

Asian politics

The Asia Research Group comprises researchers from Asia and Europe, working on a range of approaches to the study of the comparative and international politics of the Asia-Pacific Region.

We meet regularly to discuss key publications in the field; to share experiences of fieldwork; to discuss contemporary issues; and to provide a supportive environment for Group members to present their research and receive feedback. The Group periodically produces reports on issues of interest in contemporary global politics, reflecting on the significance of key events for the Asia-Pacific region.

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Workshops

22-23 November 2013: Transnational Advocacy in the Rising Powers

States remain powerful. But today the nature of that power is contested and the role of non-state actors both in influencing and shaping contemporary forms of power is now hotly debated. Formerly the sole preserve of inter-governmental negotiations, contemporary diplomacy necessitates a complex layering of relationships, among state, business and other non-state actors. The very composition of activist networks is also varied, such that they may function largely within states, or transcend state boundaries to create new transnational allegiances, influencing a range of international bodies, regional authorities and state actors. Against the background of democratisation and globalisation, this conference examines those activist groups in the IBSA states (of India, Brazil and South Africa) engaged in transnational endeavours to influence government policy in the three important areas of environment, health and land. In so doing, we aim to examine whether, and if so how, new opportunities to develop linkages with like-minded groups from other states impacts upon activist group behaviour. We will also make a preliminary assessment to establish whether or not it is possible to identify the influence of transnational activist networks on policy outcomes.

There was a general consensus that it is time to present a critique and update of the seminal work on transnational advocacy networks conducted by Keck and Sikkink in the 1990s. The workshop then provided an overview of the ways in which transnational activism is taking shape within and around IBSA per se, before going on to examine the specific national contexts within which activists work in India, Brazil and South Africa.

Speakers: Angela Crack (Portsmouth), Julie Gilson (Birmingham), VB Rawat (Social Development Foundation, India), Maria Rodrigues (Holy Cross, Boston), Mary Upton (OU), Helen Yanacopulos (OU).

10 January 2014: China's new assertiveness, the U.S. rebalance, and Southeast Asia's response

The Political Studies Association Specialist Group on Pacific Asia organised a one-day workshop here on 10 January 2014. The workshop focused on the interrelated themes of China's growing assertiveness, the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, and Southeast Asia's responses to both. The speakers included Steve Tsang (Nottingham), Shogo Suzuki (Manchester), David Dunn (Birmingham), Rosemary Foot (Oxford), Jurgen Haacke (LSE), and Kirsten Schulze (LSE).

To discuss the question of whether China has been more assertive in its foreign and security policy, Professor Tsang focused in particular on the recent establishment by China of an Air Defence Identification Zone over the East China Sea. Dr Suzuki offered a careful discussion of the arguments and evidence on which the claim that China has been behaving more assertively over the last four years are based. The two panelists debated numerous related points, such as Chinese nationalism and identity, bureaucratic politics, and the dangers of unintended consequences of operational decisions. In their take on US-China relations, Professor Dunn approached the US pivot to Asia-Pacific by exploring developments in US military policy and doctrine, and Professor Foot critically discussed the work of John Mearsheimer on contemporary China. Drs Haacke and Schulze examined respectively Myanmar's and Indonesia's contemporary relations with the US and China against the backdrop of geopolitical change and domestic challenges.

The workshop brought together about 25 scholars and students (postgraduate and undergraduate) for a rich and stimulating discussion.

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