About the India Initiative

The India Initiative builds on Georgetown University’s core strengths—academic excellence, location in Washington, D.C., and Jesuit mission of service to the world—to advance research and teaching around India and world affairs and to create a platform for high-level dialogue among American and Indian leaders from government, business, civil society, and the academy.

India’s economic potential, democratic culture, and strategic importance make it a key player across a range of global challenges, including politics and identity, economic participation and innovation, technology and communication, environment and energy, and security. The India Initiative, a university-wide effort centered in the Walsh School of Foreign Service and its Asian Studies Program, builds knowledge and fosters dialogue around these and other issues of critical importance for India, the United States, and the world.

About the Walsh School of Foreign Service

The Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS), founded in 1919, is a premier school of international affairs. At Georgetown’s Washington, D.C., and Qatar campuses, SFS provides a rigorous education grounded in both theory and practice while instilling the Jesuit value of service. Students completing one of eight majors for a BSFS undergraduate degree study a core curriculum in international affairs, government, economics, history, theology, philosophy, and geography, with a language proficiency requirement. The SFS also hosts graduate students pursuing Master’s degrees in eight different programs; in regional studies focusing on one of the major regions of the world; or in thematic programs in international relations, security studies, or international development. The SFS has become one of the world’s leading academic and research institutions, led by a faculty of both scholars and practitioners. SFS faculty are scholars in political science, economics, history, and cultural studies, as well as professionals with backgrounds in business, government, and the nonprofit sector.

About the Asian Studies Program

The SFS Asian Studies Program was established over 30 years ago to meet the demands for rigorous academic study of this critical region in global affairs. The program administers undergraduate and graduate certificate programs and, since 2012, has offered an M.A. in Asian Studies (MASIA). Today the Asian Studies Program boasts 66 first- and second-year students, 20 graduate certificate students, and eight undergraduate certificate students. The MASIA program features a range of thematic and regional concentrations such as Politics and Security; History, Society and Culture; International Political Economy/Business; South Asia; and Southeast Asia.

About Georgetown University

Established in 1789, Georgetown is the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university in the United States. One of the world’s leading academic and research institutions, Georgetown enrolls more than 17,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across nine schools. A global institution, Georgetown provides a unique educational experience that prepares the next generation of global citizens to lead and make a difference in the world. The university’s educational mission and international partnerships seek to advance the global common good.
In fall 2015, Georgetown University launched a university-wide India Initiative, which recognizes and builds on Georgetown’s considerable strengths to promote engagement with India across schools and departments. Our faculty are conducting cutting-edge research on Indian security issues, economic development, cultural practices, and historical ties, while keeping in mind their mission to serve the greater public good through policy advocacy and public engagement. The initiative convenes students and faculty from a wide array of academic and professional backgrounds, and our faculty advisory committee is made up of professors from seven of Georgetown’s nine schools. Our students inspire us to do more and to do better, leading by example as they bring India to campus through programming and take Georgetown to India as they study and work in cities and villages across the country.

As you will see in the pages of this brochure, the 2015-2016 academic year was a productive one for the India Initiative. We had the honor of hosting Mr. Salman Khurshid, our first distinguished India policy fellow. Mr. Khurshid is one of India’s most eminent public servants, having served his country as foreign minister, law and justice minister, and as a leading advocate before its Supreme Court. During his time at Georgetown, he was a guest lecturer in the School of Foreign Service, read a play to our theater students, and spoke at the Georgetown Law Center. We also hosted the Honorable Ms. Poonam Mahajan, a sitting member of Parliament (MP) who followed in her father’s footsteps and participated in the Georgetown Leadership Seminar. The Georgetown India Initiative brought other leading figures in politics and public service to campus throughout the year to engage students in all four undergraduate schools, as well as the McCourt School of Public Policy and the Georgetown Law Center. We can and will build on such outreach to provide an unparalleled platform for high-level substantive conversations concerning India’s partnership with the United States, its domestic challenges, and its role as a global leader in the twenty-first century.

The Georgetown India Initiative also seeks to engage our alumni in India. In December 2015, Dean Joel Hellman of the School of Foreign Service visited Mumbai and New Delhi around the launch of the initiative. Dean Kelly Otter of the School of Continuing Studies visited those cities in January 2016, and in February 2016 Dean David Thomas of the McDonough School of Business gave a public lecture on leadership at an event hosted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). Such interest by the university’s leaders demonstrates Georgetown’s commitment to building deeper, more robust avenues for U.S.-India engagement in Washington, D.C.

Fulfilling the promise of that commitment requires partners and resources. We hope that reading about our achievements inspires you to share your ideas and to lend your support, so that together we can build a leading program in Washington, D.C., that advances the study of India and the development of U.S.-India relations.

Sincerely,

Irfan Nooruddin, Ph.D.
Director, Georgetown University India Initiative | Hamid bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor of Indian Politics
Dean of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service Visits India

Dean Joel Hellman made his first visit to India as the dean of Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service from December 12-15, 2015. He was accompanied by Irfan Nooruddin, director of Georgetown’s India Initiative, and students Jeh Tirodkar (SFS’16) and Yash Johri (SFS’17), members of the Georgetown-India Dialogue undergraduate organization. During the course of his visit, he traveled to Mumbai and New Delhi.

In Mumbai, Dean Hellman met with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and discussed possible ways the university could collaborate with the government of Maharashtra. The chief minister emphasized a need for expertise and advice in the area of water management, given the severe drought conditions and water scarcity in the state.

In addition to conducting a productive exchange with the chief minister, Dean Hellman held public engagements with students and parents from the Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai, as well as a dinner with parents, alumni, and friends of the university at the Indigo restaurant in Colaba. MP Poonam Mahajan (GLS’15) offered a warm welcome to Dean Hellman and Professor Nooruddin, who discussed the university’s future relationship with India.

On Sunday evening, December 13, 2015, the Georgetown University India Initiative held a launch event at the Oberoi hotel in New Delhi. A number of dignitaries from the Indian government and private sector, as well as students, parents, and alumni attended the event. The following day, Dean Hellman met with Richard Verma, U.S. ambassador to India, to discuss U.S. educational priorities in India and Georgetown’s potential role in fostering this type of engagement. Following this meeting with the ambassador, Dean Hellman and Professor Nooruddin visited the Indian Parliament and witnessed house proceedings of the Lok Sabha from the speaker’s gallery. Dean Hellman also met with former rural development minister Jairam Ramesh and with the founder and chairman of the Global Education and Leadership Foundation, Shiv Khemka. Dean Hellman concluded his visit with Georgetown University’s alumni in New Delhi.

India Initiative Celebrates Launch

On Sunday, December 13, 2015, the India Initiative held an event to mark the initiative’s launch. The university hosted a reception and discussion followed by a dinner at the Oberoi, New Delhi. MP Shashi Tharoor, former under-secretary general for communications and public information at the United Nations, moderated a discussion with Dean Hellman about Georgetown’s ambitions in India, and the conference was keynoted by incumbent Railway Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu and incumbent Minister of State for Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy, and Mines Piyush Goyal. Dean Hellman highlighted Georgetown University’s location in Washington, D.C., as a key strength in facilitating the relationship between India and the United States of America. Both distinguished ministers recognized and endorsed Georgetown’s endeavors.

The launch dinner had a number of notable guests in attendance from the government, the civil services, the private sector, as well as the media. In attendance from the government were former foreign minister Salman Khurshid, former commerce minister Anand Sharma, former minister of state for external affairs Shashi Tharoor, MP Poonam Mahajan, and MP Rajeev Gowda. From the civil services sector, DIPP Secretary Amitabh Kant was in attendance. From the media, Rajdeep Sardesai from the India Today Group, Maroof Raza from Times Now, and M.K. Venu, founder of the website The Wire were present.
From January 6-8, 2016, Dean Kelly Otter of Georgetown’s School of Continuing Studies (SCS) visited New Delhi and Mumbai to explore potential opportunities for engagement and collaboration with India. Dean Otter was accompanied by Amol Dani, chief operating officer of Georgetown University’s Qatar campus, and Dr. Uday Chandra, assistant professor at the Qatar campus. During her visit, Dean Otter engaged with multiple institutions of higher learning. Dean Otter and Amol Dani met with Dr. Divya Nambiar, senior consultant to the Indian Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, to discuss workforce development. She also spoke at LIFE, the Global Education and Leadership Foundation’s mid-year conference in New Delhi, and at the Harvard University India Initiative in Mumbai. She also visited Ashoka University in New Delhi and St. Xavier’s University in Mumbai. During these visits, the Georgetown University India Initiative hosted events to engage alumni, prospective students, professors, notable politicians, college counselors, heads of schools, and members of the private sector. The initiative hosted dinners in New Delhi and Mumbai. The guests discussed issues of importance to the Georgetown-India relationship, including ways to increase the number of admitted students from India and strengthen the Indian alumni network. In addition, students admitted to the Class of 2020 used the opportunity to discuss life at Georgetown with current Hoyas and to connect with their future professors about academic programs. Dean Otter’s visit was successful in establishing Georgetown’s presence in India and creating a forum to highlight its India Initiative.

The India Initiative’s Collaboration with Harvard’s India Initiative

Harvard University’s India Initiative held its second conference in India in January 2016. The conference brings together leading politicians, members of the private sector, and thought leaders to speak to Indian high school students. This year, Congress Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor, the Chairman of Tata Group Cyrus Mistry, and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India Raghuram Rajan gave keynote speeches. Georgetown University partnered with Harvard’s India Initiative to organize panels of experts on Indian politics and international relations.

Politics of India Panel

Guests from different political parties joined the “Politics of India” panel. Participants included Varun Gandhi, member of Parliament from the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP); Muhammad Ali Khan, a spokesperson for the Congress Party; Madhukeshwar Desai, national vice president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha; and Professor Irfan Nooruddin, director of Georgetown University’s India Initiative. The session was moderated by Jeh Tirodkar (SFS’16). The experts answered questions about major political events and challenges, such as stalled bills in Parliament, the centralized Goods and Services Tax (GST), the National Herald case, the recent BJP victory in Bihar, and U.S. perspectives on Indian politics.

Foreign Policy of India Panel

Georgetown University put together a panel of area experts on Indian foreign policy. Panelists included Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro, assistant professor of security studies in Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service; Varad Pande, a partner at Dalberg Global Development Advisors in Mumbai and former special advisor to India’s minister for rural development, environments and forests; and Manjeet Kriplani, co-founder and executive director of Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations.

Dr. Mastro gave her perspective on Indo-China relations, offering insight into how India fits into the foreign policy calculus of Beijing. In contrast to public opinion in Delhi, Dr. Mastro suggested that India is not China’s highest priority, and stated that “China suffers from an insecure superiority complex when it comes to the border dispute with India.”

A member of India’s negotiating team at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Varad Pande offered insight into the 2015 Climate Summit in Paris. Pande remarked that the “Paris COP21 agreement did away with the term ‘historic responsibility.’” However, he also stated that “the Climate Agreement at Paris is only a framework; it is only the start of the good work that is required to be done for countries to address climate change.”

Manjeet Kriplani gave a comprehensive overview of the new Modi foreign policy, and spoke about the need to adopt a firm yet cautious approach with Pakistan following the attack on the Pathankot Air Force base.
Understanding India’s Democracy

On September 29, 2015, the India Initiative hosted a discussion with MP Rajeev Gowda, a national spokesperson of the Indian National Congress Party and a member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of India’s Parliament. During the talk, Dr. Gowda discussed how the new government has impacted the dynamics in Parliament.

Dr. Gowda also provided his perspective on economic reforms and the challenges the country faces in an era of increasing globalization. In addition, he discussed his views on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s first year in office and the potential for the Congress Party to return to power.

As a member of the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Gowda offered an insider’s view on the increasingly important role played by the upper house, which has recently become a focal point for many legislative battles and a place where a number of Prime Minister Modi’s agenda items have faced their greatest obstructions.

Introducing the India Initiative’s 2016 Fellows

The GUI Distinguished Fellow: Salman Khurshid

Salman Khurshid is a senior politician of the Indian National Congress who has been active in the Indian political arena for almost three decades. He was most recently the union cabinet minister of external affairs. He is also a prominent author and one of India’s leading lawyers.

Khurshid began his political career as an officer in the prime minister’s office, and later served as the deputy minister of commerce and the minister of state for external affairs. He is a graduate of St. Stephen’s College, Delhi, and holds a Master’s and a law degree from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. Before returning to India in the early 1980s to begin a career in politics, Khurshid was a lecturer in law at Trinity College, Oxford. He is the grandson of Dr. Zakir Hussain, the third President of India.

The GUI Young Leader Fellow: Muhammad Ali Khan

Muhammad Khan is an advocate practicing in the Supreme Court of India. He was formerly the officer on special duty to the minister for rural development in the government of India. Prior to that he worked as an aide to Jairam Ramesh in the Ministry of Environment and Forests. He drafted the landmark Land Acquisition Bill of 2013. He began his career during his time in Washington, D.C., as the GUI distinguished Indian fellow. He lectured students of Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and Georgetown’s Law Center, spoke at the Council on Foreign Relations, and met with members of the U.S.-India Business Council.

Lecture to the “Introduction to International Relations” Class

Former Indian minister of external affairs Salman Khurshid addressed students in “Introduction to International Relations” about the existing relationship between India, China, and the United States. He spoke about the policy challenges India faces in balancing these two critical relationships. He used his experience as the minister of foreign affairs for India to offer insight into BRIC dynamics, Indo-Pak relations, and the future of developing economies such as India and China. The discussion gave students a practical insight into the international relations concepts of balancing and bandwagoning. In addition, Mr. Khurshid highlighted India’s growing role as a maritime power and its position working with the United States to build a rules-based order. He further discussed the domestic political challenges of maintaining a balanced foreign policy.

Georgetown’s “Introduction to International Relations” class is taught by Dr. Matthew Kroenig, an expert on U.S. national security policy and strategy. The course gives students a broad introduction to the key theories, concepts, and issues in international relations, and encourages them to apply these frameworks to understand historical and contemporary phenomena, including international political economy, energy trade, ethnic and civil conflicts, and terrorism.

USIBC Roundtable

The U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC), led by President Mukesh Aghi, hosted the event “A Candid Discussion with Mr. Salman Khurshid” regarding India’s current economic challenges. The roundtable was held at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and was attended by over 20 individuals. Guests included leading corporate and legal members of the council, such as Boeing, Pfizer, Dupont, Dow Chemical, and Steptoe & Johnson, LLP. Members of leading think-tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute also attended. Mr. Khurshid was introduced by the USIBC president, and he then offered remarks on his perception of the Indian government and its work and attitude toward business. A question and answer discussion was held following the roundtable.

Lecture at Georgetown University Law Center

During a visit to the Georgetown University Law Center, Mr. Khurshid gave a lecture on India’s approach to international law within its evolving constitutional framework. He discussed the transformational role of Indian courts in identifying and incorporating internationally-recognized rights and principles within Indian jurisprudence. Mr. Khurshid also explained the origins of environmental law in India, and discussed human and women’s rights, highlighting landmark cases such as Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan and the Bhopal gas tragedy. Mr. Khurshid’s lecture was attended by members of Foreign Lawyers at Georgetown (FLAG), many of whom were Indian law students seeking his view on investor-state dispute resolution, international commercial arbitration, constitutional issues, and refugee rights, among other topics.

Salman Khurshid spent a significant amount of time interacting with the law students from India, hearing about their experiences at the Law Center and exchanging ideas with them on legal education and cultural similarities and differences between India and the United States.

Mr. Salman Khurshid engaged students, thought leaders, and members of the private sector during his time in Washington, D.C., as the GUI distinguished Indian fellow. He lectured students of Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service and Georgetown’s Law Center, spoke at the Council on Foreign Relations, and met with members of the U.S.-India Business Council.
Mr. Muhammad Ali Khan held an engaging schedule during his time in Washington, D.C., as the GUII emerging Indian fellow. He lectured students of Georgetown’s McCourt School of Public Policy and Georgetown’s Law Center on matters related to land acquisition in India and women’s rights and held discussions with the Council on Foreign Relations and the U.S.-India Business Council.

Lecture on India’s Land Acquisition Processes

One of the India Initiative’s objectives is to promote academic excellence on issues of importance in India such as development, social welfare, and public policy. The initiative developed a case study on eminent domain in India and invited Mr. Muhammad Khan to conduct the case at the McCourt School of Public Policy for Professor Jennifer Tobin’s class “Comparative Public Management.” The class trains future policymakers and analysts in successful policy implementation by examining diverse cases of public management challenges across the world. The opportunity to develop policy solutions regarding eminent domain with the man who was at the forefront of the legislation for the Land Acquisition Act of 2013 provided tremendous analytical rigor. Alishae Khar (MPP’17) remarked: “As a policy major, it was extremely interesting for tremendous analytical rigor. Alishae Khar (MPP’17)

Legislativing For Gender Equality

This discussion, featuring Mr. Muhammad Khan and moderated by Professor Shareen Joshi of the Walsh School of Foreign Service, focused on the challenges of developing legislation that would protect female victims in India in light of traditional mindsets, religious diversity, and economic and educational disparity. According to Mr. Khan, drafting comprehensive legislation of this type for a country as vast as India is an exceptionally challenging undertaking. In an attempt to combat existing gender asymmetry, legislation is written with the goal of protecting women by ensuring that accused perpetrators of violence are presumed guilty until proven innocent. He discussed the sensitive and challenging issue of marital rape and explained the obstacles legislators face when addressing the issue due to long-standing power imbalances between men and women in traditional Indian societies.

Mr. Khan acknowledged the potential threat of laws being misapplied, but emphasized that the goal of legislation is to maximize benefits for the greatest number of people.
Salman Khurshid

Commenting on the challenges faced by the Congress Party going forward, Mr. Khurshid said that “the Congress has to grapple with the difficulty of an extremely complex and fragile social reality in India.”

India in the Twenty-First Century

On March 22, 2016, former Indian minister of external affairs Salman Khurshid addressed the Georgetown University community about India’s position in the twenty-first century, and the future direction of the country as well as of the Congress Party, to which Mr. Khurshid belongs.

Commenting on the challenges faced by the Congress Party going forward, Mr. Khurshid said that “the Congress has to grapple with the difficulty of an extremely complex and fragile social reality in India.” Mr. Khurshid gave credit to the ruling BJP party’s successful campaign in the 2014 national election cycle, but questioned whether the new government has fulfilled its campaign promise of job growth. In addition, Mr. Khurshid criticized various actions of the current government in responding to Indian social issues.

Mr. Khurshid remarked that India today has to deal with many of the same issues it faced 25 years ago when he wrote his book At Home in India. These issues include nationalism, patriotic conduct, language, restrictions on food consumption, access to education, reservations, and religious equality. The concern for minority rights, according to Mr. Khurshid, is merely a small part of the larger landscape related to the issue of freedom in India. Reservations in particular, he believes, are a complex issue related to both caste and religious considerations that will impact India’s future growth. According to Mr. Khurshid, “Today the worry is not the need for fresh legislation in India, but ensuring its implementation is not faulty.”

The India Initiative’s Collaboration with the American India Foundation

Georgetown University’s India Initiative is proud of its growing partnership with the American India Foundation (AIF). The partnership began at AIF’s Annual D.C. Gala held at the Congressional Country Club, Maryland, on November 6, 2015, as the India Initiative assumed the role of AIF’s knowledge partner. The two organizations continue to work together to help each other achieve their respective goals. The initiative will participate in AIF’s 2016 D.C. Gala as a knowledge partner.

The South Asia Policy Conference

On April 7, 2016, the Georgetown India Initiative collaborated with the South Asian Policy Research Initiative (SAPRI) to host the South Asia Policy Conference at Georgetown University. SAPRI is a student-led initiative based in Georgetown McCourt School of Public Policy dedicated to raising awareness on the critical development challenges facing economies in South Asia and promoting evidence-based policies in the region.

The South Asia Policy Conference 2016 brought together leading researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who engaged with students and discussed both the key challenges facing economies in South Asia and the best options to address them. The conference was inaugurated with a panel discussion titled “Challenges and Recent Developments in South Asia,” which featured His Excellency Mr. Khalil Abbas Jilani, ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the United States; His Excellency Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United States; and Ambassador Touqir Hussain, adjunct professor at Georgetown University and at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies. The panel provided the foundation for the conference and stimulated a discussion on challenges facing Pakistan’s and Sri Lanka’s economies.

Other panels included “Investing in the Future: Addressing Barriers to Education Access and Quality,” “Women and Development Panel: Bridging the Gender Gap,” and “Energy, Environment and Climate Change: A Cleaner Path to Development.” These stimulating panels assimilated tremendous knowledge on South Asia by bringing together experts from leading organizations like the U.S. Department of State, the UN Foundation, Brookings, Millennium Challenge Corporation, World Resources Institute, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, among others.

Reimagining Pakistan with Ambassador Hussain Haqqani

On January 27, 2016, Ambassador Hussain Haqqani joined Georgetown professors Dr. Christine Fair and Dr. Tamara Sonn for a discussion about his vision for Pakistan’s future. Ambassador Haqqani is a career diplomat and the former Pakistani ambassador to the United States. Today, he serves as the director for South and Central Asia at the Hudson Institute. He is an expert on radical Islamist movements.

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country, the twenty-fifth largest economy in the world, and a member of a select club of nuclear weapons states. Yet it is too often in the news for all the wrong reasons, as forces of extremism wage violence within the state and use its borders as safe haven to conduct attacks in Afghanistan and India. What does Pakistan’s future hold? Can one imagine a prosperous, democratic Pakistan in which sectarian violence is a distant memory and which is recognized as a responsible rising power in international relations?

During his talk, Ambassador Haqqani attempted to answer a number of these questions and outlined his vision of a “Reimagined Pakistan,” one that included ideological and political reform to address instability faced by the country. His vision included a more secular government and the construction of a national identity less focused on military might and more focused on a concern for citizen welfare. He remarked that “Islamic ideology has been used essentially to be able to perpetuate the ethnic domination of groups instead of unifying a federation of partners.” He continued to say that “Pakistan needs to morph into a more just federation that accepts its diversity instead of insisting that we will try to create one nation by enforcing everything from the top.”
Poonam Mahajan

Poonam Mahajan is the first member of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in India to visit Georgetown University since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2014.

Poonam Mahajan of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party presently serves as a member of Parliament from Mumbai North Central. She also serves as the Deputy Chairperson for the task force developing an International Finance Service Center in the Bandra Kurla Complex. Mrs. Mahajan is also the first female president of the Basketball Federation of India.

The Georgetown University India Initiative was honored to host Mrs. Mahajan as a participant in Georgetown University’s world-renowned Georgetown Leadership Seminar (GLS), which convenes emerging world leaders in business and politics for a week-long executive education program. Her father, the late Mr. Pramod Mahajan, a BJP politician who served as the minister of communications and information technology, the minister of parliamentary affairs, and the minister of defense, attended the GLS in 1988.

In addition to attending GLS workshops, Mahajan held engagements with members of the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill, met with influential Indian-Americans, and spoke with thought leaders of prominent D.C. think tanks. The India Initiative organized a dinner at the famous Rasika restaurant in her honor. The initiative also organized a D.C.-wide public event hosted at Georgetown University’s Copley Hall, featuring Poonam Mahajan in conversation with Professor Irfan Nooruddin.

During this conversation, titled “An Inside Look: How the Ruling Party is Changing India,” Mrs. Mahajan explored the current administration’s priorities and goals for the future, which include economic growth and fostering international diplomacy with strategic actors.

Poonam Mahajan is the first member of the ruling party in India to visit Georgetown University since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2014. She discussed India’s growing global presence, which she attributed primarily to Mr. Modi himself and the historic 2014 election. She also provided an insider’s view of how the ruling party operates, including the challenges and preconceived notions it continues to face from the Indian diaspora. Mahajan concluded by covering her key areas of interest, including the development of Mumbai—her hometown—and the expansion of development programs for women and children.

Joyojeet Pal

Narendra Modi, Twitter, and the Selfie State

On March 30, 2016, the India Initiative hosted a discussion with Joyojeet Pal, an assistant professor at the University of Michigan School of Information. Pal examined PM Modi’s rise on Twitter as an important example of new-age political brand management.

Prime Minister Modi has had a very significant presence on social media with over 32 million “likes” on Facebook and 17 million followers on Twitter, second among elected officials only to U.S. President Barack Obama. He examined the frequency, tenor, and popularity of PM Modi’s messages, as well as his use of political metaphor. Dr. Pal analyzed how the Prime Minister employs these tactics to shape a new, populist discourse as leader of twenty-first century India. He further explored the link between the BJP party’s win and PM Modi’s connection with the youth of the country through social media. The 2014 election saw an increase in approximately 100 million new voters, which Dr. Pal asserted can significantly be attributed to Prime Minister Modi’s social media presence.

H.E. Prasad Kariyawasam

Sri Lanka: The Tale of a Resilient Democracy

His Excellency Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States, joined the Asia Pacific Forum and the Georgetown Asian Studies Program for a discussion on Sri Lanka’s recent political and electoral reforms to improve its democracy and repair its relationship with the United States and the West.

Ambassador Kariyawasam commented on Sri Lanka’s recent electoral change as well as future challenges faced by the island nation. Of the change in leadership he stated that “the people of Sri Lanka wanted a change in leadership style. They wanted to turn the country away from President Rajapaksa’s highly executive style of governance.” He explained that Sri Lankan democracy requires a commitment to the reconciliation process and investment in economic and political reforms. His remarks were followed by a conversation with Irfan Nooruddin, director of the Georgetown India Initiative.

The Georgetown University India Initiative supported this event.

Brainstorming Session Hosted by Global Poverty Project (GPP) and the Global Education and Leadership Foundation (tGELF) at Georgetown’s Mortara Center

Global Poverty Project, now Global Citizen, is an international education and advocacy organization working to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. tGELF, the Global Education and Leadership Foundation, is focused on cultivating ethical, altruistic leadership to improve the state of the planet through collective action. These organizations are collaborating to bring the Global Citizen platform to India with localized content, actions, and incentives. They intend to launch a campaign to mobilize Indians in support of the United Nations Development Programme Sustainable Development Goals. After consultations with Indian stakeholders from the government, private sector, NGOs, and civil society, the organizations plan to host a Global Citizen Festival in India in November 2016. This brainstorming session brought together academics from Georgetown University, team members from the Global Poverty Project, and leaders from development institutions in New York City and Washington, D.C. The discussion focused on the objectives of this partnership to help address educational and development-related challenges in India, and designed a campaign strategy for promoting awareness about the November 2016 event. They also discussed what needed to be done to prepare for the event, creating a timeline for coordinated work between tGELF and GPP. The session was successful and its recommendations have been taken into account in the lead up to the Global Citizen event in Mumbai on November 19, 2016.
The India Initiative Faculty Committee

The India Initiative promotes dialogue, organizes programming, and engages students across Georgetown’s schools and programs. The initiative draws on the deep and broad expertise on India from faculty members throughout the university. The faculty advisory committee comprises 13 professors from seven of Georgetown’s nine schools. Their diversity of interests and areas of expertise allow the initiative to take a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach when holding events and convening conversations on some of India’s most pressing policy challenges.

Ananya Chakravarti
Assistant Professor, History

Uday Chandra
Assistant Professor, Georgetown University in Qatar

Raj Desai
Associate Professor, Department of Government

James Feinerman
Associate Dean, Co-Director, Professor; Law Center

Mark Giordano
Professor, School of Foreign Service

Victoria Jennings
Director, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Shareen Joshi
Assistant Professor, School of Foreign Service

Oriana Skylar Mastro
Assistant Professor, School of Foreign Service

Stanley Nollen
Professor, Director; McDonough School of Business

Makarand Paranjape
Associate Professor, Director; Department of Physics

Coilin Parsons
Assistant Professor, Department of English

Henry Schwarz
Professor, Department of English

R. Kent Weaver
Professor, Department of Government; McCourt School of Policy

Collaborative Faculty Grants

During the fall 2016 semester, the India Initiative held a university-wide competition for collaborative grants designed to bring together faculty with Indian colleagues to advance research on U.S. and Indian approaches to global issues.

2016 Awards

Collaborations between Georgetown and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore
Richard Weiss, Department of Chemistry, Georgetown College

This project convenes 11 professors in the Georgetown University Departments of Physics and Chemistry who will work with colleagues at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore (IISc) to promote institutional collaboration on scientific topics dealing with soft matter. The universities will host a two-day conference that will explore science and technology issues in the context of economic development and environmental sustainability. The workshop will help promote a long-term partnership which will lead to study abroad and overseas research opportunities for Georgetown students and faculty.

Measuring the Impact of Real Estate Investment Trusts in India
Matthew Cypher, Edward Walter, and Sunil Madan, McDonough School of Business

The Indian government has recently passed legislation that governs the formation and taxation of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in the country. With support from an India Initiative seed grant, the Steers Center for Global Real Estate of Georgetown’s McDonough School of Business will initiate a study quantifying the impact that this legislation will have on economic and social development in India by extrapolating the impact of similar legislation passed in the United States. The Steers Center will convene a working group in Washington, D.C., and organize a workshop in Mumbai in order to exchange ideas between stakeholders in the United States and India.

Rethinking India’s Rise to Global Prominence: Challenges and Opportunities for Culture and Identity
Henry Schwarz, Coilin Parsons, and Ananya Chakravarti, Departments of English and History, Georgetown College

This faculty seminar, organized by Professor Henry Schwarz and other colleagues in Georgetown College, will bring distinguished scholars to campus to share their research with the Georgetown community. The interdisciplinary lecture series will address human development, culture and identity, and economic issues in India, and will explore these themes in the context of the Indo-U.S. strategic relationship.