time cricketing hero, now imprisoned by the current establishment.
- **'Balochistan: CPEC, Anti-China Sentiment and the Way Ahead'** (19 May 2025) by Muneeb Salman and Saeeda Usmani discusses the unrest in Balochistan aimed at the Pakistani state but directed at Chinese nationals and interests in the region.
- **'Harvesting Inequality: Gender, Agriculture and Climate Change in Pakistan'** (21 July 2025) by Palwasha Khan looks at various issues concerning the female agricultural labour force in Pakistan, a group that is most affected by climate emergencies.



BLOGPOST ON PAKISTAN'S CIVILIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM BY SYEDA SABA BATOOL (25 NOVEMBER 2024), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

SRI LANKA

This was an important year for Sri Lanka, as it emerged from a period of dramatic political change and instability with a new government. There were two successive elections – Presidential and Parliamentary – and both were won by a left-of-Centre political party, ushering in a new era of national politics.

We convened a panel discussion in October 2024 on **'South Asia: Paternalism and Public Healthcare'**, focusing on paternalist attitudes toward women patients in medical systems in South Asia, looking at its impact on doctor-patient communication, decision-making, exploitation (financial), cultural-patriarchal factors, and what may be a path toward a more patient-centred healthcare approach. Panelists included Indika Karunathilake (Colombo), Deen Dayal Reddy (USA), and Rishita Nandagiri (King's College London) who was Discussant. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

Sri Lanka has seen two national elections leading to dramatic political change, and it seemed apt to begin the year with a discussion titled **'Sri Lanka: Elections and Political Change'**, focused on Pradeep Peiris's *Catch-All Parties and Party-Voter Nexus in Sri Lanka* (2022), one of the few monographs that analyses the dynamics and factors impacting general elections in the country. Panelists Farzana Haniffa (University of Colombo) and Soosaipillai Keethaponcalan (Salisbury University, USA) discussed the book in the context of their own research (Keethaponcalan's monograph is titled *Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka: Presidential Elections, Manipulation and Democracy* (2022)) and observations about the more recent elections which has brought a new politics to power. Alan Keenan, who is Senior Consultant for Sri Lanka at the International Crisis Group in London and has studied the country for several decades was Discussant. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar were Co-Chairs.

In January 2025, a hybrid event titled **'Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia'** led by Tarun Khaitan (LSE) discussed the significance of state institutions to protect constitutional provisions and the vitality of democracies thereby, ensuring their resilience. Dinesha Samararatne (Colombo) spoke about institutions in Sri Lanka, a country that had recently seen dramatic political upheaval with elections ushering in a new era in national politics, along with Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh), Tarun Khaitan (LSE) and Yasser

Kureshi (Oxford) who spoke about Bangladesh, India and Pakistan respectively – a discussion of great relevance given the transgression and bypassing of constitutional guarantees in so many countries around the world. A relevant and consequential point was also about the fragility and ineffectiveness of such institutions when the leadership chose to break with customary practices. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim chaired the event, drawing attention to the importance of written Constitutions in South Asia. *This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, and in collaboration with LSE Law School.*

In May, we engaged with an important query: why is regional trade between countries of South Asia so low, when there is such enormous potential for economic prosperity for all nations if they could be able to work together despite political tensions. **'South Asia: Regional Trade & Prosperity'** discussed precisely this question: what a regional trade strategy may look like, and what economic muscle and impact it could muster to make South Asia a formidable economic bloc? Panelists included Asanka Wijesinghe (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka) who spoke about Sri Lanka, along with Yurendra Basnett (ADB, Manila) who spoke on Nepal, Pankhuri Gaur (Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries, Delhi), with Swati Dhingra (LSE) as Discussant. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar were Co-Chairs.

Our **'6 Months On'** series of events have been very successful, drawing animated online audiences as we analyse progress in different countries in the region 6 months after a watershed political moment. So, as the newly-elected government in Sri Lanka marked 6 months in office, our panel **'Sri Lanka: 6 Months On'** discussed the current economic and political situation, and looking ahead, what needed to be done in different sectors domestically, regionally and globally for the country to emerge as a confident and stable power. Panelists included Harsha Amarasekera (Colombo Port City Economic Commission), Farzana Haniffa (University of Colombo) and Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu (Centre for Policy Alternatives, Colombo), with Alan Keenan (International Crisis Group, London) as Discussant. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar were Co-Chairs.

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, NAUFEL VILCASSIM, FARZANA HANIFFA, ALAN KEENAN, PAIKIASOTHY SARAVANAMUTTU AND HARSHA AMARASEKERA AT 'SRI LANKA: 6 MONTHS ON', 14 MAY 2025.

SELECT BLOGS ON SRI LANKA

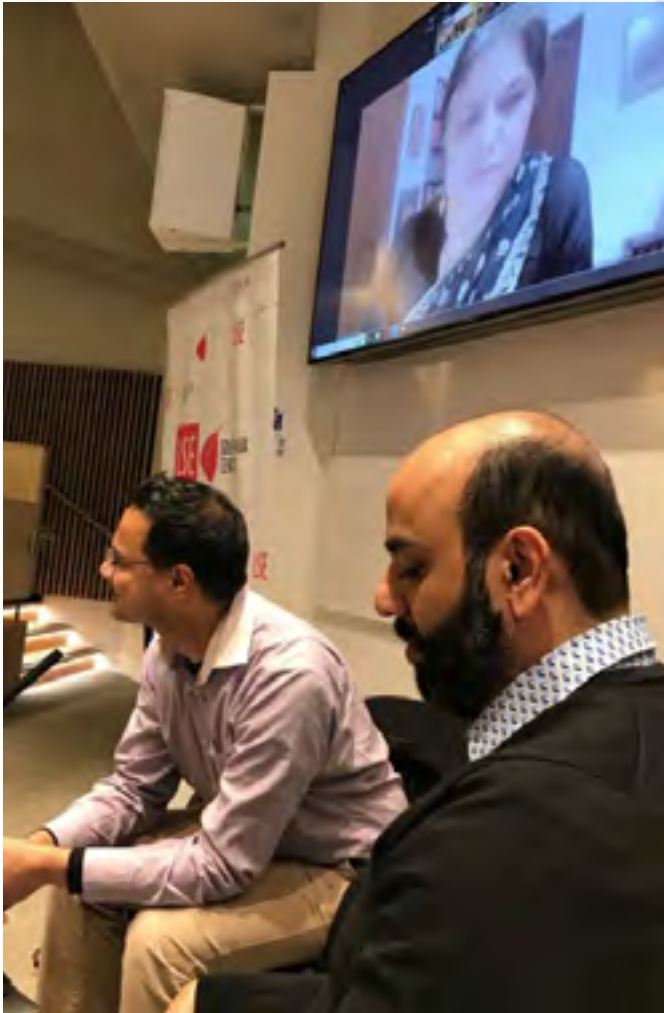
- **'The 17th IMF Program in Sri Lanka'** (5 August 2024) by Talal Rafi examines the severe conditions of the latest support package for Sri Lanka's embittered economy, once the strongest economy in South Asia.
- **'Sri Lanka Swipes Left in Landmark Presidential Election'** (7 October 2024) by Arvind Mohan reflects on the predicted, and new, outcome of the Presidential election which has, for the first time in the history of the country, brought a Left-of-Centre government to power.
- **'Sri Lanka Goes to the Polls (Again)'** (4 November 2024) by Alan J Keenan analyses the issues for the country to consider in the upcoming Parliamentary elections after the newly-elected president called snap elections.
- **'IMF and Recent Fiscal Performance in Sri Lanka'** (23 June 2025) by Tharindu Udayanga Kamburawala examines the economic performance of the newly-elected Sri Lankan government, functioning perforce within the strict terms and conditions of the IMF's support package.

SOUTH ASIA

The complex dynamic and reality of South Asia, stretching from Afghanistan to Myanmar and including two island nations (Maldives and Sri Lanka), gives us the privilege of curating events that cover multiple countries, as well as the seas and oceans. This year was particularly interesting – both in our events as well as in the blogposts we published.

The Centre hosted Aisha Jalil (NUST, Islamabad) as Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust Visiting Fellow (January–April 2024), and part of her requirement as Visiting Fellow was to participate in an event. We convened a panel discussion in October 2024 on **'South Asia: Paternalism and Public Healthcare'**, focusing on paternalist attitudes toward women patients in medical systems in South Asia, looking at its impact on doctor-patient communication, decision-making, exploitation (financial), cultural-patriarchal factors, and what may be a path toward a more patient-centred healthcare approach. Panelists included Indika Karunathilake (Colombo), Deen Dayal Reddy (USA), and Rishita Nandagiri (King's College London) who was Discussant. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

In January 2025, a hybrid event titled **'Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia'** led by Tarun Khaitan (LSE) discussed the significance of state institutions to protect constitutional provisions and the vitality of democracies thereby, ensuring their resilience. Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh), Yasser Kureshi (Oxford) and Dinesha Samararatne (Colombo) spoke about Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively – a discussion of great relevance given the transgression and bypassing of constitutional guarantees in so many countries around the world. A relevant and consequential point was also about the fragility and ineffectiveness of such institutions when the leadership chose to break with customary practices. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim chaired the event, drawing attention to the importance of written Constitutions in South Asia. *This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, and in collaboration with LSE Law School.*



TARUN KHAITAN (LEFT) AND YASSER KURESHI (RIGHT) WITH SARA HOSSAIN (ON THE SCREEN) AT 'GUARANTOR INSTITUTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH ASIA', LSE, 29 JANUARY 2025 (IN COLLABORATION WITH LSE LAW SCHOOL).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NAUFEL VILCASSIM, NILANJAN SARKAR, PANKHURI GAUR, YURENDRA BASNETT, SWATI DHINGRA AND ASANKA WIJESINGHE AT 'SOUTH ASIA: REGIONAL TRADE AND PROSPERITY', 29 MAY 2025.

We ended the year's book discussion series focusing on the Indo-Pacific, an increasingly significant geopolitical zone, coveted by many, and holding the potential to (re)define the global order. Darshana Baruah's ***The Contest for the Indian Ocean and the Making of a New World Order*** (2024) brought together Nicolas Blarel (Leiden University), Jivanta Schottli (Dublin City University) and Alice Engelhard (LSE), along with Rohan Mukherjee (LSE) as Discussant. The discussion was fascinating: how the ocean that frames the borders of so many important nations in the region, historically significant for various realities of trade and migration, has now gained prominence for its strategic importance. Examining attempts by nation-states to control and command this fluid empire holds the key to understanding why it could redefine world order, and therefore, why it is its own danger.

In May, we engaged with an important query: why is regional trade between countries of South Asia so low, when there is such enormous potential for economic prosperity for all nations if they could be able to work together despite political tensions.

'South Asia: Regional Trade & Prosperity' discussed precisely this question, what a regional trade strategy may look like, and what economic muscle and impact it could muster to make South Asia a formidable economic bloc? Panelists included Yurendra Basnett (ADB, Manila), Pankhuri Gaur (Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries, Delhi), and Asanka Wijesinghe (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka), with Swati Dhingra (LSE) as Discussant. Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar were Co-Chairs.

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.



SELECT BLOGS ON SOUTH ASIA

- **'Cultocracy in Pakistan-India and the Rationality of Gen Z'** (21 October 2024) by Nuzhat Tariq discusses the changing profile of political leadership in South Asia, often focused on populist charismatic appeal of a single leader.
- **'Air Pollution in South Asia: Harnessing City and Science Diplomacy'** (2 December 2024) by Muhammed Ittefaq makes the case of 'city diplomacy' and 'science diplomacy' in tandem to address air pollution in countries like India and Pakistan.
- **'South Asia and the Wellbeing Economy'** (10 February 2025) by M Munib Zia Khan argues for a 'wellbeing economy' model to measure economic growth and prosperity in South Asia.
- **'Women and Benefits of Gig Economy in South Asia'** (7 April 2025) by Kapila Chinthaka Premarathne looks at new challenges for the female labour force in both rural and urban settings across the region triggered by climate emergencies, and wonders if internet-facilitated gig economy work may be an alternative source of income for women.
- **'From Refugee to Slur: "Rohingya" as Signifier of Otherness in Everyday Bangladesh'** (30 June 2025) by Galib Mahmud Pasha discusses how 'Rohingya' has become a slur in Bangladesh, stripped of its originality and repurposed to signify displacement, marginality and threat.



BLOGPOST ON A WELLBEING ECONOMY IN SOUTH ASIA BY M MUNIB ZIA (10 FEBRUARY 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS

Geopolitics is something that has always been of great interest to the Centre given its dynamic potential in determining and/or impacting global events. This year, as we witnessed alarming changes to customary practices, it was obvious that RBIO as we had known it was set to change.

We continued our very successful series with its eighth event, this time focusing on changing geopolitics in the world (not just South Asia). Recent political developments have seriously challenged the Rules-Based International Order (RBIO) that has, for long, ordered global dynamics. Decisions and actions by China, India, Russia, and Turkey indicate clear departures, a new President in the US whose slogan of ‘America First’ has won him a second term in office, the rising popularity of right-wing politics in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere in Europe, the Israel-Palestine war, the ousting of Assad in Syria and Hasina in Bangladesh – all point to a dramatic change of the global order in 2025. Our panel discussion **‘2025: A New World Order?’** reflected this: panelists Michael Cox (LSE), Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (London Metropolitan University) and Helene Sjørnsen (University of Oslo) pondered on this question, with Jerome Roos (LSE) as Discussant. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

Another event, not part of the series above but no less about geopolitics beyond borders focused on the Indo-Pacific, an increasingly significant geopolitical zone, coveted by many, and holding the potential to (re)define the global order. Darshana Baruah’s ***The Contest for the Indian Ocean and the Making of a New World Order*** (2024) brought together Nicolas Blarel (Leiden University), Jivanta Schottli (Dublin City University) and Alice Engelhard (LSE), along with Rohan Mukherjee (LSE) as Discussant. The discussion was fascinating: how the ocean that frames the borders of so many important nations in the region, historically significant for various realities of trade and migration, has now gained prominence for its strategic importance. Examining attempts by nation-states to control and command this fluid empire holds the key to understanding why it could redefine world order, and therefore, why it is its own danger. The event was chaired by Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar.

A recording of these events is available on the Centre’s website.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, AHMET ERDI ÖZTÜRK, MICHAEL COX, JEROME ROOS AND HELENE SJURSEN AT '2025: A NEW WORLD ORDER', 12 FEBRUARY 2025.

SELECT BLOGS ON GEOPOLITICS

- **'South Asia: Navigating the New Cold War'** (9 September 2024) by Bharat Singh discusses the emerging new world order, and a new 'cold war' where China and Russia are pushing back US interest in South Asia.
- **'Century Tales: Subaltern Smugglers in South Asia'** (6 January 2025) by Shagnick Bhattacharya tells the story of lascars at sea in the Interwar period, some of whom became subaltern smugglers, creating an unforeseen problem for imperial Britain already fighting anti-colonial sentiments in South Asia.
- **'Pahalgam 2025: Analysing YouTube Comments across South Asia'** (26 May 2025) by Anurug Chakma analyses how citizens of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan engaged with the terrorist attack in Pahalgam (India) on social media platforms.
- **'Revitalising SAARC: Why Women's Leadership is the Missing Piece in South Asia's Regional Puzzle'** (7 July 2025) by Eva Nappert argues that the current SAARC stalemate which has rendered it completely defunct (because of tensions between India and Pakistan) may be overcome if women are appointed in leadership roles given their track record in being able to work with, and overcome, difficult situations for mutual benefit and interest. *Winner of the Vera Anstey South Asia Essay Competition Best Essay 2024-25 award.*

FACT AND FICTION

Our book discussion series remains the most popular event that we curate every year, always drawing a loyal audience and fostering animated discussions. It has also allowed us to bring LSE faculty and other academics together in conversation to discuss recent developments in research. This year, we were able to cover 5 different countries/regions, and also to collaborate with LSE Press for our first event together.

We started the year with Naila Kabeer's long-awaited and recent monograph titled ***Renegotiating Patriarchy: Gender, Agency and the Bangladesh Paradox*** (2025), published by LSE Press. Focused on Bangladesh's remarkable pro-poor, gender-equitable social progress despite poverty, poor governance, patriarchy and Islamic conservatism, Naila's book reflected her long-time research and interest in gender and its socio-economic (in)equalities in the country. Panelists Sajeda Amin from Bangladesh, Urvashi Butalia from India, and Ayesha Khan whose work focuses on Pakistan — along with Hilary Standing (University of Sussex) who was Discussant — engaged with the book and wider questions arising from it, particularly in the context of its dynamic argument of how Bangladesh had achieved such levels of gender parity despite other adversities, especially in comparison to other countries in South Asia. *This event was in collaboration with LSE Press.*

Sri Lanka has seen dramatic political change, and it seemed an apt moment to curate a discussion titled 'Sri Lanka: Elections and Political Change', focused on Pradeep Peiris's ***Catch-All Parties and Party-Voter Nexus in Sri Lanka*** (2022), one of the few monographs that analyses the dynamics and factors impacting general elections in the country. Panelists Farzana Haniffa (University of Colombo) and Soosaipillai Keethaponcalan (Salisbury University, USA) discussed the book in the context of their own research (Keethaponcalan's monograph is titled *Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka: Presidential Elections, Manipulation and Democracy* (2022)) and observations about the more recent elections which has brought a new politics to power. Alan Keenan, who is Senior Consultant for Sri Lanka at the International Crisis Group in London and has studied the country for several decades, was Discussant, with Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and Deputy Director Nilanjan Sarkar as Co-Chairs.

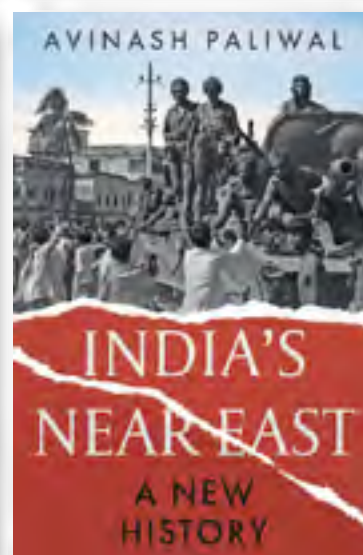
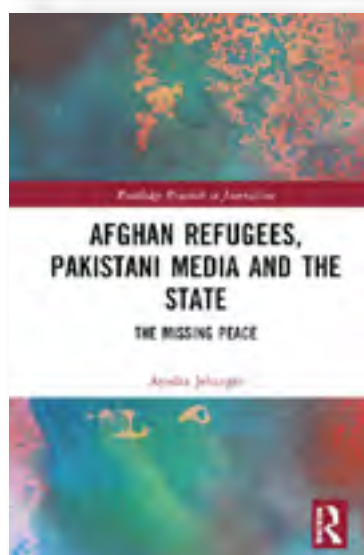
Another important book event focused on the vexed question of Afghans (especially refugees) in Pakistan, especially since the government had recently announced the forcible repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees; the two countries share a

porous border, with historical, unregulated movement of people in both directions. Ayesha Jahangir's ***Afghan Refugees, Pakistani Media and the State: The Missing Peace*** (2024) provided the opportunity to discuss not just this bilateral issue but also the role of the media in (mis)representing it, enabling a discussion on vested media narratives and identity-making of the 'Other' that blights so many countries. Omar al-Ghazzi (LSE), who specialises in the geopolitics of global communications (especially in relation to news media and popular culture) was Discussant alongside panelists Sanaa Alimia (AKU, London), Syed Irfan Ashraf (University of Peshawar) and Sonja Kretzschmar (University of Bundeswehr Munich). They discussed the many relevant questions the book raises (and addresses) from different perspectives. Sanaa brought an especially relevant perspective, given her research on how Afghans and Afghan refugees had changed urban Pakistan.

Avinash Paliwal's book ***India's Near East: A New History*** (2024) on India's eastern borders, its complex relationship with Bangladesh and Myanmar, the basis of its 'Look East' policy, started off our book discussion events in Winter Term. Avinash's masterful summary was followed by extensive comments from Sreeratha Datta (JGU, Sonapat) whose research is on Indo-Bangladesh relations, and Khin Zaw Win (Tampadipa Institute, Yangon), veteran commentator and activist in Myanmar who opened up the book's Indian perspective from the 'other' side. Both panelists brought to the discussion an especially unique flavour, giving it a more rounded texture since Bangladesh and Myanmar have been historically connected to contemporary India in different ways. *This event was in collaboration with LSE REF-India.*

We ended the year's book discussion series focused on the Indo-Pacific, an increasingly significant geopolitical zone, coveted by many, and holding the potential to (re)define the global order. Darshana Baruah's ***The Contest for the Indian Ocean and the Making of a New World Order*** (2024) brought together Nicolas Blarel (Leiden University), Jivanta Schottli (Dublin City University) and Alice Engelhard (LSE), along with Rohan Mukherjee (LSE) as Discussant. The discussion was fascinating: how the ocean that frames the borders of so many important nations in the region, historically significant for various realities of trade and migration, has now gained prominence for its strategic importance. Examining attempts by nation-states to control and command this fluid empire holds the key to understanding why it could redefine world order, and therefore, why it is its own danger.

Recordings of these book discussions are available on the Centre's website.



BOOKS DISCUSSED IN
OUR 'FACT & FICTION'
SERIES IN 2024/25.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, NAUFEL VILCASSIM, FARZANA HANIFFA, PRADEEP PEIRIS, SOOSAIPILLAI KEETHAPONCALAN AND ALEX KEENAN AT 'SRI LANKA: ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL CHANGE', 30 OCTOBER 2024.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NILANJAN SARKAR, DARSHANA BARUAH, ALICE ENGELHARD, ROHAN MUKHERJEE AND NICOLAS BLAREL AT 'NAVIGATING GEOPOLITICS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN', 13 MARCH 2025.

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 and 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.

The Vera Anstey Essay Competition remains one of the most popular student-focused activities of the Centre. Active from 2020–21, the competition was established in honour of Vera Anstey (1889–1967), alumnus and Reader in Economics, who had a lifelong interest in and association with India/South Asia and was author of *Introduction to Economics for Students in India and Pakistan* (1964).

The competition is open to 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 and Joint Masters students.

Eva Nappert (MSc in International Political Economy) won the first prize (£250 book vouchers from Waterstones) for her winning essay on **‘Revitalising SAARC: Why Women’s Leadership is the Missing Piece in South Asia’s Regional Puzzle’** (for the topic **‘SAARC should be Revived to Make South Asia a Global Powerhouse’**), arguing that the current SAARC stalemate which has rendered it completely defunct (because of tensions between India and Pakistan)

may be overcome if women are appointed in leadership roles given their track record in being able to work with, and overcome, difficult situations for mutual benefit and interest.

Commenting on the winning essay, the jury said:

'A convincing essay on the need for more equal gender representation in SAARC leadership. The essay is strong not just in its identification of the policy implications of unequal gender representation but also in its engagement with the scholarship on this topic. It rightly points out the demonstrable benefits that greater gender equality has had in other policy initiatives in South Asia, convincingly making the argument for similar institutional benefits to SAARC...'

The essay was published on the Centre's 'South Asia @ LSE' blog on 7 July 2025.



EVA NAPPERT (MASTERS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY), WINNER OF THE VERA ANSTEY STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION 2024/25.



WINNING BLOGPOST ON REVITALISING SAARC BY EVA NAPPERT (7 JULY 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

VISITING FELLOWS

The Centre welcomes Visiting Fellows from different countries in South Asia; this year was no different, and we were delighted to welcome three Visiting Fellows with very different research projects, connecting them with LSE faculty with similar interests, and providing them with a positive academic environment in which they are able to conduct research. Their presence is always mutually beneficial, both for us at LSE and for them in their research.

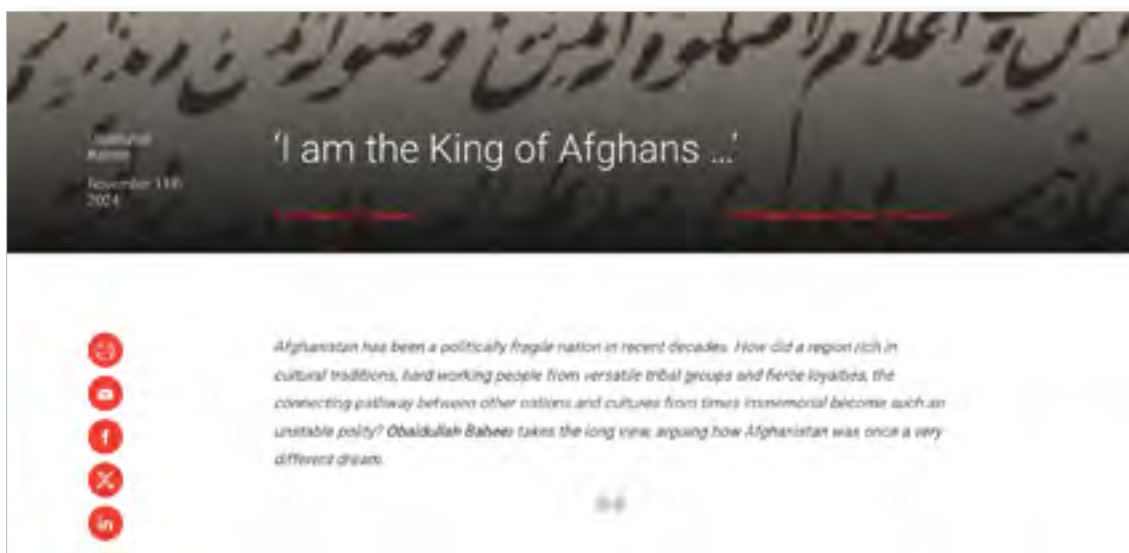
Obaidullah Baheer, *Adjunct Lecturer at the American University in Kabul and Doctorand at The New School, New York*. Whilst at the Centre (October–December 2024), he was conducting research on the impact of cultural codes on Taliban policies, if they are amenable to change, and what possible ways (if any) are available to engage with them. Obaidullah's wider research is on how the world might engage with Islamist groups (like the Taliban in Afghanistan) that come to power. During this Visitorship, he published a blog on Pir Roshan (**'I am the King of Afghans ...'**, 11 November 2024), participated in an online event on ... as well as an on-site event titled **'The West, the Taliban and the Future of Afghanistan'**, which the Centre co-hosted with the SOAS South Asia Institute (as part of the UK-South Asia Network) – with Quhrmaana Kakar (LSE) and Graeme Smith (International Crisis Group, London) as panelists, and Centre Director Naufel Vilcassim and SOAS SSAI Director Subir Sinha as Co-Chairs.

THE CHARLES WALLACE BANGLADESH TRUST POST-DOCTORAL VISITING FELLOW

Mohammad Morshedul Islam, *Professor of Communication and Journalism at the University of Chittagong*. As part of his Visitorship at the Centre (July–August 2025), Morshed worked on digital divide, safe internet practices and beneficial use of ICTs, focused particularly on secondary school students in Bangladesh. He published a blog (**'Cyberbullying among University Students in Bangladesh'**, 4 August 2025); he will participate in an online event in the next academic year, and will also submit a Working Paper based on his research at the Centre. Sadly, Morshed was the last Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow under this scheme at the Centre; the Trust has ended its funding of Visiting Fellows from Bangladesh to the United Kingdom.

THE CHARLES WALLACE MYANMAR TRUST VISITING FELLOW

Kyawe Phyo Phyo Aye, *Founding Director of ProEthics Solutions* in Yangon which works in child labour prevention, young worker protection and social compliance audits has been selected as the next Visiting Fellow from Myanmar. She will take up her Fellowship in September–November 2025.



BLOGPOST ON PIR ROSHAN BY OBAIDULLAH BAHEER (11 NOVEMBER 2024), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.



BLOGPOST ON CYBERBULLYING AMONG STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH BY M MORSHEDUL ISLAM (4 AUGUST 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

WORKING WITH LSE

Our principal mandate is to work with LSE academics and researchers, showcasing their inter- and multi-disciplinary expertise across a range of topics. Over the years, we have also worked closely with LSE Library, publicising its archives relating to South Asia, and with LSE students, helping them in their activities and providing in-house training as Research Assistants at the Centre.

'TRACES OF SOUTH ASIA' WITH LSE LIBRARY

Over the last several years, the Centre has held online events, organised public exhibitions, and published several blogposts as part of the 'Traces of South Asia' project with LSE Library, details of which are available in *Reports* of earlier years.



We have worked continuously with LSE Library to publicise its archival resources relating to South Asia, and are proud to have brought less-known but important archives (relevant both to diaspora studies as well as others) to the attention of the reading public. ”

One of our most successful collaborations has been an online exhibition on the 'father' of the *Constitution of India* Dr B R Ambedkar; titled '**Educate. Agitate. Organise. Ambedkar at LSE**'. Launched in 2021, the exhibition is the most visited online exhibition in the history of LSE Library, with nearly half a million visitors.

This year, we went a step further. As part of the 75th anniversary of the *Constitution of India* of 1950 – which remains the world's longest written, and only illustrated, Constitution in the world – Nilanjan Sarkar (Deputy Director) and Daniel Brambilla-Payne (Curator for Politics and International Relations, LSE Library) collaborated with Professor Rochana Bajpai (SOAS) and SOAS Gallery for a public exhibition titled '**After the Assembly: Constituting India**' (17 July – 20 September 2025).

Building upon the Centre's experience of a smaller public exhibition in LSE Atrium Gallery in 2017 to mark the 70th anniversary of India's independence,

“ it was the first time that documents relating to LSE alumni who would later be involved in the making of the Constitution of India were displayed to the public anywhere outside LSE. ”

Larry Kramer (LSE President and Vice-Chancellor) spoke at the inauguration on 22 July at SOAS Gallery along with Adam Habib (SOAS Vice-Chancellor), and toured the exhibition's displays.



DISPLAY OF DOCUMENTS FROM LSE ARCHIVES AT 'AFTER THE ASSEMBLY: CONSTITUTING INDIA', SOAS GALLERY. PHOTOGRAPH BY GLENN RATCLIFFE © THE PACT PROJECT, SOAS; USED WITH PERMISSION.

RESEARCH RESOURCES

Every year, the Centre works hard to create and provide academic research resources for the benefit of the community. This is labour intensive, whether it is updating the 'States of South Asia' digital map project, exploring LSE Library's resources, or publishing blogposts with new ideas and cutting edge research of LSE academics and others.

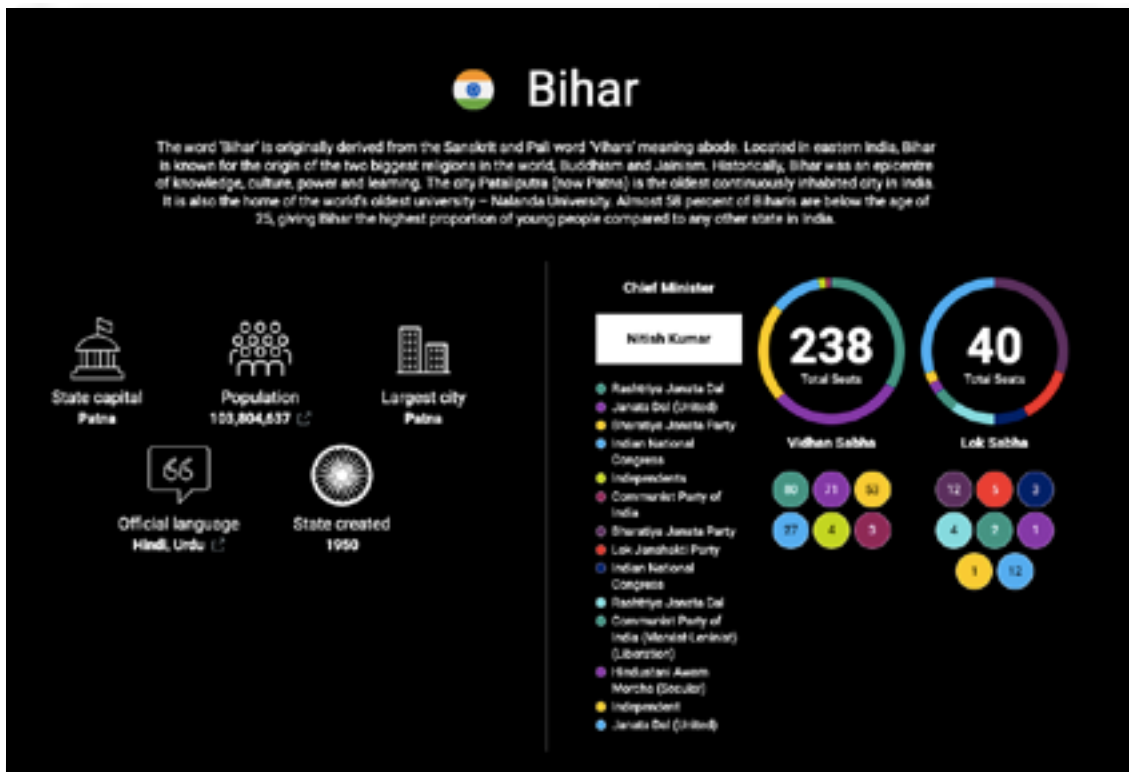
STATES OF SOUTH ASIA

South Asia never tires of political change, and elections. This year was dramatic in different ways, and we competed with change to provide verified, raw, academic Big Data for public use and impact.

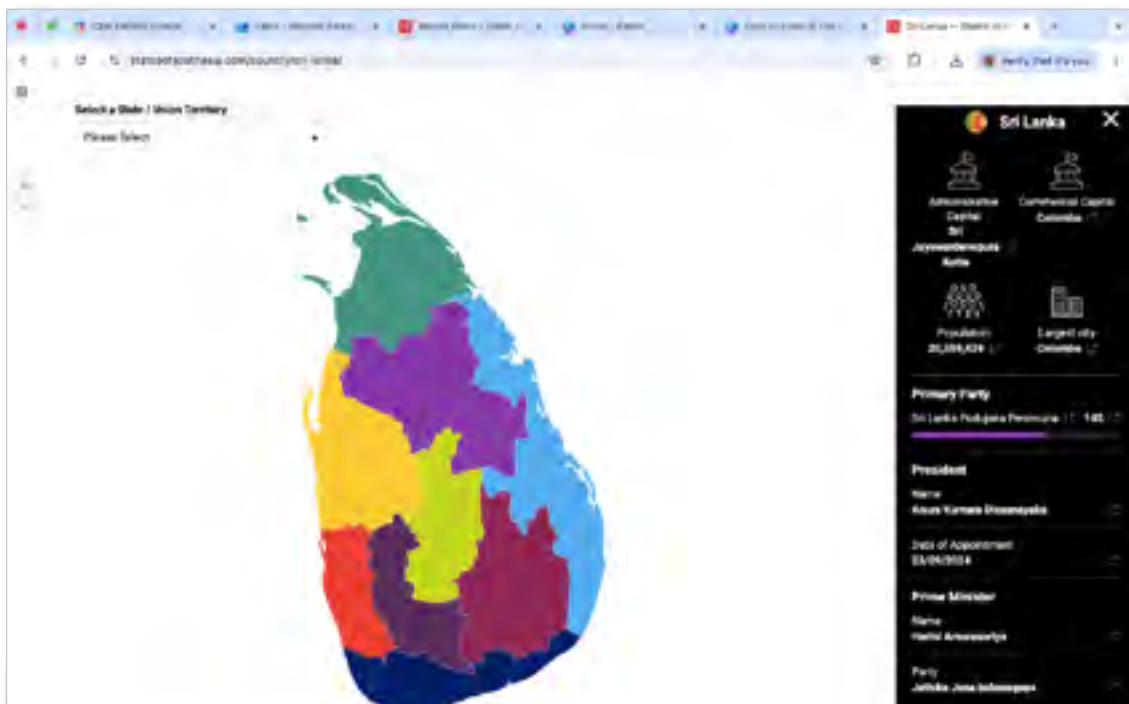
“ Launched in 2019 with the digital map of India as a pilot funded by LSE, the **'States of South Asia'** project is the only one at LSE that is still updated regularly with the latest data, and has in fact expanded to cover other democracies in the region. ”

Each year, it provides training to an LSE student in collating, verifying and organising Big Data from government and other open source information portals, and how to present them in a clear and concise manner on the website. The Centre's Research Assistant Momina Tanveer trawled through innumerable online sources to collate the information and update the website at speed.

With state elections in India, and Presidential and Prime Ministerial elections in Sri Lanka, South Asia was once again the site for hectic political activity. And next year promises to bring more – (national elections) in Bangladesh and (state elections) in India.



SCREENSHOT OF UPDATED BIG DATA DIGITAL MAP OF STATE OF BIHAR (INDIA).



SCREENSHOT OF UPDATED BIG DATA DIGITAL MAP OF SRI LANKA AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER 2024.


MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Centre's success in its activities is measured in the increasing number of followers on social media, the submission of posts for publication on 'South Asia @ LSE', and the number of readers of our blogposts each year. Our tagline – 'Unravelling South Asia to the World' – continues to be our most successful branding, creating a constant focus on our activities.

'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'

The Centre published a total of 54 blogposts in 2024/25, every Monday of the year irrespective of School or national holidays. With a total readership of ca 400,000+, 'South Asia @ LSE' remains our most far-reaching platform for knowledge exchange and impact, a free online portal to make latest research ideas on South Asia available globally.



For the fourth consecutive year, the Centre's blog remains the 8th most read blog at LSE (out of 40+ LSE blogs). 

Each year, we publish blogs that cut across the region, focused on individual countries as well as across nation-states, especially when topics cross national boundaries and become regional issues. And we take particular pleasure in drawing attention to countries on which few blogs are written; this year, we were delighted to carry a blogpost on The Maldives, and a few on Afghanistan.

Select listings of blogposts are available by country in earlier pages of this Report; the list below aims to highlight the breadth and variety of topics and countries covered in our blog:

- **'How Development Failures Fuel Labour Exodus in Nepal'** (2 September 2024) by Vidhu Prakash Kayastha discusses the various factors that have led to labour migration from Nepal, and why this will continue unless there are radical changes to the system.
- **'Debt's Gendered Impact and a Feminist Foreign Policy for Maldives' Debt Negotiations'** (14 October 2024) by Eva Abdulla discusses how countries burdened with IMF loans can work toward a more gender sensitive and economically inclusive recovery.
- **'I am the King of Afghans ...'** (11 November 2024) by Obaidullah Baheer focuses on Pir Roshan (16thc) and Afghanistan's long historical and cultural past, wondering how a country rich in cultural traditions, hard-working people from versatile tribal groups and fierce loyalties became so politically fragile.
- **'Bangladeshi Creative Subcultures and Cultural Resilience in Toronto'** (24 February 2025) by Golam Rabbani discusses the creative subcultures in the Bangladeshi diaspora in Toronto as it finds new homes abroad.
- **'AIDS, Stigma and Counter-Intuitive Advertising in India'** (3 March 2025) by Jo Krishnakumar analyses how despite government and other groups leading awareness about AIDS, well-intentioned actions can sometimes be counter-intuitive and counter-productive, negatively impacting decades of carefully created awareness.
- **'Imperial Entanglement: Burmese Pilots in the Battle of Britain'** (5 May 2025) by Thurein Naing tells the little-known story of four Burmese pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain.

Debt's Gendered Impact and a Feminist Foreign Policy for Maldives' Debt Negotiations

By **Eva Abdulla**
October 14th, 2024

As countries in the Global South cope with financial stress and some struggle with serious financial crises leading to reliance on IMF recovery programs, how can nations work towards a more gender sensitive and economically inclusive recovery? Eva Abdulla discusses this in the context of the Maldives, arguing for a gender-sensitised foreign policy and debt recovery policy as the bedrock for a better society.

A country's ability to determine its own future is inextricably linked to the who, what, why, when and how of public debt – who holds it, what it funds, why it was incurred, when and just how it must be repaid. Maldives' public debt is not just a financial challenge – it is, in itself, a story of

19 Shares

BLOGPOST ON THE GENDERED IMPACT OF DEBT IN THE MALDIVES BY EVA ABDULLA (14 OCTOBER 2024), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

AIDS, Stigma and Counter-Intuitive Advertising in India

By **Jo Krishnakumar**
March 3rd, 2025

Grassroots-level advocacy by community organisations, collectives and networks has been central to AIDS awareness and control in India. The government too plays an important role. Yet, as Jo Krishnakumar discusses here, the government's well-intended actions can sometimes be counter-intuitive and counter-productive, negatively impacting decades of carefully created awareness.

The AIDS discourse has professed that women in sex

8 Shares

BLOGPOST ON AIDS AND COUNTER-INTUITIVE ADVERTISING IN INDIA BY JO KRISHNAKUMAR (3 MARCH 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

- **‘Pahalgam 2025: Analysing YouTube Comments across South Asia’** (26 May 2025) by Anurug Chakma analyses how citizens of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan engaged with the terrorist attack in Pahalgam (India) on social media platforms.
- **‘IMF and Recent Fiscal Performance in Sri Lanka’** (23 June 2025) by Tharindu Udayanga Kamburawala examines the economic performance of the newly-elected Sri Lankan government, functioning perforce within the strict terms and conditions of the IMF’s support package.
- **‘Harvesting Inequality: Gender, Agriculture and Climate Change in Pakistan’** (21 July 2025) by Palwasha Khan looks at the various factors of the female agricultural labour force in Pakistan, the group that is most affected by climate emergencies.

See back cover for details on how to access the ‘South Asia @ LSE’ blog.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms remain the most popular, indeed the only practical, way to reach our audiences – students, academics, lay people, others – to inform them of our activities, and to engage with them.

Anachronistic to the cacophony of social media, there has been a ‘quiet’ but definite change in the use of social media platforms in the academic sector over the last year.

“ While several academics, institutions and others in the political ‘West’ have moved away from still popular platforms like Twitter/X for different reasons, those outside this ‘West’ – like South Asia – have continued to use them. ”

The Centre has traversed this change by expanding its presence across different platforms to ensure that we continue to reach and connect with our followers and audiences across the world. While individual numbers may seem low at the moment, we are confident that this has gained us more followers in total, allowing us to connect with those who have moved from one platform to another. As this *Report* goes to press, the Centre can be found here:



@lsesouthasia.bsky.social



facebook/SAsiaLSE



@southasia_lse



@lsesouthasia@mastodon.social



@SAsiaLSE



YouTube South Asia Centre LSE



BLOGPOST ON COMMENTS ON YOU TUBE AFTER THE PAHALGAM ATTACK IN INDIA BY ANURUG CHAKMA (26 MAY 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.



BLOGPOST ON FISCAL PERFORMANCE OF SRI LANKA BY THARINDU UDAYANGA KAMBURAWALA (23 JUNE 2025), 'SOUTH ASIA @ LSE'.

SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD

Nasser M MUNJEE (Chair, Advisory Board) (LSE BSc Economics 1974; MSc Economics 1975) is Chairman of Development Credit Bank, and Chair of the Audit Committee and Member of the Board of Indian Hotels (the Taj Group), 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, 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 earlier served as 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, Craig was President of Berggreun Institute in Los Angeles (2016–19); Director and President of LSE (2012–16) where he remains Centennial Professor; 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) retired as Vice Chairperson of BRAC, Dhaka where he started his career soon after his time at LSE. Mushtaque was Founding Director of BRAC's Research & Evaluation Division (where he was also its Executive Director), alongside serving in several international organisations.

M Ali JAMEEL (LSE BSc Economics 1991) is CEO of TPL Corp Limited, a leading conglomerate with operations in Pakistan and MENA. Six TPL Group companies are listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), one of which is the largest REIT in the country. He is also CEO of TPL Properties, and Sponsor Director of TPL IM, which is regulated by Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM). Ali has served on the Board of the State Bank of Pakistan, and is currently on the Board of Patients' Aid Foundation of Jinnah hospital, Karachi. He is a Fellow Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales.

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

Ratan N TATA (†9 October 2024) was a businessman, philanthropist, investor and Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons (holding company of the Tata Group), the Mumbai-based global business conglomerate. He was 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. He was made Honorary Fellow of LSE in 2007.



SIR RATAN TATA (†9 OCTOBER 2024) AT THE AWARD CEREMONY OF THE HONORARY FELLOWSHIP AT LSE, 2007. PHOTOGRAPH BY NIGEL STEAD © LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE; USED WITH PERMISSION.

FACULTY ADVISORY GROUP

Mahvish AHMAD (Assistant Professor in Human Rights and Politics; Co-Convenor LSE human Rights) teaches Human Rights and Politics in the Department of Sociology. Prior to this, Mahvish was A W Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Western Cape, Cape Town; covered military and insurgent violence in the Pakistan–Afghanistan region; co-founded *Tanqeed*, an English–Urdu magazine; and co-convenes ‘Archives of the Disappeared’, a research initiative investigating the archiving and documentation of communities destroyed in acts of mass violence.

Chris ALDEN (Professor of International Relations; Director LSE IDEAS) teaches in the Department of International Relations. Chris has held Visiting Fellowships at the universities of Cambridge, Tokyo and Pretoria, at Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto), and at the École normale supérieure (Cachan) and Centre d’études et de recherches internationales, both in Paris.

Martin J BAYLY (Associate Professor in International Relations Theory) teaches in the Department of International Relations. His research interests are in Empire and International Relations, with a focus on knowledge and expertise as a product of colonial encounter, and he is currently working on a global, intellectual and institutional history of modern South Asian international thought through a study of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, United Services Institution and Indian Council of World Affairs.

Amitav CHAKRAVARTI (Professor of Marketing) teaches in the Department of Management. His research interests are in consumer rights and behaviour, digital marketing and analytics, behavioural public policy and decision-making, and innovation and new products. Before joining LSE, Amitav held teaching positions at Stern School of Business (NYU), Sloan School of Management (MIT), Johnson School of Management (Cornell University) and University of California, Riverside.

Julia CORWIN (Assistant Professor of Environmental Geography) teaches in the Department of Geography and Environment. A critical human geographer and urban ethnographer, Julia's research focuses on the relationship between commodities, labour and the environment. Julia is particularly interested in economies and cultures of waste and repair, and is currently working on a monograph on global flows of electronic 'waste' and their revaluation through economies of repair and re-manufacturing in Delhi (India); her next project will examine care work and the politics of electronics repair in London.

Swati DHINGRA (Associate Professor of Economics) teaches in the Department of Economics, and is currently External Member of Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Swati's expertise is in international economics, international trade, trade policy and impact of trade agreements, industrial organisation and development (particularly in India), and Brexit. Prior to joining LSE, Swati was Fellow at Princeton University.

Tarun KHAITAN (Professor (Chair) of Public Law) teaches in the School of Law. His primary research interests are in comparative public law, legal theory, discrimination law, and constitutional design. Prior to joining LSE, Tarun was Professor of Public Law and Legal Theory at University of Oxford, where he was also Head of Research at Bonavero Institute of Human Rights. He has held Visitorships at the universities of Chicago and Harvard, and at NYU Law School, and is currently Honorary Professorial Fellow at Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne.

David LEWIS (Professor of Anthropology and Development) teaches in the Departments of Anthropology, and International Development. His area of research is Bangladesh, particularly on how the country has been impacted by decades of international development practices. David has worked extensively on the role of NGOs and civil society actors in South Asia – mainly in Bangladesh but also in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. He is currently Principal Investigator in a project on entrepreneurship advice in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, funded by the Atlantic Fellowship for Social and Economic Equity (AFSEE) at LSE, and is also working on a monograph on the history of flood control in Bangladesh.

Rohan MUKHERJEE (Assistant Professor in International Relations; Deputy Director LSE IDEAS) teaches in the Department of International Relations. His research focuses on rising powers and their navigation of hierarchies of international order particularly in the Asia–Pacific and how powers in the region (China, India, Japan, the US and other Southeast Asian countries) manage the regional effects of global transitions. Prior to joining LSE Rohan taught at Yale-NUS College in Singapore, and is currently Non-Resident Scholar at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Non-Resident Fellow at National Bureau of Asian Research (both in Washington DC).

Romola SANYAL (Associate Professor of Urban Geography) teaches in the Department of Geography and Environment. Her research interests are in architecture, urban geopolitics, urban theory, housing, and citizenship rights. Romola 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. Prior to LSE, she taught at Newcastle University and University College London, and has held Fellowships at Rice University (USA) and Open University.

Aliz TÓTH (Assistant Professor of Political Science) teaches in the Department of Government. Her research interests are in state capacity, bureaucracy and the politics of natural resources in India, drivers and consequences of South–South migration, and her current writing focuses on causes of conflict over land acquisition for infrastructure projects. Aliz is Non-Resident Fellow at the Governance and Local Development Institute in Gothenburg (Sweden).

EVENTS

9 October 2024

Panel Discussion

South Asia: Paternalism and Public Healthcare

Speakers: Aisha Jalil (National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad), Indika Karunathilake (University of Colombo), Deen Dayal Reddy (St Joseph Medical Centre, Bellingham, USA)

Discussant: Rishita Nandagiri (King's College London)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

16 October 2024

FACT & FICTION

Bangladesh: The Gender Paradox

Speakers: Sajeda Amin (Independent researcher), Urvashi Butalia (Founder, Zubaan Books), Naila Kabeer (LSE), Ayesha Khan (Overseas Development Institute, London)

Discussant: Hillary Standing (University of Sussex)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

This event was in collaboration with LSE Press.

23 October 2024

Panel Discussion

Afghanistan: Life with Taliban Laws

Speakers: Kathy Gannon (Harvard Kennedy School), Ali M Latifi (Journalist and Asia Editor, *The New Humanitarian*), Saad Mohseni (Director, MOBYgroup), Mahbouba Seraj (Founder and Director, Organisation for Research in Peace and Solidarity)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

30 October 2024

FACT & FICTION

Sri Lanka: Elections and Political Change

Speakers: Farzana Haniffa (University of Colombo), Pradeep Peiris (University of Colombo), Soosaipillai I Keethaponcalan (Salisbury University, USA)

Discussant: Alan Keenan (International Crisis Group, London)

Co-Chairs: Naufel Vilcassim and Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

27 November 2024

FACT & FICTION

Pakistan: Afghan Refugees, Identity-Making & State Policy

Speakers: Sanaa Alimia (Aga Khan University, London), Syed Irfan Ashraf (University of Peshawar), Ayesha Jahangir (University of New South Wales, Sydney), Sonja Kretzschmar (University of Bundeswehr Munich)

Discussant: Omar al-Ghazzi (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

4 December 2024

Panel Discussion (Hybrid)

The West, the Taliban and the Future of Afghanistan

Speaker: Obaidullah Baheer (Visiting Fellow, LSE South Asia Centre and Adjunct Lecturer, American University of Afghanistan)

Discussants: Quhrmaana Kakar (LSE) and Graeme Smith (International Crisis Group, London)

Co-Chairs: Naufel Vilcassim (LSE) and Subir Sinha (SOAS South Asia Institute)

This event was in collaboration with SOAS South Asia Institute, and part of the UK-South Asia Network.

29 January 2025

Panel Discussion (Hybrid)

Guarantor Institutions and Constitutions in South Asia

Speakers: Sara Hossain (Supreme Court of Bangladesh), Tarun Khaitan (LSE), Yasser Kureshi (University of Oxford), Dinesha Samararatne (University of Colombo)

Chair: Naufel Vilcassim (LSE)

This event was part of our 'Constitution of India @ 75' series, in collaboration with LSE Law School.

5 February 2025

Panel Discussion

Bangladesh: 6 Months On

Speakers: David Bergman (Journalist, *Netra News*), Imtiaz A Hussain (Independent University Bangladesh), Amena Mohsin (University of Dhaka)

Discussant: Paul Staniland (University of Chicago)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)



QUHRMAANA KAKAR (WITH GRAEME SMITH, TOP CENTRE) AT 'THE WEST, THE TALIBAN AND THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN', SOAS, 4 DECEMBER 2024 (IN COLLABORATION WITH SOAS SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE, PART OF UK–SOUTH ASIA NETWORK)

12 February 2025

GEOPOLITICS BEYOND BORDERS

2025: A New World Order?

Speakers: Michael Cox (LSE), Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (London Metropolitan University), Helene Sjørusen (University of Oslo)

Discussant: Jerome Roos (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

5 March 2025

FACT & FICTION

India: The Eastern Front

Speakers: Sreeradha Datta (O P Jindal Global University, Sonapat), Avinash Paliwal (SOAS University of London), Khin Zaw Win (Tampadipa Institute, Yangon)

Co-Chairs: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE) and Abhilash Puljal (LSE REF–India)

This event was in collaboration with LSE Research and Education Foundation India.



75
CONSTITUTION OF INDIA
1950-2025

invite you to a meeting with

Professor Larry Kramer
PRESIDENT & VICE CHANCELLOR, LSE

and Alumni

Gopal Sankaranarayanan
SENIOR ADVOCATE, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Nasser Munjee
CHAIR, SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD
LSE SOUTH ASIA CENTRE

MONDAY, 24 MARCH | 3-4:30PM
C. D. DESHMUKH AUDITORIUM
INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (MAIN BUILDING)
40 MAX MUELLER MARG, NEW DELHI 110003

RSVP
southasiacentre@lse.ac.uk

Tea/Coffee will be served from 2:30PM



13 March 2025**FACT & FICTION**

Navigating Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean

Speakers: Darshana Baruah (IISS, Singapore), Nicolas Blarel (Leiden University), Jivanta Schottli (Dublin City University), Alice Engelhard (LSE)

Discussant: Rohan Mukherjee (LSE)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

19 March 2025**Panel Discussion**

Nepal: Disaster, Labour Justice & Rights

Speakers: Narayan Adhikari (Accountability Lab Nepal, Kathmandu), Kripa Basnyat (ILO Nepal), Flora Cornish (LSE), Nimesh Dhungana (University of Manchester)

Discussants: Neha Choudhary (ILO Ethiopia) and Banhishikha Ghosh (University of Sunderland-London)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

24 March 2025**Public Meeting in Delhi**

LSE President Larry Kramer in conversation with Nasser Munjee (LSE alumnus; Chair, Senior Advisory Board of the Centre) and Gopal Sankaranarayanan (LSE alumnus; Advocate, Supreme Court of India).

This event was in collaboration with LSE Research and Education Foundation India.

14 May 2025**Panel Discussion**

Sri Lanka: 6 Months On

Speakers: Harsha Amarasekera (Colombo Port City Economic Commission), Farzana Haniffa (University of Colombo), Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu (Centre for Policy Alternatives, Colombo)

Discussant: Alan Keenan (International Crisis Group, London)

Co-Chairs: Naufel Vilcassim and Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

29 May 2025**Panel Discussion**

South Asia: Regional Trade & Prosperity

Speakers: Salamat Ali (The Commonwealth Secretariat, London), Yarendra Basnett (Asian Development Bank, Manila), Pankhuri Gaur (Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries, Delhi), Asanka Wijesinghe (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka)

Discussant: Swati Dhingra (LSE)

Co-Chairs: Naufel Vilcassim and Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

4 June 2025**Panel Discussion**

Rohingyas: Have We Forgotten Them?

Speakers: Mabrur Ahmed (Restless Beings UK), Tun Khin (Burmese Rohingya Association UK), Ronan Lee (Loughborough University-London), Shafiur Rahman (Independent Journalist)

Discussant: Penny Green (Queen Mary University of London)

Chair: Nilanjan Sarkar (LSE)

17 July – 20 September 2025**Exhibition**

'After the Assembly: Constituting India'

The LSE South Asia Centre collaborated with Rochana Bajpai (SOAS) and SOAS Gallery to display documents from LSE Library Archives.

Recordings of events are available on the Centre's website.

THE TEAM

Centre Staff



Naufel Vilcassim

Director



Nilanjan Sarkar

Deputy Director



Momina Tanveer

Research Assistant
(LSE LLB Law, 2025)



