

## **ALL INDIA INTERNATIONAL AND AREA STUDIES CONVENTION, 2019**

### ***Ascending India: Reflections on Global and Regional Dimensions***

#### **CONCEPT NOTE**

The study of international relations is both challenging and fascinating due to its dynamic character. Although change is constant in international relations, it is rarely that changes, which are abrupt and capable of impacting the prevailing systemic features, occur in history. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 was among such changes. On the other hand, many changes that occur are gradual and evolutionary in nature. They may take some time to make the world respond with appropriate adjustments in attitudes, perceptions, interests and policy behavior. The process of decolonization in the 1960s may be readily alluded to as an apt example of this kind. In the recent few decades, India's impressive evolution as a country with enhanced military, economic, technological, cultural and diplomatic profile is significant in its influence on not just the neighbourhood but also on a variety of state and non-state players in the world political arena.

The vision of makers of modern India to turn the country into an important player on the world stage is becoming a powerful reality in the new century. Contemporary India's ascendance in world politics is manifested in multiple measures of hard and soft power. India's emergence as a responsible (and in some ways recognized) nuclear weapon power, is buttressed by its accomplishments in space, missile and dual use technologies which will strengthen its credentials in striving for continental and regional stability. India's strengths are being sought after particularly by countries of Southeast and East Asia. India's active participation in maritime security and anti-piracy operations off the Somali coast is a case in point. Again, the Indian economy is lately rated as the "fastest growing" in the world. India is no longer an aid receiving country; in fact, it provides technical, development and humanitarian assistance to countries near and far. Indian companies are heavily investing in Africa and elsewhere to meet the country's ever growing energy security needs.

India's ascendance is equally, if not more, pronounced in the domain of its soft power. India as the largest and functioning (albeit acrimonious) democracy continues to arouse curiosity in the developing as well as the developed world. The demographic dividend (along with the huge size of aspiring youth and of middle class) is fetching significant economic returns in the era of globalization. The growing numbers and active engagement of Indian diaspora in political and economic spheres of public affairs of host countries in north America, western Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific have become an important factor in the pursuit of India's foreign and economic policy objectives. Indian music and dance forms have always held the world audience in awe, but added to it is the clout of the Hindi and regional cinema in global

fashion and culture circles. On the diplomatic front, the soft power is showcased by the numerous visits of foreign dignitaries to the country, the entry of the country into global regulatory mechanisms like G-20, BRICS, Missile Technology Control Regime, the increasingly assertive role in the World Trade Organization either individually or as part of the group of emerging economies. That India is most favoured for various prestigious positions in global organizations is clearly evident in the diligent and determined electoral battle fought against the United Kingdom for securing a prestigious seat in the World Court. Further, India has always stood out for rule-based world order and is acknowledged as a law-abiding country.

While ascending India is positively perceived by several countries, it is true that a few major and medium powers view the development with a degree of unease. Some of the South Asian countries apparently are concerned about the unwelcome consequences of the “big brother” becoming bigger for the already complicated geopolitical realities. Many of them are already looking for ways to balance India’s rise by establishing close military and economic ties with outside powers. Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and even Maldives are said to be exploring such policy options. In the past decade or so, India’s neighbourhood policy has faced more setbacks than success. The big neighbour in the north, China perceives India’s attempt to counter the pre-eminence of the former in the region by entering into strategic relationship with the United States, Europe, Vietnam, Japan, Australia, etc with a sense of unease. Conversely, India too perceives the Chinese initiatives as inauspicious to its interests, which is why India refuses to take part in the Chinese OBOR initiative. Not long ago, the Doklam stand-off has shown how tenuous is the peace along the Sino-Indian border. There is also emerging China-Russia partnership aimed at countering the hegemonic role of the United States – a move with undertones of their displeasure against India’s proximity with the United States. Ironically, the United States, too, is not fully satisfied with India’s conservative positions vis-à-vis Libya, Syria, Iran, Myanmar, Palestine, multilateral trade regime questions. At the same time, India’s desire to secure enhanced presence in key economic, security decision making bodies is stuck because of objections from one quarter or another. The reference here is to the stalemate in the efforts to get IMF quotas revised in India’s favour, the addition of new permanent members in the UN Security Council, and the country’s much delayed entry into the Nuclear Supplier Group.

The questions which would be pertinent in this context are the following. What are the domestic and external factors which contribute to – or constrict - the ascendance of India? How qualitatively different is India’s salience to maintaining contemporary Asian regional or global orders? Why does ascending India become a matter of concern to a few major and a few other medium powers? How disruptive would a rising India be on the functioning of global and regional institutional architecture? How better should India manage and overcome internal and external hurdles in moving forward on its chosen path?

It is to investigate and ponder on these intertwined set of questions that the theme of the Annual International and Area Studies Convention for 2019 is proposed as: *Ascending India – Reflections on Global and Regional Dimensions*. The suggestive sub-themes of the Convention would include:

- India's approaches to power in IR and the International System
- the sources and watersheds in India's foreign policy
- International Law and India as a Responsible Power
- India's opportunities and challenges in the post-Cold War world
- Indian State and globalization; India and the United States
- India and China; How does Pakistan matter to ascending India?
- The perspectives of South Asian neighbours on ascending India
- India and Russia/Eurasia
- India and European Union before and after Brexit
- India and Africa: Security and Economic Cooperation
- India and Central Asia
- India and the Middle East
- Look East and Look Act Policy in Practice
- India and Latin America: Opportunities and Challenges
- Evaluating strategic partnerships
- India and World Trade and Economic Order
- Non-Military and Military Technologies
- Arms Control and Disarmament Issues
- Initiative on Countering International Terrorism
- India and Sustainable Development Goals
- India and Climate Change
- Promise of India's soft power
- India and regional cooperation
- India and the United Nations
- Recasting international political and financial Institutions.

Individual or collaborative abstracts touching upon theoretical, conceptual or empirical questions touching upon any of the above suggested sub-themes are welcome for consideration by peer review process.

The purpose of the Annual Convention is to bring together the Indian scholarship in international and area studies on a single academic platform for a serious, structured conversation on issue of national and international significance. The JNU and the School, endowed with adequate infrastructure facilities, has successfully organized similar Conventions in 2013 and 2016. While the students and faculty of the School of International Studies will no doubt contribute their might to the meaningful deliberations, the success of the Convention

will lie in enabling active participation of scholars, teachers and analysts from outside Delhi in large numbers. The effort of this nature requires support and sponsorship from the Government, academic and research institutions, besides think tanks, corporate and media houses.

The last date for submission of abstracts for Convention will be 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 and the abstracts will be finalized by 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2018.