Grand Strategic Choice: India's Debate on Strategic

B.A. SEMINAR: SS 2017

Instructor: Bernhard Beitelmair-Berini

Department of Political Science, South Asia Institute

Course Description:

Does India have a Grand Strategy? Does it lack a strategic culture? Are recurrent questions which have in recent times become common place in the scholarly discourse about Indian foreign and security policy. The past two decades have seen a growing amount of research on the relationship between culture and strategy in general as well as on the Indian case in particular.

The concept of strategic culture is not a new one. Therefore, the first part of the seminar will be dedicated to tracing the evolution of the strategic culture approach as an analytical instrument back to the 1970ies. The question of culture and other ideational explanations for state behaviour came up as an attempt to mend shortcomings in ahistorical and non-cultural structural models of strategic choice at the heart of mainstream international security studies since that time. So different definitions will be discussed, which will follow a generational scheme. The focus, however, will mainly rest, besides authors like Jack Snyder, Colin Gray, Elizabeth Kier, on Alastair Iain Johnston’s seminal work.

The second part of the course engages the Indian debate which has been influenced by various adaptations of the above mentioned strategic culture concepts. Monolithic interpretations like Tanham’s controversial essay on Indian strategic thought as well as scholars which put an emphasis on the various schools of thought rooted in elite revolts against the Nehruvian-consensus will be examined, like Kanti Bajpai’s, Stephen Cohen’s, Deepa Ollapally’s contributions to name but a few.

Closely related to their explanations of India’s strategic culture are issues such as nation-building leading to questions like: What kind of India should be defended? Against which threats should India brace itself? What part should violence play in India’s external relations and finally what ideological coalitions are vying for dominance within India’s strategic community?

By the end of the course, students will be familiar with different approaches to strategic culture as an analytical category as well as with its impact on Indian international relations discourse and its implication for identity politics.
Calendar and Syllabus:

1. April 28th, 2017

#1 Administrative session

Supplementary reading:


2. May 5th, 2017

#2 Introduction: Strategic Culture

Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


May 12th, 2017

#3 Locating Strategic Culture in IR

Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


4. May 19th, 2016

#4 Strategic Culture as a Composite Concept

Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


5. May 26th, 2017

#5 The 1st Generation of Strategic Culture Research

Core reading for next week:

_Supplementary:_


6. June 2\(^{nd}\), 2017

_#6 The 3\(^{rd}\) Generation of Strategic Culture Research_

Core reading for next week:


_Supplementary:_


7. June 23\(^{rd}\), 2017

_#7 The ‘Johnston-Gray’ Debate_

Core reading for next week:


_Supplementary:_


8. June 30\(^{th}\), 2017

_#8 The Sources of Strategic Culture: India Focus_

Core reading for next week:


_Supplementary:_


9. July 7\(^{th}\), 2017

_#9 Identity Politics and Strategic Culture_
Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


10. July 14th, 2017

#10 The Case Study: India I

Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


#11 The Case Study: India II

Core reading for next week:


Supplementary:


12. July 28th, 2017

#12 The Case Study: Other South Asian States

Common evaluation of the course and Q&A regarding the term paper.

13. June 9th, 2017

#13 Reading Week I

14. June 16th, 2017

#14 Reading Week II
Prior Requirements:

Language of instruction will be English and students are expected to have prior knowledge of International Relations.

Credit Points:

(In German. For other degrees please clarify requirements with your lecturer and Fachstudienberater.)

B.A. Südasienstudien

- 6 Leistungspunkte;

Teilnahme (2LP), Referat (2LP), Hausarbeit (2LP)

(7 to 8 pages or ca. 3500 words – WITHOUT Contents and Bibliography)

Essays (Hausarbeiten) can built on your presentation.

Please do check with your lecturer regarding the research question, as well as the overall structure of your essay.

Essays (Hausarbeiten) can be written either in English or in German.

Each participant has to give a presentation of maximum 20 minutes. This presentation should go beyond the core readings for each session and attempts to answer a focused question.

A mandatory preparatory meeting with the lecturer takes place in the week before the presentation.

Please bring your handout - with your question, structure & bibliography - to this preparatory meeting. Please print this handout for all participants.

Deadline for the Essay:

Please hand in your essay (Hausarbeit) latest till 30th of September 2017

via email to: Beitelmair-Berini@uni-heidelberg.de

Good luck!