



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

SOUTH ASIA
INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia
Department of Political Science
Special Lecture on

The Challenge of Proximity: Managing India's Sub-continental Periphery

by
Ambassador Shyam Saran

The Indian sub-continent is a single geopolitical unit, with dense economic complementarities, a shared history and deep cultural affinities among the countries that share this space. It is also a single ecological unit and this aspect has gathered salience as the challenge of climate change and ecological degradation impacts the entire region respecting neither national nor regional boundaries. As the largest and most powerful country in the region, India has security interests that cover the entire sub-continent but its asymmetrical power creates anxieties among its smaller neighbours which must be managed. But the same asymmetry creates opportunities for India to become the engine of growth and a preferred provider of public goods to its neighbours. India must own and lead the project for economic integration of the region, emerge as a security provider to deliver benefits in terms of disaster management, cyber security, and maritime security and in managing other non-traditional security challenges. India will also have to lead in tackling the challenge of climate change, promoting cross-border solutions. It will have to deal with the spread of Chinese influence in the sub-continent in ways that leverage its own unique assets in the region rather than play catch up with its giant and assertive neighbour to the north. This is the challenge of proximity which confronts India as it navigates a vastly transformed and still transforming geopolitical landscape in the sub-continent and beyond.



Ambassador Shyam Saran is a former Foreign Secretary of India and has served as Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change. After leaving government service in 2010, he has headed the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a prestigious think tank focusing on economic issues (2011-2017) and was chairman of the national security advisory board under the National Security Council (NSC) of India (2013-15). He is currently life trustee of India International Centre, member of the governing board of the Centre for Policy Research and of the Institute of Chinese Studies, trustee at the World Wildlife Fund (India) and member of the international advisory council of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He also serves as a member of the governing board of Welham Girls' School. He has recently published a book, *How India Sees the World* (2018). Ambassador Shyam Saran was awarded the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award of India, in 2011 for his contributions to civil service. In May 2019, he was conferred the Spring Order Gold and Silver Star by the Emperor of Japan for promoting India-Japan relations.

Date: 06 December 2021 (Monday); **Time:** 1400–1600 hrs, CET (6.30 – 8.30 pm IST)

Online –via Zoom

Registration: by email at polsai@sai.uni-heidelberg.de