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Seeking Harmony in Diversity

I do not see into the future; nor do I care to see. But one vision I see clear as life before me: that bharat mata has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace & benediction.

- Swami Vivekananda

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3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021

Tel: +91-(0)11-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415

E-mail: info@vifindia.org

Website: www.vifindia.org

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*Think that the whole work is upon your shoulders Think that
you, young men of our motherland, are destined to do this.
Put yourselves to the task. Lord bless you.*

- Swami Vivekananda

Chairman's Message



I am delighted that after almost two years, since March this year, Team VIF has begun holding physical interactions, meetings and conventions like before. But despite the VIF being forced to adopt the digital mode for meetings since March 2020, it has been able to produce quality discussions, worthy research and specialised documents while pursuing its vibrant India-centric strategic discourse without any let or hindrance.

The VIF Director's report for the year bears testimony to the volume and quality of work accomplished by Team VIF. While Team VIF merits compliments for accomplishing what was almost a feat under challenging circumstances, the Director deserves a special mention for his devotion and commitment to seeing us through one of the most difficult years in the history of the world.

The Secretary of the VIF whose administrative responsibility doubled to manage the proximate physical infrastructure of the VIF on the one hand and the distant digital discourse on the other has to be congratulated for discharging her onerous task meticulously and efficiently.

I am particularly glad that even though the Covid-19 pandemic hindered regular VIF work, fortunately, it did not cause any human casualty in the VIF family.

The talk of the Covid-19 pandemic forcing unprecedented changes in the world order has now become outdated because of the unthinkable convulsions and contortions in global relations taking place in the last six months after the geopolitical and geo-economic Tsunami caused by the Ukraine-Russia War. What is witnessed now are no more changes or shifts but controllable acrobatic backslidings in geopolitics and geo-economics which is undoing much of the global movement since World War II. The immediate and distant consequences of this new phenomenon unfolding in the world cannot be fathomed or foreseen now. The world had never bargained in

the post-Cold War period, particularly, for what is happening to it now. In the upcoming Random Thoughts for 2022, Team VIF will endeavour to understand and assess the unimaginable and convulsive transformations that the Ukraine-Russia War has set off, touching all spheres of global interface – from geopolitics to geo-economics, finance and trade, and within traditional relational blocs, as well as impact on the multilateral, group and bilateral relations between nations.

I. The “World Order” question

We had pointed out last year [in Random Thoughts 2021] that the best minds in the world had begun talking about the world order changing forever under the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Now, with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the most dominant question will be the fate of the current world order and what shape it will take in the future. Before attempting an answer to that profound question it is necessary to recall the foundations of the present world order, whether those foundations built the world order or disturbed it, and the changes in it that the Western thinkers had begun talking about after the outbreak of the pandemic. This exercise is a necessary precondition to know the likely future state of that “world order” after the Ukraine-Russia war began. As in the World Economic Forum meeting in May last, the world order question figured very prominently in the context of the Ukraine War, it is appropriate to examine some basic ideological foundations of the post-World War II world order. It is necessary to promote a healthy and balanced debate on the fundamentals of any emerging world order.

Extreme reaction to Fascism, Nazism

The foundations of the world view of the west, born out of its own experiences during World War II of fighting Fascism and Nazism – which grew in its own backyard – had dominated the structuring of world order post-War and more emphatically after the end of the Cold War. The ideological construct of World War II was both intra-Western and reactive to Fascism and Nazism. Therein lay the structural defect in its construct. The background to the emergent post-World War II order was beautifully captured by HG Wells in his book “Rights of Man or What are we fighting for?” The heavy hangover of the most destructive war against organised, extremist State Fascism and Nazism, both Western in origin and construct, had tormented and drove the western thinkers who shaped the post-World War II global order to another extreme – unbridled individual rights that soon began to tower over nation-states, civilisations, cultures and even traditional family. Thus in framing the post world war II world order, the intra-Western hangover and the guilt of its own Fascist and Nazi past – like the guilt of the Dark Ages led it to reject religion for reason – heavily influenced and explicitly manifested in its instant reaction to undermine, if not reject, any kind of collective normative restraints on the individual, including the traditional cultural and family values. This reactionary and extremist ideological drive of the West-led world order manifested in the conceptualisation of human rights sans even basic normative human duties in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR].

Mahatma Gandhi Vs HG Wells and Aldous Huxley

While the Western thinkers were only reactive in their response, a great Indian thinker, Mahatma Gandhi was totally opposed to their reactive response. He wrote to HG Wells first and later to Aldous Huxley – both had sought Mahatma Gandhi's endorsement of UDHR – refusing to oblige them and explicitly telling them that the UDHR be exclusively duty-centric, saying that human rights are internalised in human duties and not the other way round. The Mahatma Gandhi-HG Wells/Aldous Huxley debate had brought out the civilisational divide between the politically powerful West which had a decisive influence in the discourse at the United Nations and the numerically large Asia which had little influence. With the colonised and defeated Asia and Afri.ca looking to the victorious West for support and development, there was no possibility of any non-Western civilisational input into shaping the UDHR. The Gandhian view was Asian and civilisational and was an alternative approach to Western Anthropology of Modernity which informed the post-World War II western world view. The Gandhian civilisational approach was largely the Asian view which had little voice in world affairs. The civilisational element to which the human collectives of family and society are annexed was totally absent in the Western paradigm.

West-centric UDHR turned into a political project

The Western leaders who dominated the mind of the UN could have found an acceptable midway between the exclusive rights-centric ideology of UDHR and the exclusive duty-centric approach advocated by Gandhi. The exclusive rights-centric UDHR aimed at creating a global society, which was diversified by nature, homogenised on individualism and atomising Western values. Later, the notion of atomising Human Rights which was used by the West selectively to suit its geo-political purposes turned UDHR into a cold war and post cold war political project of the West against the sovereignty of most non-Western nations. As a consequence, the UDHR, instead of being the basis of harmonious world order, tended to become the basis of a discordant if not disorderly world because of the political use of the UDHR concept by the West which tended to atomise the traditional societies and families generally in the non-Western world, particularly in Asia. After the West launched its globalisation project in the 1990s, the West-centric ideological drive became deeper and broader, with the reactions against it faster and even broader. After all, it was the human rights issue which broke up the quarter century of intense engagement between the US and China and which simultaneously torpedoed the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment between the EU and China in early 2021.

One Size Fit All Model

Again, in the early 1950s, as the immediate sequence and parallel of the UDHR, the post-World War world also saw the emergence of the idea of One-Size-Fit-All [OSFA] rooted in the Western world view as the development model for the Rest. The OSFA manifested in the Measures for the

Development of Underdeveloped Nations declared by the United Nations in 1951, whose DNA was the Western Anthropology of Modernity. The UN went one step over UDHR and declared:

There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress.

This ideological declaration acquired complete legitimacy and greater acceptance in the 1990s with the collapse of the socialist structures and with the emergence of liberal democracy and free market as the pillars of the future perfect world order in the Hegelian sense. But very soon with the rise of Asia, particularly China, the West had to soft-pedal the OSFA model after the US War on Terror commenced and the G-20 was formed. In the G20 meeting in 2005, the West compromised on the OSFA idea by declaring that there is no one size fit all development model and development has to be nation-specific, signalling a qualitative dilution of the West-led global order in the development domain. In 2008 the World Bank also gave up its long-held faith in the OSFA model and finally in 2010 the United Nations which first institutionalised the idea of OSFA rooted in the Western notion of development, also withdrew from it and expressed its disapproval of it. While on the economic model the West gave up the OSFA approach, on the social side it began to deepen its human rights, liberal democracy and liberal society. Yet, undeniably, the world order of Western construct had begun to dilute after the War on terror began and the rise of Asia, and particularly after the financial meltdown hit the US and the West more than Asia, it began to shake.

2008 melt-down questions the post-World War Order

The 2008 US financial crisis, which had raised serious questions over the Western financial model, to date remains unaddressed and unresolved by the US and West within their own economies and in the global institutions like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO created by them. The West, particularly the US, could not even address the basic cause of over-leverage in its financial system which had led to the US meltdown and hit the world and is even today an operational part of its monetary system. Not just the loose monetary policy, even the question of interest rates which had touched zero wasn't addressed till the highest inflation in four decades hit the US. Till then it was like this: When Walter Bagehot spoke of John Bull being able to stand many things, but not 2% interest rates, he meant that that was too low a rate, a floor; but that 2% seems to have become a kind of ceiling, above which Joe Sixpack begins to feel unwell. This is rank bad economics but worse still the US economy has got so habituated to it, that it cannot come out of it easily and has also acclimatised the global financial order. But inflation topping 9% is compelling the US to hike the interest rates and cut back the liquidity it has pumped into the US and global finance. The US Fed had in March last, decided to cut back the liquidity by \$ 47 billion each in April and May, and

by \$95 billion a month from June. Had it done as it had said it would, it would have by now sucked \$236 billion away from the market. But so far it has cut back only a third of it, \$75 billion. This shows not just unwillingness but possibly that it is not possible. While the Fed implemented its call on interest rates, it has been benign on the liquidity cut back. This year will tell whether the US Federal Reserve will have the courage to continue to normalise monetary policy, or whether like in 2017 it will become nervous and force rates down to near-zero again.

Undoubtedly the post-2008-crisis has weakened and debilitated the West-led model, particularly with the rise of an autocratic and non-transparent China, which was generously engaged first and was allowed into the transparent West-led rule-based world trade and finance, by the US believing in the euphoria of the success of its own liberal democracy and free market as the final victors. But China, more loyal to Marx than the Market, decided to hide and bide its time, took full advantage of the opening provided by the US and promoted its economics at the cost of the free market itself. The west had finally moved in 2016 to get the WTO to declare China as not a market economy at all! Even as China claimed that the very admission into WTO meant that it was a market economy! This showed how unstrategic the US has been which many believe to be the most strategic power. After the 2008 financial meltdown and the rise of autocratic China leveraging the geopolitical position offered to it on a platter by the US and distorting the market-run world trade - the so-called Washington Consensus - the West-led post-World War and post-Cold War order seemed less and less viable. Thereafter it appeared more and more like a pretence of an order than reality. To sum up, the continuing post-2008 crisis questioned the world order based on the balance of power cleverly crafted by Henry Kissinger in the post-Cold war period became weak after the 2008 crisis, and more, the post-Cold War world order, led by the US as the sole superpower, began eroding after the Covid 19 strike. The post-Covid pandemic developments were seen by Henry Kissinger as a sudden and fast-forwarded change forever in the world order, although even Kissinger would not say change from what into what.

Range of Change – “Permanent Restructure” to “survival of Western civilisation”

But, the Ukraine-Russia War, however, has changed the entire scenario, causing not just a tectonic shift in the partial remains of the world order, but forcing the west to see the change as that which threatens the survival of the western civilisation itself. Henry Kissinger, who in 2020 had warned of a change in the world order after the advent of Covid-19, went one step ahead during the World Economic Forum meeting at Davos in May last and said that the Ukraine War “could permanently restructure the world order” and desired that the war must be stopped soon, in a couple of months. But the controversial billionaire George Soros, with a net worth of \$8.5 billion according to Bloomberg, who spends a large part of his wealth, promoting pro-liberal agitations across the world, was more explicit in his Davos speech. He did not utter a word about the Covid challenge, climate change, or inequality, which used to be his favourite subjects, but exclusively focussed on the authoritarianism of Xi Jinping and a war-mongering Vladimir Putin, warning that

“our civilisation may not survive”. While it is not clear what he meant by “our civilisation”, given his left and liberal tendencies, it is clear that he meant that the West-led liberal world order is at risk. Soros added that Western aid to Ukraine and the latter’s resistance to Russia were the only silver linings. He said the war has shaken Europe to its core and even when the fighting stops, as it must, the situation will never revert to what it was before. The media keeps reporting that Soros spends huge sums of money through his Open Society Foundation to influence geopolitics to promote liberal world order. Even though both influential men spoke using different terminologies, what they meant was that the liberal world order, which Soros equated to modern [Western] civilisation, was in danger, ranging from “restructure” to “risk of survival”.

Against the historic and contemporary background, it is necessary to re-examine the founding thoughts and institutions of the world order, the risk to which both Kissinger and Soros are highly concerned. It calls for a recall of ideologies and ideas that formed the basic structures of the post-World War II West-led world order which it had thought, become unchallengeable with the emergence of globalisation founded on the victory of the Western liberal democratic social order and free market economic order – the so-called Washington Consensus - over the Rest. It is also necessary to examine how so soon and suddenly these great and momentous events seem to have become distant memories now.

The impact and effect of the tectonic changes taking place after the onset of the Ukraine war, at the speed of light as it were, are difficult to comprehend at present. The sequence and consequence of the shift will become manifest only when the full effect of the unprecedented war plays out in the future. Yet, it will be Team VIF’s endeavour to throw light on the impact and effect of the war on the world and on different nations in the upcoming Random Thoughts 2022. We will delve into and dissect the ideologies that drove the ambitious Western world order project and its historical background. We see the debate initiated by influential minds like Henry Kissinger and George Soros on the emerging change in the West-led world order as a fascinating geopolitical and geo-economic development in post-World War II history.

II. Impact of the Ukraine war

In the Random Thoughts 2022 that is under preparation, we will discuss how the world is being turned upside down by the Ukraine war and try to trace how a hidden Cold War has transformed into an open Ukraine-Russia war; how the US underestimated and created Putin; how deep had been the Russian planning for the war. We will also track the relative effects of Russian strategy and the Western counter strategy and how successful Russia’s oil for Rouble strategy is and how Russia must have planned to use the very platform of globalisation – which had made nations interdependent believing that the world has entered an era permanent peace and harmony – to make entire Europe dependent on it for energy. We will also endeavour to assess what a continuing war means to Russia,

Western nations and others, and its impact on European nations, their economy and the Trans-Atlantic Alliance, on US-Middle East relations. We will also try to capture how the war is turning traditional alliances into current problems and also contemplate on whether the outcome will be a restructured order or more disorder. We will also discuss the impact of the Ukraine conflict on the global institutions – the UN, the WTO, the UN Commission on Human Rights and other similar multilateral bodies; the impact of the Ukraine conflict on globalisation, global trade and regional trade pacts, and also how the war is creating and deepening non-Western political economic and financial blocks. We will also try to assess the outcome and impact of the war on the different world nations, groups and alliances, on the global monetary order, trade and finance, and India's current response to it and what in our opinion its future responses could be. We will also discuss China-related issues, India's neighbourhood issues and finally diverse scenarios of the emerging world order from the current threat of disorder and India's role in influencing it as we see it.

Global monetary order, trade and finance

We will endeavour to comprehend the possible shift in global trade from financial power to commodity power, the resultant possibility of a shift from the post cold war emphasis on the financial economy, back to the real economy, and the possible, and perhaps, inevitable changes in the global monetary and financial order and its effects, and the travel back from globalism and multilateralism to civilisational and other groups pacts to bilateralism and the increasing role of national currencies in bilateral trade.

Ukraine War, and the US and Europe

We will try to measure the impact of the Ukraine War and its result on the global climate issue, particularly in the context of the energy crisis in Europe forcing Germany and other countries to go back to coal-based energy, which will turn the climate deal on its head. We will also discuss how the messages and outcome of the Ukraine conflict point to the emergence of an increasingly polarised world, full of distrust, where global commercial and financial commons are used as weapons of war, robbing the world of residual morals in global affairs and where there are no neutral geographies or actors left.

We will also discuss how the war has dented American influence and leadership, resulting in a defensive West in a world of offence. We will also discuss whether Ukraine is a trailer for Taiwan or a warning against it. We will examine the impact of US/West sanctions on Russia, the West and the Rest and whether these sanctions are a success or failure by tracing their background. We will also try and comprehend the international strife, leadership deficiencies in the US, Russia, China and Europe, split polity in Europe and the US and the rise of nationalism in the West – France, Ireland, and other nations -- and the explosive and deepening Liberals Vs Conservatives conflict in the US.

Ukraine war and emergence of new global players

We will also examine how international developments are likely to open up considerable opportunities for middle-level power players like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Israel and the UAE to leverage the evolving situation to their advantage. India, which has risen from being a middle player into a higher orbit in the last few years, has a great advantage over most middle powers as its comprehensive power is far superior to theirs and its continental economy opens up unprecedented opportunities for it at a time when China has emerged as a big challenge to the West, even as global supply chains have been greatly disrupted. We will discuss how this new phenomenon also points to the emergence of a multipolar world, where hard power which India has been quietly building and its natural soft power, both matter. With multiple players emerging and geopolitics being used as a global policing force, what is likely to emerge is a multipolar world, where persuasion rather than pressure will be key to global relationship management.

III. Ukraine War and India's response

We will discuss India's response to the Ukraine War and how India's Ukraine Policy is an exercise in the national interest, as well as its causes and consequences to India. We will also capture how India strategically moved with warring nations, even getting them to suspend the war, to bring back all Indians safely from Ukraine – a great and physically demanding diplomatic feat by any standards. We will also try to comprehend the Ukraine War's impact on India's relations with different nations – the US, Russia, Germany, France, England, Japan, Israel, and the Arab world – UAE, Saudi Arabia and China. We will try to measure India's rising stature as demonstrated by physical Indian visits and virtual meetings of heads of state, finance, trade and foreign ministers of Japan, Australia, Nepal, UK, UK, Oman, Israel, China, even as the war rose in crescendo. Finally, we discuss the QUAD and India and India's dilemma in the QUAD.

Other India-related issues

We will try to bring out India's economic challenges, opportunities and risks in the present context and in the future, India's internal issues and challenges, India's Chinese challenge, and India's neighbourhood risks and obligations. We will also discuss how in the medium and long-run, Indian democracy will stand at the Centre, mediating between the liberal and the illiberal world, and how liberal democracies whose influence is perceived to be weakening, will have to work with India to sustain a democracy-inspired world order in a world geographically and numerically dominated by autocracies.

IV. China-related Issues

We will also endeavour to figure out and explain China's economic challenges, particularly those arising from Western model real estate-driven growth, and the external and internal issues in China, including those between Xi and his adversaries, Xi and the PLA, the Xi regime and Ukraine Policy. We will also try to understand the stand-off between China and Taiwan because of the visit of Nancy Pelosi Speaker of the US House of Representatives to Taiwan and whether the war hysteria China has created over the visit would turn into a war or peter out into long cold war tearing apart the deep engagement that has twined the two powers, the US and China and the consequences of either to the world and also to India. How the separation of the two Siamese twins is going to take place will be a historic development to watch.

Can China do a Ukraine on Taiwan?

While how the Taiwan stand-off will play out is unclear, there are some clues as to how different things are between the Ukraine war and the Taiwan war if it takes place. One would normally tend to think that the Ukraine war would be a trailer for China's Taiwan action. But the new kind of sanctions that the West levied on Russia would make the Chinese think twice before taking any unilateral, aggressive action. The Western response to Russia with sanctions involved the ban on the use of global commons like SWIFT to use multinational corporations to freezing the Dollars assets and so on. Russia could ward off the impact of the sanctions by leveraging its strength as the major gas and oil supplier to the European nations and on their weakness as energy-dependent on Russia. The sanctions, which the US had prematurely claimed reduced the "Rouble to rubble" have not been highly successful against Russia, whose use of energy as a weapon against the European nations has seen the Rouble rise to a three-year high. While the West has shown by its sanctions that Russia's own assets cease to be its assets and can even become its liabilities, Russia has shown by its Rouble for gas and oil that the economic and trade interdependence of the world which the West forced on the Rest through the West-centric globalisation can be the greatest danger to the West. Now apply the war rules of Ukraine to Taiwan.

If China moves unilaterally on Taiwan and the West responds in the same way as it did against Russia what are the possible consequences to China? The Chinese have kept invested close to a trillion US dollars in US treasury securities. That apart, American Enterprise Institute Global China Investment Tracker says that, between 2005 and 2022, the Chinese have invested \$2.25 trillion world over — of which over \$850 billion is in North America, especially the USA, Europe and Australia — all falling within the areas of US influence, and can be subject to sanctions in case of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. It means that some \$ 1.80 trillion of Chinese cash can be frozen by the West.

The US and Europe are certainly China dependent on some critical areas of the supply chain, and cheaper consumer goods. But that dependence is unlike the energy dependence of Europe on Russia. Countermeasures of China to the kind of sanctions the US and West have levied on Russia

if levied on China, cannot have the kind of impact which Russia's energy weapon could produce on Europe. Any Russian kind of sanctions on China could be a lighted map to a train of gunpowder on China — the consequences could be immeasurably harmful to China. Let us examine.

The most critical issue in China's economy now is the real estate bubble. Housing accounts for 30% of China's GDP. Since 2005 China has focussed on housing and related sectors steel and cement for its high growth much of it financed by debt. China accounts for 57% of the world's steel production. Policies like presale mortgages which China had adopted to promote housing resembled the subprime lending of the US to promote home values. The home values which rose by three times between 2011 and 2020 powered China's data of GDP rise. The home values constitute 70% of the personal wealth of the Chinese. But the pandemic and global slowdown, besides the ageing society, appeared to have reversed the fortunes of China's housing economy. The residential property sales have crashed by 72% since last year and the slide has been continuous month after month for 11 months and appears irresistible. Home buyers are refusing to pay the mortgage dues for the houses which are not completed and are agitating on the streets. On top of that, the unsold property inventories reached a 5-year high. Large firms are defaulting on debt. Experts say that 30% of steel producers dependent on the housing economy are staring at bankruptcy. Even though 90% of the property developers are locally funded and only 4% have taken loans from abroad, the housing crisis will cause a massive impact on the Chinese regular banks, shadow banks and the economy. The Chinese economic growth which was 8.1% in 2021 is likely to be 5% in 2022. The OECD EcoScope estimates that a 2% fall in the Chinese economy, coupled with housing stress and higher finance in China will cause a 2% reduction in global GDP and also cause a collateral impact on prices in the world — which will also have a spin-off effect back on China's economy itself.

There are two more causes of concern to China. One China's total Debt to GDP has risen from 146% in 2006 to 258% which is presently more than that of the debt-prone US. The Dollar denominated debt of China is \$3 trillion. China is regarded by many as a candidate for a debt crisis. With a huge dollar component in its debts, a Chinese debt crisis can, by contagion effect, get exported outside. The other issue is China's overseas lending. National Bureau of Economic Research [NBER] US estimates that Chinese overseas lending which was \$500 billion in 2000 topped \$5 trillion by 2018 — equal to 6% of the world's GDP. NBER also says that if the Chinese investment in foreign equity and Direct investment [that is the AIE figure of \$2.30 trillion] is added, the total investment would equal 8% of global GDP. These figures are outdated — four years old. A non-transparent China does not allow easy detection of its assets and liabilities. Yet, these are assets valuable in peacetimes. If the US-China stand-off leads to a global economic mess and it triggers a global economic crisis as it is bound to, it will not only rebound on China, but it can also turn the global loans of China into non-performing loans.

It is true that China has dominance in rare earth supply — in 2019 its dominance was as high as 80% of global supply — so critical for technology manufacturing and renewable energy products

essential for green energy. In 2010 China had almost a total monopoly with India as a marginal supplier. But things are changing. With the US planning to rival China by including, in its \$2 trillion infra mission, on-shoring of rare earth production for its semi-conductor industry and for remaking its transport sector, the Chinese dominance cannot last too long. Rare earth may soon become not so rare. Definitely, in case of a war against Taiwan, Chinese rare earth dominance cannot produce for China the effect that Russian gas produced for Russia in the war against Ukraine. Apart from rare earth, China can also hold back green energy equipment. With the green agenda being undermined by the Ukraine war, the issue will cease to be a pressing issue.

To conclude with the change of the rules of war the West has demonstrated against Russia in the Ukraine war, it will be difficult if not impossible for China to respond to the West as Russia did. That is, it cannot easily do a Ukraine on Taiwan like Russia

But the strategic difference between the Russia vs Ukraine situation and China vs Taiwan situation should not induce one think that China would not take aggressive action. Xi Jinping's third term of five years is due for confirmation in October next, which may compel him into kinetic mode as, having unwisely hyped Nancy Pelosi visit into an issue against One China Policy that China had extracted from the US, he cannot be seen to be accepting her visit unresponded – even though the international community will find it difficult to accept that Pelosi visit as a sufficient cause for China to act militarily against Taiwan. Yet, members of the international community, especially among the Quad members and ASEAN countries should advisedly not remain complacent. While the financial and trade deterrents to military action by the People's Republic of China are obvious, there are ominous signs of heightened preparations for war on the Chinese side, apart from the pronounced aggressiveness of the military exercises it is conducting around Taiwan. Chinese are decoupling their economy by gradually pulling companies out of listings in New York; they have stockpiled semiconductors needed for their industry, especially after the difficulties faced in this regard by Huawei and ZTE; and they have launched a movement to cleanse the public space of “sissy boys” and the “lie flat” movement. All of this would be consistent with their medium-term strategy to sanction-proof themselves for a possible show-down. Above all, in the background of the demonstrated lack of appetite for the US and West for military involvement outside given the US retraction from the Middle-East and Afghanistan, it would be unwise to underestimate the PLA's inclination and determination to settle the matter by force, as also to underestimate the power of the PLA in decision-making on matters of national security. Prudence dictates the need to prepare in advance for any untoward development – the war in Ukraine has lessons for the west as well as for the PRC.

Another intriguing aspect is the dichotomy between its aggressive war drills against Taiwan and the latest – and bad – news about its economy. Over and above the burgeoning woes of its housing economy – the mainstay of China's GDP – China's industrial production as well as retail sales for July 2022 have slowed. The relentless fall in home sales continuing for the 11th successive

month in July has ripped through the industrial sector with Chinese steel production touching the lowest since 2018. Data shows that 19.9% of all youth in the age group of 16-24 are jobless – a record high, and shocking. It shows a larger malaise in the economy. This is of huge concern to the CPC as the Chinese Congress is expected to meet in mid-October to re-elect XI Jinping. The real GDP growth has also slowed below estimates indicating that the growth target of 5.5% for 2022 may be unachievable and the actual could well end up at sub 4%. China experts in world finance regard the sudden bad news as alarming. This has forced the People’s Bank of China to cut its rate by 10 basis points – the reverse of US Fed action to hike the rates – and also inject \$60 billion in lending markets. The surprise rate cut, though not significant, is seen by some economists as indicating that the entire economy is in trouble. Because of the bad economic data from China, global oil prices have dropped by 5% – which is good news, though small, for the US which has been toiling to bring down the oil prices with the twin aim of controlling domestic inflation and harming Russia, a principal beneficiary of high oil prices. Whether the bad news on the economic front would dissuade China from a war on Taiwan is also a million-dollar question. What happens on the economic front before the Chinese Congress meets might also influence Xi’s decision. Xi’s decision might also depend on whether worsening economic conditions would impede his re-election, or how sure is he to get elected in spite of it. In the end, whether Xi’s re-election prospects are smooth or tough might also decide his approach to Taiwan.

V. India’s neighbourhood

We will also discuss the developments in India’s neighbourhood, particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and the way forward. Afghanistan, in particular, looms large: the dismal performance during the withdrawal by the US and allied forces has probably played a part in emboldening America’s adversaries. It will reflect on the ability of the western consensus to sustain its values if there is any weakness shown towards the Taliban, under whatever pretext its crypto-supporters will drum up. The Taliban have openly flouted the assurances they gave at the time of the Doha Agreement, particularly in terms of women’s rights, minorities’ treatment and terrorism. This cannot be a cost-free approach for them.

The significance of the economic and consequent social troubles in the South Asian neighbourhood deserves special attention. At heart, this is a reflection of predatory loan practices, without due consideration of the ability of the recipient country to absorb and repay the capital. Much of the spending done by the People’s Republic of China is of this kind, done in disregard for the creditworthiness or repayment capacity of the countries. But, as we have seen in the case of Sri Lanka, it is India that has to finally work to stabilise the situation. Why all China’s Belt and Road Initiative participants including Pakistan are in serious trouble needs probe. In this endeavour, cooperation from the Quad partners would be invaluable—room for the four to work together in an important new vector.

Finally

We will compare the global developments in the background of Random Thoughts 2021. In the end, we will try to build diverse scenarios about the likely future of the world and the role of India in it as we see it.

A historic, fascinating, high-risk and uncontrollable transformation of the world is taking place in front of us which has shattered all post-Cold Wars positive predictions of a conflict-free world assured of peace, prosperity and harmony through globalisation and West-led solutions to global problems. Interesting yet dangerous times are ahead for all nations in the short and in the long run.

In the Random Thoughts 2022, Team VIF will endeavour to comprehend and bring out these and other developments that take place before it is completed.



S. Gurumurthy
Chairman, VIF

August 2022 | New Delhi





About the VIF

The aim and purpose of founding the VIF was to bring about a paradigm shift in the national and global discourse in India. VIF is a non-partisan independent think tank focusing on the study of contemporary India – its international relations, security problems, governance, and civilisational issues from an Indian perspective. Monitoring emerging trends, it aims at engaging experts, both within and outside the Foundation, to evolve informed policy options and work out alternative strategies. Through public discourse

and interactions, it strives to create greater awareness among people and partner with civil society to make people vital stakeholders in national affairs.

Some of India's leading experts in the fields of security, diplomacy, governance and economy have got together under the aegis of the Foundation to generate ideas and stimulate action that could lead to India's all-round empowerment and its ability to contribute

to regional and global security and stability. Independently funded, VIF is not aligned to any political party, religious group or business house.

Trust Deed of the VIF prohibits it from accepting any donations from foreign sources other than the people from Indian origin who are associated with the organisation. VIF has not received any foreign donation till date since its inception.

Dedicated to India's long-term strategic, developmental and civilisational interests, it aims to ideate on fresh approaches and channelise them to those responsible for managing the affairs of the nation on the one hand and people at large on the other.

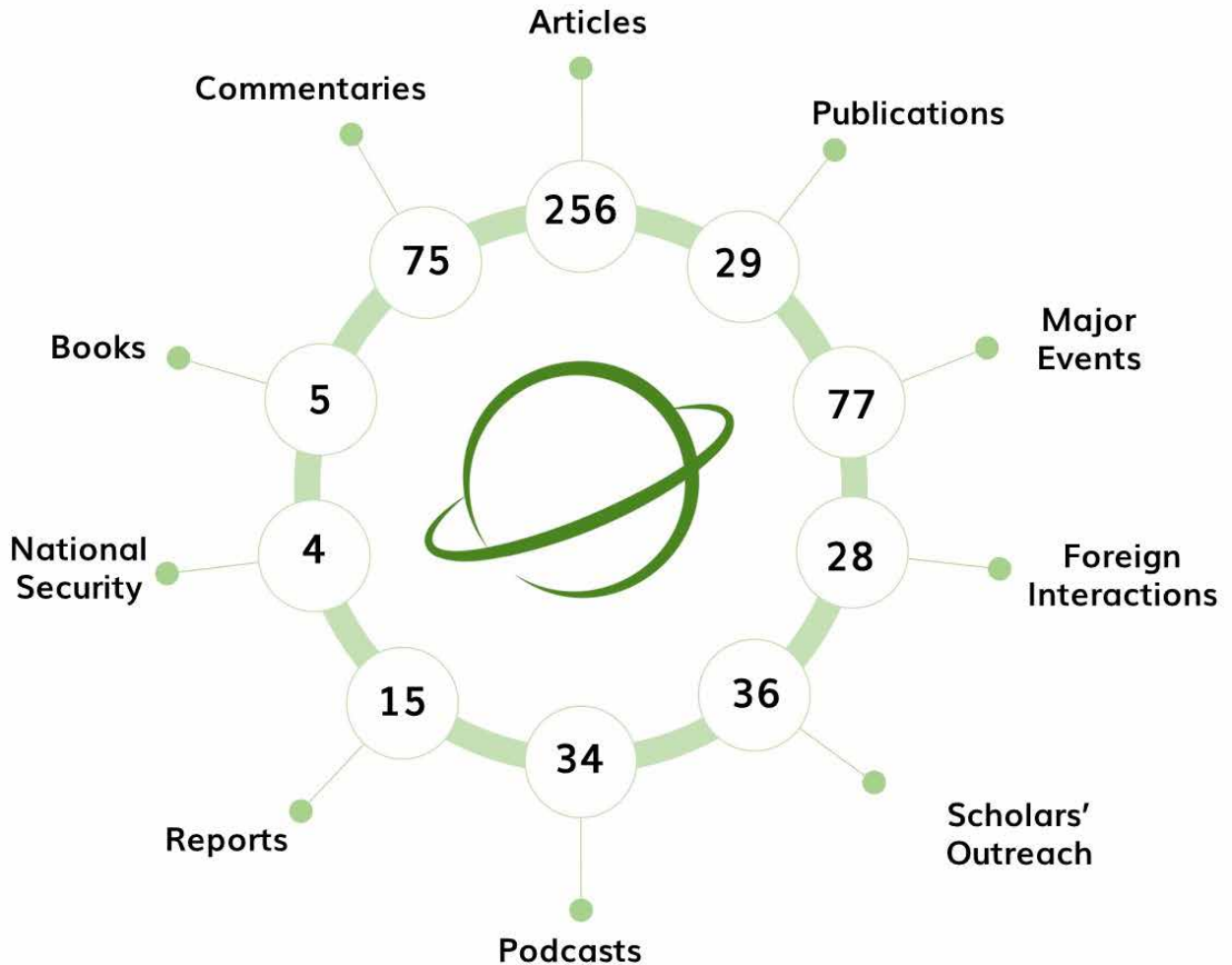
VIF works under the guidance of a Trust with eminent people in public life as its Trustees. It has an Advisory Council and an Executive Committee comprising of distinguished persons from diverse fields with high professional accomplishments and long experience.

The Director is the Chief Executive of the Foundation and is nominated by the Trust.

Objectives

- **Offer** policy alternatives to contain internal conflicts caused by India's socio-economic disparities and political rivalries.
 - **Ideate** on economic policies and models that would facilitate the well-being and prosperity of one and all.
 - **Interact** with civil society and offer institutional support for exchange of ideas among conflicting groups.
 - **Deliberate** on public policies, the working of national institutions and democratic bodies, and suggest measures for their revival and rejuvenation.
 - **Evolve** benchmarks for good governance and efficiency in public institutions.
 - **Reassess, formulate** and **develop** India's civilisational and cultural imperatives in an increasingly globalised world.
 - **Promote** initiatives that further the cause of peace and global harmony.
- **Analyse** India's external and internal security environment to offer effective inputs to shape policies and response strategies.

Annual Outcomes



Website

2007726
Views

35002
Downloads

672699
Visitors



Twitter

2876000
Impressions



Facebook

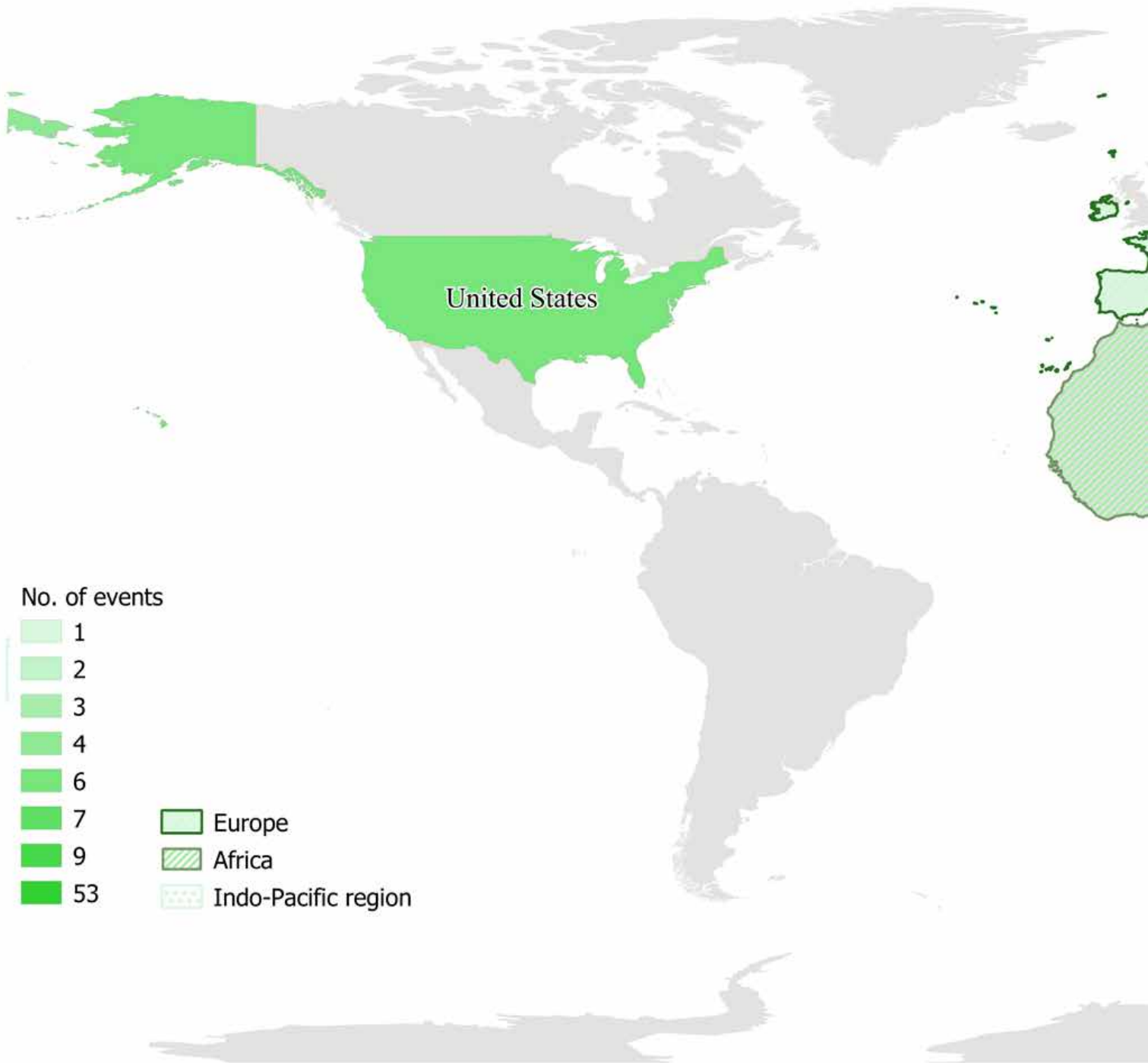
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Impressions



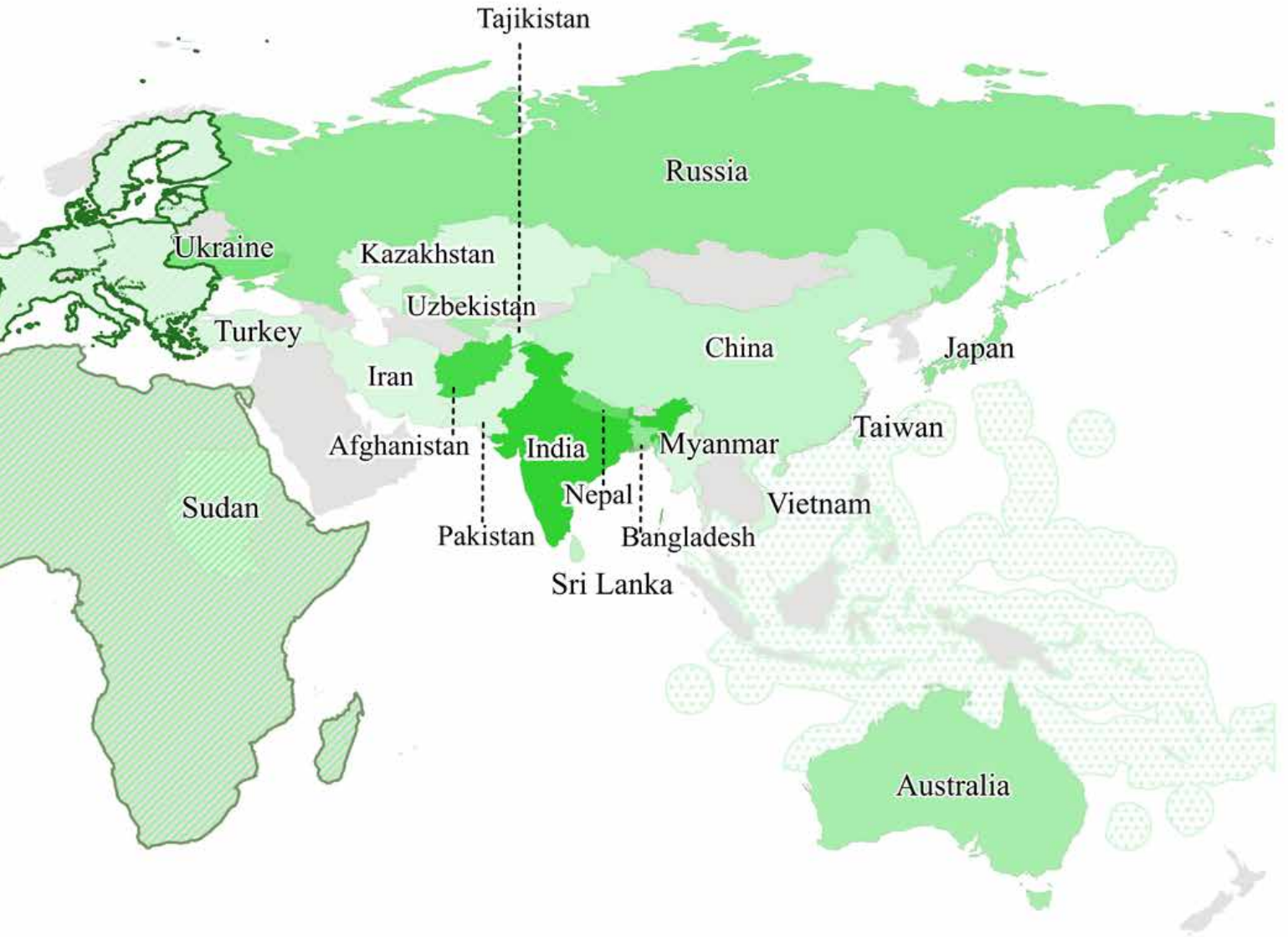
Youtube

7.5K
Hours watched
on Channel

Heat map of events conducted :



Country Based Frequency



From the Director's Desk



After a gap of two years, the VIF office reopened with due precaution in March 2022 as the Covid-19 pandemic abated. During the pandemic, we maintained and gradually quickened the pace of our activities online. In 2021-22, Covid-19 continued although its severity mitigated to some extent in the latter half. Besides Covid-19, the world witnessed the outbreak of a war between Russia and Ukraine, which will leave a long-term impact on global restructuring. Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war should be seen as early symptoms of an imminent global upheaval. The world has already seen an unprecedented rise in commodity prices, besides severe energy and food security crises. VIF activities over the past year were focussed on understanding the extent and depth of the changes taking place and India's response to them.

Through a series of well-crafted initiatives and policies, India has sought to contribute to global peace and stability while building its own political, economic, technological and military capabilities. The VIF has long advocated the need for a comprehensive Indian narrative rooted in its cultural and civilisational attributes, and in contemporary realities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of India emerging as a force for global good is part of the emerging narrative. In a significant statement delivered at the UN, India's Permanent Representative highlighted the disturbing trends of Hinduphobia in the West for the first time. The VIF Chairman's article on the subject was widely distributed. Similarly, an article by Dr A. Surya Prakash on the double standards of Western democracies in lecturing India about its democratic functioning and freedom of speech was also carried.

Great power rivalries have accentuated. Multilateralism is under stress. Globalisation's weaknesses have been exposed. China's rise, facilitated by the West, threatens the West-led international order and dominance of the US. The West has decided to isolate and weaken Russia, which will have a major impact on Europe and the global security order. How the West deals with China is still unclear. By not calling out Russia explicitly for the war with Ukraine, India has

maintained a distinct stance on its relationship with Moscow. The VIF has extensively discussed the emergence of a new world order and opined that India must safeguard its interests and look for opportunities.

With grey-zone conflicts and hybrid warfare becoming increasingly common, there is a need for Indian military planners to incorporate lessons from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict into our own war-fighting doctrine. In asymmetric warfare, the weaker party has an advantage. The strategic implications of new technologies, drone warfare, cyber warfare, weaponisation of social media, sanctions, etc. have been examined in detail by the VIF.

The VIF maintained a sharp focus on emerging trends in India's foreign policy. Continuing with its diplomatic engagements throughout the year, India navigated the choppy waters of world policy diligently. There is a need for political parties and politicians to be aware of the complexities of international relations and be restrained in their statements. Foreign policy implementation also requires more resources. VIF discussions brought out how foreign and domestic policy are closely linked. As India's global stature rises, domestic developments could have serious implications for foreign policy and the nation's image. This is a lesson we need to imbibe as we engage with the world.

India followed prudent policies to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic. The government pushed through some serious economic reforms. Although the country managed a smart economic recovery, the sharp rise in global oil and commodity prices impacted it adversely. India will need to mitigate the inflationary pressure quickly. A strong economy is sine-qua-non for a strong India. The VIF continued to argue for reform in economic policy while taking into account the vulnerability of weaker sections. The interests of the middle class cannot be ignored either. The employment challenge also needs to be addressed.

The VIF has consistently championed for thorough defence and national security reform to build India's military strength. The Make-in-India is a right step in that direction. The initiatives to involve the private sector in defence manufacturing and the space industry are welcome and need to be speeded up. A key requirement would be to enhance resource allocation to India's defence, strengthen defence R&D and increase defence manufacturing. Several interactions with experts, industry and policy makers have been held to analyse various facets of technology's interface with security and the economy.

Due to the growing uncertainty in the world, India's traditional and non-traditional security challenges are likely to grow. The environment and the ecology cannot be ignored. There is an utmost need to maintain cohesion and harmony in society and not give adversaries opportunities to exploit India's domestic fault lines.

Main activities of the VIF: Highlights

The following table provides a glimpse of VIF's activities during the period from April 2021 to March 2022:

Descriptions	Number
Books	05
Monograph	01
Briefs & Papers	28
Reports	15
Articles and Commentaries	331
Articles by Scholars published outside VIF	36
Podcasts	34
Videos	26
National Security Journal (Quarterly)	04
Global Developments & Analysis Digest and Africa Now	Weekly
China Daily Digest & Neighbourhood News Digest	Daily
International Development & Defense, National Security and Terrorism Digest	Fortnightly
Seminars, Conferences & Interactions	69
Collaborative Seminars	25
Vimarsh talks	11
New books added to Library	142 (Books)
E-resources (e-books, articles, Op-ed, digests, occasional papers from various sources)	880
Entries in VIF Database	585
Tweets issued	1,349
Followers on Twitter	25,614
Followers on Facebook	12,288
Website hits (Cumulative)	6,726,99

The VIF maintained high-level contacts with key government agencies, including the Ministry of External Affairs, DRDO, the Armed Forces and others. The interaction was mutually rewarding. Several follow up actions have also been initiated. These will bear fruit in the near future. Several of our scholars were regularly invited to deliver talks and take part in their programmes. This helped enhance VIF visibility and to convey its thinking.

The VIF maintained a concerted programme of engagement with leading think tanks of the world. It participated actively in the “Quad Plus” Dialogue among think tanks, which takes place every quarter. In addition, leading experts from several countries were invited for talks and discussions. Their views enriched VIF’s understanding of global trends. Several discussions were held with Taiwanese think tanks to explore the possibilities of Taiwanese investments in semiconductor manufacturing in India.

The VIF maintained an active programme of publications. Our quarterly journal -- National Security, edited by Prof Sujit Dutta focussed on several themes, including Indo-US relations, China’s BRI, India’s security environment, climate change and many others.

The VIF’s outreach to the diplomatic community was continued. Ambassadors of Afghanistan, Taiwan, Vietnam, UAE, European Union, Libya, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh interacted with the VIF. Indian ambassadors posted in Oman, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Lebanon, Maldives, Bhutan and Sri Lanka also interacted with us.

Our website remained active throughout the year. New content was posted every day. Apart from incisive commentaries, the VIF uploaded several podcasts by leading experts. This is a new feature.

The tempo of publication of quality books was maintained through the year. Eight books were published during this period. Random Thoughts by Shri S. Gurusurthy touched upon a wide range of subjects, ranging from civilisational to geopolitical. He put his finger on the serious crisis that liberal democracies are experiencing. Random Thoughts underlined the need for bringing in culture, civilisation and social harmony into the Indian discourse on global issues. The book was widely distributed by the VIF.

The commemorative volume, *India-Bangladesh Bonhomie at 50: 1971 and the Present*, put together by a VIF team was released at a function in Dhaka in which the State Minister for Foreign Affairs was present. Sreeradha Datta’s edited volume *BIMSTEC: The Journey and the Way Ahead* provided a range of views from Indian and foreign scholars on this regional organisation. *Irrawaddi Imperatives* by Jaideep Chanda is comprehensive account of India-Myanmar relations. The VIF’s annual volume on Pakistan titled *Pakistan Insights 2022*, edited by Tilak Devasher, gave an insightful account of the internal developments in Pakistan, the civil-military ties, developments in Pakistan occupied Kashmir etc. The VIF publication *Atamnirbhar Bharat*, to which Prime Minister Modi contributed a message, was aimed at explaining the broader concept of self-reliance.

Former VIF Director and ex-army chief, General N.C. Vij (Retired) wrote a book titled *The Kashmir Conundrum: The Quest for Peace in a Troubled Land*, while Ambassador Dinkar Srivastava, Distinguished Fellow at the VIF, published a book titled *Forgotten Kashmir: The Other Side of the Line of Control*, which dealt with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The book was released by the Lieutenant Governor of J & K. The Director published a book titled *Opportunity for India in a Changing World* in which an effort was made to understand the fundamental global changes underway and the vistas they open for India.

Neighbourhood has been a focus area for the VIF. We highlighted the emerging instability in the neighbourhood. The impact of developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives and Bangladesh on India was analysed in detail. VIF publications argued in favour of a proactive approach, enhanced connectivity, establishment of South Asian supply chains, deepening of the people-to-people contacts, urgent emphasis on trade and investment and greater attention to non-traditional security issues. India should take a lead in strengthening BIMSTEC. The VIF engaged with eminent think tanks in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, bringing several experts onto a common platform for discussions. A VIF delegation visited Bangladesh for in-depth exchanges. The report was shared with the government. Eminent political leaders, scholars and experts from neighbouring countries also participated in VIF discussions.

The VIF has resumed its Africa cluster. An Africa scholar joined the VIF in August 2021. Since September, a weekly newsletter and several commentaries and articles on African issues have been published. Several book discussions on India-Africa relations have also been organised.

The VIF maintained a strong focus on Indian culture and civilisation. A series of lectures on Indian philosophy were given by Dr. Shashi Prabha Kumar, Distinguished Fellow at the VIF. The introduction to Indian philosophy was meant to provide a background and context to scholars working on international relations about India's civilisational and cultural heritage. On January 6, 2022, the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) began an online talk series by Svāmī Mitrananda of the Chinmaya Mission on the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā. A compilation of Shanti Mantra verses from Vedas, highlighting the importance of peace and reverence for the nation is under preparation.

Dr. Marike van Aerde of Leiden University gave a talk on January 19, 2022, highlighting the archaeology of ancient India's trade network that connected India with Africa and the Mediterranean through Indian Ocean. VIF's articles covered such themes as the historical background of the destroyed Bamiyan sites in Afghanistan. An article, titled 'Understanding Indian Heritage: Shedding the Colonial Past,' discussed the importance of archaeological port site of Arikamedu in Tamil Nādu, India. This article, through specific examples, highlighted the need to revisit India's archaeology with a post-colonial approach to discover more about these sites to shed some preconceived colonial notions and get new insights. An article, titled 'Metaphors of Reverence: A Tale of Two Civilisational Gestures', explored how Bharāt and Western civilisations are differently

cultured in terms of perceiving their past, present, and future, which in effect makes their approach to subjects like progress, change and continuity different.

The National Security Advisory Board and the VIF organised three high-level webinars on Indo-US cooperation in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity, biotechnologies, space etc. Several important suggestions and recommendations were generated during these discussions and were shared with the policy makers.

During the height of the pandemic, the VIF organised a series of discussions on vaccines, oxygen supplies, public health etc.

VIF scholars did indepth work on China. A monograph by Lt General Gautam Banerjee traced key aspects of Chinese military reform and its implication for India. Cdr Shashank Sharma outlined reforms in the PLA Navy, while Col Pushpinder Bath analysed the emergence of China as a space power. Dr Gulshan Rai wrote about China's cyber organisation and a paper by Gen P.K. Mallick discussed the evolution of cyber warfare. The VIF also prepared a report on Chinese operations in Tibet.

A vast range of subjects were covered in over 300 commentaries and articles published by the VIF on topical issues. These commentaries were analytical in nature and covered topics such as the pandemic, technology and trade, diplomacy etc.

The VIF approached several experts to record their views on topical issues. These were presented and uploaded as podcasts. We uploaded 34 podcasts and 26 videos in all.

We have set up a forum for young scholars to present their research every week. Forty seven such meetings have been held. This forum helps younger scholars to improve their research and presentation skills. Some of them made presentations at our regular weekly meetings.

The VIF continued with the tradition of public lectures by eminent experts. In eleven Vimarsh lectures, a wide range of subjects were covered, including climate change and India's energy choices, the Indo-Pacific, defence reforms, challenges before armed forces, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, India's drug challenge, Indo-US relations and administrative reforms.

VIF scholars were invited regularly to speak at the leading training academies of the Armed forces, home ministry and the external affairs ministry. The Director delivered several talks on national security, and foreign policy.

In collaboration with Army War College/Army Training Command and IIM Indore, the VIF organised a "Strategic Leadership and Perspective Planning" 3- day capsule in physical mode for eighteen recently approved Lieutenant Generals. These officers have taken over the command of topmost positions in the Indian Army. Focus discussion groups comprising of senior armed forces veterans, diplomats, academics and experts were formed to discuss Pakistan, US, Europe, West

Asia, Indo-Pacific, the neighbourhood and other subjects. Summaries of the discussions were prepared and uploaded on our website. Many of the members of these groups contributed articles to VIF publications. I would like to express sincere thanks to them for voluntarily contributing to these discussions, which had a high standard of discourse.

I would like to acknowledge the support provided by team VIF in carrying on our activities. The VIF's circle of strategic experts has grown. Our team of young scholars remained enthusiastic throughout the year despite Covid. They participated meaningfully in our activities. The administrative and support staff worked tirelessly throughout the year for VIF's success. I would like to thank the Chairman, the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and the Advisory Board for their support and guidance.

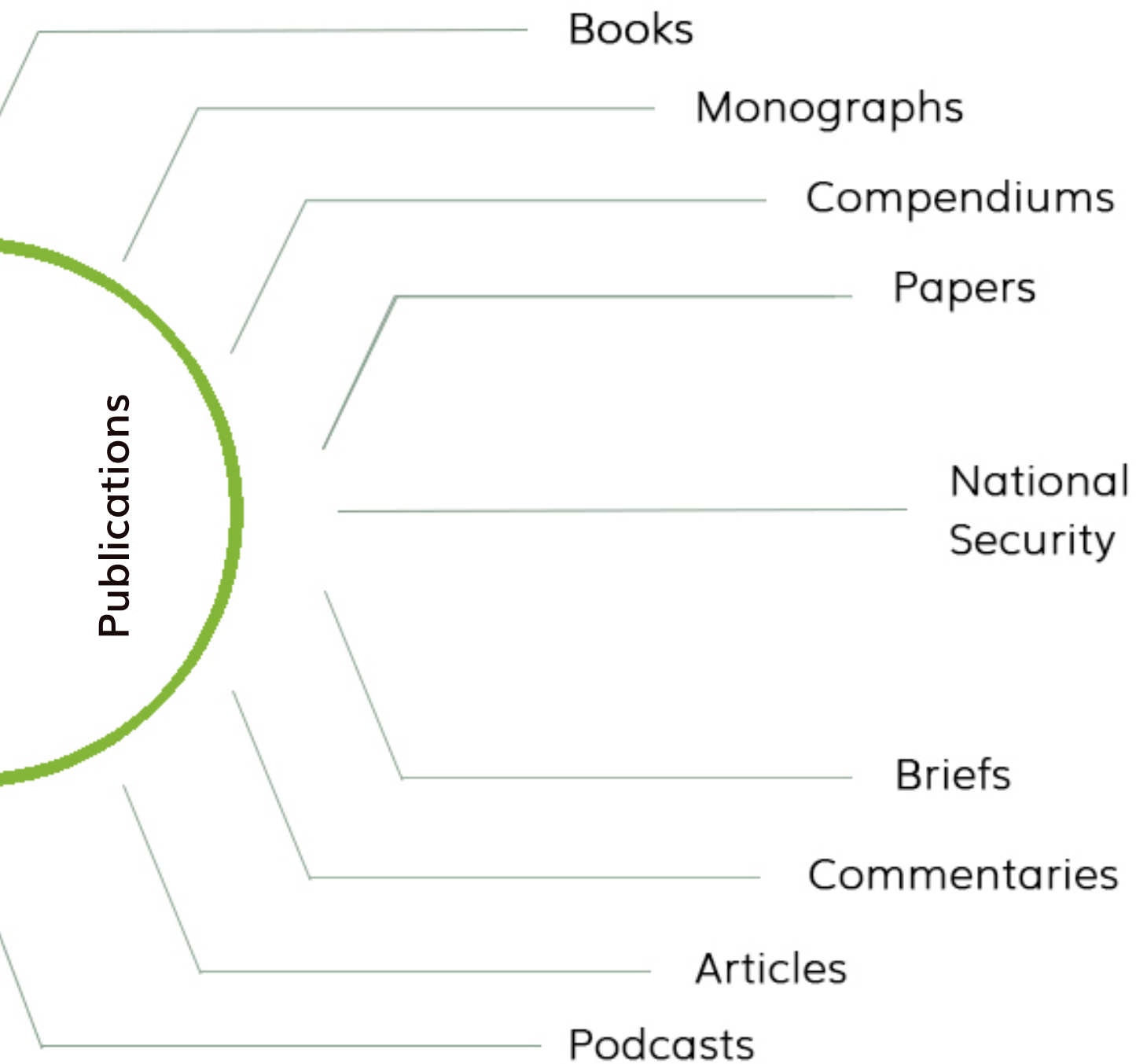
Overall, the VIF had an active year of serious in-depth discussion, debates and dialogue aimed at building an Indian narrative, establishing India as a civilisational and cultural state devoted to national resurgence and a force for global good. These activities will continue in the future with a view to build an Indian narrative on important contemporary global issues.



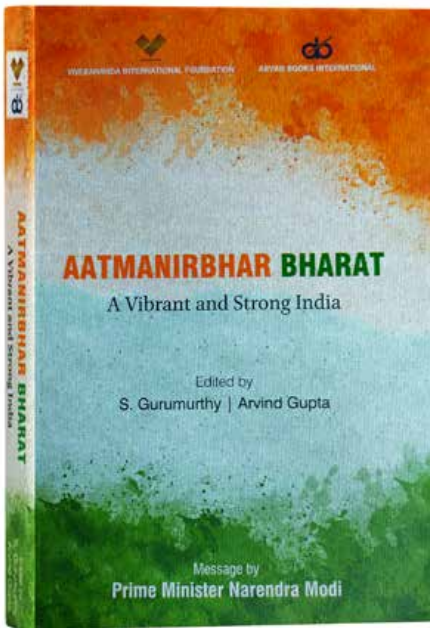
Dr Arvind Gupta, IFS (Retd)
Director, VIF

Former Deputy National Security Advisor &
Former Director General, IDSA

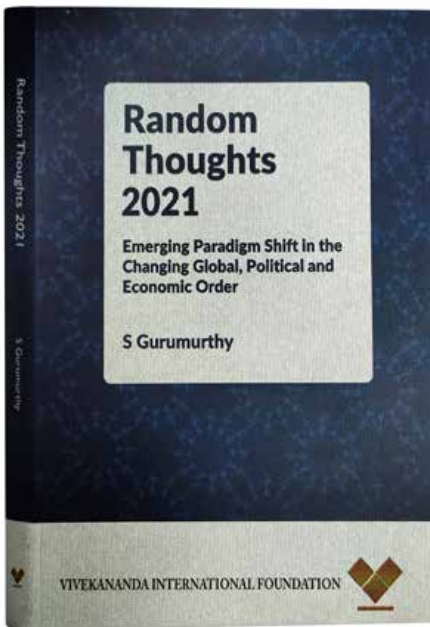
August 2022 | New Delhi



BOOKS



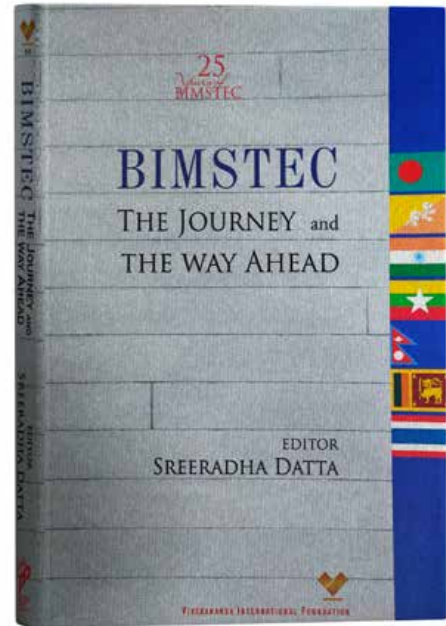
Neither development without self-pride nor self-pride without development are desirable. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for Aatmanirbhar Bharat or a self-reliant India goes beyond mere economic self-reliance. The COVID-19 pandemic brought forth India's unhealthy and unsustainable dependencies on imports, be it of goods, armaments, technology or even ideas. Through this book, India's leading thinkers and policy stalwarts (including two Padma Shri awardees), dive deep into conceptualizing and outlining the way forward for this arduous, yet ardent vision of Aatmanirbharta. A broad spectrum of the policy space ranging from civilizational and historical discourses to economy, foreign policy, technology, military, rural sector, education, skills development, women, and climate change is covered in the book making it an inspiring read for the decision makers, intelligentsia and the public at large.



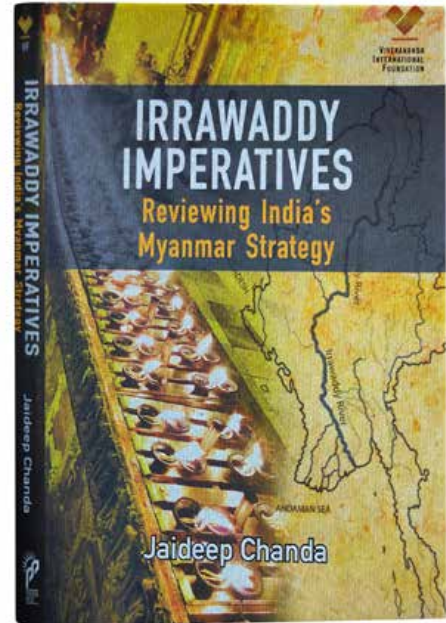
Random Thoughts 2021 touches upon unusual range of subjects, namely from emerging civilisational, religious and historical issues; to out-of-the-box suggestions for astronomy-based education for conflict avoidance, to how liberal democracies are short-termist as compared to long-termist autocratic China; to how the liberal and civilisational democracies like India are different, to how Indian democracy is under threat both from autocratic China and Western liberalism; to how market economics is distinct from market societies, to contemporary geopolitical, geo-economics, geo-strategic issues with a particular reference to India and India's strategic relations with select countries and the emerging strategic relations between India and the rest of the world. Random Thoughts 2021 is a humble attempt to provoke a debate on larger issues, including civilisational, cultural and social diversity issues that had missed their place in the debates leading to the formation of the post-World War II and post-Cold War global order which stands challenged today.

BOOKS

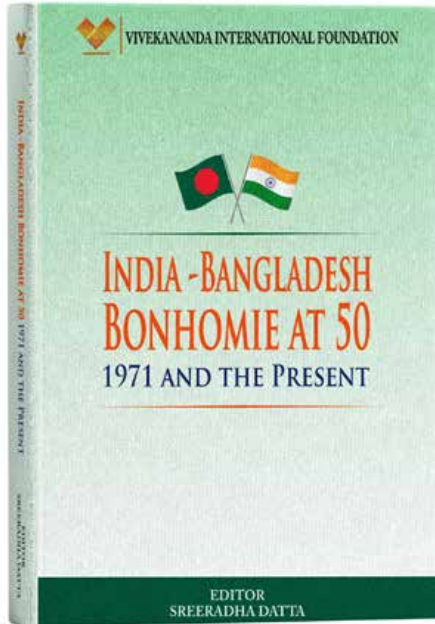
The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a sub-regional organisation straddling five member states from South Asia and two from Southeast Asia. In the larger context of the global developments in the Bay of Bengal and the Indo-Pacific, BIMSTEC has taken on a more distinct salience and collaborative endeavours would prove beneficial for all the member-states. While the lack of perceived progress within BIMSTEC has introduced fatigue and doubts as well as scepticism about its goal and ability to deliver, cooperation within BIMSTEC assumes paramount importance given the present state of international cross-border permeability. The pandemic has buttressed the need for BIMSTEC members to be on a common platform to address similar issues of security threats, traditional and non-traditional, within a complex politico socio-economic environment. The book highlights the sectors that need focus, the aspects that require greater attention and the issues that can provide common grounds to take the journey forward.



Myanmar, the Golden Land, has for ages been the last frontier, steeped in mysticism and mystery. However, knowledge about Myanmar remains woefully inadequate in most spheres including Indian academia, media and in some cases, even foreign policy. The irony is such that premier educational establishments in India provide exotic courses on countries with which India has no borders and are thousands of kilometres away, but do not offer Myanmar studies or language courses, despite India sharing a 1643 km border with Myanmar. According to the author, this book attempts to raise Myanmar consciousness in Indian strategic thought and relationship. This Book can serve as a reference for the Myanmar Scholars.



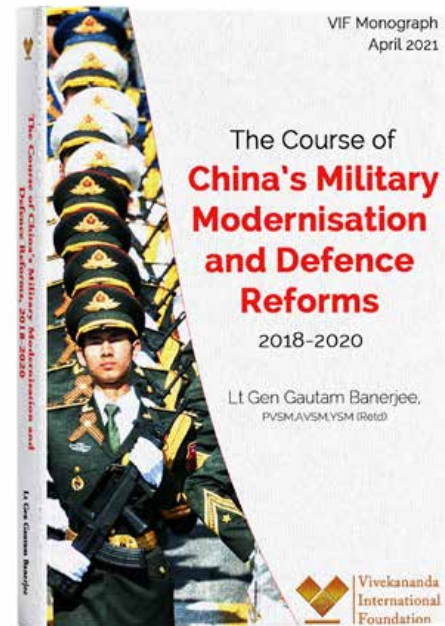
BOOKS



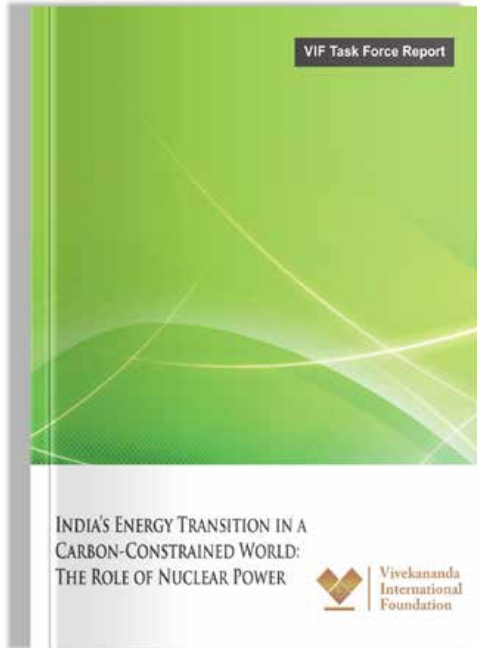
For Bangladesh and India, the past year has been about celebrating 50 years of Bangladesh and commemorating the iconic event, the Liberation War of Bangladesh, one that irreversibly changed the political landscape of South Asia. While much scholarly work and detailed research were undertaken and many publications and books were released over the past two years, the question remained as to how many of subsequent generations were aware of this cataclysmic event and India's defining role in it? The Liberation War of Bangladesh is not only integral to Bangladesh but also formed the core underpinning of India- Bangladesh partnership. This book is a ready reckoner about the Bangladesh Liberation War from the Indian perspective, given the challenges in unearthing new information from official archives. It once again reiterates especially through the narrative of the brave soldiers that while the official war was fought between 3 -16 December 1971, many were already engaged in various sectors training the Bangladeshis who had joined the movement from a cross section of the society.

Monograph

While the current phase of China's military modernisation began in right earnest since the mid-1990s, it is the period after 2016 when the final step to defence hierarchical reforms was taken. Meanwhile, the process of comprehensive bottom to top levels of forces' modernisation has reached a stage where the fundamentals had been secured in place and the process of extending its coverage to the entire order of battle is well on its way. This Monograph begins with a brief but relevant recall of China's military modernisation endeavour from its beginning in 1980 and proceeds to analyse the PLA's mandate vis-à-vis the orientation of its modernisation. Next, it lists the major modernisation events and the training activities conducted during the said period of 2018-20, followed by analyses of the objectives of thereof. Further, the Monograph relates the PLA's modernisation and training activities to its assertive posture along the Indo-Tibet border. The monograph concludes with an assessment of the CMC's strategic objectives and the PLA's current war-worthiness to secure these.

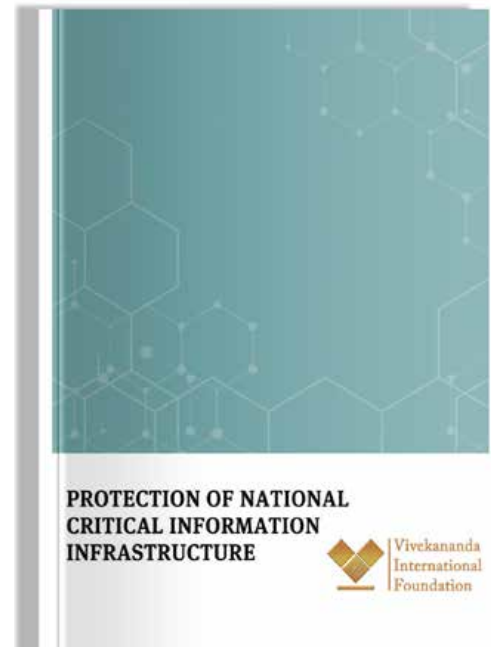


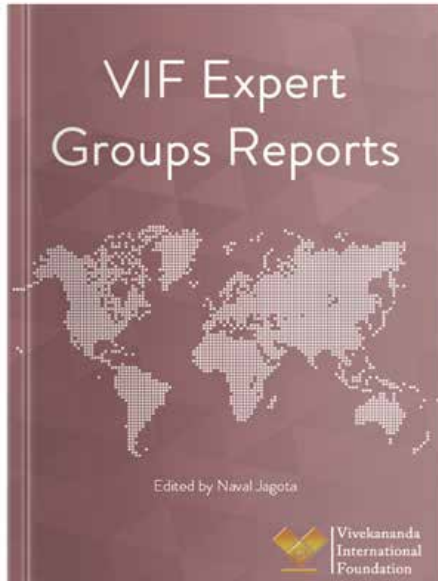
Reports



The concern for climate change has spurred an intense debate on energy transition to a low carbon economy. Climate change is an existential problem facing humanity. While the developed world has contributed most to global warming, its consequences will be felt by all countries. The worst affected will be those least equipped to deal with it. Vivekananda International Foundation has undertaken a study of energy choices available to India keeping in mind our development perspective. This is an interdisciplinary study. For this purpose, VIF has put together a Task Force, which consists of senior scientists, engineers, civil servants, and members of academia. Their efforts are supported by a strong research team. The study covers climate negotiations, energy choices made by major economies, and trends in the power sector in India. It explores technology options and finances available to developing countries for making the transition.

India is in the next phase of digital transformation. The digital presence of economic and national security infrastructure is growing in the country at a rapid pace. All critical infrastructures are dependent and have integrated cyber technologies for management, control, and operations. Different types of software are in use. The critical systems are under various types of cyber-attacks. The complexity and numbers of attacks against critical information infrastructure are increasing and becoming sophisticated by the day. The Parliament of India passed the Information Technology (IT) Act in 2000, and since, there has been explosive growth in the digital markets. There have been many experiments to better manage the emerging issues from cyber space in the last two decades. Correcting the institutional dysfunctionality present in the country would bring about the required effectiveness in the national response. The report explores the criticality and recommends the way forward.





In the year gone by extensive discussions were undertaken by the various Experts Groups constituted by the Vivekananda International Foundation. Each month despite the Covid-19 pandemic norms in place, the six experts groups namely the Pakistan Study Group, China Expert Group, West Asia Expert Group, Indo-Pacific Expert Group, Europe Experts Group and the US Experts Group deliberated in their field of expertise and analysed the contemporary issues at hand.

Some of the topics discussed in the **Pakistan Study Group** were the internal dynamics effecting Pakistan economy, military, their religious groups and foreign policy.

In the **Europe Experts Group** discussions focused on the effect of the Ukraine war in terms of funds, military equipment, and the evolving European relationship with Russia and its effect on India, the European relationship with China and its effect on India, India

and the FTA with Europe, evolution of Europe's Indo-Pacific policy as a whole, cooperation in space and military with countries in Europe and identification of cooperation in science and technology among others.

In the **West Asia Experts Group** discussions happened on trade and evolving economic policies and its effect on India, military cooperation with countries in the region.

In the **US Experts Group** some of the key topics discussed were military cooperation, Quad cooperation, science and technology cooperation, US foreign policy towards China and Russia and its effect on India , trade and economic cooperation.

The **China Experts Group** discussed China's relationship with countries in South Asia, China's military employment and technology developments, China and India trade relations, China and India conflict resolution, as well as China's internal political and economic policies.

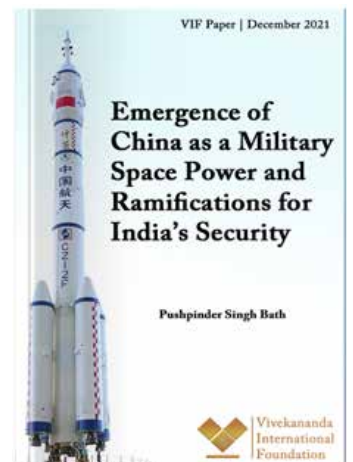
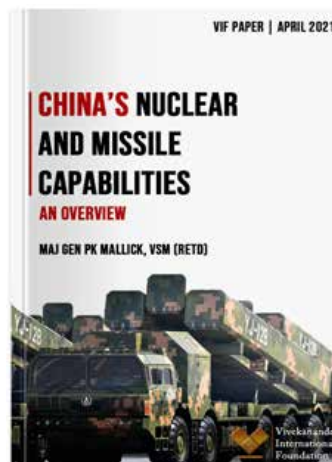
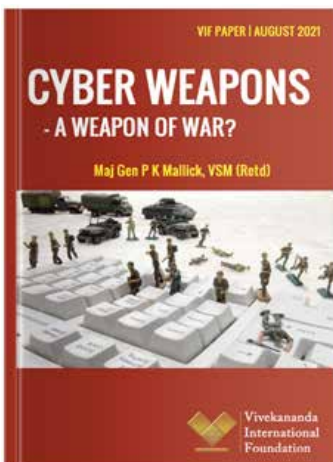
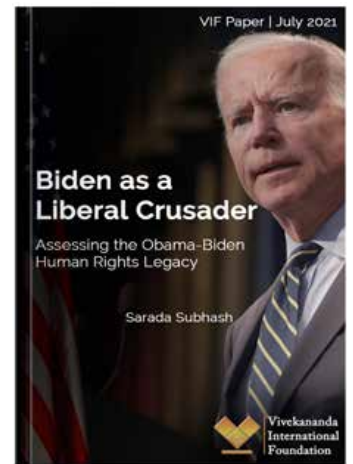
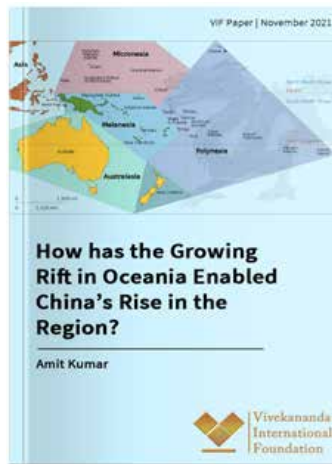
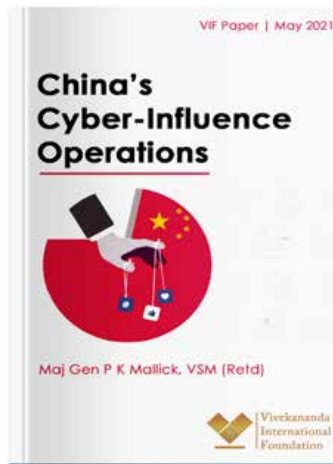
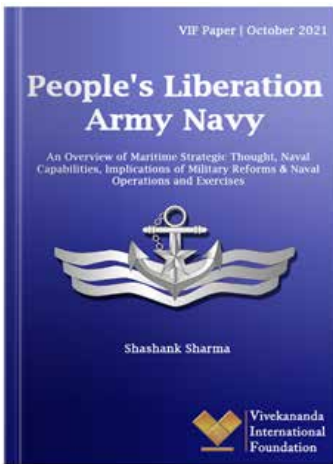
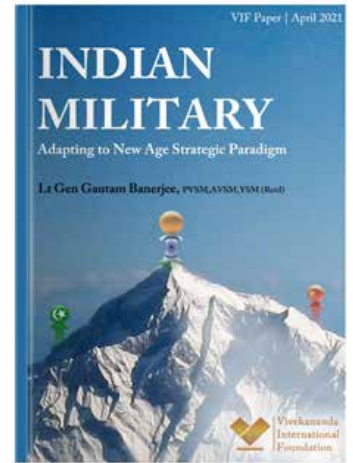
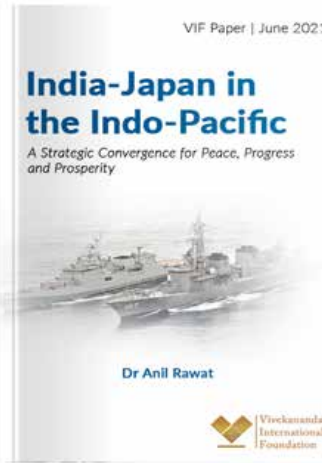
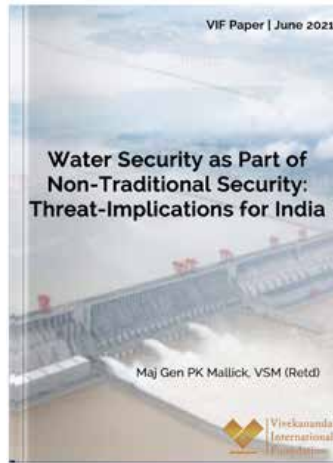
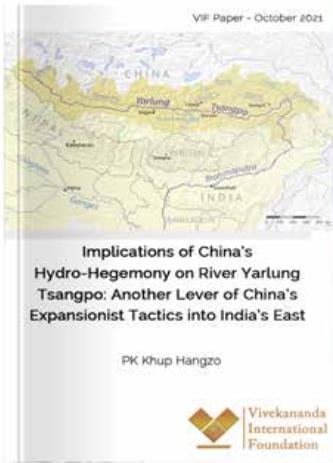
The **Indo-Pacific Experts Group** discussed the key players and the evolving policy of Quad, various countries policies towards Quad and its effect on bilateral relations, vaccine and technology cooperation.

The **Neighbourhood Experts Group** discussed developments in south Asia, areas for cooperation for trade and non-traditional security areas. The need for understanding political groupings and its effect on India and identifying cultural areas for cooperation were some of the other focus areas of this group.

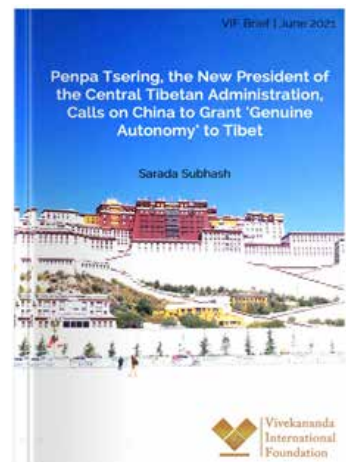
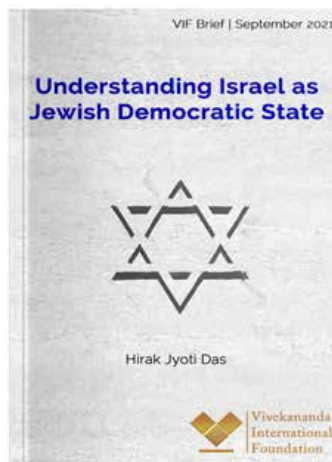
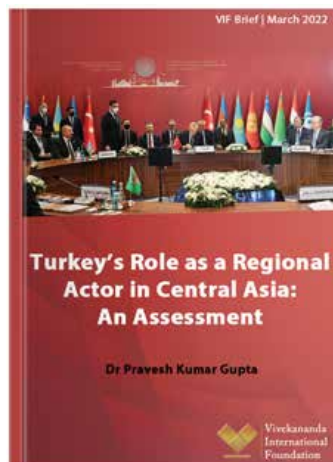
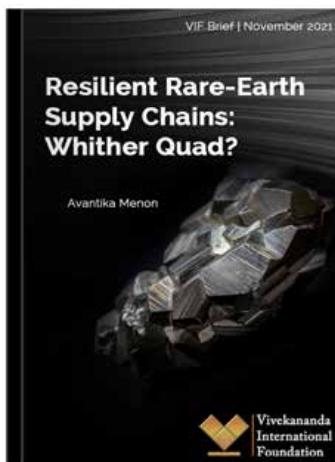
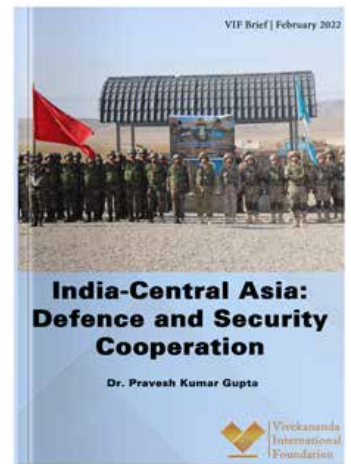
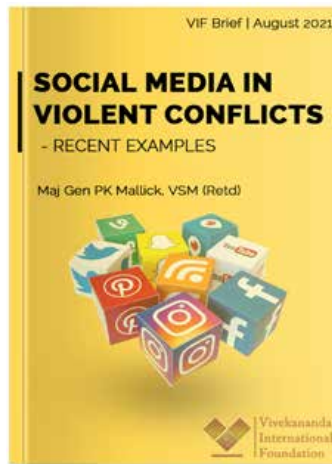
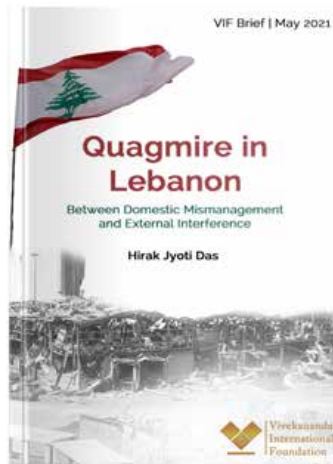
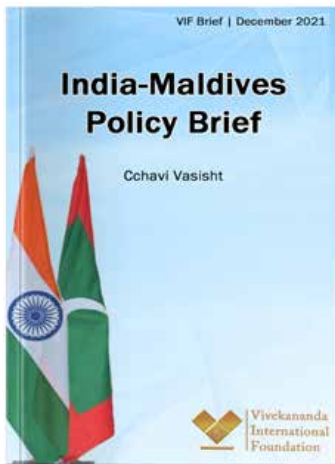
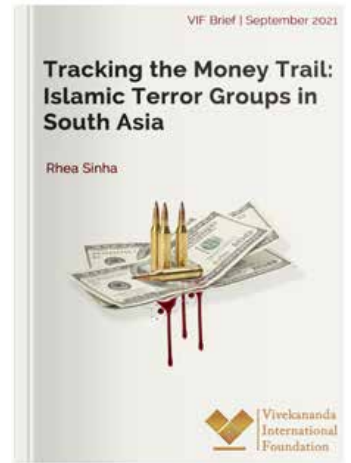
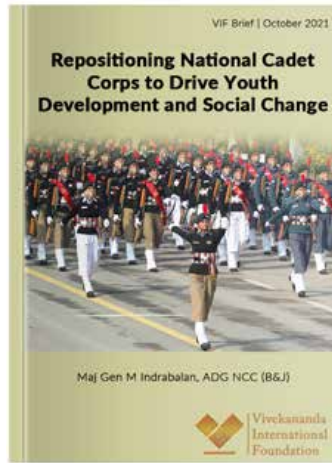
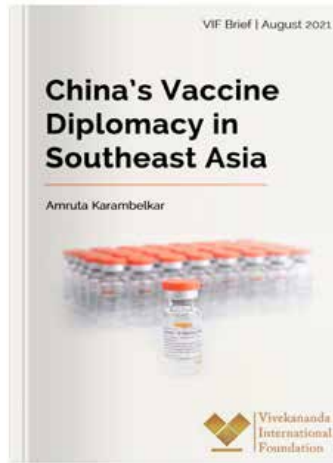
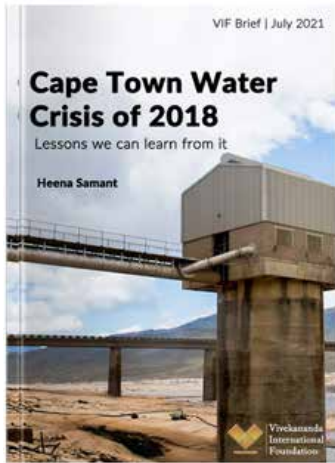
In addition few specific editions of the **Strategic Expert Group** and interactions with think tanks and universities of US, Japan, Russia, China and Taiwan were also held.

The diversity of the expertise of each of the members of the groups brought rich flavor and knowledge of global developments in the fields of political, economic, military and their repercussions on India either directly or through key players. The participants were from varied professional backgrounds (military, diplomacy and academia) and thus provided a three sixty degree view.

PAPERS



BRIEFS



The VIF flagship policy journal, National Security, launched in August 2018 will complete five years publication with the July-September issue this year. The Journal focuses on the principal issues and trends in India's increasingly complex national and international security environment.

Three special Issues and a general Issue were published – both online and in print by our new publishers – Prints Publications, New Delhi. To fulfill the need for a printed copy that could be accessed by libraries and institutions in the country and around the world this new arrangement was made. The journal is now subscription based. It gives us satisfaction that despite being behind paywall some 6,817 readers have so far perused or read the January-March 2022 special issue on the theme: The China Peril. The full subscription details are still being compiled by the publishers. We are making all efforts to ensure that the journal becomes easily accessible online to our readers.



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Vol. IV Issue II | April - June 2021 | Special Issue: India-US Relations

This special issue explored the expected policy orientation of the United States under its new President, Joe Biden, especially towards India. The issue stood out for the contributions by some of India's most knowledgeable foreign policy, defence and academic experts – most of whom have actively shaped foreign policy decision-making and Indo-US relations over the past few decades. It carried a total of 4 essays, 4 articles and a book review that made significant contributions to the policy and academic debates on the trajectory of one of India's principal foreign relationships – the ties with the United States.

Vol. IV Issue III | July - September 2021 | Special Issue: Belt and Road Initiative

This critically acclaimed special Issue focused on China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its strategic impact, especially on India's neighbourhood. BRI was touted as an ideal strategy to promote connectivity, growth, and development in the global 'South'. The initiative also promised win-win gains for all the participants. Yet today, the Silk Road imagery of mutual trade expansion, economic growth, interdependence, and resultant peace has fallen from grace.

The lead article outlined how a grand strategy shaped by the need to overcome China's internal economic problems and neutralise emerging security challenges evolved into an imperial

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plan to integrate the regions around China and beyond in a China-centric order to advance its ‘core interests.’ Another article brought argued that the plan poses a threat to India’s territoriality, security, and diplomatic interests even though India has rejected it. Other articles focused on the BRI’s growth and operations in Southern Asia - Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The July-September 2021 Issue also reviewed two important and latest books.

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Vol. IV Issue IV | October - December 2021 | General Issue

The October - December 2021 Issue of NS was a general one that covered a series of critical themes in India’s emerging security environment – the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban following a rapid and badly planned US withdrawal, terror financing operations in J&K, and the threat posed by China’s aggressive posture and military build-up along India’s Northern and Eastern border. Among the highlights of the Issue was the fact-based critique of the Western liberal-left campaign against India’s democratic practice and human rights record expressed in a series of reports. They exposed the deep ideological biases that underpin the reports put out by Freedom House, V-Dem, Reporters without Borders, etc. It also carried a critique of the global Big-Tech’s operations and pointed to their roots in the intelligence and defence department’s funding of Silicon Valley

Startups whose commercial success is based on information gathering that pose a threat to India’s national security. It also carried an important policy brief by two former senior naval officers, outlining a feasible strategy to build a world-class shipbuilding industry in India that would advance its vital industrial, commercial, and military aims.

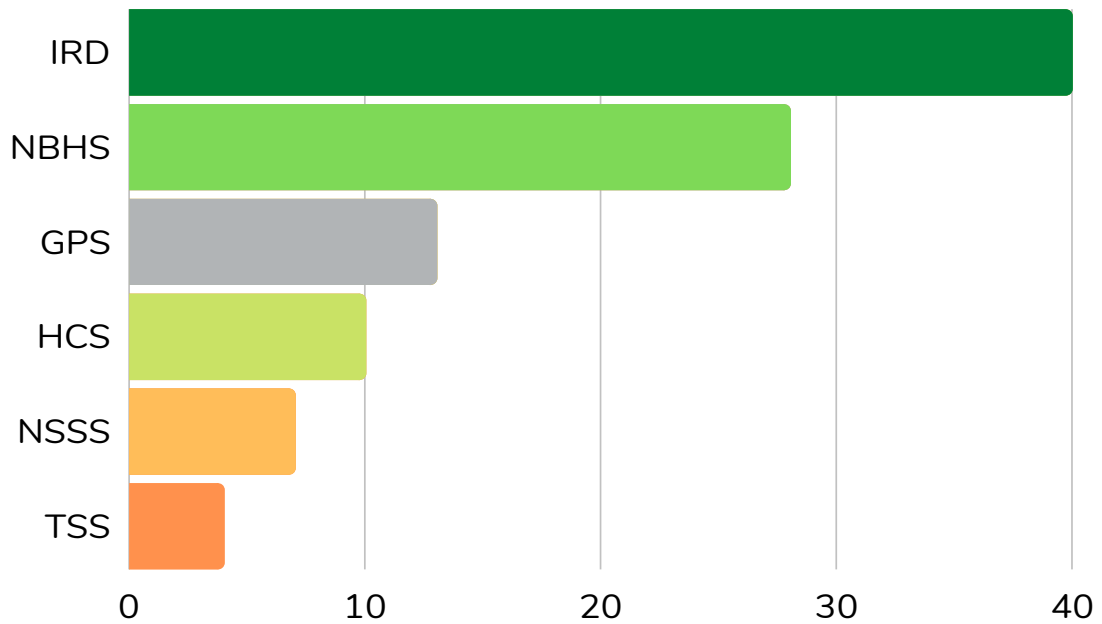
Vol. V Issue I | January-March 2022 | Special Issue: The China Peril

The January-March 2022 of National Security covered the grave security environment evolving around India, especially as a result of the threats flowing from China’s unbridled quest for dominance and expansionism. Among the other themes was an analysis of the divergence between ‘direction and destination’ in Xi Jinping’s pursuit of the ‘China Dream’, and how this has undermined the progress, security, and stability in Asia; an analysis of the significance of the Chinese aggression in Ladakh, an essay on the PLA Air Force’s repeated intimidation of Taiwan and Japan, the many tensions in the post-pandemic Chinese economy and China’s systematic Sinicization strategy in Tibet.

The Issue also carried a critical appraisal of Pakistan’s recently released National Security Policy. From this Issue, the NS also introduced a new segment called ‘Africa Watch’ to widen the ambit of its geopolitical coverage and give special attention to the developments in this vast and vital continent.

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Centre Activities



- International Relations and Diplomacy
- Neighbourhood Studies
- Governance and Political Studies
- Historical and Civilisational Studies
- National Security and Strategic Studies
- Technological and Scientific Studies

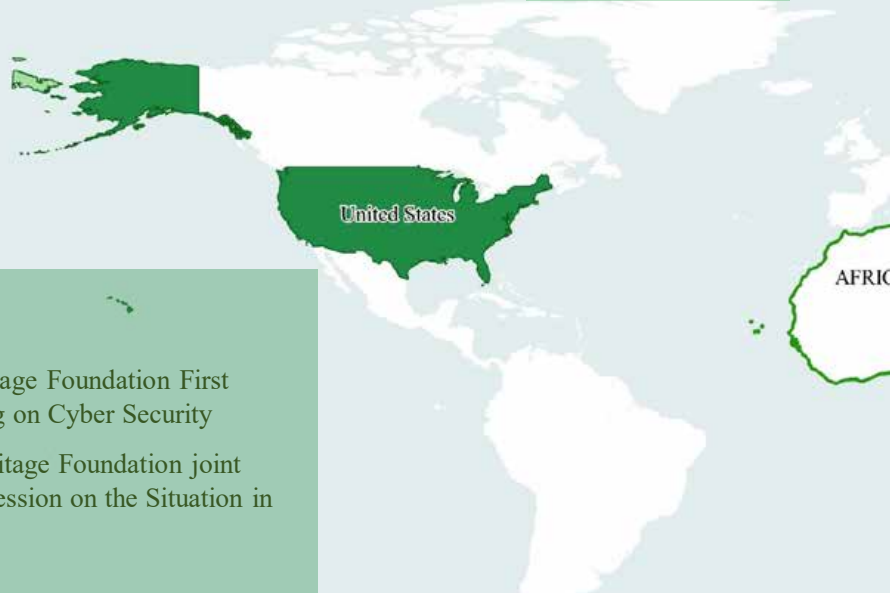
Centre for International Relations and Diplomacy

Ukraine

- Feb-** VIF-RIAC Bilateral on Ukraine
- Feb-** Discussion on Ukraine Crisis: Global and Regional Implications
- Mar-** Strategic Discussion on Ukraine Crisis
- Mar-** Strategic Discussion on Ukraine Crisis
- Mar-** Review of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Turkey

- Aug-** Discussion on India-Turkey Relations, Turkey's foreign policy and its Regional role



US

- June** - VIF-Heritage Foundation First Bilateral Meeting on Cyber Security
- Aug-** VIF & Heritage Foundation joint Brainstorming Session on the Situation in Afghanistan

Africa

- Nov-** Book discussion - Harnessing the Trade Winds
- Feb-** Discussion on The African Continental Free Trade Area and Opportunities for India with Mr Louis Yaw Afful, Group Executive Director for Afctfa Policy Network
- Mar-** Book Discussion on India–Africa Relations: Changing Horizons authored by Mr Rajiv Bhatia, Former High Commissioner to Kenya, South Africa

Sudan

- Mar** -Interaction with Dr. Adil Hassan, Sudanese National , Assistant Professor in Higher Academy for Strategic and Security Studies

Iran

- May-** VIF - IPIS joint webinar on Bilateral, Regional and International Issues

Uzbekistan

Oct- Interaction with Indian Ambassador to Uzbekistan

Oct- Joint VIF- Uzbekistan Embassy webinar on Uzbekistan-India: Exploring New Horizons of Strategic Partnership

Oct-Discussions with Uzbek Think Tanks

Kazakhstan

Jan- Brainstorming Session on Protests in Kazakhstan and regional implications

Russia

June- VIF-RIAC on Post Covid Global and Regional Trends and India-Russia Relations

Japan

Feb- Joint VIF-JINF Webinar on Strategic Outlook for Indo-Pacific in 2022

China

July- Book Discussion: Tiananmen Square - The Making of a Protest

Jan -VIF-Sichuan University Dialogue

Taiwan

June -VIF-Prospect Foundation Dialogue on India-Taiwan Cooperation in Semiconductor Industry

Sept- Discussion on China's strategy towards Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region

Vietnam

Aug-Interaction with Mr. Pham Sanh Chau Ambassador of Vietnam to India

Tajikistan

July-Talk on India-Tajikistan Relations

QUAD(US, India, Japan, Taiwan, Australia)

Apr- Quad Plus meeting with Australian Strategic Policy Institute

Oct-Quad Plus Dialogue

Feb-Quad Plus Dialogue



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International Relations & Diplomacy

Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region was eventful throughout the year. From responding to the Myanmar Crisis to dealing with the fallout of the Ukraine Conflict, the region was beset with numerous challenges. Dilemmas posed by China's increasing strategic weight in the region and its iterant unilateralist-aggressive behavior remained unresolved. The Biden administration continued with tough stance on China and early on reiterated US commitment towards the Quad and the Indo-Pacific. The year would see two landmark Quad leaders' summits and other meetings at various levels. There were also new security frameworks announced such as the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS), and Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement. Persistent tensions in China-Australia ties and increasing Chinese engagement with Pacific Island states complicated both economics and security for Oceania. Increasing European interest towards the region continued with the EU announcing its own Indo-Pacific strategy in April 2021. There was also change in governments following elections in Japan, South Korea and Iran. China-Russia joint patrols in straits around Japan in October 2021 signified an alteration in the regional dynamics.

For India, signing of the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement and India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement were watershed moments. The Indo-Pacific Experts Group at the VIF focused on all these issues through publications, group meetings and programmes. Notable events included talk by Ambassador Pham Sanh Chau, serving Vietnam's ambassador to India, Quad-Plus dialogue, VIF-Japan Institute of National Fundamentals (JINF) joint seminar etc. Strategic Developments in the Indo-Pacific was also a subject of VIF Vimarsh, a public lecture in January 2022 by Amb Anil Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow VIF and Former Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs, India.

United States

Biden's first year of presidency saw large activity and numerous challenges on both the domestic and international front. The chaos of withdrawal from Afghanistan and Ukraine-Russia war along with a rampant domestic inflation and energy shortages would become defining trials for the Biden administration. There were initial efforts to reframe relations with Russia through significant diplomatic activity and an in-person meeting between President Biden and President Putin in June

2021 in Switzerland. But tensions on Russia's border buildup and US/NATO armed support to Ukraine and its potential membership into NATO persisted throughout the year. It culminated with Russia announcing a special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, followed with unprecedented western sanctions and unabated military supplies to Ukraine. Continued focus on the Indo-Pacific, prioritization of Quad and larger engagement with Taiwan along with increasing delisting and blacklisting of Chinese firms ensured ties with China remained hostile. The military challenge from China was comprehensively elucidated in Pentagon's Annual Report to Congress (2021) from China's hypersonic missile tests, to expansion of its nuclear forces along with increasing resources and technology for force modernization etc. Revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) remained on the backburner as the US sought to await a new administration in Iran.

There were successes also in bridging US relations with the European Union, Philippines, delivering on multilateral issues of climate change and global minimum corporate tax and organizing of the Climate and Democracy Summits. The US Experts Group at the VIF comprising former diplomats, senior defense officers, and representatives from academia, various think tanks and industry, remained vigilant of the turning tide of affairs. The Group members exhaustively discussed and wrote on US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Indo-Pacific and Quad, US-Russia relations, US-China relations, and India-US relations along with an enthusiastic focus on new and emerging technologies. India-US Relations would also form subject of Vimarsh in November 2021 by

Amb Arun Singh, former Indian Ambassador to the US. The flagship Quad plus dialogue was salient in informing and constructing new discourse on the emerging trends and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Continuous engagement with US think tanks such as Heritage Foundation, Center for New American Studies etc. remained unchanged despite the pandemic.

Europe

2021 was a turning year for Europe as multifaceted challenges brought it out from its strategic inertia. The EU remained mired in numerous challenges from post-US withdrawal from Afghanistan, AUKUS, China, Iran and revival of JCPOA, changing contours in Africa, defining engagement with Taiwan, resetting ties with the US, renewing NATO and European security, gas shortages and later dealing with the fallout of the Ukraine-Russia war. All these challenges would recurrently raise the issue of Europe's strategic autonomy and military wherewithal. Despite attempts at diplomacy and mitigating tensions with Russia on Ukraine issue, the consequent military flare-up and sanctioning a full energy embargo on Russia would prove to be overwhelming. The suspension in ratification of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment following increased global focus on Xinjiang and forced labor, prompted EU and China to impose countersanctions on each other. The relations with China remained tense throughout the year as EU sought to reduce strategic dependence on China by proposing tougher trade and investment rules and China refusing to back western position on Russia following the Ukraine war.

The EU also came forth with its Indo-Pacific strategy in April 2021, as numerous European countries such as France, Germany, and Britain expanded their naval missions and diplomacy within the region. The European Commission also proposed Global Gateway in December 2021, an investment platform promoting high standards, transparency and catalyzing private sector investment to meet increasing demands for infrastructure. Relations with India saw a fillip with the India-EU Leader's meeting in May 2021 and resumption of free trade negotiations with India. The Europe Experts Group at the VIF closely followed developments in Europe with priority focus on reinvigorating India-EU ties. Numerous discussions expanded on Indian and European expectations from a bilateral FTA, potential for an investment agreement, defense and strategic cooperation, cooperation in science, new technologies and innovation etc. The highlight of the year was a talk by Ambassador Ugo Astuto, serving EU ambassador to India on India-EU Strategic Cooperation and its future prospects. There were also deliberations and writings on EU-China relations, EU-Russia relations, ramifications of the Ukraine war etc.

China

During the year, in the China cluster discussions focused around Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, China Myanmar Economic Corridor, and Maritime Silk Route among others. In addition there was a renewal of debate on the origin of the Corona Virus and its apparent weaponisation which got a fresh lease of life. Past, Present and Future of the Communist Party of China after 100 Years of its founding was also

deliberated upon in addition to China-Taiwan relations and its regional effect. Increase in the PRC's military activity in the straits using the PLAN and PLAAF was also touched upon.

Xi Jinping's "common prosperity strategy" in Chinese economy and its regulatory changes with its regional impact was also discussed.

Central Asia

India-Central Asia relations witnessed an upward trajectory in 2021-22. Some important events that India hosted recently highlight the forward movement in India Central Asian relations. The Delhi Regional Security Dialogue in November 2021, the Third India-Central Asia Dialogue in December 2021, and the First India-Central Asia Leaders' Summit in a virtual format in January 2022 have proven to be watershed moments in India's Central Asia policy. With New Delhi's expanding role in regional and international politics, it is imperative that India's outreach to this region will increase in the coming days. .

Last year was very challenging for Central Asia. From the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021 to the January protests in Kazakhstan, these events posed serious security threats to the region. The Russia- Ukraine Conflict and its consequences have exacerbated Central Asia's worsening socio-economic situation. These developments also affect India, either directly or indirectly. Afghanistan's development has become a primary concern for India and Central Asian countries. Consistent interaction and debates were essential due to the rapidly changing security dynamics and socio-economic trends in the South and Central Asian region. As a strategic think tank,

the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) hosted several key events to debate the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia and to enhance cooperation with partners such as Russia, Iran, and Central Asia.

West Asia

The West Asia Cluster at the VIF is committed to in-depth research and analysis of political, strategic, economic developments in the region and compliment India's 'Think West' Policy. The VIF in 2021-2022 continued to undertake academic and research pursuits; organised series of interactions

and engaged with academicians, diplomats, journalists, political and security experts and representatives from the West Asian states. The area of focus were India's policy options and diplomatic engagements with the region; role of Russia in West Asia and North Africa; Foreign Policy and domestic dynamics of Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE; strategic objectives of Turkey, Israel; Political Islam; West Asian Quad and the impact of Russia-Ukraine crisis on the region. The Cluster published monthly round ups of the major developments in the region between April 2021 and March 2022. The Cluster has also conducted podcasts during the said span of time.



UK's CDS, General Sir Nicholas Patrick



Dr. Seyed Kazem Sajjadpour, IPIS, Iran



H.E. Mr. Dilshod Akhatov, Amb. of Uzbekistan to India



Director VIF with Dr. Adil Hassan, Sudan at VIF



Interaction with Uzbek Think Tank



VIF-Sichuan University Dialogue



Amb Rajiv Bhatia



H.E. Mr. Pham Sanh Chau, Amb. of Vietnam to India



VIF-JINF Webinar

Amb Viraj Singh, Amb of India to Tajikistan

Amb Sanjay Panda, Amb of India to Turkey



Andrey Kortunov, Director General, RIAC

Review of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Louis Yaw Afful, Director, AfCFTA



VIF-Prospect Foundation Online Dialogue on India-Taiwan Cooperation in Semiconductor Industry

Major Events at a Glance

UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy

On 21 April, Vivekananda International Foundation members had in a virtual interaction with UK's CDS, General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, GCB, CBE, DSO, ADC, Indo-Pacific security and salient aspects of UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, released on 16 March 2021, was

focused upon. The General emphasized on the world's challenging and dynamic strategic environment and methods which would be employed by the adversaries in the future to achieve their strategic aims, with technology playing decisive role. An informative discussion followed.

IPIS Iran - VIF Dialogue on Bilateral, Regional and International Issues

India and Iran share close, multi-faceted relationship that includes cooperation in

political, trade-economic, security and multiple other sectors. In a virtual dialogue on 24 May, Dr. Seyed Kazem Sajjadpour, President, IPIS, Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, Amb DP Srivastava, Amb Amar Sinha, Sh. Tilak Devasher and among others assessed the dynamics of India-Iran relations. The dialogue included concerns over Afghanistan, situation in South Asia, Gulf, and West Asia, revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), strengthening trade, investment, energy and connectivity relationship after lifting of the sanctions, China-India and Iran-China relations.

VIF- RIAC discussion on Post Covid Global and Regional Trends and India-Russia Relations

The virtual discussion held on 23 June saw participation by Andrey Kortunov, Nikolay Kudashev, DB Venkatesh Varma, Amb. Kanwal Sibal, Victoria Panova, Andrey Volodin, Amb. Anil Wadhwa, P.S. Raghavan, Gleb Ivashentsov and Dr. Arvind Gupta. The discussion saw a candid exchange of views with respect to three important topical themes: emerging global and regional trends in the post Covid world; developments in the Indo-Pacific; and trends in India-Russia ties. The speakers reiterated the importance of India-Russia ties in shaping the new world order and the geopolitical challenges of the past and future, and emphasised the need to have more such dialogues in future.

VIF Virtual talk on 'India-Tajikistan Relations' by Amb. Viraj Singh, Indian Ambassador to Tajikistan

The talk held on 26 July assessed the dynamics of the India-Tajikistan relations with

the Director VIF pointing out the strategic significance of Tajikistan. Amb Viraj Singh gave an insightful presentation on India's relations with Tajikistan, the geopolitical factors affecting bilateral ties. Stating that India-Tajikistan relations were below the potential, he elaborated the intensification of efforts to enhance bilateral cooperation – trade, investment, pharmaceutical, tourism, defence and Afghanistan issues. This was followed by discussions.

Discussion on India-Turkey Relations; Turkey's Foreign Policy and its Regional role

On 04 August Indian Ambassador to Turkey, Amb Sanjay Panda as part of the West Asia Experts Group meeting discussed India's warm bilateral relations with Turkey with the mention of institutionalization of a new bilateral mechanism 'India-Turkey Policy Planning Dialogue' on 22 October 2020. Next, Turkey's economic and military power, its involvements in Syria, Libya, Azerbaijan and firm relations with Qatar, Pakistan and Malaysia were discussed. Finally, it was brought out that economic downturn due to pandemic effect on tourism has led Turkey to intensify economic engagement with India.

India-Uzbekistan Relations and the Regional Dynamics

On 04 October, Amb. Manish Prabhat, Indian Ambassador to Uzbekistan discussed the current status of Indo-Uzbek relations and regional security and strategic dimensions. Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, Ambs Amar Sinha, P. S. Raghvan, Gautam Mukhopadhyay, Sanjay

Singh, D P Srivastava, Anil Trigunayat, Skand Tayal participated. Beginning with India-Uzbekistan close historical and cultural links, and now strategic partnership, the discussion covered peace and stability in Afghanistan, and the new regime's perseverance on creating a favourable environment in the country and playing a constructive role in regional integration in Central Asia. It was opined that this environment in Central Asia would benefit India's engagement with the region, bridge the connectivity gap and enhance trade and commerce. India's 3 billion US dollars' worth of assistance was also mentioned. The Webinar generated good interest, and there were many points of discussion.

Quad Plus Dialogue

As the designated think tank since 2013 the VIF organized the Quad Plus Dialogue on 13 October which saw participation by think tanks from Quad members - Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Heritage Foundation, US, and Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), with Germany joining as a 'Plus Partner' and represented by the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). Representatives from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) also addressed the Group and discussed NATO's engagement in the Indo-Pacific and with the Quad and Quad-related organizations.

The discussion took stock of recent developments such as the Quad Leaders' Summit on 24 September 2021 and the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS), among others.

Uzbekistan-India: Exploring New Horizons of Strategic Partnership

A webinar organized by VIF and the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 18 October discussed how India's increasing economic capabilities and geopolitical vitality have amplified its aspiration to reconnect with Central Asia in the recent past. Accordingly, India-Uzbekistan relations have witnessed tremendous growth.

The Ambassador of Uzbekistan delivered the opening remarks followed by Lt Gen. Ravi Sawhney, H.E. Mr. Furkat Sidikov, Uzbekistan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. D. P. Srivastava, (INSTC & Chabahar) and Amb Skand R Tayal. Prof Sanjay Kumar Pandey, JNU, made a presentation on Presidential Elections in Uzbekistan. Boost to defence cooperation, Afghanistan issues, Pharmaceuticals and medical tourism and connectivity were discussed and recommendations made. The discussion ended with a Q&A session.

Visit to Uzbekistan as International Election Observer and Discussions with Uzbek Think Tanks

In end October, Senior Research Associate VIF Parvesh Gupta was invited as observer to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's re-election for the second term whose domestic and foreign policy approach has created an amicable environment in the Central Asian region. Wide ranging discussions were carried out with prominent Uzbek think tanks. The think tanks were: the Development Strategy Center, policy advisor on the country's democratization and modernization and its National Action Strategy

2017-2021; the Centre for International Relations Studies (CIRS) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan; Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS) under the President of Uzbekistan; Center for International Relations Studies; and Scientific Affairs and Innovation, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies. Discussions centered around India-Uzbekistan Relations, Afghanistan crisis, cooperation on connectivity and university curricula, each leading to recommendations for follow up.

Brainstorming Session on Strategic & Economic Outlook for 2022

The uncertainties of global politics and economics was discussed as part of the Strategic & Economic Outlook for 2022, The session saw participation by Dr. Anantha Nageswaran, Dr. C Rajamohan, Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli, Lt Gen Ata Hasnain, Ambs Arun K Singh, Kanwal Sibal, PS Raghavan, Anil Wadhwa, Anil Trigunayat, Gautam Mukhopadhaya, TCA Raghavan, Satish Chandra, and others. The issues covered were: impact of Covid on global economy, elements of recovery, asset prices and stock markets, crude oil, FDI, technology competition. On political front the issues discussed were: China's increasing nuclear arsenal, hypersonic missile tests and rebooting economy, politics and foreign policy, and China ally Cambodia's Chairmanship of the ASEAN. Further discussions included political polarization in the US, US-China rivalry, Afghanistan, dialogue among West Asians, Iranian nuclear issue, Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Indo-Pacific environment including AUKUS, Japan-Australia defence pact and European naval deployments. At the end, India-China border talks, CAATSA and India's relations with US and Russia were reviewed.

VIF-Sichuan University Dialogue - Interaction with Scholars from Sichuan University

In the interaction on 13 January 2022, both sides exchanged views on three areas: the Indo-Pacific, Afghanistan and economies. The Indian side conveyed that the bilateral relations should be improved but unresolved border disturbances and violation of peace and tranquility have affected bilateral ties. The Chinese side acknowledged that bilateral relations are in critical times but emphasised on economic potential between the two countries.

Indian perspective was spelt out based on India being an Indian Ocean country with responsibility to safeguard its coastline, EEZ and its resources, its interests in Southeast Asia where EEZ and boundary demarcations should be respected, and rules must be based on consent, universality, faith and dialogue and not on force. From China's perspective, there were concerns in the Indo-Pacific due to US-led multilateral security networks, and that India-China bilateral relations were complicated but dialogues should be conducted in other areas such as maritime domain. Views on Chinese and Indian Economies and Afghanistan were also exchanged.

Briefing by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) on the 'Developments in Ukraine'

The briefing on 04 February on recent developments in Russia-West Relations and the escalating situation in and around Ukraine was

conducted by Mr. Andrey Kortunov, Director General, RIAC and Russian experts, Dr. Yulia Nikitina, Ms. Ekaterina Chimiris and Mr. Sergey Utkin, with Dr Gupta in chair. The Russian vision of the current situation in Ukraine, the foreseeable scenarios and forecasts for the region at large were explained.

VIF- JINF Webinar on ‘Strategic Outlook for Indo-Pacific in 2022’

After initial remarks by Dr Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, and Ms Yoshiko Sakurai, President JINF, presentations were made by Amb Anil Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow and Hiroshi Yuasa, Senior Fellow JINF. The webinar on 10 February discussed a range of issues from shaping a new regional security architecture to engaging ASEAN and analyzing ramifications of China’s military rise and Ukraine standoff on the region.

Strategic crisis borne out of rising Chinese firepower, incursions in waters around Senkakus, transits of PLA navy in Japanese waters along with Russia, continued harassment of Taiwan, Chinese encouragement to North Korea to conduct provocative tests, threatening Guam and the US forces in the region, etc. all to destabilize regional security were the issues discussed. Both sides agreed the Quad should work together to invite major ASEAN countries to ‘Quad Plus’ and prevent China from building a “forced sphere of influence.

Quad Plus Dialogue

The latest iteration of the Quad Plus Dialogue on 14 February saw participation

by think-tanks representing the other Quad partners - the Heritage Foundation, USA; the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA); and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). Taiwan based think-tank, the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) joined in as a ‘Plus Partner’. The agenda focused on the economic and strategic implications of regional developments including the Ukraine crisis and their impact on the Indo-Pacific region. Implications and further scope of the recently convened Quad Ministerial Meeting in Melbourne were also discussed.

Talk on ‘African Continental Free Trade Area and Opportunities for India’

The Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) is a critical African project to accelerate the continent’s long-term integration and represents an immense opportunity to address Africa’s economic vulnerabilities in the global economic order, manifested and exacerbated by WTO and other multilateral and bilateral trade agreements imbalances.

Louis Yaw Afful, the Group Executive Director, AfCFTA Policy Network in a talk on 23 February alluded to Africa’s growth and widening relationships, of which there was insufficient awareness. From that perspective, he said AfCFTA will be a game-changer, and India must do all that is required to make it a success. The CFTA has created substantial investment opportunities in some priority sectors which will be of mutual benefit. The issue of China-Africa trade imbalance was also raised.

Strategic Discussion on 'Global and Regional Implications of the Ukraine Crisis'

A two-part strategic discussion, one on 24 February with a follow-up session on 03 March in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was focused on assessing the Russian ground forces attack into Ukraine from multiple sides and seizing control of the key port city of Kherson. Moderated by Dr. Arvind Gupta the attendance included Ambs Arun Singh, Ashok Kantha, Satish Chandra, P.S. Raghavan, Lt. Gen. Rakesh Sharma, Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli, Diptendu Chaudhuri, Lt. Gen. Ravi Sawhney, Cmde Gopal Suri and Gp Capt. Naval Jagota.

The deliberations sought the rationale for Russia's actions and its military objectives in the region. India's delicate position as it walks the tightrope between the West and Russia was also assessed. It was determined that India has adopted a balanced position but will have to brace for economic implications of the war and the following sanctions.

Strategic Discussion: Review of Ukraine Crisis

The discussion held on 15 March was moderated by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF and was attended by Amb. P.S Raghavan, Lt. Gen. Rakesh Sharma, Lt. Gen. Ravi K. Sawhney, Gen. N.C. Vij and Brig. Vinod Anand. The ensuing deliberation identified the role of American rebalancing in the region and the emergence of an increasingly divided Europe as key determinants of the ongoing conflict.

The flux in European security architecture and grandstanding by countries pursuing their interests in the region that have finally brought

down this house of cards was pointed out. The discussion also reflected on the space opening up for greater Chinese involvement, impact of the conflict on India, Russian military objectives and weaknesses. Need for involvement of the US in a negotiated settlement was mentioned. As the war expands and extends further, there seem to be no easy solutions for Putin, was the conclusion.

Strategic Discussion - Review of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

A month into the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this discussion on 25 March reviewed the impact of its multitude of geopolitical and economic facets. Moderated by Dr Arvind Gupta the discussants included Ambs Kanwal Sibal, P.S. Raghavan, Arun K. Singh, Akshay Mathur, Gp. Capt. Naval Jagota, Brig. Vinod Anand, Dr. Gulshan Rai, Air Mshl Anil Khosla, Adm Girish Luthra and Lt. Gen. R. K Sawhney.

Europe's re-defining its relationship with Russia, supplying Ukraine with weapons, and preventing a full-fledged war between Russia and NATO in Eastern Europe were one aspect discussed. Next, the focus shifted to economic decoupling and impact of the sanctions on the business community, the energy markets and the regional and global economy. Further, it was opined that the conflict is likely to persist for some time unless the bilateral negotiations between Russia and Ukraine succeed. It was surmised that the US is working towards a strategic defeat of Russia and in this geo-political and geo-economic hotpot, it has become increasingly pertinent that India undertakes a clear cut and comprehensive assessment of the overall situation.

Book Discussions

‘Harnessing the Trade Winds: The Story of the Centuries-Old Indian Trade with East Africa, using the Monsoon Winds’, authored by Blanche Rocha D’souza

Identifying the role of the Indian diaspora in Africa, the book establishes that for century’s trade between the West Indian and East African coast was dominated by Indian merchants till the Europeans’ advent in the 17th century. It complements the history by describing the role of the Indian diaspora in Africa in trade and other sectors - like rise of Zanzibar as a trade centre, formation of the first Indian political organisation in Mombassa, socio-economic developments of Africa, Ugandan railways, etc. Creation of Indology departments in Think Tanks and Academic Universities was suggested.

‘India–Africa Relations: Changing Horizons’ by Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

The objective of the book was explained as to instill a desire to know more about Africa, a continent of huge diversity whose resources and opportunities are attracting interest worldwide. Visits to Africa by Indian top leaders and bilateral and multilateral meetings with nearly 100 African leaders was alluded to in the discussion. The conclusion highlighted India’s opportunity to forge multi-layered connections with 15 specific strategically significant African countries, Mozambique and Rwanda for example, on sectors like raw materials, oil and gas, market development, or human resource development.

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*Each man and woman, that is to say, when perfectly educated,
becomes an epitome of the history either of his or her own race, or of
Humanity as a whole.*

- Sister Nivedita

Centre for Neighbourhood Studies

Afghanistan

June - Talk by H.E. Mr. Rahmatullah Nabil, former head of Afghanistan's NDS

July - Interaction with Mr. Tamim Asey, ex-Dy. Defence Minister of Afghanistan

July - Brainstorming Session on Developing Situation in Afghanistan

Aug - Discussion on evolving situation in Afghanistan

Sept - Meeting with Dr. Omar Sharifi, Afghan Expert

Sept - VIF-IPIS bilateral Discussion on Afghanistan

Sept - Discussion on Impact on India of Developments in Afghanistan

Oct - Discussion on Unfolding Developments in Afghanistan and Its Implications for The Region

Oct - VIF-RIAC-IPIS Trilateral on the Developments in Afghanistan and their Regional Implications

Pakistan

Apr- VIF and UF Joint Webinar on Pakistan's Future: Geopolitical Dilemmas, Economic Woes and Troubling Fault Lines

Aug- Discussion on India's Neighbourhood Policy

Sept- Release of BIMSTEC: The Journey and The Way Ahead

Nepal

Aug - Discussion on India's engagement with Nepal and Bhutan: What can India do more?

Sept - Talk by High Commissioner of India to Maldives on India and Nepal- bilateral relations

Sept- VIF-AIDIA joint webinar on Indo-Nepal economic relations



Nov- Book Discussion - The Kathmandu Dilemma: Resetting Indo-Nepal Ties

Nov- Interaction with Sunil Bahadur Thapa and Bishow Parajuli

Feb - Book Discussion - The Janajati of Nepal

Mar- Book Discussion on India's Economic Miracle and Nepal



Bhutan

Oct- Talk on India-Bhutan Relations by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj

Myanmar

Jan- Discussion on the Visit of Foreign Secretary to Myanmar and India-Myanmar Relations

Bangladesh

Sept- Interaction with HE Muhammad Imran, HC of Bangladesh to India

Dec- Talk by HC of Bangladesh on Bangladesh developments and Indo-Bangladesh bilateral relations

Feb- Interaction with Mr Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Presidium Member Bangladesh Awami League

March- Apr- VIF Delegation Visit to Bangladesh

Sri Lanka

Apr- VIF-PF Joint Webinar on Connectivity between India and Sri Lanka

Dec- Discussion on the Report Integrated Country Strategy: From Sri Lanka Diplomatic Missions in India (2021/2023)

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Neighbourhood Studies

Afghanistan

For Afghanistan the 2021 brought unexpected challenges. The hasty withdrawal of US on 15 August 2021 and the Taliban illegitimately wresting power in Kabul, brought complete chaos in Afghanistan. There is a looming humanitarian and economic crisis in the making in Afghanistan.

India has been in the forefront in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan by supplying a consignment of 50,000 tonnes of wheat and also sending Covid-19 vaccines. However India's dilemma of recognising a government in Kabul led by the Taliban is growing and while no hasty decision is anticipated a number of factors will dictate the same in the days to come. To understand the fast paced developments in Afghanistan, the cluster organised various discussions on some pertinent issues. On July 30, VIF organised a Virtual Talk by H.E. Rahmatullah Nabil, former head of Afghanistan's NDS.

After the Taliban takeover the cluster on 13 September organised on Brainstorming session on the impact of developments in Afghanistan on India. On 06 October, the cluster also organised a panel discussion focusing on the unfolding development in Afghanistan and its Implications for the Region.

Bangladesh

Year 2021 marked the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's liberation from Pakistan. Tracking the evolution of the country's economic and political landscape through this period, Senior Fellow VIF Dr Sreeradha Datta penned an Op-Ed on Bangladesh's Journey of Fifty Years. 2021 also represents 50 years of 'Victory Day' and India's close relationship with Bangladesh. In celebration of this milestone, VIF organised a discussion on 50 years of Bangladesh and its evolving ties with India-reflecting on the past and future trajectory of bilateral relations between both states. An edited volume titled India-Bangladesh Bonhomie at 50: 1971 and the Present was published to raise awareness and reinforce India's pivotal role in the 1971 war amongst newer generations. The book was launched in March at the Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies in the presence of the Minister of State, Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh.

Bhutan

In 2021, Bhutan emerged among the most successful countries in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Bhutan sought global assistance in vaccinating its 77 per cent population by December 2021 and helped Nepal

and Thailand with its surplus vaccines. On the governance front, the political forces united to address the COVID-19 situation. The King of Bhutan trekked to several parts of the country to meet the people and closely experience their well-being. Also, despite adverse economic conditions and the closing down of the tourism sector due to COVID-19, Bhutan was appreciated by the international agencies in handling the economic situation. On the external front, Bhutan appreciated India for sending the first-ever batch of COVID-19 vaccines and other necessary medical assistance under Operation Maitri. To mark the natural, close and all-weather bond with India, the King of Bhutan honoured the Prime Minister of India with its highest civilian honour in December 2021. PM Modi became the first foreign delegate to receive the highest honour. In this light, the VIF published a short report on Bhutan in 2021 on January 20th. The foundation also organised an interactive session, India's Engagement with Nepal and Bhutan, on August 12. A distinguished talk was delivered by the then India's Ambassador to Bhutan- Ms Ruchira Kamboj on India-Bhutan Relations on October 21. Importance of India-Bhutan ties was also discussed during the launch of the Book BIMSTEC: The Journey and the Way Ahead at the VIF.

Maldives

Maldives has attracted international attention due to the increased importance of the Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific region. India-Maldives relations have made immense progress in the past years, with the recent signing of the Great Male Connectivity Project

(GMCP) in 2021. To further examine the evolution and prospects of India-Maldives relations, VIF organised a talk on "India-Maldives-Bilateral Relations" in September 2021. Additionally, a policy brief was published on the same to further discuss the impacts of the presence of Islamic radicalisation and China's increasing economic clout in the country.

Myanmar

01 February 2022 marked the first anniversary of the military coup. During 2021-2022, Myanmar witnessed the most distressing period in its history. Soon after the military coup, VIF had organised a discussion on Recent Developments in Myanmar: Implications for India on 11 February. During the year, several articles and commentaries were published regarding the impact of the crisis, role of social media, Rohingya issue, ineffectiveness of the sanctions rule, Myanmar's relation with its neighbouring countries. In January 2022, a talk to analyse the visit of Indian Foreign Secretary to Myanmar and India-Myanmar Relations was organised as it was seen as a first step by India to engage with the country after the coup. A monthly roundup to cover the latest developments in the country an article analysing 2021 year review of events and predictions for 2022 was published. In the year 2022, VIF aims to publish a book to cover Myanmar's economic, political and social journey since Independence.

Nepal

The year 2021 was a defining moment in the political history of Nepal. The Supreme Court

of Nepal reinstated a dissolved Parliament by then Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. Since KP Oli had no numbers to remain in the Parliament and run a government due to their fallout with the Maoists, the apex court asked the second largest party- the Nepali Congress to form the government. Amidst the political crisis, COVID-19 has had a severe impact on the economic wellbeing of the country as the migrant labourers could not send remittances, halting the economic activities and lack of tourist activities. On the foreign policy front, the newly appointed Nepali Congress-led government showed a willingness to address the disputes and differences through diplomatic means. As a result, several bilateral exchanges have taken place from mid-2021 to early 2022 between New Delhi and Kathmandu. Also, there were major developments in Nepal's bilateral ties with the United States, especially the approval of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Grant worth USD 500 million on February 28, 2022. To assess and understand these major developments, VIF organised several events including India's engagement with Nepal and Bhutan on August 12, India-Nepal Economic Dialogue on September 17, and book discussions on Kathmandu Dilemma authored by Amb. Ranjit Rae, The Janjatis of Nepal, published by VIF and authored by Prof. Hari Bansh Jha. An interactive session with Shri Sunil Bahadur Thapa, Joint General Secretary, Nepali Congress, and Member of Constituent Assembly was held on November 08.

Pakistan

The year 2021 brought new challenges to Pakistan as the country lurched on from one

crisis to another. While the Covid-19 crisis loomed in the background, Pakistan was embroiled by multiple controversies. Internal fault lines, governance failure, rise of extremism and economic distress are some of the factors that brought instability to the country. India-Pakistan relations were at the lowest ebb as there was no forward movement in the bilateral ties.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan cluster remains committed to in-depth research and analysis of political, strategic, economic developments in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite the constraints imposed by Covid-19, the Pakistan Study Group (PSG) met virtually and continued to discuss issues relating to Pakistan and Afghanistan in a holistic manner, going beyond the headlines. PSG discussed various crucial issues ranging from India Pakistan relations, FATF developments, Pakistan's internal developments, Afghan peace process, Intra-Afghan dialogue, Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Pakistan-China relations, Pakistan's economy, PDM movement, Senate elections and civil-military relations. During the year 2021-2022 the cluster also produced various topical commentaries, briefs and papers. The cluster has also begun to record podcasts with leading experts. Following the success of Pakistan Insights 2019 that was based on the discussions held in the Pakistan Study Group (PSG) of the VIF, PSG brought out the second edited book titled Pakistan Insights 2020. The book includes an overview of developments in 2019-20, civil-military relations, the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic challenges, the terrorism landscape, developments in J&K after the 05 August 2019,

Pakistan Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, nuclear programme, defence production capabilities, and the digital landscape. The external section looks at Indo-Pak relations, Pakistan`s relations with China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia and Russia as well as Pakistan`s role in Afghanistan and the Afghan peace process. The PSG is working towards bringing out the third edited volume titled ‘Pakistan Insights 2021’. The cluster is also working on a VIF book on Afghanistan.

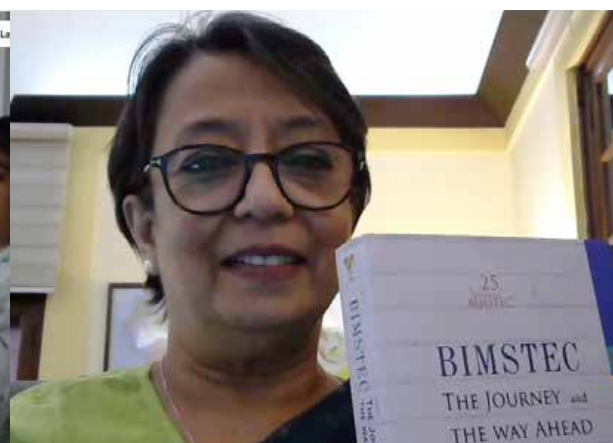
Sri Lanka

The year 2021-2022 brought the most significant economic crisis ever in the history of

Sri Lanka. The negative growth rate of GDP and the continuous devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee pushed Sri Lanka’s inflation rate to 21 percent and the food inflation rate to 30 percent. The debt to GDP ratio of Sri Lanka crossed 110 percent in the year 2022. As a result, there was a balance of payment crisis in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, Sri Lanka’s political situation remained fragile throughout the year. During 2021-2022, the VIF published commentaries and podcasts on various issues concerning Sri Lanka. A webinar on Connectivity between India and Sri Lanka was co-hosted by the VIF with Pathfinder Foundation on 07 April 2021.



VIF-Pathfinder Foundation Joint Webinar



Ms Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary, MEA, GOI (East)



H.E. Mr Muhammad Imran,
High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India



Sunil Bahadur Thapa,
Nepal



H.E. Milinda Moragoda,
Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India



H.E. Mr. Rahmatullah Nabil,
Afghanistan



Admiral Jayanath Colombage, Foreign Secretary, Sri Lanka



VIF-Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies joint webinar



Release of 'India Bangladesh Bonhomie at 50: 1971 and the Present, BISS Dhaka, Bangladesh



H.E. Sunjay Sudhir, High Commissioner of India to Maldives



Book Discussion on India's Economic Miracle and Nepal

Major Events at a Glance

VIF Pathfinder webinar on Connectivity between India and Sri Lanka

The webinar held on 7 April began with introductory addresses by Director VIF and, Chairman, PF and included brief presentations by Professor Rohan Samarajiva, Mr Bipul Chatterjee, Mr Sanjay Chadha, and Dr Ravi Rathnayake, followed by remarks from Mr Abdul Azeez, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka. Importance of historical perspective, connectivity, people to people relations, trade, bilateral challenges and future prospects were analysed in the light of issues related to trade agreements, tourism, geographic location and national security.

Talk by H.E. Rahmatullah Nabil, former head of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS)

To understand the evolving situation in Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Rahmatullah Nabil, former head of Afghanistan's NDS was invited to deliver a talk on 'Situation in Afghanistan' on 10 June. In his opening remarks, Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF pointed out how the situation in Afghanistan remained complex as the peace process was stalled and violence remained at an all-time high.

Mr. Nabil presented a grim picture of Afghanistan. He said there was no real progress on the peace process. Taliban has obstructed the peace process, as they were not interested in the power sharing while capturing as much territory as possible. He pointed out that the USA was pushing Afghanistan to come up with

a bilateral security arrangement with Pakistan and that the overall the situation remained tense. The talk was followed by a stimulating interactive session.

China in Rajapakse 2.0: Ports and Geo-Political Challenges

On 2nd August Prof Asanga Abeyagoonasekera, Senior Advisor, Security and Geopolitics, Sri Lanka started his talk by saying that the ports and geopolitical challenges have shaped the China-Sri Lanka relationship in which duality is visible as it promises a neutral posture but in practice have adopted a China tilted policy. Due to this duality, sovereignty concerns, national security concerns, internal political interference, human rights, media freedom and trust deficit issues are rising.

Sri Lanka needs to show sensitivity to India's security interests. He suggested measures to recalibrate the Sri Lankan foreign policy. A detailed discussion followed.

Webinar on 'India's Engagement with Nepal and Bhutan: What can India do More?'

On 3 August a webinar was organised amidst rising tensions along India's northern border. Ambs Ranjeet Rae, Manjeev Puri, P Haran, Prof. Rajesh S Khara and Dr Smruti Patnaik participated. On Nepal, it was stated that political unpredictability require India to engage with all the leading actors, including civil society and political parties. Also, as Chinese manoeuvres continue to grow, India should help Nepal meet the demographic aspirations for global outreach and connectivity. On Bhutan, it was reiterated that India holds responsibility

for an all-weather friendship in development and strategic sectors like, hydropower, electricity, trade, education etc. While Bhutan understands Chinese double standards, India's strong response to China in the Doklam region has strengthened the bilateral ties. Director VIF pointed out that despite dedicated policies like Neighbourhood First and Act East, India has to understand the changing demography of Nepal and Bhutan and her foreign policy needs an immediate revival to strengthen goodwill.

Talk on 'India and Maldives Bilateral Relations'

The talk held on 6 September focused on the journey of India Maldives relations, and how they have developed economically, politically and strategically. It highlighted the progress in India-Maldives relations backed by positive activity, for example, the Great Male Connectivity Project (GMCP). India's economic package of about one billion dollars, capacity building programmes, projects on sports infrastructure, expanding airports, building cancer hospital, open-air gyms, speed boats to connect islands, LED lighting assistance, cargo ferry etc. were also highlighted.

The discussion also focused on the Maldives' security challenges, such as Islamic radicalization and China's inroads and its development of strong defence ties with India including maritime domain awareness. It was concluded that Maldives holds significance for India and efforts must be made for continuous development of the economic and strategic relations.

Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Iran - VIF Dialogue on Latest Developments in Afghanistan

The virtual dialogue on 7 September covered the historical India-Iran links and the contemporary cooperation in political, trade-economic, security, and multiple other sectors. The main agenda included the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and its implications for the region and India-Iran relations. From the VIF side, Amb DP Srivastava, TCA Raghavan Amb Sanjay Singh participated as speakers.

During the discussion, both the Indian and Iranian sides emphasized that Afghanistan should not become the proxy of any other regional country and Afghan land should not be used by terrorist and extremist forces. The speakers felt that India and Iran could work together to ensure peace, stability and to bring humanitarian aid to Afghanistan with cooperation from Russia and Central Asian countries.

India Nepal Economic Dialogue: Unleashing Potentials

The interaction held on 9 September was in association with the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (AIDIA), Kathmandu. Speakers included Mr. Sunil KC, Director, AIDIA; Amb Ranjit Rae, Former Ambassador of India to Nepal; H.E. Eshor Raj Poudel, Consulate General of Nepal in Kolkata, Mr Sanjay Chadha, Additional Secretary, MEA, Ms. Sreejana Rana, President of Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI), Mr Rakesh Gaur, President, Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd, India, Mr Ashis Gajurel,

Executive Director, Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board, and Mr Sanjay Jadhav, Vice President & Head of International Operations (South Asia) at Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd, India, Dr Sreeradha Datta & Dr Arvind Gupta.

Contentious issues of trade deficit, hydropower projects, transit, tourism etc. were discussed. Earlier technical challenges, bureaucratic hurdles and political challenges faced by the Indian investors had led to their withdrawal from Nepal. Thus, it was opined that there were areas of potential economic cooperation that could help Nepal reduce its dependence and trade deficit.

VIF-RIAC-IPIS Trilateral on the Developments in Afghanistan and their Regional Implications

The VIF along with the Russian Institute of International Affairs (RIAC) and the Institute of Political and International Studies (IPIS), Iran organised this webinar on 06 October. Participants included Dr. Arvind Gupta, Andrey Kortunov, Mohammad Hasan Sheikholeslami, Seyyed Rasoul Mousavi, Amb. P.S. Raghavan, Mikhail Konarovskiy Gleb Ivashentsov, Amb. Arun K Singh, Hosein Ebrahim Khani, Sanjay Singh, Bahman Agharazi, Andrey Kazantsev, among others.

The trilateral focused on Russian, Indian and Iranian interests in light of internal developments in Afghanistan and its regional reverberations. The discussion explored scope for collaboration, implications of the Afghan situation on the SCO agenda, opportunities for action and associated security risks.

Panel Discussion on Unfolding Developments in Afghanistan and its Implications for the Region

US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the takeover of Taliban has changed the regional balance and motivations of key players like Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey. There are also growing concerns of how the Taliban is going to act in future. The matter was discussed among Dr. Arvind Gupta, Major ASM Shamsul Arefin (Retd.), Lt General R K Sawhney (Ret.), Ambassadors Jayant Prasad, Satish Chandra, Shamsheer M. Chowdhury and M. Humayun Kabir, and Dr. Sreeradha Datta on 6 October.

It was observed that the mask of Taliban was gone as it has formed an all-male government that is anything but inclusive. It hosts large numbers of global terrorists, there are reports of violence, human rights violations and retributive and ethnic killings. That it will embolden Islamist terror organisations and Jihadist networks and the resurgence of AQ, ISKP and relocation of LeT, JeM there. The recent developments in Afghanistan do not bode well for global or regional stability.

Virtual Talk on India-Bhutan Relations

The talk held on 21 October delved into the foundations of India-Bhutan all-weather friendship. India's development assistance is one of these foundations - building four Mega Hydro Power Projects with three more under completion, and the latest contribution of USD 670 million development assistance for its 12th Five Year Plan. Bhutan's 85 per cent trade, free of customs duty, takes place with India. Mention was also made of India opening five new trade

routes in 2020, education facilities offered and collaboration on information technology, start-ups, and Buddhism studies which continue to further deepen the friendship.

Interactive Session with Sunil Bahadur Thapa and Bishow Parajuli

The session was attended by Shri Thapa, Joint General Secretary, Nepali Congress, and Member of Constituent Assembly, Bishaw Parajuli, Representative and Country Director, United Nations World Food Programme, Nepal, Dr Arvind Gupta, Amb Jayanta Prasad, Professor Sangeeta Thapliyal, Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Ms. Chavi Vasisht and Mr. Rishi Gupta.

The discussion held on 08 November covered the new low in India-Nepal bilateral relations in the past five years, the border row and its use for domestic politics by the left forces, and Nepal's overlook of China's wrongdoings in its internal politics and border policy. The recent revival of relations at the government and party level was therefore seen as a testimony to Nepali Congress's commitment to good relationship between India, the largest democracy and strong economy, and Nepal. Nourishment of the ties through economic engagements in sync with political and socio-cultural relations, and initiatives like a cross border oil pipeline, railways, and Arun III hydropower project were hailed.

Talk on Recent Visit of Foreign Secretary to Myanmar and India-Myanmar Relations

The introductory remarks by Dr Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, pointed at India's interests and role in Myanmar and underlined the need

to reach out to its leaders. This was followed by presentations by Amb Rajiv Bhatia and Gautam Mukhopadhaya.

On the note that the defence of Myanmar is the defence of India, the discussion held on 4 January 2022 highlighted the meeting with Myanmar military leader Min Aung Hlaing and Ambassadors of a few other countries. The inferences drawn were that marred by internal conflicts between the army, political parties, the Ethnic Armed Organisations and the National Unity Government (NUG), the process of nation-building has not been completed in Myanmar. On the question of legitimacy, it was felt that sanctioning Myanmar and its military leaders had not yielded results. The conclusion was that India should maintain ties with the Tatmadaw, build contacts with ethnic parties and try to curb China's footprint in Myanmar.

Sri Lanka Integrated Country Strategy

In the last few months, India-Sri Lanka Relations have seen significant developments. On 27th January the VIF organised a discussion on Integrated Country Strategy: From Sri Lanka Diplomatic Missions in India (2021/2023). India and Sri Lanka have been cooperating on the Covid-19 pandemic. India has extended support to Sri Lanka. During the economic slowdown, India has extended \$ 400 million currency swap facility to Sri Lanka as it navigates through the pandemic induced economic challenges. Sri Lanka and India have agreed to develop the Trincomalee oil tank farm jointly. It will encourage Indian investment in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has recently adopted the Integrated Country Strategy to raise the existing India-Sri Lanka relationship to a special relationship.

Talk on '50 Years of Bangladesh and its Evolving Ties with India'

The talk was organised to commemorate the 50 years of India-Bangladesh friendship, built on the sacrifices made by the Indian forces and Bangladesh warriors in the Liberation War. It delved into Bangladesh's journey as a ravaged nation with social, political and economic challenges staring at it, and the support it received from the people and the Government of India during that difficult period. It further narrated India's invaluable contributions during Bangladesh's journey to progress.

Mentioning that Indo-Bangladesh ties have experienced phenomenal growth over the recent years, the talk covered the matters related to Bangladesh's economic growth, adoption of new technologies and human resource development. Founded on the war for liberation of Bangladesh and based on shared history, heritage, culture, language and other commonalities, India and Bangladesh have always been trusted partners.

VIF Delegation's Dhaka Visit

A VIF delegation led by Director, Dr Arvind Gupta, comprising Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, Dr Sreeradha Datta and Mr EB Rajesh, CII visited Dhaka during 29 March-2nd April 2022 at the invitation of Bangladesh Foundation for Regional Studies, led by Maj ASM Shamsul Arefin. The interactions included the State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Education Bangladesh, Deputy Minister of Education, Speaker of Bangladesh National Assembly, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and its

members, Secretary of International Affairs. Besides engaging with the Government representatives, the VIF delegation engaged with the civil society members, intellectuals, political leaders, Chairman and the scholars of Bangladesh Institute for International Studies and the Centre for Research and Information. Release of the VIF edited book titled 'India Bangladesh Bonhomie at 50- 1971 and the Present' was organized by the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry during the visit.

Issues of expectations from India, water sharing, border violence, people's perception, rural development, education, radicalization, minorities, and trade were discussed with the Centre of Research Initiatives. Overall, India is considered a time-tested friend and while there were unresolved bilateral issues, India was seen as a welcome development partner.

Book Discussions

Release of 'BIMSTEC: The Journey and the Way Ahead'

The book, edited by Dr Sreeradha Datta was released by Ms Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs on 30th September. The discussants Admiral Jayanath Colombage, Foreign Secretary, Sri Lanka; Amb Hemayut Uddin, Former Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh; Amb Shambhu Simkhada, Former Diplomat, Nepal and Prof Chaw Chaw Sein, Yangon University, Myanmar. The book is a collaborative effort of 30 authors. It discusses the political, social, economic, security-related information for the BIMSTEC countries and the challenges faced by them in terms of illegal migration, radicalisation, drugs and human

trafficking, terrorism, cyber security and so on.

Discussion on ‘Kathmandu Dilemma: Resetting India-Nepal Ties’ by Ambassador Ranjit Rae

The discussion on 5th November began with the author’s introduction of the book followed by a discussion by Prof. Sangeeta Thapliyal, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan (Ret.), 11th Gorkha Rifles, Indian Army. This is a contemporary book dealing with various aspects of the India-Nepal relations.

The discussion centered on the relationship based on the civilisational, cultural, and political and trade links between the two countries before pointing out that there has been a projection of anti-India notion by the elites of Nepal. The book also describes the coming of better equations on the economic front, including in the hydropower and petroleum supply sectors, which reach India’s goodwill to the people of Nepal.

Discussion on ‘The Janajatis of Nepal’, authored by Professor Hari Bansh Jha, Executive Director, Centre for Economic and Technical Studies, Kathmandu, Nepal

Speakers at the book discussion held on 21 February included Mr. Rajendra Mahato, Former Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of Loktantrik Samajbadi Party, Nepal. Prof Kapil Shrestha, Political Scientist, Human Rights Expert and Civil Society Activist in Nepal, Mr Buddh Chhering Moktan, Janjati Expert, Kathmandu, Prof Sangeeta Thapliyal of JNU, and Amb Ranjit Rae, India’s Former Ambassador to Nepal.

In his monograph Prof Jha has offered insights on various dimensions of the Janajatis (indigenous people) who happen to be the largest ethnic group in Nepal. Apart from the socio-economic conditions, the monograph presents their place in the state and other affairs. It also gives details on the different agencies that have been working for their upliftment.

Discussion on ‘India’s Economic Miracle and Nepal’

After introductory remarks by Mr. Prakash Man Singh, Nepali Congress MP and Prof Hari Bansh Jha, Director Center for Economic and Technical Studies, Nepal, nature of India-Nepal relations was deliberated upon by Amb Deep Kumar Upadhyay, Amb Ranji Rae, Mr. Atul K Thakur and Mr. Ganesh Kumar Mandal on 23rd March. Apart from raising the importance of shared economic growth between India and Nepal, the discussion also presented current shortcomings and potential avenues in bilateral cooperation. Beginning with the historic socio-cultural, religious, political and economic ties with India, the speakers delved into the significance of India’s economic growth, its extension of aid and assistance, multi sector investments in Nepal, India’s economic boom, and ways to ensure that the economic miracle trickle into Nepal. Necessity to identify solutions of the border dispute and water management was also highlighted.

Release of ‘India Bangladesh Bonhomie at 50: 1971 and the Present’ edited by Dr Sreeradha Datta, at BISS Dhaka, Bangladesh

The book with chapters by VIF scholars was released on 31 March at Dhaka and was attended

by Mr. Shariar Alam, Minister of State, Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, Amb Kazi Imtiaz Hossain, Chairman Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Major Shamsul Arefin, Chairman, Bangladesh Foundation for Strategic Studies, Dr Arvind Gupta, and Lt Gen Ravi K Sawhney. It was preceded by a seminar “Confluence of Ideologies and Evolving Interests,” with Dr Mafuz Kanir, Senior Fellow BISS and Dr Sreeradha Datta, editor of the book as speakers. Bilateral relations, convergence of national interests, trade reforms, and positivity

in seeking solutions to various issues were discussed.

The book is aimed at the post the Bangladesh Liberation War generations to acquaint them with the historical legacy of the region. The unique 50 years of Indo-Bangladesh relationship and the need to introspect on strengths and to review the mistakes was emphasized in order to exemplify good bilateral relationships to the region and beyond.

Articles			
	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	Myanmar’s Return to Tragic Past, Set for a Long Haul	Prof Rajaram Panda	3247
2	Afghanistan Stares at an Uncertain Future	Arvind Gupta	3224
3	Nepal Urges International Community to help in fight against COVID-19	Prof Hari Bansh Jha	2784
4	Sanctions: An Ineffective Tool in Myanmar	Cchavi Vasisht	4067
5	Colombo Port City Project and Indian Concerns	Dr Sreeradha Datta	4433
6	150-Days of Political Crises: A Setback to Democracy in Myanmar	Cchavi Vasisht	2367
7	Appalling state of Press Freedom in Pakistan	Aakriti Vinayak	3232
8	The Taliban on the Offensive in Afghanistan Ahead of the US Withdrawal	Dr Anwesha Ghosh	4577
9	Relevance of Water in India’s Economic Growth: Need for a Diplomatic Outreach	Major General (Retd.) Ajay Kumar Chaturvedi	3914
10	Afghan Lives Matter: Part 1- Role of Pakistan and her Emerging Dilemma	Amb Amar Sinha	6213
11	Afghanistan's Uncertain Future and Its Implications for China-Pakistan Relations	Aakriti Vinayak & Anushka Saraswat	4503
12	Taliban’s Return Signals a New Chapter in Afghanistan	Arvind Gupta	3613
13	Colombo Security Conclave Emerges	Amb Gurjit Singh	4704
14	Compulsions of Coalition Politics in Nepal	Rishi Gupta	4285
15	Taliban Takeover and Implications for Nepal	Rishi Gupta	4133
16	Rohingya Crises Enter Fifth Year	Cchavi Vasisht	3787
17	Stray Thoughts Relating to Developments in Afghanistan; India’s Policies Relating thereto and Implications for India	Amb Satish Chandra	3747
18	The Two Tales of Pakistan’s Geography	Amit Kumar	5212
19	How Pakistan Outwitted the US on Taliban Peace	Abhinav Pandya	3506
20	The Idea of Bharatavarsha	Dr Dilip K. Chakrabarti	3060

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22	Qatar Registers its Soft Power Presence in Afghanistan	Dr Anwesha Ghosh	3371
23	Fresh Impetus to India-Sri Lanka Ties	Rup Narayan Das	4023
24	An Assessment of International Coalition Forces Intervention in Afghanistan	Brig (Dr) Ashok Pathak	3858
25	A Welcome Reset in India-Nepal Relations Amidst Chinese Encroachment of Nepalese Territories	Rishi Gupta	4035
26	Choices: Why the Future of Afghan Sports Must Concern the World	Tejusvi Shukla	4027
27	Nepal, India expedite Connectivity Projects	Kamal Dev Bhattarai	4527
28	Functioning of Judiciary in Nepal	Rishi Gupta	4074
29	Foreign Secretary's Visit to Myanmar -Reiterating India's Support to its People	Dr Sreeradha Datta	2277
30	Myanmar's Battle on Social Media	Cchavi Vasisht	2053
31	Restructuring Power Equation: Rise of Indigenists means fall of Communism in Nepal	Prof Hari Bansh Jha	2511
32	Pakistan's National Security Policy 2022-26: Some New Elements but No Shift on India	Arvind Gupta	2634
33	The Himalayan Conundrum: Nepal and Bhutan in 2021	Rishi Gupta	2633
34	Bamiyan Buddhas and Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage	Rishika Dhumal	3247
35	2021 - A Year of Military Rule: Predictions and Way Forward for 2022	Cchavi Vasisht	3215
36	An Analysis of ASEAN's Special Envoy Visit to Myanmar	Cchavi Vasisht	2901

Commentaries

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1	Surely not a Faux Pas-China warns Bangladesh against Joining the QUAD	Dr Sreeradha Datta	3478
2	Nepalese Budget 2021-22: Whiter Madhesh?	Prof Hari Bansh Jha	3350
3	Pakistan remains under the scrutiny of FATF	Aakriti Vinayak	3244
4	Pakistan's Support to Taliban is Behind the Escalating Violence in Afghanistan	Arvind Gupta	3891
5	POK: Election or Selection?	Amb D P Srivastava	5661
6	An Uncertain Outlook for Pakistan's Economy	Aakriti Vinayak	3868
7	Lost in Afghanistan	Amb Anil Trigunayat	15139
8	Taliban's Victory: Implications for the Region	Amb D P Srivastava	4205
9	Do Not Whitewash the Taliban	Arvind Gupta	3306
10	Implications of Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan	Arvind Gupta	3126
11	Maldives' UNGA Presidency: Prospects for India	Cchavi Vasisht	3292
12	ASEAN Snubs the General in Myanmar in keeping him out of the Summit	Prof Rajaram Panda	3201
13	Single National Curriculum in Pakistan- a Recipe for Disaster?	Aakriti Vinayak	11190

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14	Nepal's Afghanistan Policy is gradually Acquiring Some Shape	Kamal Dev Bhattarai	3175
15	The Situation in Pakistan: Pressure Building on the Imran Khan Government	Arvind Gupta	3810
16	Bangladesh- Journey of Fifty Years	Dr Sreeradha Datta	3390
17	Pakistan in Flux- A bleak future ahead	Aakriti Vinayak	2456
18	Why Culturally Pluralistic Nations in Nepal?	Prof Hari Bansh Jha	2500
19	Sri Lankan Economy Spiralling out of control; Request's IMF assistance	Asanga Abeyagoonasekera	2678

Podcasts

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1	Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) Protests in Pakistan	Tilak Devasher	2888
2	China and South Asian Neighborhood	Prof Veena Sikri	3019
3	Pakistan External and Internal Developments	Amb D P Srivastava	2256
4	BIMSTEC: Present and Future Perspectives	Udayan Das	3266
5	BIMSTEC in a Changing World	Amb Hemayet Uddin	3003
6	The Institutionalisation of BIMSTEC	Amb Shambhu Ram Simkhada	3624
7	BIMSTEC: The Need for Ocean Governance	Ruwanthi Jayasekara	3187
8	Perspectives on BIMSTEC: Views from Myanmar	Dr Khin Zaw Win	3496
9	BIMSTEC: Potential Arena of Maritime Convergences and Capacity Building	Dr Probal K Ghosh	3234
10	Regional Cooperation in BIMSTEC in Post-COVID-19 World	Dr Prabir De	3549
11	Gender Mainstreaming in BIMSTEC	Amena Mohsin Mohammad & Atique Rahman	3863
12	India's Foreign Secretary Visit to Myanmar in December 2021	Amb Gautam Mukhopadhaya	2290

National Security and Strategic Studies

The Centre for National Security and Strategic Studies (hereafter CNSSS) at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), during April 2021 – March 2022, carried out significant activities under the assigned charter. Along with generating “Bi-Weekly News Digest on Defence and Terrorism Studies”, covering the developments in Defence, and Terrorism (National & International), the centre also introduced the “VIF Cyber Review”, a monthly digest focusing on policy, industry, and incident-related developments domestically and internationally. During the year, the CNSSS published several publications, including commentaries/articles, briefs, papers, compendiums/task force reports/expert groups reports, book reviews and monographs. Focusing on the various aspects of Defence studies, India’s Foreign Policy and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the VIF organised few discussions. All events/webinars witnessed the participation of distinguished experts from defence, academia, and media. Acknowledging the rise of cyber-attacks worldwide, the VIF published a “Protection of National Critical Information Infrastructure” report. Under the guidance of Dr Gulshan Rai and Dr Arvind Gupta, the report was prepared by a team of cyber

experts. The report highlighted the trends in cyber security and provided recommendations for the policymakers to protect India’s Critical Information Infrastructures.

Major Events at a Glance

24 -26 November 2021: Strategic Leadership and Perspective Planning Workshop by ARTRAC, Army War College, IIM, Indore and VIF

The three day collaborative workshop was attended by a group of Lt. Gens wherein they, in addition to the military aspects of strategic leadership and perspective planning, were exposed to the strategic environment confronting India. There were various sessions conducted by Lt. Gen. Raj Shukla, GOC-in-C ARTRAC, Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman NITI Aayog, GOC-in-C Northern Command, the Military Secretary, the Adjutant General, Sh. S Gurumurthy, Chairman VIF and Dr. Himanshu Rai, Director, IIM Indore. A panel discussion was also conducted with Lt. Gen. Ravi Sawhney, Amb Kanwal Sibal, Vice Adm Satish Soni, Amb Anil Wadhwa, Amb Ashok Kantha, Lt. Gen Rakesh Sharma, Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli and Mr. Jayadeva Ranade.

Articles

	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	Transformation in Indian Armed Forces to Exploit Modern Information Systems	Brig (Dr) Ashok Pathak	4695
2	Climate Change Summit: India Should Invest in Climate Action but Resist Western Pressure	Arvind Gupta	3291
3	Eastern Ladakh: NTR - 'Trust but Verify' Information!	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma (Retd.)	4321
4	India's Maoists: Utility of Counterinsurgency and Futility of Talks	Dr Uddipan Mukherjee	3241
5	COVID-19 Pandemic and Indian Armed Forces	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma	2966
6	Maoist Menace Calls for a Different Ball Game	Dr P M Nair	2935
7	The Need to Activate the National Disaster Management Authority in Pandemic Times	Arvind Gupta	3268
8	PM's call at Kevadia – What is the 'Big Picture'?	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	3127
9	Left-Wing Extremism: Contained but Continues to Exist	Tejusvi Shukla	3650
10	The Absence of Air Power in India's Security Narratives	Air Marshal D Choudhury	4072
11	Indigenize India's Military Doctrines, Procedures and Customs too: PM at Kevadia	Brig (Dr) Ashok Pathak	2581
12	With Defence Production and Procurement Policies in Place – Are We Headed Correctly?	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	2764
13	Political Initiatives and Peace Building in J & K: The external and Internal Dimensions	Lt General S A Hasnain	3003
14	Fore-warning that could not be Heeded	Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee	2705
15	Pandemic Factor in Military Organisation	Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee	2598
16	Shooting the 'Messenger': How India is tackling the Weaponisation of Social Media	Tejusvi Shukla	3705
17	Launch on Demand: Relevance in Future Wars	Pushpinder Bath	3570
18	Drone Threat – The Big Picture	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	4484
19	Drone Terror in India: A Challenge to Deter	Saumya Joshi	4264
20	Eastern Ladakh – In Focus Again!	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma (Retd.)	4017
21	Eastern Ladakh – Fixing "No-Patrolling Buffer Areas"!	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma	3930
22	Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory Board –An Analysis	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	4390
23	Extreme Weather Events: Time to Prioritize Global Responses to Climate Change	Heena Samant	3809
24	Defence Exports: Challenges, Opportunities and Imperatives	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	3750
25	India Ahead of 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26)	Heena Samant	4013
26	Border Management: Challenges and Opportunitites	Arvind Gupta	5871
27	Youth Power for Nation Building	Brig Dinesh Mathur	3909

	Title	Author	Views & Download
28	Climate Finance and Climate Justice: The Twin Anchors of India's Climate Commitments at COP 26	Heena Samant	4336
29	Afghanistan Mired in Uncertainty	Aakriti Vinayak	2729
30	Demystifying the "Armed Struggle" in Jammu and Kashmir	Col Nilesh Kunwar (Retd.)	2118
31	Year End Review: India Took a Big Leap in Addressing the Threat of Climate Change in 2021	Heena Samant	3349
32	Terrorism Studies (National): Review of 2021 & Projections for 2022	Anurag Sharma	2950
33	Climate Change – A Review of 2021 and Outlook for 2022	PK Khup Hangzo	6815
34	Making a Sense of Chinese Hypersonic Threat- The Big Picture	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	2664
35	Cruise Missiles : where are we ? Where are our Potential Adversaries? What way ahead?	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	3604
36	India: Gearing Up for National Defence	Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee	2542
37	IPCC's Timely Reminder on the Need for Climate Justice: A Quantum Leap in Global Climate Change Talks	Heena Samant	3143
38	Russia-Ukraine War: A Game of Vain Military Venture?	Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee	3038
39	A Review of Kashmir Files	Anmol Mahajan	3566

Commentaries

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1	The Social Media Dilemma: From Capitalism to National Security	Anushka Saraswat	4268
2	A New Kashmir in the Making	Abhinav Pandya	3550
3	Glasgow Conference and India's Energy Transition	Amb D P Srivastava	3355
4	Ahead of COP 26: Need to Restore the Saliency of Climate Justice	Arvind Gupta	4214
5	COP 26: NET POSITIVE & Corporate Social Responsibility	Dr Swati Mitra	4630
6	The Institutionalised Approach to Sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction	Dr Swati Mitra	2273

Podcasts

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1	Technology and Air Warfare	Air Marshal Anil Khosla	3119
2	The Rajput Age of the Indian Navy: Why INS Rajput matters on her day of decommissioning	Rear Admiral Sudarshan Y Shrikhande	11280
3	Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) by USS John Paul Jones in the Indian EEZ – A violation or unwarranted assertion?	Rear Admiral Sudarshan Y Shrikhande	3085
4	Covid Pandemic and the Armed Forces	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma	3029
5	India-China Military Standoff at LAC in Ladakh Sector - Whither from here?	Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma	2872
6	Drone swarms - a grave threat. Where are we?	Lt Gen (Dr) V K Saxena	2051

Historical and Civilisational Studies

Lecture Series: Philosophy for Beginners

As part of the lecture series on Philosophy for Beginners, Dr Sashi Prabha Kumar, Former Vice Chancellor of Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies, Raisen, M.P and presently the Chairperson of the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies Shimla delivered a series of lectures on Nyaya and Vaisesika Philosophy, Samkhya and Yoga Philosophy and Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta Philosophy.

India's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

Since the overwhelming success of the International Yoga Day, it has been felt that now is the time to mobilise our ancient resources of ideas and bring them forward for practical and strategic use with an aim of building an Indian narrative. It is time that we recognize these components of India's soft power and use these as vital strategic assets. A panel discussion was organized to commemorate the International



Prof. Shashi Prabha Kumar

Amb Aditya Narayan Dhairyasheel Haksar

Swami Mitrananda



Release of Russian Translation of the Book
'Swami Vivekananda: Biography and Teachings'

Dr. Marike van Aerde, Leiden University

Swami Atmalokananda



Interactive Session on Shared Buddhist Heritage between India and Russia

Yoga Day, Swami Atmalokananda, President, Ramakrishna Society Vedanta Centre was the chief speaker.

Lecture series on Gita for the Millennia

In January 2022, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) started an online lecture series on Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā by Swami Mitrananda of Chinmaya Mission. Swami Mitrananda is a disciple of H.H. Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati. He currently serves as the mentor for Chinmaya Mission Chennai and North-Eastern India. The series is titled ‘Gītā for the Millennia’. This monthly lecture series comprising 18 sessions, one on each chapter of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā aims at seeking guidance from the scripture to continuously inspire us for enlightenment and to foster original thinking among us to rebuild a narrative for India and the world in the contemporary global scenario. The Gītā shows the art of exercising wisdom even while facing a problem and here the battlefield becomes the best possible example.

Each person should revel in the knowledge of the Gītā for gaining clarity and to recognise what is adharmā and practice what is dharmā, so that we can equip ourselves to give timely and rightful responses to every tough situation in life, whether professional or personal. The upcoming lectures of this series aims to extract profound messages residing in each chapter of the Gītā.

Major Events at a Glance

Introduction to Nyaya and Vaisesika Philosophy

On 9th April VIF organised a talk on Nyaya and Vaisesika philosophy as part of the VIF lecture series: ‘Philosophy for Beginners’. Professor Shashi Prabha Kumar explained the deeper nuances of these two philosophies and their intellectual salience. Prof. Kumar introduced Nyaya philosophy as logical realism or Indian logic. She said that the propounder of Nyaya philosophy is Maharishi Gautam

Aksapada. Nyaya translates to the examination of any object or issue with the evidence. She added that Nyaya is called justice today. Prof Kumar introduced the Vaisesika school of philosophy as the sister school of Nyaya philosophy. Vaisesika philosophy deals with the objects of knowledge. Vaisesika philosophy provides us insights into the minds of ancient Hindus, she said.

'A Look at Sanskrit Literature'

Ambassador A.N.D. Haksar, a veteran diplomat and eminent translator of Sanskrit texts, on 14th April began his lecture by pointing out that Sanskrit language has a continuing history till the present times. He gave many examples of the European efforts made to translate Sanskrit scriptures since the past two and half centuries and so as to enrich their own literature. Stating that besides religious and philosophical areas, there were many other dimensions of Sanskrit literature, the speaker spoke of the Epigrammatic form of Verse, Satire and Cultural Confluence. The objective behind drawing attention towards the importance of these works was that though Sanskrit is a rich ancient language and has contributed to our enormously rich heritage, it is not widely spoken and has been given a status of a 'classical language'. He also added that India was witnessing a renaissance and we should all work towards it.

Talk on 'Introduction to Samkhya and Yoga Philosophy'

As a part of the VIF lecture/webinar series 'Philosophy for Beginners', Prof. Shashi Prabha Kumar on 31st May spoke on Samkhya philosophy and its theory of evolution as

propounded by Maharishi Kapil. Prof Kumar explained the Samkhya as an orthodox, dualist, realist and relative school which accepts the centrality and authority of Vedas. Next, Prof. Kumar explained the concepts of yoga, its origins and propagation, and integration into the Indian system. Prof. Kumar said that there are many yoga traditions in India like Patanjali yoga, Rajya yoga, Kriya yoga, Mantra yoga, etc. She suggested that the means to achieve clarity of mind is the path of yoga, the ultimate goal being 'Atma darshan'.

Discussion on International Yoga Day

A panel discussion was organized to commemorate the International Yoga Day on 21st June wherein Swami Atmalokananda, President, Ramakrishna Society Vedanta Centre and Dr Arpita Mitra, Assistant Professor, Kazi Nazrul University & Professor Shashi Prabha Kumar, Dean, Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, were invited as speakers. Highlighting the different aspects of yoga, Swami Atmalokananda said that the ultimate goal of yoga was freedom and self-realization, and it was a spiritual science that seeks to bring harmony between mind, body and soul. Next, Dr Mitra explained that according to Swami Vivekananda yoga was a union between the practitioner and his true divine self. Lastly, the spiritual, physical and psychological aspects of yoga were explained by Professor Shashi Prabha Kumar.

Introduction to Mimāṃsā and Vedānta Philosophy

On 16th July a talk on 'Mimāṃsā and Vedānta Philosophy', as part of the VIF Lecture Series 'Philosophy for Beginners', was delivered

by Prof Shashi Prabha Kumar, Explaining the concepts of Sāṅkhya-Yoga or Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā (Pūrva Mīmāṃsā) and Vedānta (Uttara Mīmāṃsā), the speaker said while Vedānta emphasizes on the Jñāna-kāṇḍa, Mīmāṃsā emphasizes on the Karma-kāṇḍa. Essence of Vedānta - realisation of Brahman, the Sat-Cit-Ānanda Svarūpa, which is veiled by our ignorance was also touched upon.

Shared Buddhist Heritage between India and Russia

The webinar held on 19th July was a collective effort of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Science, Embassy of India, Moscow, International Buddhist Confederation and Vivekananda International Foundation.

History of Buddhism in Russia, contributions of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore to Indian heritage and Buddhist linkages between Russia and India were discussed. Amb D Venkatesh, Amb of India to Russia while introducing the session spoke on Buddhist ties between India and Russia as an integral part of people to people ties between both countries. Professor Shaumyan, Professor for Indian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies spoke on the history of Buddhism in Russia. She also discussed the spread of Buddhism in Russia and its ethnic interaction with Russian society. Telo Tulku Rinpoche shared that he has been a part of the revival of the Buddhist tradition in the Kalmykia region after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Mr. Rinpoche said that there's a need to strengthen cultural exchanges between Indian and Russian scholars in terms of

Buddhism. He suggested that Indian scholars explore regions in Russia to develop scientific research on India-Russia Buddhist heritage. Andrey Alexandrovich Bazarov, Institute for Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of the Serbian Branch of the RAS, Buryatia Republic, Ulan-Ude from Buryat Region spoke on preserving of the Buryat language by the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Heritage (Kangyur). Baatr Uchayevich Kitinov, Senior Researcher of the Dept of Oriental Studies, Moscow, spoke on the cultural heritage between India and Russia. He emphasised the contribution of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore to the Indian heritage. Further, he spoke on the historical engagement of Russian regions with Indian civilisation.

'Gītā for the Millennia' by Swami Mitrananda

On 6th January 2022 Swami Mitrananda began the lecture by invoking H.H Swami Chinmayanda's lifetime effort to bring back the Gītā as a 'book of action' at a time when its engagement was reduced only to prayer rooms. By highlighting the importance and eternal relevance of the Gītā as it makes the timeless, profound knowledge of Vedas and Upaniṣads comprehensive to the common folk, the speaker discussed the major themes and emphasized the core of Arjuna Viśāda-yoga, the first chapter of the Gītā. The lecture highlighted the fact that the Gītā is a discussion between two warriors on a battlefield, which means that the message of the Gītā is applicable even during utmost tense and uncertain situations. In life, we all have to choose our own 'battlefields' or fields of action.

‘Routes of Exchange, Roots of Connectivity- The Archaeology of Ancient India’s Trade Networks’, by Dr. Marike van Aerde, Assistant Professor of World Archaeology, Leiden University

Dr. van Aerde specializes in trade networks and connectivity between the Indian Subcontinent and East Africa. Her research project focuses on multiregional sites and datasets across the Indian Ocean region to reconstruct the trade routes connecting to East Africa.

The talk on 19th January covered the aspects of maritime trade routes, trade objects (beads) and land trade routes (Himalayas) as distinct from Roman perspectives to show that the process of trade was much more fluid. Trade activities of the Gupta Empire, Buddhism and objects of trade were also discussed; some rock carvings too were presented to establish facts about the role of the Indian Subcontinent in the ancient trade networks.

Book Discussion

Release of Russian Translation of the Book ‘Swami Vivekananda: Biography and Teachings’

Virtual release of this Book was organised under a collective effort of the VIF and the Embassy of India, Moscow, Russia. Ms Tatiana Skorokhodova, Professor, Penza State University, Ku. Nivedita Bhide, Vice President, Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Dr Arpita Mitra, Assistant Professor, Kazi Nazrul University and Professor Sergel Serebriany spoke on the occasion. Quoting Swami Vivekananda’s speech at the Parliament of World Religions in 1893 in Chicago, Dr Arvind Gupta as well as Ambassador Varma highlighted the significance of the spiritual and unique message the Indian civilisation offers to the world.

Articles			
	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	A Different 9/11: How Vivekananda Won Americans’ Hearts and Minds?	Arvind Gupta	3168
2	Metaphors of Reverence: A Tale of Two Civilisational Gestures	Rohith Krishna	3042
3	Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Economic Planning in India	Dr Arpita Mitra	3393

Commentaries			
	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	Vivekananda for Covid Times	Arvind Gupta	2831
2	Fascist Distortion of History?	Dr Dilip K. Chakrabarti	5076
3	Understanding Indian Heritage: Shedding the Colonial Past	Rishika Dhumal	3453

Governance and Political Studies

During the year, the Centre for Governance and Political Studies organised a number of book discussions covering energy transition, partition, human rights among others.

Major Events at a Glance

‘Indus Basin Uninterrupted- a History of Territory and Politics from Alexander to Nehru’, authored by Uttam Kumar Sinha

On 17th August, the VIF organized a discussion on Indus Basin Uninterrupted- A History and Politics from Alexander to Nehru by Dr Uttam Kumar Sinha. Director VIF described the book as a fascinating story of the Indus water river basin. He also applauded the author for going back into the history and starting from the time of Alexander bringing the readers to 1960 when India and Pakistan signed a treaty called the Indus Water Treaty. The book covers a long history of the Indus Basin spanning the millennia from the Harappan Mohenjo-Daro Civilization to sixty years ago when Indus Water Treaty was signed. Divulging further, the author explained that the book has been divided into five parts which covers themes concerning society’s relationship with the Indus Basin ranging from conquest, commerce and territorial demarcation to development and administration of the water. The structure of the

book, according to the author, was shaped by the archives and the information gathered by him. He also emphasized that in a certain sense the book gives a picture of humanities’ intimate connection to the Indus and how its tributaries in a way humanizes the Indus rather than treats it as a hydraulic object.

Discussion on ‘Bengal and its Partition: An Untold Story’, authored by Amb Bhaswati Mukherjee

The partition of Bengal was one of the major events in the world’s history. It had the elements of politics, violence, and cultural repression, the struggle for territorial and political autonomy among others. To highlight these elements, historians, political observers and experts have written a plethora of literature. However, the recent account of the Bengal Partition by Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee Bengal and its Partition comes as an insightful amalgamation of history, personal observations and a strong pitch for reasons that could have helped to avoid the Bengal Partition.

A united Bengal had been home to a composite and syncretic culture where language played the cardinal role in keeping the culture intact than the religious divide between Hindus and Muslims. The deceitful victory of the East



S Gurumurthy, Chairman, VIF



Amb Satish Chandra, Vice Chairman, VIF



Dr. Anirban Ganguly



Amb Veena Sikri



Amb Bhaswati Mukherjee



Dr. Devi Prasad Shetty



Uttam Kumar Sinha



India's Permanent Representative to the UN



Amb. Chandrasekhar Dasgupta

India Company in the Battle of Plassey had sowed the seeds of partition. The colonial rule of the British Empire destroyed the economic wellbeing resulting in an impoverished Bengal and left millions of the farmers without lands and those farmers who could produce little were levied high taxes. Exploitative policies of the Empire resulted in the Great Bengal Famine of 1943-44.

British Empire used its loyalists like Bengal Chief Minister H.S. Suhrawardy to stage a barbaric August 16, 1945 'Direct Action Day' to fabricate and propagate poisonous public views

on a homeland for Muslims. It had turned into a nightmare for Bengal as thousands of Bengalis were thrown into a civil war on the religious lines. Such initiations were further venomous by leaders like Jinnah who was a moderate looking Muslim but ended up using extreme two nation's propaganda to divide Bengal. Author Amb Bhaswati Mukherjee concluded the session with a quote from the German philosopher Georg Hegel's famous quote "the only thing that we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history." The book discussion was held on 25 August and was chaired by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF. Author Amb. Bhaswati Mukherjee

was joined by Amb. Chandrasekhar Dasgupta, Mr. Jayanta Roy Chowdhury and Prof Shahid Amin as discussants.

Release of the Interim Report of the VIF Task Force on 'India's Energy Transition in a Carbon-Constrained World: The Role of Nuclear Power', by Shri Gurumurthy, Chairman, VIF

In his opening remarks on 04 January 2022 Director of VIF highlighting the need for diversification of energy sources whilst being mindful of developmental prerogatives, credited the Task Force for undertaking a study that explores technology options and financing mechanisms available in order to make this transition and examines the role of nuclear power as a stable base-load, low carbon source to aid this transition. Shri DS Choudhary, Director, Operations of the NPCIL spoke about the efforts of the NPCIL in scaling up the current nuclear capacity of India, the progress in getting 700 reactors connected to the grid, and how these have been a fruit of over a decade long commitment to research and initiatives by the DEA and NPCIL, especially pulling through when the nuclear sector was facing sanctions. Dr. Anil Kakodkar, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy in his address stressed that the move towards a green economy requires increasing the share of electricity in the energy mix from around 20 percent now to 35 percent and eventually 80 percent. Ambassador DP Srivastava, coordinator of the VIF - NPCIL project in his presentation made a comparison of the country-wise carbon emission levels and historical responsibility

since 1751. India with cumulative emissions bears no responsibility for climate change with cumulative CO₂ emissions of 48 billion tons. In contrast, the US has emitted 399 billion tons CO₂, EU 353 billion tons, and China 200 billion tons. He recommended that Nuclear is the only emission-free source of stable, base-load power. Ramping it up will require government support. An immediate step will be providing it a must-run status on par with renewables.

Shri S. Gurumurthy in his address outlined the importance of nuclear power. He said that until the 60s, energy was part of the discourse on international trade. In the 70s, this was transformed into a geo-economic and geo-political issue. Thereafter, energy became enmeshed in the security debate. Today, it is linked to climate change. He congratulated the Task Force for a well-researched report that helps explore India's energy transition options. He stressed that a public education campaign is needed to help mobilize public opinion in favor of nuclear power. He pointed out that India with 1/6th of the world population supports 7-8 percent of bio-diversity despite having only 2 percent of the world land-mass. This is only possible due to our eco-friendly philosophy and belief in the unity of man and nature. The lifestyle choices, including dietary habits of developed countries and Abrahamic cultures, encourage excessive energy consumption, and demand on scarce land and water resources. He stated that in order to meet the challenge of climate change, we must address not only the supply side, but also the demand side of the equation.

India's Engagement with Human Rights

The VIF hosted a discussion on India's Engagement with Human Rights on 27th January 2022. In 2021, India got elected to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the second term (2022-24) to strengthen its commitment to protecting and promoting human rights.

Some of the key discussion themes were the structure and functioning of the UNHRC, India and Human Rights Treaties Body and India's approach towards the Human Rights Council. Participants included retired diplomats, scholars and other government representatives.

Articles			
	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	The Oxygen Crisis in Second Wave Covid-19 Pandemic in India and "We the People"	Brig (Dr) Ashok Pathak	3189
2	Action Plan for Handling the Covid-19 Threat-Second and Subsequent Waves	VIF Experts Group Report	2800
3	Recommendations: Oxygen Management for Current and Future Covid-19 Waves	VIF Experts Group Report	2976
4	Modi Government: An Evaluation	Amb Satish Chandra	4515
5	Focussing on the Vaccines is the Need of the Hour: Some Suggestions	VIF Experts Group Report	2632
6	India 1952-1976 and 2014-2021: Two Periods of Political Stability- A Comparative Analysis	Brig (Dr) Ashok Pathak	4193

Commentaries			
	Title	Author	Views & Download
1	Academic Freedom: Some Unpleasant Considerations	Dr Dilip K. Chakrabarti	3130
2	Overcoming the Pandemic: Some Suggestions	Arvind Gupta	2730
3	The Power of a Billion in Volunteering to Defeat COVID!	Dr Swati Mitra	2987
4	Boosting electronics manufacturing in India	Arvind Gupta	3557
5	Time for a Sporting Push in India	Col (Retd.) Ravinder Pal Singh	3642
6	Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Private Partnership to fight Poverty	Dr Swati Mitra	3763
7	Walk the Elephant- Environment & Social Governance	Dr Swati Mitra	2686
8	Is Environment Social & Governance the Way to Achieve UN SDG's?	Dr Swati Mitra	2473

Technological and Scientific Studies

In 2021 centre aimed to keep pace with the steadfast rate at which science and technology has been advancing. Series of discussions highlighting the importance of indigenous scientific and technological capabilities in India were organised during the year.

Major Events at a Glance

VIF- Center for a New American Security (CNAS) Webinar on ‘Space and Biotech’

The VIF in collaboration with the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) of the U.S., has initiated a series of discussions on the potential for collaboration between the US and India on New and Emerging Technologies: Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Technologies, Cyber/ digital, 5G/6G, Biotech and Space. A discussion on Cyber and 6G was conducted in July 2021 followed by a discussion on the scope for collaboration in AI and Quantum computing in November 2021. The third iteration of these sessions was held on 28 January 2022, the discussion focused on Biotech and private sector cooperation in Space Technology. Participants included representatives of academia, industry and the governments in both countries.

Discussion with Chairman DRDO on ‘Self Reliance in Defence Technologies’

VIF organised a discussion with Dr G Satheesh Reddy, the Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation), the strategic community and representatives from the private Indian defence manufacturers and included L&T’s Defence, Tata Advanced Systems, Bharat Forge, Godrej, Mahindra Defence among others on March 16. Chairman DRDO spoke on “Self Reliance in Defence Technologies” presenting his perspective on indigenous defence R&D, production, expectations from and opportunities for the Indian private defence manufacturers. The representatives from the private industry aired their expectations from the Ministry of Defence, the Defence R&D establishment, as also apprehensions and challenges faced as private defence manufacturers. During his talk, the DRDO Chairman mentioned about weapon systems, sensors and platforms in which self-sufficiency had been achieved in terms of design and development. He also provided a scan of the futuristic fields that are opening up for disruptive research and development of capabilities.

He detailed the industry collaboration mechanisms being pursued actively by DRDO to engage the private industry including joint development, Government Owned Company Operated (GOCO) model, Transfer of Technology, Tech Development Fund (TDF), Development cum Production Partnership (DCPP) etc and the scale of private industry engagement and involvement with the Defence R&D establishment. He highlighted various national efforts towards enablement of the industry

like budget announcements prioritising and allocating funds for domestic procurement of defence equipment, mechanisms for promoting design and development by industry, opening of the Defence R&D for private industry and schemes for engaging academic institutions and promoting academic research through Centres of Excellence, Research Boards etc and developing all round R&D ecosystem in India etc.



Discussion with Chairman DRDO on 'Self Reliance in Defence Technologies'

Vimarsh

VIF promotes dialogue to seek and establish harmony in diversity. Since its inception, the VIF has set up a public forum titled Vimarsh to encourage debates and discussions on issues of national interest. Over 150 lectures have been delivered by eminent scholars, experts, thinkers and practitioners of public policy in the last twelve years. Over the years a wide variety of thought-provoking ideas and concepts have been put forward in the vimarsh discussions. In the 10th year of the VIF's establishment, as a commemorative edition, a selection of some of these talks were published to give an indication on how the public debates on important issues have moved over the years.

During 2021-22 VIF held several important talks and discussions under the Vimarsh series.

Major Events at a Glance

'Shaping the Armed Forces to Meet likely Current and Future Challenges'

On 7th April, the then Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat covered the issues of evolving threats to India's security, complexities in modern warfare, hybrid wars, and implications of China's rise, Pakistan's proxy war against India, India's military preparedness and the role of military diplomacy. Capability differential with China, need for technological

upgrade and integration of services, and need to formulate our own customized security solutions were the highlights of the talk. An exhaustive Q&A session followed.

Foreign Secretary's Talk on 'Global Rebalancing and India's Foreign Policy'

The VIF hosted an online talk on 30th June by India's Foreign Secretary, Shri Harsh V. Shringla. Dr Arvind Gupta, Director VIF, in his welcome address outlined how the world was heading towards complex multipolarity amidst increasingly challenging issues such as climate change, pandemics, trade and technology competition, grey zone conflicts, rising inequalities, race for resources, air, land and maritime pollution, migrations, terrorism, food, energy and water security, public health, demographic transitions etc. He emphasized the need for India's foreign policy to become more innovative and agile and having sufficient diplomatic capacity and bandwidth to deal with today's complex problems.

The Foreign Secretary highlighted how the transition to a multipolar world has manifested doubts about the continuing relevance of the existing international structures and intellectual pillars to contemporary problems. He then defined the pillars of the Indian foreign policy as: tradition of Middle Path; multi-polar



General Bipin Rawat, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM, ADC



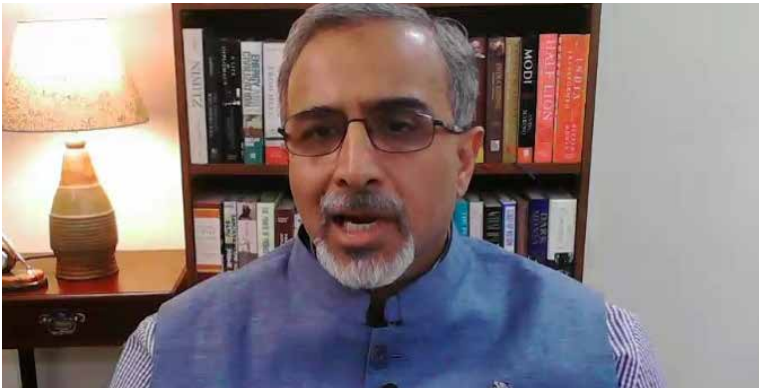
Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary, GOI



Amb Satish Chandra, Vice Chairman, VIF



General NC Vij, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM



D. Bala Venkatesh Varma, Former Ambassador to the Russia



Dr Ajay Kumar, Defence Secretary, Govt. of India



Shri V. Srinivas, Additional Secretary to Government of India



Shri Jayant Misra, IRS (Retd)



Amb Arun Singh, Distinguished Fellow, VIF



Amb Dinkar Srivastava, Distinguished Fellow, VIF



Dr. Shailesh Nayak, Director of the National Institute of Advanced Studies



Ambassador Anil Wadhwa, Distinguished Fellow, VIF

focus; evacuation of stranded Indians; medical supplies for COVID-19; and global good with commitment to climate action.

‘India’s Defence Reforms’, by Dr Ajay Kumar, Defence Secretary, GOI

In the talk held on 22nd July the speaker highlighted the rapid pace of defence reforms undertaken in the last two years, however he cautioned that there was a long way to go. The major areas emphasized were: Modernisation of Armed Forces, Atma Nirbhar Bharat in Defence, Streamlining Procurement, Budget Management, Digital Transformation, Reforming Defence R&D, Strengthening Border Infrastructure, and Galvanising Strategic

Thinking. A wide variety of questions were fielded by the virtual audience.

V. Srinivas, Additional Secretary to GOI and Director General, National Centre for Good Governance, on ‘Administrative Reforms: Challenges and Opportunities’

In the talk held on 20th August, the speaker stressed on the need for administrative reforms, their implementation and the requirement of a new governance module in India. He elaborated on the trajectory of growth and administrative reforms based on expert reports beginning with the regulatory administrative model of 1950-1999, paradigm shift to liberalization reform of 1990’s and the third phase from 2000-2014 which

saw the promotion of rights based services. Lastly, he explained the 2014-2021 quest for a new Public Service based on citizen centric parameters - Right to Information (RTI), Right to Public Services Acts, National e-governance plan etc. The discussion concluded with a vigorous Q&A session.

‘India’s Drug Challenge’

The talk by Shri Jayant Misra, IRS (Retd) and former Chairman of the Settlement Commission, on India’s Drug Challenge held on 11th October began with the information that 2.8% of India’s population were frequent cannabis users and one crore of the population are sedative users. It was pointed out that drugs finance terrorism and organised crime globally and its trafficking was a concern of international security. The speaker pointed out that drug cultivation in Afghanistan in 2019 was 6700 MT worth over 600 billion USD while Myanmar cultivated 508MTs, and the produce was transiting through the infamous ‘Golden Crescent’ and the ‘Golden Triangle’ which surrounded India. He spoke about the bio-physiological dependence and drug addiction, shift from traditional drugs to synthetic drugs, challenges in detecting, rise of the dark net and the use of crypto-currencies and enforcing drug laws. He recommended that strategies need to be built on science, evidence and knowledge to enhance precursor controls and effective action on drugs. The session was followed by a Q&A session.

‘Indo-US Relations’ by Amb Arun Singh

During the talk held on 29th October Amb Arun Singh pointed to the highs and lows of

Indo-US relations and the fact that it has grown tremendously regardless. It advocated for the great scope for widening of the relationship further in light of a bipartisan consensus in the US Congress on building strategic ties with India. The speaker viewed this as an opportunity of intensifying ties with the US at a time when Beijing has emerged as a main economic, security and military challenger. According to him a strong Indo-US partnership could play a catalytic role in balancing China, but there was the need to be realistic in expectations from each other.

‘Climate Change and India’s Energy Choices’, by Amb Dinkar Srivastava

The Vimarsh on 22nd November began with introductory remarks of Director VIF, in which he gave his point of view on COP26 and expressed disappointment over overlooking of the key issues such as climate justice, finance and global cooperation in fight against climate change. Amb Srivastava then went over the historical background, the Glasgow Conference, energy transitioning and India’s energy choices. A Q&A session followed.

‘The Kashmir Conundrum: The Quest for Peace in a Troubled Land’, authored by General NC Viji, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM

The discussion held on 27th December was chaired by Director, VIF, who pointed out that this was one of the few books that discusses the change that happened in J&K since the nullification of Articles 370 and 35A, which has in turn introduced new dynamics in the internal, regional, and international situations. He noted a critical aspect brought out by General

Vij about the increasing trends of Islamic radicalization in J&K. General N C Vij then narrated his experiences of witnessing J&K in its varied degrees of turbulence right from the very beginning. He stated that the changes of August 2019 created a clarity of purpose and was manifestation of a proactive approach, even if there were no easy solutions to J&K issues. There were comments by Amb. Satish Chandra, Former Deputy National Security Advisor & Vice Chairman, VIF and Lt Gen S A Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM (Bar), Former GOC 15 Corps.

‘Strategic Developments in the Indo-Pacific’ by Ambassador Anil Wadhwa

The talk held on 17th January 2022 began with Dr. Gupta mentioning about the salience of Indo-Pacific in Indian Foreign Policy. Amb. Wadhwa then highlighted a range of activities that have taken place having the potential to impact global peace and security. He recognised China’s rise in the region and the response to it by the United States and the affected countries along with some other outside powers as the underlying factor impacting the region. Amb. Wadhwa talked about ASEAN’s twenty-year struggle of locking China into a Code of Conduct before highlighting the contemporary events in the ASEAN member countries.

Next, the speaker delved into the strategic questions on South Pacific and the reactions of the US, the Koreas, and India. He concluded by arguing that the Indo-Pacific was too big a region to be controlled by one power. He predicted a rise in competition between the two competing camps led by the United States and China.

‘Earth Sciences & their Importance for the Nation’s Well-being’, by Dr. Shailesh Nayak, Director of the National Institute of Advanced Studies and Distinguished Scientist from the Ministry of Earth Sciences

The presentation on 9th February addressed four key sectors of Indian studies in the Earth Sciences: development of warning systems for natural hazards; the significance of weather and climate in sustaining local agriculture; sustainable utilisation of the Blue ‘Ocean’ economy; and exploration of ocean mineral resources. Dr Nayak emphasised their implications on the country’s societal interests and security. Further, he stressed at the importance of developing a cooperative framework of engagement between the Earth System (knowledge), the Human System (behaviour) and the Social System (governance, policy and infrastructure). Dr Gupta shared his views and delivered the concluding remarks.

‘Russia-Ukraine Crisis’, by D. Bala Venkatesh Varma

Following introductory remarks by Director VIF the talk focused on strategic trends and the impact of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine Crisis on the world in all its strategic dimensions. Amb Varma began his talk on 14th March by noting India’s success in evacuating her citizens, especially the students, stuck Ukraine, just as it was in case of the Operation Ganga. He attributed this to Indian influence with Russia at the highest level and the personal rapport between PM Modi and President Putin. The talk covered the current happenings, the strategic trends at global level and its impact on India.

Emphasizing that the war was a catastrophic failure and miscalculation among big powers that has become a Russia versus the rest situation, India must not be asked to play a part for their policy failures. The peripheral situation of China was also mentioned. The

speaker suggested that India must take note of the critical issues like weaponisation, networked world, global commons, rule based order and resilience of supply chain in a war that is fought in conventional, information, cyber and economic domains.

Every individual should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life. Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others.

- Sri Aurobindo

Our Exchanges Worldwide

Think Tanks, Institutions, Universities with whom VIF had Exchanges during 2021-22

Australia

- Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)
- Australian National University (ANU)

China

- Research Institute for Indian Ocean Economies (RIIOE), Yunnan University of Finance and Economics
- National Institute of International Strategy (NIIS) of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)
- Center for South Asia & West China Cooperation & Development (SAWCCAD), Sichuan University

Israel

- The Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs (JCPA)

Japan

- The Japan Foundation Asia Center
- The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA)
- Japan Institute for National Fundamentals (JINF)

Jordan

- West Asia-North Africa Institute

Myanmar

- Myanmar Institute of Peace & Security (MIPS)
- Thayninga Institute for Strategic Studies (TISS)

Nigeria

- Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, NIIA

Russia

- Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)
- Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS)

Singapore

- S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

South Korea

- Korean National Diplomatic Academy

Sri Lanka

- Pathfinder Foundation

Taiwan

- The Prospect Foundation
- Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

UK

- Institute of International & Strategic Studies (IISS)

USA

- The Atlantic Council
- The Heritage Foundation
- US-India Security Council Inc. (USISC)

Uzbekistan

- Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS) under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies

- Center for International Relations Studies (CIRS)
- The University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED)
- Development Strategy Center (DSC)

Vietnam

- The Institute for Foreign Policy and Strategic Studies (Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam)

Indian Universities

- Gorakhpur University

Other Institutions

- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)

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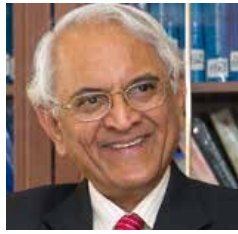
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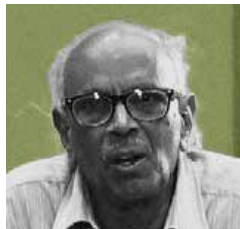
Amb DB Venkatesh Varma



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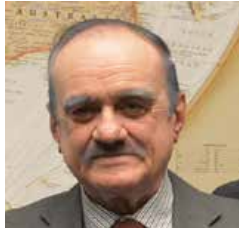
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Manisha Bhadula

Finances

Vivekananda International Foundation, created under the aegis of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, was registered as a Trust on 25 March 2010 at New Delhi.

The trust holds its meetings periodically.

The Annual Audited Accounts for the financial year 2021-22 is presented here.

Statutory Auditors: M/S Purohit & Purohit, Chartered Accountants, New Delhi

VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION 3, Institutional Area, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110 021			
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST MARCH, 2022.			
PARTICULARS	SCHEDULE	CURRENT YEAR'S FIGURES	PREVIOUS YEAR'S FIGURES
SOURCES OF FUNDS			
Corpus & Non-Corpus Fund	"A"	23,831	13,302
TOTAL ::		₹ 23,831	₹ 13,302
APPLICATION OF FUNDS			
Fixed Assets	"B"	5,736	6,611
Investment	"C"	-	2,000
Current Assets	"D"		
- Advances, Deposits & Receivables		412	875.00
- Cash & Bank Balances		19,989	6,081.00
		<u>20,401</u>	<u>6,956.00</u>
Less: Current Liabilities	"E"		
- Other Liabilities		2,306	2,265.00
		<u>2,306</u>	<u>2,265.00</u>
		18,095	4,691
TOTAL ::		₹ 23,831	₹ 13,302
Notes on Accounts and Significant Accounting Policies	"F"		
<p>Signed in terms of our Report of even date. For PUROHIT & PUROHIT (FRN:003282N) Chartered Accountants</p> <p>CA. K.K. Purohit, B.Com(Hons), LL.B, FCA, MBF, ISA Partner Membership No.054763</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Arvind Gupta Director</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kishor Tokkar Managing Trustee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Anuttama Ganguly Secretary</p> <p>New Delhi, Friday, The 01st day of July, 2022.</p>			

VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
3, Institutional Area, San Martin Marg,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110 021

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 2022.

PARTICULARS	CURRENT YEAR'S FIGURES	PREVIOUS YEAR'S FIGURES
[A] INCOME		
Donations	42,000	28,000
Bank Interest	597	522
Publications Royalty	101	158
Grant for Nuclear Project	1,845	-
Other Interest - IT Refund	-	11
Excess of Expenditure over Income for the year	-	5,940
TOTAL ::	₹ 44,543	₹ 34,631
[B] EXPENDITURE		
Audit Fees	65	65
Bank Commission & Charges	3	2
Conferences, Seminars, Vimarsha & Other Activities	1,062	756
Corona Preventive Expenses	2	73
Depreciation	996	1,204
Fees/Hon/Publication Exp-NPCIL	1,204	-
Gardening Expenses	431	507
General up-keep and Cleaning Expenses	2,350	2,289
History Project Expenses	91	974
Honorarium, Salaries, Fees & Stipend	20,620	21,616
Insurance Charges	4	3
Interest on TDS	5	-
Legal & Professional Fees	55	53
Library Expenses	1,293	1,479
Office Expenses	237	156
Postage & Courier Charges	64	77
Power, Fuel Charges & Expenses	1,691	1,663
Printing & Stationery	37	135
Publication Expenses	678	749
Pre-fabricated Cabins Dismantled	-	59
Repairing & Maintenance Expenses	1,073	545
Security Services Expenses	1,319	1,343
Telephone, Mobile & Internet Expenses	155	180
Travelling & Conveyance Exp.	190	67
Water Charges	61	240
Website Renewal & Maintenance Charges	328	396
Excess of Income over Expenditure for the year	10,529	-
TOTAL ::	₹ 44,543	₹ 34,631
Notes on Accounts and Significant Accounting Policies "E"		

Signed in terms of our Report of even date.
For PUROHIT & PUROHIT (FRN:003282N)
Chartered Accountants

CA. K.K. Purohit, B.Com(Hons), LL.B, FCA, MBF, ISA
Partner
Membership No.054763

For VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

(Signature)
Director

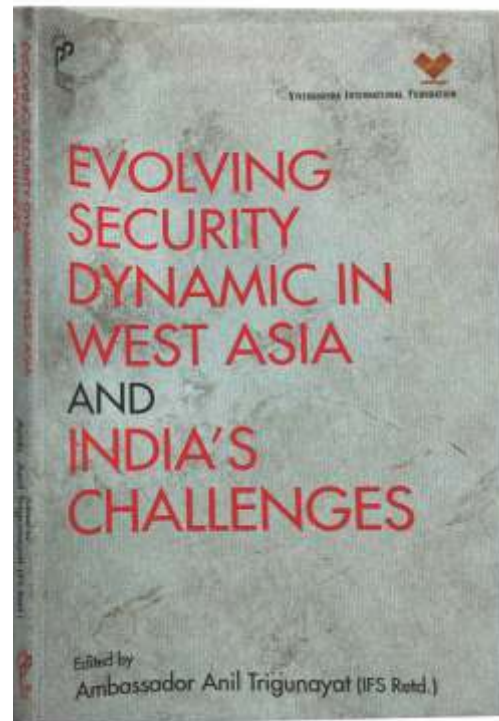
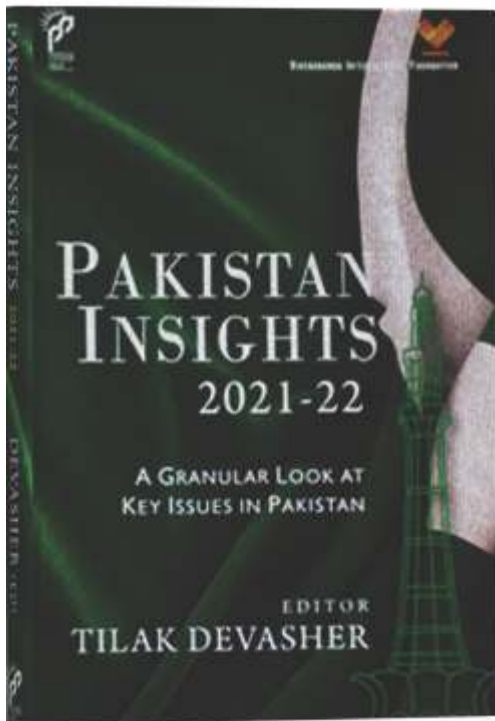
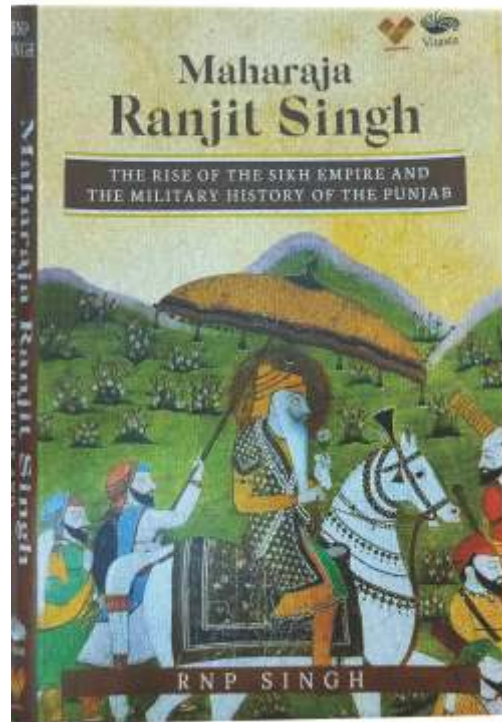
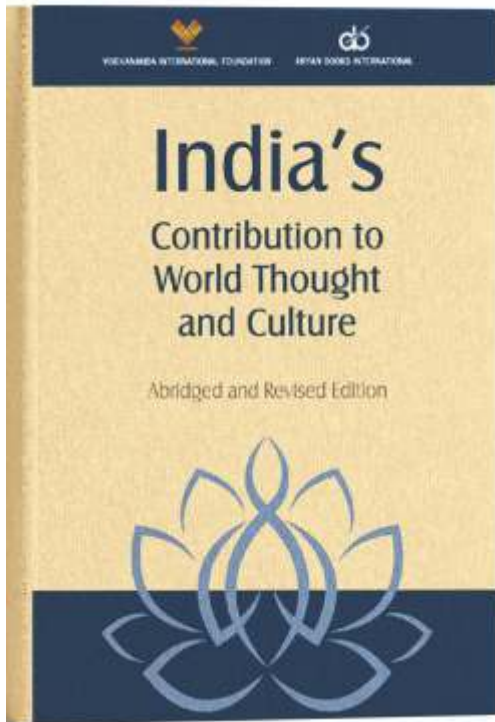
(Signature)
Kishor Tokekar
Managing Trustee

(Signature)
Anuttama Ganguly
Secretary

New Delhi, Friday, The 01st day of July, 2022.



FORTHCOMING BOOKS



“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced. Others are mere talking machines.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Vivekananda International Foundation

3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021

Tel: 011-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415

E-mail: info@vifindia.org

Website: www.vifindia.org

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