PROGRAMME

Day 1: Tuesday 25 August 2015

10:00 – 10:30 am    Registration and Tea

10:30 – 11 am    Inauguration

Welcome: Professor Emeritus Barrie Macdonald, Interim Provost, Victoria University of Wellington

Opening Remarks: Hon Steven Joyce, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment, Government of New Zealand

Vote of Thanks: Professor Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Director, New Zealand India Research Institute

11:05 am – 12:05 pm    Keynote speech

Professor Ian Hall, Griffith University
          *Narendra Modi and the Remaking of India’s Normative Power*

Chair: Manjeet Pardesi, Victoria University of Wellington

12:05 – 1:00 pm Lunch

1:00 – 2:15 pm    Session 1 – India and USA

Manjeet S. Pardesi, Victoria University of Wellington
          *The East Asian Origins of the US-India Cold War “Estrangement”*

Ashok Sharma, Australia-India Institute, University of Melbourne
          *India as a “Global Swing State”: An Analysis of India’s Strategic Engagement, Posture and Autonomy*

Chair: Paul Sinclair, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington
2.20 – 3.30 pm  Session 2 – Economy, Environment and Foreign Policy

Amitendu Palit, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore
The Economics in Narendra Modi’s Foreign Policy

Jagadish Thaker, Massey University
From a Deal Breaker to a Deal Maker? India’s Shifting Positions on Climate Change

Chair: Sita Venkateswar, Massey University

3.30 – 3.50 pm  Afternoon Tea

3.50 – 5.00 pm  Session 3 – Global Position, Domestic Politics

Srikanta Chatterjee, Massey University
India: An Unlikely Superpower?

Ronojoy Sen, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore
‘Acche Din’? Modi and the Politics of Symbolism

Chair: Rick Weiss, Victoria University of Wellington

Day 2: Wednesday 26 August 2015

10:00 – 10:30 am  Morning Tea

10.30 am – 12.00 pm  Session 4 – Foreign Policy and Development

Sita Venkateswar, Massey University
Making Millet Matter: Food Resilience in Contemporary India

Arindam Basu, University of Canterbury and Shrimati Das, Nehru College, Bengaluru, India.
How might India create health opportunities for its own citizens?

Chair: Amitendu Palit, National University of Singapore

12.00 – 1.00 pm  Lunch
1.00 – 2.10 pm  Session 5 – India’s Foreign Policy: Indian Ocean and Middle East

Rajat Ganguly, Murdoch University  
* Sino-Indian Naval Competition in the Indian Ocean Region *

Nicolas Blarel, Leiden University.  
* India’s (re-)emergence as a regional player in the Middle-East? Assessing change and continuity since 1947 *

Chair: Ronojoy Sen, National University of Singapore

2.15 – 3.30 pm  Session 6 – Soft Power

Parama Sinha Palit, Independent Scholar, Singapore  
* Modi Government’s Communication of ‘New India’ *

Adrian Athique, University of Waikato  
* Indian media and soft power in SE Asia *

Chair: Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, Victoria University of Wellington

3.30 – 4.00 pm: Afternoon Tea

4.00 –5.00 pm  Session 7 – Open Forum

* India’s global position: lessons for New Zealand *

Chair: Jim Rolfe, Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

5.00 – 5.15 pm  Vote of Thanks

Manjeet Pardesi, Conference co-convener, Victoria University of Wellington
Narendra Modi and the Remaking of India’s Normative Power

Narendra Modi has injected new energy into Indian diplomacy, but, as many have recognised, he has not yet developed a distinct foreign policy doctrine. In one area, however, Modi has struck out in new directions. Having promised to reinvigorate India’s so-called ‘soft power’ prior to coming to power, Modi is starting to develop a new cultural agenda in Indian public diplomacy. His success in securing United Nations’ agreement for an International Yoga Day is one aspect of this agenda, which builds upon earlier attempts by Indian Prime Ministers to make India a ‘normative power’ in world politics. This paper analyses Modi’s public and cultural diplomacy in the context of those earlier efforts, outlining his agenda, assessing the means he is utilising to project Indian ideas and values beyond its borders, and analysing the likelihood that this effort will be successful.
Subrata Mitra
National University of Singapore

*Liability, asset or a fig-leaf?*

*Democracy and the making of foreign policy in India*

The regime change in India following the parliamentary elections of May 2014 has quickened the pace of foreign policy making in India. Five major changes have been reported in the press. These include the promotion of India’s economic and technological development through foreign visits of the Prime Minister and the foreign minister, the orientation of domestic and foreign policies towards this objective, the emphasis on national power including military power as a tool of foreign policy, stress on soft power, and a reduction in self-imposed constraints on actions that other countries may construe as inimical to their interests. The tit-for-tat strategy against Pakistan in contrast to the hesitant approach of the predecessors appears to be firmly in its place. Over the past year, Mr Modi has undertaken strategic visits abroad and come up with major statements about policy. Many of these initiatives have been taken outside the ambit of normal foreign policy making arenas.

Is the new-look of India’s foreign policy a strategy to overcome the democratic and federal restraints on India’s room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis other regional and global players? Beyond the constraints that the process of deliberation and negotiation that a federal, democratic process inevitably imposes on the leadership in its effort to promote national interest, are there aspects of Indian democracy that act as political resources for India vis-à-vis strategic partners, rivals and diplomacy in the global community in general? Finally, does democracy also function as an elaborate and effective ruse behind which the country can promote its national interests? The paper discusses these themes by first specifying the interaction of foreign policy making and the democratic process on the basis of a tool kit inspired by Putnam’s two level game, and then it applies the lessons of this model for an analysis of some specific issues from recent Indian politics.
Recent discussions of ‘soft power’ in international relations and in media and communication studies have proved appealing to a nation that has consistently emphasised its cultural depth when promoting its stature on the international stage. In recent years, proponents of a ‘soft power’ strategy for India have tended to focus on the potentials of India’s image making in regards to her relationship with traditional power centres in the West. As a consequence, in the era of ‘Bollywood’ diplomacy, relatively little attention has been given to the impact of Indian popular culture within Asia itself. Nonetheless, India’s modern mode of melodramatic expression is well known across the region, where it encounters audiences located within a diverse mix of historical and political relationships with the Indian subcontinent. As the Government of India seeks to revitalise the ‘look east’ policy initiated in 1993, media investments, cultural exports and other symbolic modes of persuasion provide the most immediate symptoms of India’s desire to increase its presence across the region. Drawing upon current fieldwork in Southeast Asia, this paper examines how contemporary media exchanges contribute to a new impression of a ‘rising’ India as a commercial partner, technology hub and cultural powerhouse. In switching focus from the efficacy of ‘soft power’ in diplomatic forums, this paper will begin to assay the operation of ‘soft power’ amongst general audiences. That is, how does the consumption of Indian media content build upon historical cultural ties (and assumptions) and how do the meanings derived by consumers interlace with contemporary political realities in the Asia-Pacific?
**How Might India Create Health Opportunities for its own citizens?**

We argue in this paper that as India continues to assert her "soft power" by influencing other countries, her pattern of transaction with the rest of the world is changing. In turn, this has resulted in a unique occupational/population health problem that warrants examination.

Since mid-1990s, Indian entrepreneurs established "business process outsourcing centres" (BPO and Call Centres) in India that served back offices to the developed countries; further, the Y2K crisis in computing provided opportunities for Information Technology professionals from India find overseas jobs. Both contributed to India’s economic growth but also exposed Indians to life stresses in the developed countries.

BPOs are important tools India uses to project her soft power, yet how do the working conditions in BPOs affect the health conditions of their employees? While the Diaspora act as agents of India’s soft power, trying to project India’s expertise in different spheres, they too seem vulnerable to the stresses of migration.

We present our findings from a survey conducted in Bengaluru, India and highlight health issues related to stress and work associated with BPO. We also draw a parallel with a survey of health effects observed among Indians and compared with other immigrants in Auckland DHB region in New Zealand. In the light of these findings, we discuss the broader question how should India address health issues to create a better environment for its own citizens even as it realises its aspiration as a global soft power.
In the fluid international order we are witnessing today, India is considered by both academics and policy-makers as a rising power whose reach and influence will increasingly be global. For instance, some argue there is a renewed debate on the exact definition of India’s regional sphere of influence. While India may have concentrated on the subcontinent in past decades, one example of India’s new extra-regional ambitions is its broader engagement of the Middle-East over the last two decades, notably to ensure access to resources and markets. However, I argue in this paper that rather than a new phenomenon, India’s policy towards its Western flank was a predictable development. At different periods such as under the British Raj, India has had a wider conception of its sphere of influence which included parts of the Middle-East. The study of India's Middle-East policy is particularly relevant as it stands at the interstices of its regional and global strategies. Is India’s engagement of the region an attempt at re-establishing an historical and privileged position in what was usually considered as its extended neighborhood? What can historical patterns tell us about India’s future policies? Is India’s "Look West" policy part of a more global strategy of competition for influence and resources with other major powers like China?
India: An Unlikely Superpower?

A country to qualify as a superpower needs to have a strong economy and a military capacity to influence and control events beyond its borders, while protecting its own national interest and those of its allies and friends. In order for its superpower status to be credible, it needs to have a domestic, foreign and security policy framework that helps project an image of reliability as a capable and committed defender of its ideology and interests. Typically, it will gather around itself a number of like-minded powers accepting its ‘hegemonic leadership’ in international affairs. Cultural, political, technological and other resources of a country can play an important role in projecting its power and attracting allies beyond its borders. India’s large and young population, pluralistic political system, fast and sustained economic growth in recent decades, considerable prowess in scientific and technological capabilities, a sizeable and growing military establishment and its large and often-influential diaspora spread across the world are among the factors that may project its image as a potential superpower. However, while these factors are among India’s strengths as a nation, they conceal some real weaknesses that India must overcome if it were ever to become a global power. Its endemic and widespread poverty and inequality; several on-going domestic separatist movements; caste, ethnic and religious differences and violence and an uneasy co-existence with its neighbours all combine to weaken India’s ability to evolve as a nation at peace with itself, let alone become a superpower in the foreseeable future. This essay examines these and other factors in a critical manner.
In the new millennium, China has steadily increased its naval footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The PLA Navy (PLAN), utilizing its rapidly growing blue water capability, now routinely patrols the high seas in the IOR. Beijing has also invested heavily in the construction and maintenance of several ports in the IOR. Moreover, Chinese warships and submarines have made several port calls in a number of countries in the IOR in recent times. Given its historic enmity and trust deficit with China, the rapidly growing footprint of the PLAN in the IOR has raised New Delhi's concerns and suspicions. The Indian government has responded by fast-tracking India's naval modernization and expansion, holding joint naval exercises with the U.S. and other Asian states, and renewing diplomatic and economic engagement in the IOR in order to counter growing Chinese influence. The IOR has therefore become a space of intense Sino-Indian naval competition. In this paper, I try to answer the following questions: What are the drivers of the PLAN's growing footprint in the IOR and is this an attempt by Beijing to strategically encircle India? What is India's perception of the PLAN's growing footprint in the IOR and what countermeasures has India taken and why? What are the security implications of Sino-Indian naval competition in the IOR and is there a possibility of naval warfare between China and India in the foreseeable future?
Amitendu Palit  
National University of Singapore

The Economics in Narendra Modi’s Foreign Policy

Modi’s first year in office witnessed his pursuit of a robust and energetic foreign policy. He travelled to countries far and wide leaving lasting impressions of his visits through passionate efforts to establish India as an attractive destination for global capital. Through these visits, he was successful in producing a major shift in the global perception on India by generating positive sentiments about the outlook of the Indian economy and the proactive role that India could play in global and regional affairs. It is evident that India’s foreign policy under Modi would be driven by economic objectives and would primarily act as an enabler for the latter.

This paper will analyse the economic objectives and drivers of Modi’s foreign policy that are based on the BJP’s vision of India being a major actor in global affairs on the basis of the strategic influence flowing from strong economic performance. The paper identifies domestic economic growth manifesting through the ambitious ‘Make in India’ initiative, access to energy, engaging the diaspora and deeper foothold in global and regional forums as the key drivers of the Modi government’s external engagement strategy. It also highlights some of the challenges likely to be encountered by the strategy in the days to come.
Countries are becoming more aware of the importance of defining how they want to be perceived and the need to improve and leverage their assets in the 21st century. In a globalized world, a country’s image and its promotion have come to play a major role in developing national interests. By involving ‘people’ who become mouthpieces and recipients of the message, while creating reputational economic, political, social and cultural capital, a country promotes them at home and abroad, thus seeking to showcase its soft power.

Building positive image, an essential objective of soft power, is conspicuous in foreign policies of Asian countries like China, Singapore, South Korea. Given that countries seek to ensure that their international reputations keep pace with the rapid growth of their economic, political and cultural power, it is natural for India to become a part of the narrative communicating its positive and constructive image.

The Modi government is following a conscious policy of communicating India’s positive image. While for China image-building has been an ongoing process, for India the concept is rather new or under-explored. The government’s steadfast emphasis on economic development and good governance is an intricate part of its attempt to build a positive global image for India. The new Indian government is also focusing on ‘building brands’ including Brand India and possibly Brand Modi too. The paper will analyze India’s attempt at image-building and development of soft power by the Modi government, particularly the strategy of communicating a ‘new India’.
The conventionally cited explanations of US-India Cold War “strategic estrangement” – India’s quest for strategic independence/non-alignment and the US-Pakistani defense/military relationship – ignore East Asia. This is problematic because even as America and India are forging a partnership today, India continues to value its strategic independence while America enjoys a close military relationship with Pakistan. Since the persistence of the same factors cannot explain both historical divergence and contemporary convergence, this paper tests an historical hypothesis that has consequences for contemporary policy. Based on archival research at the Truman and Eisenhower Presidential Libraries, this paper argues that America and India’s early divergence was a result of their policy differences over five East Asian factors – recognition of the People’s Republic of China (1949), response to the Chinese invasion of Tibet (1950-51), the Korean War (1950-53), the San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan (1951), and over US involvement in Indo-China (before the 1954 French defeat in Dien Bien Phu).
‘Acche Din’? Modi and the Politics of Symbolism

There are very few politicians who have engineered as dramatic a metamorphosis as India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The makeover of Modi began during the long run-up to the 2014 national election. Eschewing the language of Hindutva, Modi mostly focused on vikas or development in the election campaign. After becoming prime minister, Modi has attempted to transform himself, with a good deal of success, from one of the most divisive figures in Indian politics to one seemingly above partisan politics. The presentation will examine two things. First, it will analyse the use of slogans which have been key to Modi’s image makeover. Beginning with his election-time ‘sabka saath, sabka vikas (participation of all, development for all)’ slogan, Modi has proved to be a master of sloganeering. Among his many other slogans has been ‘minimum government, maximum governance’. There is of course a precedent for such sloganeering in India, particularly during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s time. Second, the presentation will look at the launch of several big-ticket, nationwide campaigns during the first year of Modi’s term as prime minister. Among the most talked about was the ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan (Clean India Movement)’ which was strategically launched on October 2, 2014, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. There have been several other initiatives, including the high-profile ‘Make in India’ programme to transform India into a manufacturing hub. In sum, the presentation will analyse the impact of what might be called the politics of ‘symbolism’, both during the 2014 election campaign and Modi’s tenure as prime minister.
India with its geographical location, growing economy, expanding foreign policy and strategic posture is considered as a ‘Global Swing State’ in the emerging balance of power. In the post-Cold War period India has taken some resolute steps to reformulate its foreign policy and one of them is its strategic engagement with the United States.

The new Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has once again rejuvenated the India-US strategic partnership. Modi’s high profile foreign visit is one of the most striking features of one year of his governance. This is mainly seen in the context of Modi government’s initiatives to attract foreign direct investment in India under the much vaunted “Make in India” campaign. But, its strategic implications are far reaching when seen in the context of India’s quest for its rightful place in the world and in the emerging strategic geometry of the great power politics in the 21st century.

This paper will examine the debates about India as “Global Swing State” in the context of Hegemon (The United States) vs Challenger (China) competition. It will assess how close India’s foreign policy under Modi government would be to the US perception of India as a global swing state. The debate will be put into the context of the deepening India-US strategic partnership, India’s complex relationship with China, India’s security threat perception and its path towards an independent and autonomous foreign policy posture.
India is considered to be one of the most vulnerable countries to global climate change impacts, termed as one of the greatest challenges to humankind in the twenty-first century. Yet, climate change is also a strategic foreign policy issue, where different countries vie for their national interests in international and sub-regional agreements on climate change, and related issues such as sustainable development and global trade and technology flows. Despite its low-per capita emissions and how historic emissions, developing countries like India are under international pressure to sign a legally binding emissions treaty due to rapid rise in their national share of emissions. For example, India is now the world’s third largest greenhouse gas emitter, with a projected 300% increase in emissions by 2030s compared to 2008.

This paper explicates the emerging narratives of climate change in India by different actors and institutions, domestically, and as a foreign policy priority. It argues that although international aspirations, such as a UN Security Council seat, primarily drive Indian climate policy that trump domestic priorities on climate change, it is increasingly seen, even by its neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, as a ‘deal breaker’ rather than a ‘deal maker’ in international negotiations. As the climate policy debate increasingly gets domesticated, existing and new actors may push India for strong climate action, commensurate with its vulnerability, and its ambitions for international and regional leadership.
Gathering the threads drawn from different media, this paper analyses the available knowledge, modes of intervention and policy outcomes derived from identification of millets as a crucial component of climate smart agriculture. Through a focus on the nexus of academia-industry-policy in relation to millet cultivation in India, the paper examines the mix of contradictory trends underway that undermine efforts to secure livelihoods and foster food resilience responsive to the manifestations of climate change across different regions in India. A key question that underpins the analyses in the paper is how questions of scale and sustainability can be simultaneously addressed through the lens of millet cultivation at this conjuncture in India, and potentially, elsewhere in the world where millets are a fundamental food staple.