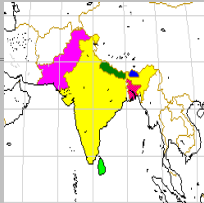


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British Association for South Asian Studies

BASAS Bulletin



BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES
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DANGER OF AN ARMS RACE

India's bomb tests are morally shameful and politically foolish. Any act which legitimises or promotes the production or deployment of these evil weapons of mass destruction whether it is by the USA, China, India or any other country deserves to be criticised at least on moral grounds even if the overall judgements that such considerations must be subordinated to 'national security concerns'.

Indeed, historically India had always cited the moral factor as a major reason why it would not behave like nuclear elites elsewhere. That nobody amongst the new army of applauders has even bothered to point to the moral dilemma intrinsic to this act reveals most strikingly the general mood of the Indian elite and strategic community. But since nobody barring opponents are bothered by this, let us go to the political dimension.

Amongst the numerous reasons why this act is so foolhardy there is space here only to highlight one - it unleashes a political dynamic which is outside India's control and whose ultimate end cannot yet be forecast. More precisely, there will now be tremendous domestic pressure on Pakistan to carry out its own test in retaliation. If this happens, which is more than likely, the pressure on India to go a step further and openly deploy nuclear weapons will become intense. As it is, there is a powerful lobby both inside the BJP and government as well as outside it, which is pushing for India to do this. And, of course, once this happens, Pakistan will follow suit and the regional nuclear arms race will begin.

Expect the bomb lobby to react in two ways to such a development. On the one hand there will be the appeal to national chauvinism about the need to counter any Pakistani nuclear threat in the name of national security, ignoring that Pakistan is the reactor. On the other, there will be the claim that it doesn't really matter and that, in fact, Pakistani acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons capability will enhance its self-confidence and therefore improve the prospects of peace through active nuclear deterrence. What will be missing will be any recognition of the simple truth obvious to all but the 'nuclear expert' that the initiation of such nuclear rivalry both reflects and qualitatively exacerbates the hatreds, tensions and suspicions that have made this the only part of the world that has had for over

50 years a continuous hot-cold war between two countries, and with no end in sight.

It doesn't stop here. For all the talk of the Chinese nuclear threat against India, this supposed threat has always been an abstract one arising not from the actual behaviour of China but from two other directions. First, there has been the deceptive slant given by vested Indian interests to the interpretation of the China-Pakistan relationship. This has falsely been made out to be a near nuclear alliance when it is actually nothing more than a relationship of cooperation in dual use materials and technologies and arms carried out for mutual economic, technological, commercial and political benefit. One can imagine the uproar there would be in this country if China were to supply Pakistan with its most advanced fighter aircraft or help it set up two nuclear reactors. Yet this is exactly what Russia is doing with India. The Pakistani hawk who screams that this indicates an alliance between Russia and India which is strategically directed against Pakistan is as fundamentally mistaken as the Indian hawk who makes the opposite but equivalent claim about the China-Pakistan relationship.

Second, there has been the deliberate and calculated invocation of China as potential enemy at this juncture, even at the risk of worsening China-India relations for no justified reasons. The purpose of Fernandes' recent tirade against China now stands revealed. It was to lay down the ideological rationale for the bomb tests to come. This could not have been pegged to claims about Pakistani nuclear provocation because of its essentially reactive diplomacy. It could only have been pegged on the need to counter a future threat from a 'potential' enemy, China, or on the need for India, also, to be seen as a 'great' power, 'win world respect', etc. This last factor is the real reason for the bomb tests. This action is not the expression of a mature, calm, confident and relaxed nationalism, but of the very opposite!

For a long time now what we have been witnessing in India is an insecure, tension filled mood of frustrated and uncertain nationalism amongst the Indian elite and middle classes. It is precisely because there exists such a milieu and because this promotes the search for a more aggressive 'resolution' of existing problems that the BJP-RSS combine has been able to make the political inroads that it has. It is not in the least a coincidence that the party which has pursued the most aggressive and viciously communal form of cultural nationalism has also been the party with the most aggressive nuclear position. It has been the only party whose official position was that it would 'exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons' as distinct from merely keeping the option open.

Fifty years after independence there is a widespread sense within the Indian elite, that the country has not 'made it' internationally. China has its economic miracle, smaller Far Eastern countries are greater success stories, India is not listened to seriously, we are a great civilisation, we must shape the twenty-first century along with other great powers, etc. These are the sentiments that dominate. This is a context eminently suited to the near desperate search for some perceived short cut that can somehow change such a situation or be thought to do so. There has been no change in the external environment or in threat perceptions that explains what has now happened. It has everything to do with changing self-perceptions.

The sheer lack of sobriety in much of the public response, the near-hysterical character of the adulation is not only pathetic but also deeply disturbing because of the out-dated mind-set it reveals. In the more complex and difficult world we live in, great power status of the conventionally sought kind is neither as important as it was once (and still) thought to be, nor as easy to attain, nor pivoted as significantly on military might. Certainly, nuclear weapons are not only irrelevant to the issue in a way that economic prosperity and strength is not, but so self-defeating as to be part of the problem, not the solution.

After what has happened there are still two vital paths to pursue. The first is to call a halt to

the line where it now is and to adamantly oppose further movement by India towards open development and deployment of nuclear weapons or indeed any further tests. This is a path which both anti-nuclearists, appalled at what has happened, and many of those who support the tests can together follow. The other path must be travelled by those who have supported the tests but are rightly hostile or worried by the way in which the BJP has hijacked the nuclear agenda.

Even as they may feel or publicly declare that these tests are desirable and will contribute to a strong India, it will be the most shameful abnegation of their political and moral responsibility if they do not also declare publicly that they are motivated by a vision of Indian nationalism that is fundamentally opposed to the ugly anti-democratic, communal, intrinsically belligerent Hindutva that is the guiding force of the BJP-RSS project for constructing a Hindu rashtra. The latter are systematically seeking to hijack the discourses on national security, national interests, national greatness, etc., to legitimise their versions of all these and to use the impact of these tests as part of that larger project.

This cannot be effectively confronted by doing what the Congress or UF have done—clamouring for a share of the credit. The feeble official response of the CPI and CPI-M is equally disgraceful. This can only be done by a consistent differentiation of one's own politics and an equally consistent attack on the ideology of the BJP-RSS even on issues where there seem to be an agreement on final policy. Is it too much to hope that the 'strategic experts' and others who approve of the tests but not of the BJP-RSS will do as much?

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A STATEMENT BY SOME INDIAN SCIENTISTS

In the last few days, India has conducted five nuclear tests, including the explosion of a thermonuclear device. The tests, which are claimed to have become necessary due to strategic compulsions affecting our national security, have also been claimed to be a major scientific and technological achievement.

We, scientists in various disciplines, while expressing our deep dismay and unhappiness at this action of the Indian Government, wish to point out the following:

The magnitude of the scientific and technological achievement in conducting these nuclear tests should not be blown out of proportion. The technology involved is for the most part decades old, and the aura of achievement stems mainly from the secrecy that surrounds its acquisition and mastery. It must also be seen in relation to far greater technological challenges like the designing, erecting and successful running of safe nuclear power plants. This is something we have been doing for a long time now, and we are justifiably proud of it.

These tests are bound to vitiate the atmosphere in the South Asian region, triggering a nuclear weapons race in the region, exacerbating the tensions that already exist and making even more difficult the achievement of peaceful co-existence and co-operation amongst the peoples and the nations of this region. The Government of India has adopted the same cynical language as the nuclear weapon powers by claiming that these tests will contribute to disarmament.

These nuclear tests have undone the consistent position that has been taken over the years on nuclear disarmament. While making it clear that we had the relevant technological capability, India had nevertheless not taken the step towards weaponisation in order not to

initiate a nuclear arms race in the sub-continent. At the same time, we had taken a firm stand against signing both the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) because of their discriminatory nature. Strangely enough it is now argued by sections in the government as well as the media, that we should accept and sign the CTBT!!

The country has been committed to an expensive weapons programme without a national debate. We do not see what immediate threats to national security 'forced' this move, particularly when people's needs in terms of education, health, infrastructure and industrial development are urgent. The present Government had promised on assuming office that a debate on national security issues would take place, but has in fact initiated a sharp policy turn with wide-ranging implications without the slightest debate.

We wish to recall here, emphatically, the horror that is nuclear war. We stand firmly with the long tradition of eminent scientists who have consistently argued against the induction of nuclear weapons. The horrors of nuclear war cannot be forgotten, whatever pride we feel in the scientific and technological achievements, or whatever tactical calculations we make. After all, we still hear of the strategic 'compulsions' that led to the bombing of Hiroshima, and many of us were disgusted by the way the American media turned the 1991 Gulf war into a show of technological supremacy. Moreover, can we feel happy and secure in a world in which every country feels proud of its nuclear weapons capability and is convinced of the deterrence tactic?

T R Govindarajan, Kamal Lodaya, Krishna Maddaly, Kapil Paranjape, Venkatesh Raman, R Ramanujam, Sudeshna Sinha, R Shankar, T Jayaraman (IMSc), D Indumathi, Pramathanath Shastry (MRI), Jaikumar Radhakrishnan (TIFR), K V Subrahmanyam (SMI), Enakshi Bhattacharya (IIT Chennai).

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INDIA'S ELECTIONS BRING FIRST BJP GOVERNMENT

The people of India, the world's largest parliamentary democracy with an electorate of over 600 million, have voted in their twelfth general election and, for the sixth time, have brought about a change of government peacefully through the ballot box. This is the first time, however, that the 'Hindu nationalist' Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party or BJP) has dominated a government. Indian politics have undergone an enormous transition in the past twenty years. While India's first five general elections were all won by the Indian National Congress, each election since 1977, with one exception, has produced a change of government.

The BJP was set up in 1951, as the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, by Dr S.P. Mookerjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha. It has aimed to develop India as a modern democratic society but one based on 'One Nation, One People and One Culture'. It has traditionally been critical of the secular nature of Indian politics, has found it difficult to accept the existence of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan and has called for a strong national defence to include the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Of greatest concern to India's secular parties, however, has been the BJP's close association with the Rashtriya Swayamseval Sangh (RSS), a para-military and overtly communal pro-Hindu movement. It was an RSS fanatic who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948.

India's new Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, represents the more liberal wing of the BJP and his Cabinet contains a number of non-BJP ministers who are certain to restrain any

tendency of the new government to pursue the BJP's more extreme policies.

India's first general election was held in 1952 and was won handsomely by the Indian National Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru. This performance was repeated in the elections of 1957 and 1962. During this time, the Jana Sangh was one of a small number of relatively weak national opposition parties, the others including the Socialists, the Communists and the pro-business Swatantra Party. There were also a number of regional parties, such as the Sikh Akali Dal in the Punjab and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu.

Indian politics began to change following the death of Nehru, in 1964, and his successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri, two years later. The choice of Nehru's daughter, Mrs Indira Gandhi (no relation to the Mahatma) to succeed Shastri provoked serious opposition in sections of the Congress, leading to a series of groups splitting away over the next few years. However, while Mrs Gandhi was nearly defeated in the 1967 elections, she scored a resounding victory in 1971. Mrs Gandhi's subsequent lurch towards autocracy and, particularly, her Emergency rule after July 1975, caused the non-communist opposition parties to coalesce into one movement, the Janata (or People's Party). The Janata victory, in March 1977, led to the first non-Congress government since independence. Janata won 295 seats to the Congress' 154.

The Janata Government was led by the conservative Moraji Desai who had broken with the Congress in 1969 to form the Congress (Organisation) Party. The Government's other main components were the Jana Sangh (led by Vajpayee and L.K. Advani), the Socialists (under George Fernandes) and the Lok Dal (under Charan Singh). The Lok Dal had been formed in 1974 between various Congress breakaway groups and the Swatantra Party.

The 1980 general election was won handsomely by Mrs Gandhi at the head of a new Congress (Indira) Party, which had been set up to outmanoeuvre her own Congress Party critics. The Congress (I) won 353 seats to the Janata's 31, while Charan Singh's Janata (Secular) Party gained 36 seats. Then, in April 1980, the Jana Sangh faction left Janata to re-establishment themselves as a separate party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee (who had been Foreign Minister under Desai) as Party President.

Following Mrs Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards, in October 1984, the Congress (I) leadership passed to her son, Rajiv, emphasising further the dynastic nature of the party. In a hurriedly held general election, in December, the Congress (I) gained an unprecedented victory in a wave of sympathy for the bereaved Rajiv. The Congress (I) won 415 seats to the Janata's 10, with only 3 seats for the Lok Dal (formerly the Janata (S)) and 2 seats for the BJP.

This marked the nadir of the Jana Sangh/BJP's fortunes. In May 1986, L.K. Advani replaced Vajpayee as Party President. Vajpayee's openness and emphasis on 'Gandhian socialism' was quickly replaced by anew advocacy of communal BJP goals, such as a ban on cow slaughter, a uniform civil code (to deny special provisions for Muslims) and the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution which provides a special status for the Muslim majority of Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1987, there was another political realignment. The Janata and the Lok Dal merged to form the Janata Dal (JD) and were soon joined by V.P. Singh, who had resigned from Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet over the Bofors scandal, and others. The Janata Dal was then able to form a 'National Front' together with a number of regional parties, including the newly formed Telugu Desam from Andhra Pradesh, in August 1988.

In the general election of May 1989, the Congress (I) remained the largest party, with 197 seats. However, thanks largely to a widespread seat arrangement between V.P. Singh and

the BJP, covering 350 of the 543 constituencies, the JD gained 143 seats and the BJP 86. In addition, the two communist parties (Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) won a combined total of 45 seats. This enabled V.P. Singh to form a minority government with outside support from both the BJP and the communists. Indian politics had now become a ‘three horse’ affair.

Position of the main political parties, 1984-1998

	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998
Congress	415	197	231	140	141
BJP	2	86	119	161	179
Janata Dal	13*	143	59	46	6
CPI(M)	22	33	35	32	32

*(Janata 10, Lok Dal 3)

India’s second non-Congress government was even more short-lived than the first. There were three reasons for its fall. First, the decision of the government, in August 1990, to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission to reserve 27% of the posts in the central administration and public corporations to the ‘Other Backward Classes’ who made up 52% of the population, drew the hostility of the high caste leaders of the BJP. Secondly, the increasingly vehement campaign of L.K. Advani, in favour of building a temple to the Hindu god Ram on the site of the mosque of the Moghul Emperor Babur (the Babri Masjid) at Ayodhya, in Bihar, led the government to fear an outbreak of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, which led to Advani’s arrest in October. These factors caused the BJP to withdraw its support from the government. Thirdly, the Janata Dal split when Chandra Shekhar, a senior party leader who had been deprived of an important government post, broke away to form a Janata Dal (Socialist) Party. V.P. Singh then lost a confidence vote in Parliament, in November, and Chandra Shekhar then led a minority government, with Congress (I) support, until fresh elections were held in May and June 1991.

Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in Tamil Nadu during this election, which probably helped the Congress (I) to win a relative (but not an absolute) majority with 231 seats and a minority government was formed under P.V. Narasimha Rao. While the BJP advanced to 119 seats, the Janata Dal fell back to only 59 seats. The BJP’s campaign had been based on ‘no’ to Mandal and ‘yes’ to Mandir (the Temple). Strengthened electorally, Advani and his successor as BJP Party President, Murli Manohar Joshi, stepped up their campaign for the building of the temple to Ram at Ayodhya. This came to a climax at a massive rally at the site of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992. In the presence of Advani, Joshi and other BJP leaders (but not Vajpayee), hordes of Hindu militants (Kar sevaks) broke through the cordon of RSS stewards, climbed onto the centuries old mosque and tore it down. This dramatic incident provoked widespread communal violence during the following week in various parts of India in which around 1,200 people were killed. Advani, Joshi and others present were arrested and the BJP governments of five states were dismissed. Vajpayee, although not party to this deed, did not condemn it but claimed that ‘a symbol of shame’ had now been ‘erased’.

In June 1993, Advani was again elected as Party President but now the party’s emphasis began to be placed increasingly on social, economic and foreign policy, allowing the

Temple of Ram to become a less burning issue.

Although in a minority, P.V. Narasimha Rao's government was able to run its full course, albeit among increasing criticisms of corruption. Prior to the 1996 general election, the Janata Dal formed a United Front with a number of regional parties and made a common platform with the communists and their allies of the Left Front. Although, in the elections of April and May, the score of the JD fell further to only 46 seats, (with post-election additions), thanks to the growing number of regional parties. The BJP gained 162 seats and the Congress (I) 140. This was the first time that the BJP had overhauled the Congress (I) to become India's largest single party. The BJP parliamentary leader, Vajpayee, was now invited to form a government but, after only a few days as Prime Minister, had to admit that he had failed to win the support of a majority. Instead, the JDF leader, Mr H.D. Deve Gowda, became Prime Minister with outside support from the Congress (I).

After Narsimha Rao resigned his party's leadership, in October 1996, the veteran Sitaram Kesri became leader of the Congress (IK). He took a very vindictive stance against Deve Gowda and soon secured his replacement as Prime Minister by the Foreign Minister, I.K. Gujral. It was clear that the new government was in a most precarious position. Moreover, over the previous few years, the Janata Dal had suffered from successive defections. In Uttar Pradesh, the former JD Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, had broken away to form his own Samajwadi Party, although he remained in the United Front. Later, George Fernandes split off to form the Samata Party. Prevented by his former JD colleagues from joining the United Front in the 1996 elections, he formed a seat arrangement with the BJP, which enabled his party to retain a number of seats, especially in Bihar. After the elections, there were further defections in Karnataka, Orissa and Bihar.

Thus, when the Congress (I) decided to 'pull the plug' on the Gujral government, in November 1997, the once powerful Janata Dal had been weakened beyond recognition. More of these splinter groups and regional parties now turned to the BJP which, thus entered the 1998 general election with many more allies than before. The BJP won a record 179 seats, the Congress (I) retained 141 seats, thanks partly to the last-minute campaigning support of Mrs Sonia Gandhi (Rajiv's Italian-born widow), and the Janata Dal almost disappeared without trace. After the election, yet more small parties rallied to the BJP.

Position of the Parties before and after 1998 General Election

Party	Before	After
BJP	161	179
Congress(I)	138	141
Janata Dal	44	6
CPI(M)	32	32
CPI	12	9
Bahujan Samaj Party	11	5
Samata Party	5	12
Rasgruta Habata Dal	-	17
Tamil Manila Congress	20	3
DMK	17	6
AIADMK	-	18
Telegu Desam	17	12
Samajwadi Party	17	20

Shiv Sena	15	6
Akali Dal	8	8
Revolutionary Socialist Party	5	5
Forward Bloc	3	2
Haryana Vikas Party	3	1
Muslim League	2	2
Asom Gana Parishad	5	-
Lok Shanti	-	3
Biju Janata Dal	-	9
West Bengal Trinimal Congress	-	7
Other Parties	11	25
Independents	9	6
Nominated	2	2
Vacancies	4	9
Total	545	545

Thus, on 15 March, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was again invited to become India's first BJP Prime Minister and this time he succeeded in obtaining a majority. In his 22-member Cabinet, he has 11 fellow BJP ministers, including L.K. Advani at Home Affairs and M.M. Joshi at Human Resources. Yet the composition of the Cabinet is also quite diverse. Yashwant Sinha at Finance although now in the BJP, had earlier been Chandra Shekhar's Finance Minister. The Socialist George Fernandes is at Defence. Ramakrishna Hegde, a former Janata Chief Minister of Karnataka, is at Commerce, now leading the small Lok Shanti Party. Buta Singh the Minister of Communications and now an Independent, was Rajiv Gandhi's Home Minister. Other Cabinet members include S.S. Barnala of the Akali Dal, Naveen Patnaik, son of the former JD Chief Minister of Orissa (Biju Patnaik) who now leads the Biju Janata Dal, and Thambi Durai and R. Muthiah of the AIADMK (the main rival to the DMK in Tamil Nadu) which was earlier allied to the Congress (I). There is also Suresh Prabhu of Shiv Sena, the Maratha nationalist party which is an old ally of the BJP.

The broad-based nature of the new government is reflected in the National Agenda for Government, which was presented by the BJP and its allies on 18 March. Comparing this document with the BJP's own election manifesto, it can be noted that the references to building the Temple of Ram at Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370 and the ban on cow slaughter have all been omitted from the National Agenda. Instead, emphasis is given to issues more associated with the Janata Dal (or even the Samata Party), such as providing help to the self-employed, small scale and handicrafts sectors, providing drinking water and housing for all and totally eradicating illiteracy. The only specific BJP pledge which has remained has been the reference to induction nuclear weapons and this has been left to the old Socialist, George Fernandes, who is not known for his pro-nuclear views.

Finally, given the great political uncertainty of the past two years, it would appear that the Indian electorate has voted for a period of stability. With the present Cabinet, this can be achieved. The question is, will the rank and file of the BJP, let alone the RSS, be content

with the government's present Agenda. If not, or if the BJP ministers try to implement their old communal policies by stealth, they are sure to be deserted by their new-found allies among the regional parties and those on the centre-left and yet another non-Congress government will collapse. For the moment, however, India's 'third force' has imploded, leaving the Left Front largely isolated, while the Congress (I) has handed over its leadership to Mrs Sonia Gandhi who did not even stand for election. This puts the new government in a strong position and should enable it to see out its full term.

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NUCLEAR TESTING AND INDIAN MILITARY OFFICERS

In the recent debate on India's testing of five nuclear devices, there has been little or no comment in the domestic or foreign media about the role, if any, of the country's armed forces in the surrounding decision-making process. To Western observers used to the separation of civil-military powers in government and the concept and practice of civil supremacy-of-rule, it may seem reasonable to expect that Indian military officers were not involved in such a momentous *political* decision. Yet one only has to look at the Pakistan government's current machinations over how to respond to its neighbour's tests to see the prominent role played by its military officers in this debate. China, India's other named 'enemy', is another example of a state where decisions over the government's nuclear policy closely involve the armed forces.

This lack of participation by the Indian armed forces reflects the country's lack of enthusiasm for, and hence expertise in, military and security issues. From the days of the independence movement onwards, India's politicians, bureaucrats and public have engaged in remarkably little original debate on questions of national defence and the role of the armed forces, preferring at all times to keep the military at arm's length. For instance, unlike most Western states, India's defence ministry contains not one armed forces' officer who might 'unduly' influence policy nor, for the same reason, does there exist the office of a 'joint' services head who could at once speak for the three army, naval and air force services. It is no coincidence that the BJP administration's decision to go ahead with the recent series of nuclear tests was made with little thought for officers' views on future *military* practicalities such as the construction, deployment and use - strategic and/or tactical - of nuclear weapons.

That Indian military officers themselves remain content with this state of affairs reflect their successful professional - and personal - internalisation of the notion of civil supremacy-of-rule. In virtually all third world states (including Pakistan and Bangladesh), tensions between the armed forces and a civilian government have led to the extreme sanction of a military coup d'état and rule. Despite great ethnic, religious, regional and economic challenges to the existing order, Indian military officers have never displayed anything but the utmost loyalty to the legitimate civilian government of the day. My forthcoming book, [*Militarism in India: The Army and Civil Society in Consensus*](#) (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), examines the remarkable harmony of purpose between Indian officers, politicians, bureaucrats and the public in the construction and maintenance of civil supremacy-of-rule.

The unique strength of *Militarism in India* is its emphasis throughout on those actors which are the ultimate determinants of whether civil supremacy-of-rule in India thrives or dies; namely, military officers themselves. The book draws on the personal experiences and perceptions of *over 100* senior Indian army, navy and air force officers to a variety of professional challenges, from their 1918 admission to Sandhurst through to the post-Operation Blue Star mutinies of 1984. Other topics covered include the role of officers in

the independence movement, the challenge of the Indian national armies of the Second World War, partition and the transfer of power, the establishment of military rule in Pakistan, the rise of the Menon-Kaul nexus, defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and Indira Gandhi's period of Emergency Rule. India's 'top brass' have never before spoken in such numbers or on such sensitive civil-military issues.

This work will be of interest to all those interested in the history and politics of South Asia in general, and in theories of civil-military relations and military professionalism in particular.

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OIOC MOVES

The reading room of the Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, closed on Friday 3rd April 1998. This end to thirty years in the Blackfriars Road was marked by a small party for readers, staff, and retired staff, and many memories were shared. The reading room will re-open in the new British Library building at St Pancras (96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB) on Wednesday, 12th August 1998; there will be better facilities for readers, and even space to display some oil paintings from the India Office collection.

The timetable for the move means that the books and manuscripts in 'oriental' languages, and the collection of prints, drawings and photographs will be available on opening day. The transfer of the European printed books and serials will still be in process, and will not be completed until the autumn. The India Office Records present formidable problems for the move, as they occupy some 14kms of shelving. The collections of European Manuscripts (private papers), maps, and official publications will be available in August, together with the India Office departmental papers, and 'non-range' Proceedings (i.e. from 1860 onwards). The earlier 'range' Proceedings (1702-1860) will not be moved until January 1999, and that move will take about a month; between August and December 1998 these Proceedings will be available on a 'next day delivery' basis.

BASAS members will be relieved to hear that all the Proceedings will be housed in the new building, and not in a remote repository, which would have produced delays in delivery, and damage to the manuscripts. The concerns voiced in the *BASAS Bulletin* (Vol 2, No. 3, May 1997), and by scholars world-wide, have been heard and common-sense has prevailed over bureaucracy.

Richard Bingle

Further information from: Move Information, OIOC, 197 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8NG, telephone 0171 412-7832, fax: 0171 412 7641; e-mail oioc-move@bl.uk

NARRATING SOUTH ASIA: HISTORIES, NATIONS AND DIASPORAS

BASAS Annual Conference, CGEM, Manchester

17-19 April 1998

This year's annual BASAS Conference was held in Manchester and was hosted by Centre

for the Study of Globalisation, Eurocentrism and Marginality (CGEM). The papers presented at the conference as usual came from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, but despite the diversity of disciplines an effort was made to focus on two main issues confronting South Asia(ns) and South Asian Studies: the critique of Indology and globalisation and its consequences

The conference began with a panel dedicated to looking at issues arising from the critique of orientalism and Indology. This, however, was not the only place where the epistemological status of South Asian studies was discussed. Many of the presentations were suitably self-reflective about their methods and approaches to the study of South Asia and South Asians both in their contemporary and historical forms.

Many of the panels in the conference were devoted to an analysis of the effects of globalisation - in its broadest forms - on South Asia. Panels focusing on the nation-state, its limitations and political economy all addressed the impact that global forces (both centrifugal and centripetal) have on political, economic and cultural structures of South Asia.

The conference was well attended and many South Asianists used the occasion to re-subscribe to BASAS. Apart from the academic presentations there was also time for some socialising with a reception on the Friday evening, followed by a party on Saturday night. Here, the President and Membership Secretary of BASAS distinguished themselves by leading the festivities with some funky dancing.

The success of the conference depended upon the support and assistance of a number of people including: Nasreen Ali, Hatoon Al-Fassi, Bilal Anwer, Luca Brusa, Pandeli Glavanis, Sameera Mian, Navtej Purewal, Laura Turney, Imran Tyrer and the staff of Chancellors Conference Centre.

Bobby Sayyid, Manchester University <bobby.sayyid@man.ac.uk>

For panels and abstracts of papers presented at the conference see the [1998 Conference](#).

BASAS LOGO COMPETITION

Entries are invited for a competition to design a logo for BASAS

Entries to be submitted by 30th August 1998 to

Yunas Samad, Secretary, BASAS

University of Bradford

Department of Social and Economic Studies

Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD7 1DP, UK

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

THE 13TH PAKISTAN WORKSHOP

Rook How, Lake District, 3rd to 5th July 1998

Social Movement, Change and Continuity in South Asia

Workshop organiser: Dr Pnina Werbner, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Keele University, Keele, Staffs., ST5 5BG, UK

The 13th Pakistan workshop will take place at Rook How in the Lake District on 3rd to 5th July 1998. At the last meeting in June 1997 everybody present agreed that our topic would concern: Social Movement, Change and Continuity in South Asia. As usual the choice of a theme is meant to stimulate discussion and is not binding, therefore we welcome papers on any theme and on areas of your current research. The main aim of the workshop is to provide an opportunity to present and discuss current work in progress on Muslims in South Asia and the Diaspora.

We intend to use the main hall at Rook How in the Lake District for our workshop meetings throughout the three day period. The accommodation at the Rook How Quaker Field Centre is of youth hostel standard. For people wanting more comfort in bed-and-breakfast accommodation is available nearby. However, you will need to let us know well in advance so we can arrange to book a place for you. Accommodation at Rook How is approximately £6 per night per person and a bed-and-breakfast approximately £20 per night per person (this includes breakfast).

The whole workshop should cost approximately £45 for those staying at Rook How. Included in this is the registration fee of £20. Meals will be eaten at local pubs along with a specially prepared Asian haute cuisine meal at the Field Centre. The surroundings at the centre are very pleasant and inviting for relaxing walks.

We like to keep the workshop small and intimate and allow a lot of time for discussion so it is essential to book early. If you are coming from South Asia and need a special invitation in order to apply for British Council funding, do let us know. Could you please let us know of any visiting scholars or research students who might also be interested in attending the workshop. As we would like to build up an E-mail address list, it would be for your and especially our advantage if you could mail your E-mail address to Inger-Lise Lien in Oslo, who is the convenor of the Pakistan Workshop 1998. You can also register by using the E-mail: inger-lise.lien@nibr.no.

Please confirm by Fax or E-mail that you have received the invitation, whether or not you plan to come, as we are trying to update our address list.

Registration fee £20 for the Pakistan Workshop 1998 should be paid to NIBR's account in the following Norwegian bank: Kredittkassen: 6039 15 16897

Remember to register «Pakistan Workshop» and your name when you pay. Please send registration form to: Dr Inger-Lise Lien, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, PO Box 44 Blindern, N-0313 Oslo, Norway, Tel: +47 22 95 88 00, Telefax: +47 22 60 77 74

15th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

on

MODERN SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

8-12 September 1998

Charles University, Prague

We would like to invite you to the 15th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies which will be held at Charles University in Prague under the auspices of the Rector of the University as part of the celebrations of the 650th anniversary of the University.

The Conference is organised by the Institute of Indian Studies, Charles University in co-operation with

- the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences
- the Institute of International Relations
- the Náprestek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures
- and other institutions

The Conference will be inaugurated on Tuesday, 8th September 1998 at 7 pm, the sessions will start on Wednesday, 9th September. The final plenary session will take place on Saturday, 12th September 9.00 am to 12.00 noon.

Further details can be obtained from: Institute of Indian Studies, Charles University, Celetná 20, 11642 Praha 1, Czech Republic. E-mail: southasia@cuni.cz

THE SOCIETY FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

THE BRITISH ACADEMY, 10 CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE

LONDON, SW1Y 5AH

0171-969-5200

MEETINGS FOR 1997-98

June 15 Mr James Howell (Society for South Asian Studies), Paithan: The Satavahana Capital of Western India

'Beyond Europe: New Directions in Comparative Literature, 8-9 June, SOAS, London. A two-day workshop organised by Dr Javed Majeed. Topics include The influence of non-European literature on European literature, Themes of exile in European and Arabic poetry, Neo-traditionalism in Asian literature, Translation and pre-colonial Indian verse, Conventions of performance in European and non-European dramas, Genres and Feminism and non-European literature, Chinese and Roman rhetoric.

International Convention of Asia Scholars, 25-28 June 1998 Noorwijkerhout, The Netherlands. For information contact Shelley Feldman, Department of Sociology, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 7801, USA. Fax: 607 254 5000. Email: rf12@cornell.edu OR Dirk Kolff, Kern Institute, PO Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands. Fax +3171 527 2939. Email: kolff@rullet.leidenuniv.nl

'Handmade in India', until 28 June, London. A major exhibition of contemporary Indian crafts. Gathered from different regions, the exhibits are all of the highest quality and include embroideries and textiles from Assam, gold jewellery from Kerala, ceramics from Tamil Nadu, and everyday objects by leading craftspeople from other provinces. The aim of this show is to highlight both the outstanding quality and extraordinary diversity of India's

contemporary crafts scene. Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Road, London N1 9BY.
Telephone: 0171 278 7700.

SEMINARS

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Contemporary South Asia Seminar, Wednesday, 2.00pm, Library Wing Seminar Room,
Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford

Telephone: 01865 273600, Direct Line: 01865 273617, Fax: 01865 273607, Email:
savsp@qeh.ox.ac.uk Convenors: Dr Barbara Harriss-White and Dr Nandini Gooptu01865
273607, Email: savsp@qeh.ox.ac.uk

June 10 S. Anandhi (Indian Social Institute, Bangalore) *Dalits and the discourse of land
rights in Tamilnadu*

K. Seeta Prabhu (Dept of Economics, University of Mumbai) *Social sectors during
economic reforms: the Indian experienced*

SOUTH ASIAN VISITING SCHOLARS TO QUEEN ELIZABETH HOUSE

Trinity Term 1998

Dr S. Anandhi, Indian Social Institute, Bangalor, India. Research Area: *Reproductive
control and women's agency: class, caste and sexuality in the birth control debates in
colonial Tamilnadu, India*

Dr Indira Hirway, Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, India. Research Area:
Understanding development: from empirical analysis to theoretical abstractions

Mr Aditya Nigam, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, India. Research
Area: *The crisis of secular nationalism in India: locating the moment of rupture*

Dr Hiranya Mukhopadhyay, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi,
India. Research Area: *Macroeconomic adjustment to capital inflows: the case of India in
the light of E. Asian experience*

Dr A. Siddiqa-Agha, Military Accountant General's Department, Lahore, Pakistan.
Research Area: *Military corporatism and economic development*

Mr S. Akbar Zaidi, Freelance consultant in Social Sectors, Karachi, Pakistan. Research
Area: *Local government reform*

C.R. Parekh, Fellow.

Dr Meenakshi Thapan, Faculty of Education, University of Delhi, India. Research Area:
Gender, body and everyday life

Commonwealth Fellow, Dr Rekha Chowdhary, Department of Political Science, University
of Jammu, India. Research Area: *Understanding subordination and subjectivity: towards a
theory of power and resistance*

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES, University of London

Beyond Europe: New Directions in Comparative Literature

A two day workshop 8-9 June 1998

Provisional Programme

June 8

- 9.30 am Registration, Room 116
- 9.45-10.15 Opening remarks - Dr Javed Majeed, SOAS, University of London
- 10.15-11.00 'Travelling beyond Europe' - Professor Susan Bassnett, Warwick University
- 11.00-11.45 'Afloat on the sea of stories: the necessity of comparative literature' - Dr Peter Caracciolo, Royal Holloway, University of London
- 11.45-12.15 Coffee in Room G50
- 12.15-1.00 'Tradition and neo-traditionalism in Asian literatures' - Professor Vladimir Braginsky, SOAS, University of London
- 1.00-2.15 Lunch Break (Lunch will be available for speakers and members of the Comparative Literature panel in Room G51)
- 2.15-3.00 'Am I in that name?' Writing the 'New Woman' in 1920s China' - Professor Mingbao Yue, Visiting Fellow, SOAS, University of London
- 3.00-3.45 'Feminism and difference: three women's texts across cultures' - Dr Nana Wilson-Tagoe, SOAS, University of London
- 3.45-4.15 Tea in Room G50
- 4.15-5.00 'Innovation on a theme: Formulaic conventions of performance in Japanese Literature' - Professor Drew Gerstle, SOAS, University of London
- 5.30 *Drinks for speakers, academic staff of SOAS, and students on the Comparative Literature MA programme - Room G50*

June 9

- 10.00-10.45 'Classics, neoclassics and the comparison of adjacent literatures: Panjabi and Urdu poetry across the colonial divide' - Professor Christopher Shackle, SOAS, University of London
- 10.45-11.30 'English voices for Hindi verses? Issues in Translating pre-colonial poetry' - Dr Rupert Snell, SOAS, University of London
- 11.30-12.00 Coffee in Room G50
- 12.00-12.45 'Themes of exile in German Jewish and Palestinian Arab poetry' - Dr Stefan Sperl, SOAS, University of London
- 12.45-2.15 Lunch Break (Lunch will be available for speakers and members of the Comparative Literature panel in Room G51)
- 2.15-3.00 'The gentleman (junzi), the good man (vir bonus), and the art of speaking rightly: a note on Chinese and Roman rhetoric' - Dr Bernhard Fuehrer, SOAS, University of London
- 3.00-3.45 'Caliph' Beckford: 'Orientalism' as defamation: the 'picturesque ruins' of a career' - Dr Elinor Shaffer, School of Advanced Study, University of London
- 3.45-4.15 Tea in Room G50
- 4.15-5.00 'Genres and the generation of new texts in popular culture' - Dr Karin Barber, Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham

**Beyond Europe: New Directions in Comparative Literature | A two day workshop 8-9
June 1998 | REGISTRATION FORM**

Name:

Address for correspondence

Telephone No.

E-mail:

Fax:

Enrolment fee: Staff and Students of SOAS £5.00

Non-SOAS members £10.00

Please note that speakers are exempt from registration fee.

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ made payable to 'SOAS'.

Please return to Mrs Susan Madigan, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, London, WC1H OXG. Tel: 0171 323 6251. E-mail: sm2@soas.ac.uk

Signature

Date

THE SOCIETY FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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The Society is one of the Schools and Institutes founded and grant-aided by the British Academy. Its aims are to promote study and research into the humanities and social sciences of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Membership Members support the work of the Society and are entitled to attend all lecture meetings, colloquia etc. organised by the Society, and receive a copy of the Annual Report. Full members receive the Society's journal South Asian Studies. Full membership rates (with journal) £25 or US \$40 - (£20 if paid by UK Bankers Order or before January 1st each year). Membership without journal £5. Student/junior membership £15.

Lectures and Publications The Society organises a regular programme of meetings in London each year. Its journal South Asian Studies is published annually. Details of the separate cost of volumes of the journal and its predecessor Afghan Studies are available from the Assistant Secretary.

Grants The Society offers annually a number of small personal research grants and travel grants.

Small Personal Research Grants are awarded towards the cost of research and fieldwork in South Asia. These grants are available for work at post doctoral level or its equivalent. Awards will not be made to support courses or research leading to academic qualifications, or for research directly related to the topic of a current thesis. Applicants must normally be resident in the UK, applications for maintenance in the UK will not be considered.

Travel Grants A limited number of travel grants of up to £600 each will be awarded to scholars in connection with work at post doctoral level and to younger qualified students who wish to take part in excavations or participate in projects intended to introduce them to organised fieldwork in South Asia.

Applications for both types of grant must be made on the proscribed forms and submitted before the **closing dates of 15th May and 15th October each year.**

For further information about the work of the Society, membership, grant application forms etc. contact: **The Assistant Secretary, The Main Wing, Elsworth Manor, Elsworth, Cambs CB3 8HY.**

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