

Four Decades of RIS

Vision and Evolution



Volume I



RIS

Research and Information System
for Developing Countries

विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

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ISBN: 81-7122-179-3

Published in 2023 by:



RIS

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THE IDEA OF RIS

It is a proud moment for the RIS family, as we celebrate the rise and global connect of the institution over the years. As a leading think-tank of the Global South, RIS is poised to expand its footprint in the global policy space in the future.

As we reflect on RIS@40, the institution that has championed the voice of the Global South over the past four decades, adds the latest initiative - 'DAKSHIN,' the Global South Centre of Excellence, to its work programme. As envisaged by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, 'DAKSHIN, housed at RIS, would serve as a collaborative hub, fostering the exchange of ideas and incubating innovative strategies to address the diverse challenges faced by the developing nations.

The Genesis

Looking back, it is fascinating to recall the sequence of events that led to the establishment of RIS. The genesis of RIS can be traced back to a time when the global economy was undergoing a seismic shift following the oil crisis and the need for better coordination among the Southern economies was realised. The idea of a research and information system linking these economies was an agenda at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The idea was to gather critical inputs, generate informed debates and collate policy support in the areas of contemporary

interest, particularly international trade negotiations, technology transfer, technical assistance, among others. While the idea of having their own research and information system matured during different meetings of NAM over a few years, it got concretized in the Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers, held from 30 May to 2 June 1976. The vision gained momentum at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in Colombo, convened from 16-19 August 1976, which emphatically recommended the establishment of RIS. This was reemphasized at the Havana Summit in 1979. Finally, during the New Delhi NAM Summit on March 7-12, 1983, India took the lead in setting up of Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS).

A number of illustrious personalities of those times, including Shri G. Parthasarathi and Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty, led the establishment process. Professor V. R. Panchamukhi was the founder Director General of RIS. This team played a pivotal role in shaping the development narrative of the South through various research and dissemination efforts of RIS in line with the above mentioned stated objectives.

The first Governing Board, led by G. Parthasarathi as Chairman RIS and Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty as Vice Chairman, had the following members -Shri M. Rasgotra, Shri Romesh Bhandari, Dr Arjun Sengupta, Shri M. Narasinhan and Dr S. Vardarajan.

Evolution of Thematic Focus

Beginning with an emphasis on trade, RIS dynamically adapted it to the evolving needs of the developing world, expanding its research areas to encompass crucial domains of knowledge such as technology, investment and their interlinkages. Very recently, finance has also been added in a major way to bring these four steams together, though primarily, RIS continues to have trade as an over-arching focus.

Since trade has largely been connected with development, SDGs, have also occupied a major place in our work programme. Within technology, the thematic focus has evolved on two tracks of impact assessment and connect with science diplomacy. RIS worked closely with Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) of NITI Ayog for assessment of STI schemes of the Government of India. Our new journal in this area, Science Diplomacy Review, is already creating its own niche and popularity with academic and scientific institutions. This is supplementing our long standing work through Asian Biotechnology and Development Review.

With the AYUSH Ministry, RIS could launch FITM, which has produced the first-ever market-size assessment for the AYUSH sector. We could also house an AYUSH Task Force on the trade classification of AYUSH goods. A national survey on the AYUSH services is underway at this point. Soon, FITM would host a large number of fellowships in this sector. We could also launch a journal in this sector called the Traditional Medicine Review.

A dedicated vertical on finance has been carved out for specific focus and in-depth research on emerging financial sector

issues such as Fintech, cryptocurrency and climate finance. Current research in this vertical include Fintech as an enabler of financial inclusion, the feasibility of trade in local currency with neighbouring countries in South Asia, recalibrating cross-border payment settlements through indigenous payment platforms like UPI, assessment of bilateral trade in Fintech and Fintech-enabled services, the inclusion of provisions on Fintech-enabled financial services in FTAs, and so on.

Regional Integration

Since the beginning, RIS work programme focused on regional and sub-regional economic integration. Several studies have been undertaken on various facets of integration. RIS provided inputs for several regional charters of cooperation. Beginning with SAARC, focussing on BIMSTEC, IORA, IBSA and the sectoral, dialogue and full partnership with ASEAN.

In the subsequent years, the work programme contributed several reports, undertook several studies and organised several different events on these regional groupings like SAARC, ASEAN, IORA, BIMSTEC, IBSA, etc. Recognizing the dynamic nature of global challenges and the need for continuous innovation, the think-tank actively initiated and nurtured frontier research areas with a focus on promoting South-South cooperation. Currently, the institute's research agenda is structured around four pillars, namely Global Economic Governance and Development Cooperation Architecture; Trade, Investment and Regional Cooperation; Trade Facilitation, Connectivity and Regional Integration; and New Technologies and Development Issues.

In the pursuit of these pillars, RIS has built an intense work programme that spans feasibility studies on Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs), Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and other trade agreements; scope and contours of regional cooperation in IBSA, BRICS, IORA, BIMSTEC, etc; principles and practice of South-South Development Cooperation; implementation of Sustainable Development Goals; the role of infrastructure & connectivity for IORA, Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC); the potential of new areas e.g. Blue Economy; biotechnology, Science Diplomacy, AYUSH sectors among others.

The institute has created and promoted several forums and networks of like-minded institutions in the Southern countries so as to act as an interface between academics and the policy world. This also includes close association with the work programme of the South Asian Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), which presently operates from RIS. SACEPS has brought together scholars and institutions for conducting collaborative research with close interactions with policy makers, intellectuals and civil society organizations. Through a network, built over the years, it has tried to contribute policy research inputs at different forums for promoting socio-economic cooperation in the region.

Domestic Connect

Since 2014, RIS has undertaken some unique initiatives of leveraging global connect for domestic economic growth. This is being accomplished through several sectoral interfaces for bringing together academics, industry and policy makers.

The idea is being worked out at two different levels. There are new platforms which have emerged as convening initiatives

like the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC), Blue Economy Forum (BEF) and Network of Southern Think-Tanks (NeST). This category also includes a new addition of University Connect.

RIS was tasked to spread awareness about G20 among the students and young minds across the country and engage them in the G20 process through the 'G20 University Connect' programme. With 101 lectures and panel discussions organised at 101 universities/institutions in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, the programme turned out to be a huge success. In addition, RIS coordinated 25 seminars of Youth20 for the youth of the country on five different themes across various states and union territories in close collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare designated RIS as the Knowledge Partner for the G20 Agriculture Group, while the organization also took on responsibilities for the G20 Development Working Group.

The second category is of those initiatives which have emerged as new research centres, apart from being major sectoral convening platforms. This includes the Forum for Indian Traditional Medicine (FITM) with the Ministry of AYUSH; the Forum for Indian Science Diplomacy (FISD), with the Department of Science and Technology (DST); ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) supported by the Ministry of External Affairs; Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity (CMEC) with the support of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways; Science, Technology and Innovation Programme (STIP) with the India Habitat Centre.

RIS has made remarkable contributions to major international platforms such as G77, G15 and G20. Over the years, RIS has emerged as the voice of the Global South, advocating for the cause of equitable opportunities, human-centric development, greater access to development finance, reform of Bretton Woods institutions, regional economic cooperation, among others. During the G20 presidency of India in 2023, RIS was entrusted with major responsibilities to support the work of several Engagement Groups of G20, viz. Think20, Science20, Civil20, Women20, Space20, among others. Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), advocated by the Prime Minister of India, was a major plank of Indian Presidency along with just transition, digital public infrastructure, millets and food security, women-led development, etc.

The unwavering commitment and hard work of the RIS faculty have been instrumental in the institute's contributions across various fields. From practical implications to pioneering conceptual frameworks, RIS has been at the forefront of generating knowledge that transcends borders and benefits developing nations. Remarkably, RIS has developed a number of conceptual frameworks (published in Volume II) showcasing its prowess in intellectual leadership and innovation. Moreover, several flagship reports such as the South Asia Development Cooperation Report (SADCR), World Trade and Development Report (WTDR), ASEAN-India Development Cooperation Report (AIDCR), etc and seven peer-reviewed journals, namely Asian Biotechnology Development Review, Science Diplomacy Review, G20 Digest, Traditional Medicine Review, South Asia Economic Journal, Development Cooperation Review, and

Journal of Asian Economic Integration, have been serving as key platforms of dissemination of its research findings.

RIS@40

On the eve of RIS@40, we are filled with immense pride and a deep sense of achievement. This milestone stands as a testament to four decades of unwavering dedication, firmly establishing RIS as the hub of ideas and expertise for developing countries towards their journey for inclusive and sustainable development.

To commemorate the celebration, we are coming out with two volumes. The first volume covers the voices of those individuals who have been the guiding lights for RIS from time to time. Those include contributions by former Chairpersons, including Hon'ble Dr Manmohan Singh, Shri H.S. Puri, Ambassador Shyam Saran, Ambassador Mohan Kumar; Vice Chairpersons, including Ambassador S.T. Devare; Director Generals, including Professor V.R. Panchamukhi, Dr Nagesh Kumar and Dr Biswajit Dhar and former faculty members and other eminent persons associated with the work programmes of RIS. They have not only witnessed the evolution of RIS but have played pivotal roles in shaping its trajectory. Their stories narrate not just the history of RIS but also the broader narrative of development in the past four decades.

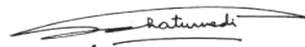
In recognizing the legacy and impact of these figures, we pay homage to the collective wisdom that has shaped RIS into the institution it is today. The second volume delves into the intellectual backbone of RIS- the conceptual framework that has guided its research endeavours over the years. RIS has consistently adapted the existing research methodologies and

techniques to address the ever-evolving challenges of policy research in the realm of development. This volume offers a comprehensive exploration of these aspects, providing readers with an in-depth understanding of the theoretical underpinnings that have fuelled RIS's impactful contributions.

This occasion also gives us the opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to all members of the RIS Governing Body and Governing Council, Research Advisory Council, faculty members and colleagues in the administration, both past and present, for their immense and unflinching support for various activities of RIS during all these years. We also remain grateful to the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Ministry of Finance, Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Aayush, NITI Aayog, other departments of the Government of India, UN agencies, and the partner institutes at the national and international level for their continuous association with the work programme of RIS.

I also note with appreciation the support received from the publication team comprising Mr Tish Malhorta, Dr Ivy Roy Sarkar, Mr Sachin Singhal and Mr Sanjay Karna for arranging the production of this report.

Given the widespread presence of the institute in critical policy domains, I am sure that RIS will continue to strive hard to espouse the cause of ensuring sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth for all.



Sachin Chaturvedi
Director General, RIS

REMEMBERING THE YEARS WITH RIS



DR MANMOHAN SINGH

Hon'ble Former Prime Minister of India;
and former Chairman, RIS



I am glad to learn that RIS has completed 40 years of its fruitful journey as a major think tank of developing countries. Established in 1983 after New Delhi NAM Summit, the institute has crossed several glittering milestones. The occasion compels me to recall some of the prominent memories of my long association with it.

There have been several engagements with RIS as the institute keeps evolving over the years to fulfill its unique mandate of being the voice of developing countries at multiple fora. These were the occasions to work closely with Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty, founder Vice-Chairman of RIS and the founder Chairman of RIS, G. Parthasarathi.

As is well known, Sukhamoy was one of India's most acclaimed development economist. He had an abiding interest in issues relating to the philosophy and methodology of economic planning and development. I fondly recall that Sukhamoy along with Professor D.T. Lakdawala, former Dy. Chairman of Planning Commission; and Dr K.S. Krishnaswamy, former Dy. Governor of the Reserve Bank of India invited me to be the Member of RIS General Body and Governing Council in 1986. I had the honour of participating in several meetings

that RIS organized from time to time. However, at the sudden unfortunate and untimely demise of Sukhamoy in 1991, I took over as the Vice Chairman of RIS.

I came to know G. Parthasarathi, when he was our Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Our association became more intimate after he came back as the Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which he built brick by brick. I took part in several meetings of the selection committees of JNU that he constituted. What impressed me most even in my first contacts with him was his passionate desire to build an institution which would be worthy of the great ideals and ethos of our nation. The fact that the Jawaharlal Nehru University has grown to be such a renowned institution of national learning is, in a large measure, due to the sustained and dedicated hard work that G. Parthasarathi did in the most formative period of its evolution.

He played a vital role in RIS emerging as a well-respected centre of excellence. He never compromised on his deep and abiding commitment to social equality. These values and convictions would continue to guide succeeding generations. RIS would continue to work as a leading and effective global think tank of developing countries for promoting greater South-South economic development cooperation. The vision of GP that RIS should work as a leading and effective global think tank of developing countries for promoting greater South-South economic development cooperation, must always remain

the guiding principle for the work of RIS. Unfortunately, G. Parthasarathi suddenly passed away in 1995.

Being Chairman, RIS, gave me the opportunity to give added momentum to the work programme of RIS for promoting collective self-reliance, unity of purpose and better understanding among developing countries through exchange of information and collaborative research in important areas like fundamental structural changes in the world economy and international economic relations and their implications for developing countries.

Another important landmark of those days was the Eighth World Economic Congress of the International Economic Association, held in New Delhi in December 1986. The theme of the Congress was 'The Balance between Industry and Agriculture in Economic Development'. Professor Kenneth J. Arrow, President of the IEA (1983-1986) presided. The World Economic Congress gave us the opportunity to interact with eminent economists from all over the world who deliberated on different aspect of basic issues in structural change, economic independence and world development.

During the organization of the grand Eighth World Economic Congress, there was intensive day to day interaction with Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Professor P.R. Brahmananda, Dr C. Rangarajan, Dr Malcolm S. Adisheshaiah, Professor A.M. Khusro, Dr Bimal Jalan, Shri Muchkund Dubey, Professor M.V. Mathur, Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, among others.

Being Secretary General of the South Commission, set up in 1988, I had many occasions to interact with RIS for facilitation of organization of important meetings with members of the Commission. Before finalizing of the South Commission Report 'The Challenge to the South', RIS organized a high level Seminar on 10 November 1989 on various aspects of the Report. In March 1993, jointly with South Centre, Geneva, RIS organized a Conference on "Challenges to the South in Nineties" with special reference to the Asian region. In 1995, RIS and South Centre jointly brought a pioneering volume 'Towards an Asian Economic Area'. I wrote the Foreword for it. The main message emanating from the volume envisaged that the Asian countries should evolve as an Asian Economic Area, which would foster closer economic integration among themselves for their mutual benefit.

I also distinctly remember chairing the inaugural session of the Platinum Jubilee Annual Conference of the Indian Economic Association held in Mumbai in February 1994. Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, the then Director General, RIS had delivered the Presidential Address on the important theme of 'Trade, Theory and Practice'. International trade being one of the major area of RIS research programme, the institute brought out this address in the form of an RIS Occasional Paper.

On completion of 40 years, I wish RIS every success in its endeavours for giving voice to the concerns and aspirations of the developing world. The institute has striven to realize its aim

of serving as the Voice of South, articulating the importance of developing countries in achieving the inclusive growth, as envisaged in the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The world needs a new paradigm of sustainable development for creating a more equitable and just economic order for well-being of all. RIS is poised to play a vital role in this regard at various multilateral fora. In 2017, I came to dedicate its library to the memory of Sukhamoy. Earlier, I had been in RIS on 20th February 2015 to inaugurate its well-appointed Conference Hall dedicated to G. Parthasarathi, the founder Chairman of RIS.

RIS @ 40: A HISTORIC LANDMARK FOR A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

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SHYAM SARAN

Former Chairman, RIS



The Research and Information System for Developing Countries, which is better known by its acronym “RIS” has served as one of India’s premier institutions for economic research, economic diplomacy and international exchanges. As it celebrates its 40 years in existence, it can be proud of its significant contributions to the study of the Indian economy, the country’s expanding external economic relations and for promoting regular exchanges with a network of sister institutions in countries across the world. Its focus, however, has remained on the promotion of South-South Cooperation. This is not an accident since RIS began its journey as a Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries four decades ago. The original impulse came from the short-lived G-15 grouping of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was designated to become the dialogue partner with the G-7 grouping of advanced Western economies with an agenda that would have covered a host of issues of particular concern to developing countries, including terms of trade, multilateral financial institutions, commodity markets and pricing. It would, additionally, promote South-South Cooperation among developing countries. The leaders of NAM felt that for such

a North-South dialogue, it was necessary to have a top-level think-tank with well-qualified experts, who could provide briefs and position papers which the G15 leaders could use on items on the G15-G7 dialogue, from the unique perspective of developing countries. For various reasons, the initiative for what would have been a potentially path breaking North-South dialogue, never fructified. Thereafter, with the end of the Cold War in the early nineties, NAM itself lost much of its relevance, even though the challenges confronting the developing countries remained significant and their resolution of increasing urgency. It was in these circumstances that RIS eventually became reincarnated as the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, fully financed by the Government of India. Being a key instrument of India's economic diplomacy, it has remained affiliated with the Ministry of External Affairs. Over the years, the institution has benefited from the leadership of some outstanding Indian scholars and statesmen, including Shri G Parthasarathi, Dr Manmohan Singh and Dr Arjun Sengupta. I was privileged to succeed them as Chairman of RIS, serving in that capacity from 2011 to 2017. I was supported by a most talented and dedicated team. During these six years, RIS continued to serve as India's premier economic think tank, taking up a number of pioneering research projects, assisting the government in organizing important regional and international conferences and bringing out a large number of books, research papers and discussion papers. These were welcomed and

appreciated not only by the agencies of government, but also by the larger constituency of Indian and international academia. RIS has also served, on behalf of the MEA, as a capacity building institution for trainees from developing countries in areas as broad-ranging as development models, the digital economy, the international trade and monetary systems and, more recently, the challenge of climate change and biodiversity. These capacity building programmes are extremely popular. RIS has also built up a data base of such trainees, establishing an influential network of alumni, since several of the alumni go back to senior positions in their own countries.

During my association with RIS, I can recall a few initiatives in which the institution now plays a leading role. For example, the India-ASEAN Centre, was set up in 2013 at the RIS. It was the India-ASEAN Eminent Persons' Group, on which I had the honour to serve as the Indian co-chair, which, in its report, recommended setting up of an India-ASEAN Centre, to strengthen India-ASEAN partnership, through a range of activities. This recommendation was unanimously approved at the historic India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit, convened in New Delhi on 19-20 December, 2012. This Summit is notable for having upgraded India-ASEAN relations to the level of a strategic partnership. The India-ASEAN Centre is committed to realizing the objectives of the partnership, through providing up to date information, data resources and exchanges among various governmental and non-governmental institutions in

India and ASEAN countries. I understand that the Centre is now well-established and has gained the respect and support of stakeholders both in India and abroad. The Centre has played a pioneering role in promoting all round connectivity between India and ASEAN countries. These are a number of joint research projects it has been promoting on a shared agenda of energy security, food security and water conservation.

RIS is involved in other initiatives promoting India-ASEAN relations. The India-ASEAN Think Tank Network was set up in 2012 and has met annually since. It has become a most important forum for exchange of ideas on the very wide-ranging cooperation agenda. The Network is also a most valuable source for identifying new areas for the two sides to work on. The fact that the Network has already held seven rounds of think tank interactions since its inception, is a testimony to its value. I am proud of the fact that this forum was initiated during my Chairmanship and I had the privilege of presiding over its inaugural session.

As would be apparent, relations with ASEAN countries have been a key part of RIS activities. The range of these activities has been comprehensive, covering almost all important areas of interaction.

It is sometimes forgotten that historical and cultural affinities between India and ASEAN are unusually close, but not well known and appreciated. One of the most important initiatives undertaken during my Chairmanship was the convening of

the international conference on “India-ASEAN Cultural Links: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions” on 23-24 July, 2015. The conference was attended by internationally acclaimed scholars from India, Asia and several Western countries, who have spent years exploring the myriad historical, cultural and religious links which bind India and South-East Asia together. The conference also focussed on the history of maritime and commercial relations between the Indian sub-continent and East and South-East Asia. The Conference also drew its inspiration from Prime Minister Modi’s recommendation that current scholars in the field should come together to nurture a new generation of young scholars to whom the baton could be passed for making this intellectual exploration a thriving activity. The proceedings of the Conference were compiled together in an edited volume entitled “Cultural and Civilizational Links between India and South-East Asia”, which was published in 2018. This publication, sponsored by RIS, has become a much sought-after reference book for scholars across Asia and the world.

I referred to the work done by RIS in promoting connectivity between India and South-East Asia. RIS was one of the first think tanks in the country to take up a detailed examination of connectivity as a driver of growth of India and its neighbours in South Asia and South-East Asia. It studied the experience of cross-border movement of goods and services and people both among ASEAN countries and in the European Union. The studies included an examination of how legitimate concerns

over security could be addressed, using new and innovative technologies already deployed in other regions. RIS also put forward the view that the “hardware” of connectivity such as border infrastructure, roads, rail links, electricity grids and digital links, must be accompanied by the “software” of connectivity, in terms of efficient and behind-the-border processes to ensure smooth and uninterrupted cross-border flows. Traditionally, the Indian mind-set has seen borders as walls behind which the country must be kept safe. In changing this mind-set, the studies conducted by RIS and the several conferences it held with key decision-makers, played a significant role.

Speaking of connectivity, RIS also pioneered the concept of “economic corridors”, going beyond physical cross-border infrastructure. The idea was to leverage transport corridors to promote a range of economic activities in the region through which they traversed using locally available manpower and resources. The regions through which transport corridors are established should not only be treated as mere passage-ways. This approach was first applied to India-Myanmar connectivity, creating economic opportunities for our North-East. As will be seen from the outcome of the recent G-20 Summit hosted by India, the concept of “economic corridors” is now firmly established in development discourse.

I would like to draw attention to two other initiatives of RIS which constitute a major contribution to economic policy analysis and strategizing for the future

During my assignment at RIS, there was a growing controversy over the value of several Free Trade Agreements (FTA) and comprehensive economic partnership agreements (CEPA), India had concluded with a number of countries, mostly in Asia. We were fortunate to have as our Vice-Chairman, Dr V.S. Seshadri, a former diplomat, but with rich experience in economic diplomacy. At my request and with the support of MEA, he undertook detailed examination and review of India's FTA/CEPA agreements with Singapore, Japan and South Korea, visiting these countries and interacting with policy makers. He also interacted with policy-makers in India and trade bodies involved in trade and investment relations with these countries. The reports published by RIS have been a major contribution to the policy debate on the subject, bringing out why India has not benefited as much from these agreement as its partners have and several important recommendations included in these reports have become important policy inputs both for the government and the business sector.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 by the United Nations, opened a new and rich area for academic exploration and international interaction for the RIS. It is one of the lead institutions selected by the NITI Aayog to undertake policy studies on the pursuit of these goals. It has undertaken a number of consultations with key stakeholders to enable a well-thought and coherent strategy on SDGs. This work continues and I am happy to see that it is a key area of focus for

the work of the RIS. I was privileged to take part in some of the initial consultations before demitting office in 2017.

Having served as Prime Ministers' Special Envoy on Climate Change (2007-2010), I was able to use my time at RIS to continue to pursue work on Climate Change and Bio-diversity. A related area, which Director-General, Dr Sachin Chaturvedi personally worked on was traditional health and medicinal systems, bringing together several countries of the South, which like India, have rich traditional medicine systems. RIS work in this year has contributed to the significant development of Ayurveda in our own country. Thanks to RIS, intellectual property in this area is being recognised and protected through systems contributed to by RIS.

This brings me to another important initiative taken during my association with RIS. This is the area of Science Diplomacy. RIS has worked together with the Department of Science and Technology and the office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the PM, to develop Science Diplomacy as an integral part of RIS activities. It continues to make significant contributions under the leadership of my Foreign Service Colleague, Dr Bhaskar Balakrishnan.

It should come as no surprise that Africa has been on the RIS agenda right since its inception. Several of the capacity building programmes undertaken by RIS under the MEA's development cooperation programmes, have always had a significant representation from African countries. The promotion of trade

and investment with African countries, has been pursued side by side with development cooperation. The only RIS study that I personally undertook was on India-Africa Development Partnership which is available as a discussion paper. Since then, the India-Africa partnership has been jointly promoted by RIS and its NGO partner, the Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC).

I must also mention that extensive work undertaken by RIS in drawing up a comprehensive strategy for long-term economic collaboration between India and the Maldives. I was asked by the Prime Minister's office to lead this exercise myself and I was ably assisted by Dr Ram Upendra Das, Professor at RIS. We undertook several visits to the Maldives in 2011 and there were several interactions with the then President of the Maldives, His Excellency Md. Nasheed. The strategy paper drawn up by RIS included assisting the Maldives in setting up a banking and financial system, a stock exchange, building infrastructure which could enable the Maldives to emerge as a local for film making, promoting internet education and health care, to name just a few areas. Unfortunately, the project could not be implemented due to political changes in the Maldives, but the recommendations remain relevant.

The range of activities that RIS is engaged in currently, has expanded much beyond my time as its Chairman. The credit must go to my successors, Shri Hardeep Puri and Dr Mohan Kumar, under whose leadership the institution has gone from

strength to strength. RIS has been fortunate to have as its Director General, some outstanding scholars and administrators. I must acknowledge the dedication with which Dr Biswajit Dhar and later Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, who continues to lead the institution, have contributed to making RIS one of the most respected think tanks in India and abroad. I must also acknowledge the role played by my colleague, Dr Prabir De, without whose untiring efforts, RIS could not have assumed the lead role it has today in promoting India-ASEAN relations.

I am also proud of the fact that during my chairmanship, the excellent faculty and research team at RIS established a regular interaction with the vibrant non-governmental sector in India. It was thanks to the efforts of RIS that MEA has been able to draw upon the considerable expertise available with reputed Indian NGOs to promote its development cooperation projects in developing countries. I have already referred to RIS' cooperation with Forum for Indian Development Cooperation.

As I reflect back upon my six years as Chairman of RIS, I consider it my good fortune to have been associated with an institution which has been led by towering personalities and which is undoubtedly a centre of excellence in our country. It has played a pioneering role in promoting South-South cooperation. In a sense, the circle has come around to where it began – RIS has made a major contribution to the success of the G-20 New Delhi Summit. At the Summit, India was successful in articulating the voice of the Global South, which may be

considered a more influential a more active constituency of developing countries. The inclusion of the African Union as the 21st member of the grouping is a symbol of the rising importance of the Global South. In the years to come India will have to play a key role in consolidating and mobilising a constituency which is still an amorphous and loosely structured entity. I was happy to learn that a Centre for the Global South has been set up at RIS. I am certain that just as it was originally conceived as a think tank for Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries, it will now play a pioneering role in giving shape and content to the emerging constituency of the Global South.

My best wishes to RIS on its 40th anniversary.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF GLOBAL SOUTH

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HARDEEP S. PURI

Hon'ble Minister of Housing and
Urban Affairs and Minister of
Petroleum and Natural Gas; and
former Chairman, RIS



I am delighted to note that this commemorative volume is being released to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS). It is a fitting tribute to one of India's leading policy and development research institutions. Over the last four decades, RIS has steered notable initiatives and dialogue in the fields of international economic development, trade, investment, and technology.

While my formal association with RIS as its Chairman lasted only a few months between March 2017 and September 2017, I have engaged with it for much longer and continue to do so even today as it fosters policy dialogue and builds capacity on various global and regional economic issues. Having observed its work at close quarters, it is no surprise to me that RIS has evolved to become such an esteemed research institution in the development sector.

South-South Cooperation

RIS was one of the first Indian think tanks to undertake comprehensive research and advocacy work for the South-South cooperation agenda, prioritising economic and technical

cooperation in particular. Through its high-quality research, it has distinguished itself as one of the leading forums engaged in strengthening the principle of South-South Cooperation. At a time when India is actively advancing this agenda through its G20 Presidency, the theory-building and background work that RIS has championed for years in this domain has informed the discourse considerably.

Track 1.5 Dialogue

RIS is an autonomous institute under the Ministry of External Affairs. When I was Secretary (ER) at MEA, RIS took a number of commendable initiatives for various Track 1.5 Dialogue interventions, especially in relation to India's engagements with countries in the Indo-Pacific, BRICS, BIMSTEC and ASEAN. Its exemplary work in compiling information and opinions, producing policy insights, and disseminating knowledge on various aspects of India's cooperation has provided continuity and policy coherence across inter-governmental processes of many regional economic cooperation initiatives. During my stint at Permanent Mission of India a New York, RIS participated in the High Level Political Forum meetings.

Here, I would also like to recall some of the other prominent initiatives that RIS took during my tenure. They included commemorating the 25 years of ASEAN-India Partnership and organising important events such as the Delhi Conference on South-South and Triangular Cooperation, Consultation on

Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, Mid-Term Review of Foreign Trade Policy (2015-2020), Blue Economy Framework for Sustainable Development and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, among others.

Sustainable Development Goals

Besides its work programmes on development cooperation, trade and investment facilitation, and regional connectivity, RIS has also broadened the knowledge base through its mainstreaming of gender, technology and inclusion. It was one of the first organisations in India to articulate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a lever for increased South-South cooperation. In this regard, RIS has worked closely with NITI Aayog, UN office in Delhi, MEA and other government departments both at the central and state levels.

RIS also raised essential dialogue on cooperation in infrastructure financing and the revival of the multilateral agenda for the SDG Agenda. I was honoured to chair a discussion of policymakers and development organisations in India that it held with Professor Jeffrey Sachs on 23 February this year. It was a unique opportunity to deliberate on the ways in which the global stagnation on SDGs could be turned around amidst the prevailing economic uncertainty and the 3F's crisis. Some innovative and actionable recommendations came out of that discussion; most notably, on creating new facilities for development and climate financing.

I want to take a moment to focus on the SDGs. My stint as Chairman at RIS coincided with the global push for the SDGs which had formally been adopted only a year earlier on 25 September 2015 by the UN General Assembly. In my next (and current) role as a Union Minister in the Modi government, I have had the privilege of handling the urban development and petroleum and natural gas portfolios, both of which have a prominent interface with the SDGs. The Modi government's flagship initiatives such as the Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Smart Cities Mission as well as policy interventions such as ethanol blending, green hydrogen production, adoption of electric vehicles, and public transport have played a critical role in helping achieve India's SDG targets.

I have always said, "If India succeeds, SDGs will succeed. And if the SDGs are to succeed, India has to succeed." India has shown world-leading progress and is years ahead of many high-income countries on the SDG pathway. NITI Aayog reports that more than 140 million Indians exited multidimensional poverty in the four years since the adoption of the SDGs under the Modi government. Transformative progress in water and sanitation, housing, food, energy access, digital connectivity, and financial inclusion have led to an unprecedented 'saturation of service'. This resonates with the 'leave no one behind' philosophy of the SDGs. India has considerably closed the gap on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production); SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 3 (Health); SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation);

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy); SDG 8 (Economic Growth); and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

Most remarkably, India has consistently ranked among the best countries in the 'SDG Spillover Index', signalling that our positive movement on the SDG track has not come at the expense of other nations. What this has shown the world is that development does not have to be a zero-sum game; nor does it have to be driven by aid handed out by developed countries and their diktats. Hobbled by the pandemic, developed countries continue to struggle with many aspects of the 2030 Agenda, most notably the decarbonising imperative. India, on the other hand, launched the ambitious Panchamrit Action Plan which aims to make the country 'net zero' by 2070 – the shortest time span a developing country has proposed between peak emissions and net zero. India has emerged even more resilient after the pandemic, and has been applauded globally for its domestic vaccination programme, and its scientific and manufacturing capabilities.

India's development objectives were inherently aligned with the SDGs, and this is why we are succeeding. India's success story is now being replicated in many developing countries. India itself is taking the lead to build bridges and establish a South-South Cooperation model for the SDGs. RIS has contributed significantly to this purpose by building dialogue around this synergy right from the inception of its work programme on SDGs. It has supported the operationalization of SDG initiatives

in many developing countries through its capacity building under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.

G20

RIS is also an organising participant in the Think 20 (T20) Engagement Group of the G20 under India's Presidency this year. Given its extensive network of research institutions, universities, think tanks and philanthropic organisations across the globe, I believe it is aptly placed to convey the perspective of academia and civil society in the G20. Initiatives such as NeST (Network of Southern Think Tanks), "Delhi Process", and FIDC (Forum for Indian Development Cooperation) demonstrate the influential role that RIS has played in driving global partnerships for the development of the Global South, led by the Global South.

The advocacy that RIS has undertaken at the G20 this year is only one of its many consequential interventions over the years. Its imaginative work on the Blue Economy is another example. RIS has coordinated various discussions of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), particularly its Academic Group. Senior Fellows have provided crucial recommendations to the Indian government on its engagement. RIS has been a prominent entity in India's efforts to engage with littoral countries, most of which are low-income and Small Island Developing States, by proposing technical cooperation and aiding in capacity building.

The Faculty

Even though I was Chairman only for a brief time, I was impressed with the wide ambit of research and capacity building work RIS had taken on. Its dedicated team of researchers and senior experts continually proposed new ideas and alternate approaches for policymakers.

I felt a familiar sense of passion and zeal when I recently visited its offices at the India Habitat Centre in Delhi and interacted with various members of the team, including its current Director General Professor Sachin Chaturvedi who has deftly positioned RIS to both anticipate and inform India's cooperation agenda for the years to come. I was also pleased to observe that a number of young researchers have joined the RIS team recently. The institute has put in place a robust programme of Internship at RIS for university students.

I send my best wishes to everyone at RIS on completing a distinguished 40 years, and wish the institution success in all its future endeavours. RIS is well placed to achieve greater successes and to continue burnishing its credentials of producing relevant research for the development sector and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

A BASTION OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION



AMBASSADOR MOHAN KUMAR

Former Chairman, RIS



It was a singular honour for me to serve as Chairman of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) from June 2018 to June 2022. I am delighted that RIS is bringing out a publication commemorating the fortieth anniversary of its existence. I am honoured to contribute my mite in this endeavour.

The RIS was established in the heyday of the Non-Aligned movement. Indeed, in 1983 when it was established it was called the “Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries”. It was to function as an advisory body to the Government of India on matters pertaining to trade, investment, technology and development issues at multilateral, regional and sub-regional levels; and to act as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity building among developing country think tanks on international economic issues and promoting south-south cooperation. Over the years the RIS has done this and more, making adjustments to the evolving geo-political situation but always remaining true to its core beliefs and values.

The fundamental objective of RIS was always to promote South-South cooperation. But this is easier said than done.

The countries of the south are diverse, at various levels of development and belong to different continents. Drawing them all into one common framework was next to impossible. There was no “one size fits all” solution. This meant that RIS had to promote South-South Cooperation among those who were ready and willing to accept what was on offer.

RIS has, over the years, offered a credible platform for exchange of best practices on the whole gamut of economic and technical cooperation. This is done through major research publications, development initiatives and capacity building programmes. Major research publications have included: World Trade and Development Report; An Appraisal of India-Singapore CECA; An appraisal of India-Korea CEPA; South Asia Development and Cooperation Reports. These and other research publications are based on academic rigour and solid evidence. RIS research publications have established a gold standard in their area of expertise and have served academics, policy makers and scholars very well. RIS journals are worth mentioning in this regard. Whether it is the South Asia Economic Journal or the Development Cooperation Review, RIS journals are widely disseminated, read and quoted among scholars.

The programme on Science Diplomacy was an innovation that happened during my time as Chairman and this is worthy of mention. Indeed, the first issue of Science Diplomacy Review was brought out in November 2018 and a Science Diplomacy Fellow was appointed to take things forward. Since then, RIS

has regularly brought out Science Diplomacy Reviews at regular intervals. This publication carries weighty observations by Scientists in developing countries and talks of the contribution that diplomacy can make in promoting scientific cooperation among developing countries. Indeed, there are many ways Indian diplomacy can use the country's scientific prowess to spread its influence and gain leverage across the world.

The ASEAN-India Centre occupies an important place within the RIS. Set up to look specifically at the whole gamut of cooperation between India and ASEAN, it comes up with reports, studies and research papers aimed at enhancing ASEAN-India cooperation. A flagship event known as "Delhi Dialogue" is held on an annual basis. It is a Track 1.5 event which enables both India and ASEAN to meet at the Foreign Ministers level to both take stock of existing cooperation and to look ahead. Delhi Dialogue has proved to be useful in providing a platform to look at ASEAN-India cooperation critically with a view to providing options to policy makers for taking the ties to the next level. The tenth anniversary of the Delhi dialogue was held in 2018 and was a remarkable occasion for stocktaking and for looking ahead.

Another flagship event organized by the RIS is the "Delhi Process" on South-South Cooperation. This annual event looks at all the issues and emerging challenges of South-South Cooperation with a view to making it more effective and impactful.

Yet another initiative that occurred in my time as Chairman was the establishment of the Global Development Initiative by

the RIS. The idea of the Global Development Initiative was to share India's development experience with other developing countries. India has emerged as a grand laboratory for innovative development initiatives whether it is the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) or the COWIN platform used to vaccinate more than one billion people. These can and should be shared by us with fellow developing countries.

In 2016, the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) was formally launched. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, consolidating and sharing knowledge on south-south cooperation approaches for international development.

Most appropriately, the RIS also brings out a G20 Digest. This assumes importance as India carries out its mandate of the presidency of the G20 by taking it to different parts of the country.

Perhaps the most important part of the work of RIS is the wide array of capacity building programmes that it conducts for participants from other developing countries. The most significant of the capacity building programmes is the ITEC, i.e. Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programmes of which there are five modules: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Trade & Sustainability, Learning South-South Cooperation, Science Diplomacy and International Economic Issues and Development Policy. These programmes make a huge difference to the participants from various countries of

Africa, Latin America, and Asia in terms of enhancing their ability to negotiate, to make policy and to enable their respective countries to benefit from international rules and regulations. In a similar vein, there are also other programmes such as RIS-EXIM Bank Summer School and IBSA Visiting Fellowship Programme whose purpose remains the same, namely, how best to promote south-south cooperation.

RIS also considers “Triangular Cooperation” as very important. This, however, should not be considered as something in lieu of North-South cooperation. Of late, India too has actively promoted triangular cooperation be it in the form of India-Japan-Sri Lanka or India-France-Africa. This is an important form of cooperation and this needs to be looked at critically from all aspects. RIS does this so that developing countries are aware of the potential as well as of the pitfalls, if any.

I wish to conclude by dwelling on the term “Global South”. Coined as far back as 1969 by Carl Oglesby, it has become common only recently. Global South refers to countries which have a low level of economic and social development. In this sense, it captures what non-aligned and G77 stood for earlier. As India exercises the presidency of the G20, it is increasingly obvious that India wishes to be the voice of the Global South. Indeed, in a brilliant masterstroke, India invited as many as 125-odd countries belonging to the Global South in a virtual summit early this year to ask them for their priorities and objectives. India hopes to articulate these objectives in front of the other

G20 members so that this can be included, to the extent possible, in the Leaders' Declaration after the Delhi summit in September this year. In accordance with this philosophy, India has called for the inclusion of the African Union (AU) in all future G20 meetings as a member.

RIS is already part of the Think Tank G20 process. But it must go further in my view. Once the Delhi Leaders' Declaration is out, RIS must pick up the relevant parts and seek to operationalise it through South-South cooperation.

I convey my best wishes to RIS for relentless, steadfast and solid work worthy of a bastion of South-South cooperation that it is.

Jai Hind!

THE RIS @ 40



AMBASSADOR SUDHIR T. DEVARE

Former Vice Chairman, RIS; and currently Chairman,
Research Advisory Council, RIS



The Research Information System for Developing Countries, briefly known as RIS has completed 40 years of its existence. For this institution, established in India in 1983 following the decision at the Non-Aligned Summit this is a significant landmark. It is an interesting coincidence that its 40th anniversary is being celebrated when India is engaged in chairing another important multilateral grouping, G20 and RIS is closely associated with the activities of the latter.

At the Non-aligned conference in 1983, it was felt that the non-aligned developing countries lacked sufficient expertise, especially the technical knowledge about various international economic issues, foreign trade and investment, or application of technology in their development programmes. That often resulted in their inability to match the developed states in negotiations on a number of multilateral issues. They required assistance in capacity building in different areas of their socio-economic activities. South-South Cooperation was thus the need of the day in which countries of the South would share their expertise and experience with fellow members of the South in building mutual strength. This initiative to set up a facility for the purpose could not have come a day too soon even as RIS was established in 1983.

Amb. G. Parthasarathi, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarti, Dr Manmohan Singh and others who were the pioneers in giving shape to the concept had visualised the institute to be a self-governing autonomous think tank receiving support from the government for its basic requirements. The Ministry of External Affairs was designated as its parent organization with Governing Council members drawn from MEA, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, Department of Science and Technology as well as senior economists from the academic community. Right from its inception, the agenda of RIS focused on the global economic issues as they affected the socio-economic development of non-aligned developing countries, as also development partnership and foreign trade matters of concern to them.

The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and formation of 16 independent republics were events of far reaching consequence. The economic reforms in India in 1991 was an exciting time. RIS responded to these challenges with imagination and active programmes. Important inputs were provided by RIS during negotiations leading to the creation of WTO. The Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 which caused a major disruption in the economies of Asia was carefully studied at RIS and useful advice was provided to the government as well private sector with regard to its handling. India's Look (and now, Act) East policy was a subject of much attention at RIS which along with connectivity matters became one of the major

work programmes of the organization. RIS had started a lecture series of eminent persons from ASEAN where former Prime Ministers from the region also addressed. RIS continues to host the annual ASEAN-India Dialogue. It was therefore only fitting that the ASEAN -India Centre was established at RIS.

The RIS work programme has continued to evolve with changing global environment. With the centre of gravity of world economy shifting to Asia. RIS was in favour of working with JACIK countries (Japan, ASEAN, China, India and Korea) towards regional economic integration. The concept of Asian Economic Community was articulated and actively supported by RIS.

RIS has continued over the years to take initiatives on trade, investment as well as trade facilitation. With regard to India's policy of entering into Free Trade Agreements or Comprehensive Economic Cooperation agreements RIS has consistently made important contribution. In fact initial work towards FTAs signed in recent years with a number of countries was done in RIS.

RIS also came up regularly with its World Trade and Development Report which was released at WTO. This was a much welcomed document for all connected with global trade issues.

New Technology and Development Issues is one of RIS' verticals. Under this RIS has also been very innovative in adopting new areas in its activities. It initiated work in the field of biotechnology. In recent years it has focused on Traditional

Medicine and is working closely with Aayush, the concerned Ministry. Science Diplomacy is another area which RIS has lately placed its emphasis on. It has held seminars on the subject and also started to bring out a periodical titled 'Science Diplomacy Review'. Given the currently growing importance and relevance of Digitisation as well as Fintech RIS is also engaged in these areas.

Blue Economy and Maritime India Vision 2030 was one of the new fields undertaken by RIS. The work done in this regard provided a very useful input to NITI Aayog and other Ministries of Government of India and state governments.

All through past forty years the commitment of RIS to development cooperation and capacity building has remained its top priority. Be it the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), energy, climate change, health, finance, or investment RIS' work programme has paid close attention to them. All along South-South Cooperation has been RIS' *raison d'être*. It continues to organise seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. as well as training activities with fellow developing countries utilizing, *inter alia*, India's longstanding ITEC programme.

It was remarkable that even during COVID-19 time RIS continued to function as actively as possible. A marathon job of producing the database of development cooperation with developing countries extended by all Ministries and departments of Government of India since India's independence was undertaken at RIS. Another massive work completed included

the list of all imports from China in recent years and the names of sources/countries which could be competitive alternatives for our imports. This was a useful input to the business community in India.

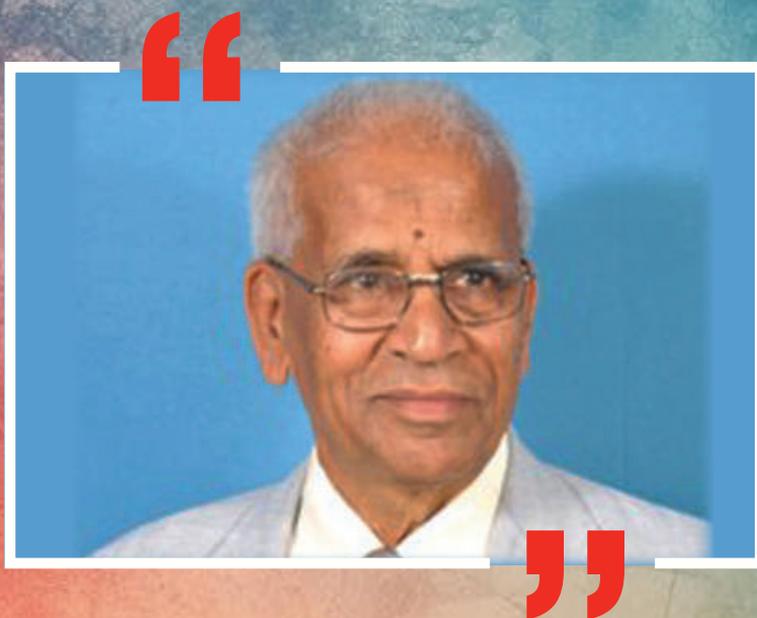
Regional or trans-continental economic integration is a key area where the RIS expertise has been put to extensive use in recent years. RIS functions as a leading think-tank in India for BRICS, IBSA, BIMSTEC, IORA and now the prestigious G20 and has created a network of think-tanks in those regions. During this year of India's G20 presidency RIS' role as a member of T20 has increased manifold. RIS hosted a major international event titled 'Global Governance with Life Values and Well-being' which emphasized that values and ethical considerations should not be treated as residual elements in formulating development strategies; they should form the core of the substantive practice in research , financial transactions.

RIS has a wide range of publications. They include books/ reports, Discussion Papers, Occasional Papers, Policy Briefs, RIS Diary etc.

The story of RIS in last four decades is indeed extraordinary. The number of fields of its research activity is unbelievable; so also its volume of publications. Thanks to the leadership of eminent economists and diplomats, indefatigable effort, imagination and commitment by its Director Generals like Dr Panchamukhi, Dr Nagesh Kumar and in recent years remarkably by Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, as well as untiring work by a small but competent

faculty like Dr S.K. Mohanty and others; consultants and interns fully supported by professional, staff members like Shri Tish Malhotra, RIS has grown into a leading and credible institution of research at the global level on international economic issues. It has been my privilege to be associated with its activities since past twenty five years. I am confident that RIS will continue to be a major think-tank for dialogue on global and regional economic issues which the international community will look to in the coming years.

RIS: THE GENESIS, EVOLUTION AND LEGACY



DR V.R. PANCHAMUKHI

Founding Director General, RIS; and
Former Chairman, ICSSR



I would like to thank Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, the present Director General of RIS and a very active leader of the activities of the RIS. Dr Sachin Chaturvedi was also appointed in RIS in the early days and he has shaped so very well that I feel very proud of him for his achievements and the manner in which he is conducting the RIS activities.

Recently I participated in the G20 meetings. Under India's G20 Presidency, RIS has conducted many events of the G20 Presidency of India. I found Dr Sachin Chaturvedi to be very elegant, extremely competent to summarise the meetings. His own deliberations have also been extremely well. I will say I feel proud of him. So I thank him for giving me this opportunity of saying something about the formation of the development of RIS right from its scratch in 1984 onwards.

I feel proud to be the founder Director General but at the same time I must express my gratitude to the Founder-Chairman and Founder Vice-Chairman right at the outset. The Founder Chairman was no less a person than G. Parthasarathi, a veteran, the son of a distinguished diplomat, a distinguished statesman so to say, Gopaldaswamy Iyengar who was also a Member of the Constitutional Committee of India. Vice-Chairman, Professor

Sukhamoy Chakravarty was a moving encyclopaedia on economics, development and planning. These two stalwarts, I must remember right at the outset.

Initially, the institution was called as Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries. How it all started is a question which we must ask. What were the circumstances for the formation of this institution?

In the post-World War scenario a number of countries became politically free and independent. Aspirations of the people were so high that the new era was totally different. The post-World war scenario, the geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic maps of the world had undergone significant changes. But the intellectual capital of these so-called colonial countries, had not fully vanished. It had got rekindled after the independence and freedom. They all were wanting to assert their autonomy. They all were yearning to evolve a development paradigm which could be conducive to the welfare of the people because earlier in the long years of colonial rules, the welfare of the local people were at stake. They were not really cared for and exploitation was there, both at the national level and at the international level.

India was known as the golden bird of the world economy. A number of invasions had taken place to exploit the richness of the Indian culture, its material wealth and spiritual wealth. It was known as the leader of the world economy; that is why so many invasions took place. Indian ethos was at the highest peak, spiritually, materially and intellectually.

But over several centuries of colonial rule, first Muslim rule, then British and other small colonies of the Portuguese, the French, the personality of India underwent lot of change. It lost its connections with the roots of its very existence. Therefore any assertion for autonomy, and new era of development were not there. But after the independence, it was rekindled. The geopolitical map of the world had undergone change led by USSR. The East had emerged as a powerhouse for its own purposes and the West had emerged led by America. The two blocks were in extreme war situation which was termed as Cold War, not an explicit war but a war of thoughts, war of strategies, and supremacies. It was much worse than the open war. The scenario had again threatened to make these so-called colonies of the past remain as colonies. Therefore, there was the desire to develop autonomy in decision making, in thinking and in choosing the development paradigms for the welfare of the own people.

The result was that the beginning of Non-Aligned Movement. Non-Aligned means not aligned either to the West or to the East, but being independent on its own. It had more of a political overtone of being independent. But in my view it has more of economic overtone in terms of asserting own autonomy in decision making to choose for a development paradigm that would suit the welfare of the people. This was the philosophy which asserted the non-aligned movement. Though some people say that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the market

economy system has conquered. It has become victorious and, therefore, there is no need for non-alignment and non-alignment should be withdrawn. But economic non-alignment is still there in terms of asserting the autonomy of decision making and the autonomy of development paradigm. That was the reason for how the non-aligned movement (NAM) started.

I consider 1960s as a period of new intellectual renaissance, so to say. The G77 and the non-aligned movement were born. A number of trading blocks emerged and a new geo-political and geo-economic map was emerging. This was a period when new institutions had been created. G77 was the group of developing countries and NAM was the group of non-aligned countries. Other developing countries like North Korea had not joined the non-aligned movement but still believed in the philosophy of the non-alignment, like Taiwan also.

From 1975 onwards, the non-aligned movement, though started in the 1960s, was very active. It was the period when I consider the actions were initiated on the intellectual underpinnings that were identified in the 1960s. In 1974 the United Nations came out with the resolution on New International Economic Order. UNCTAD was created in 1962 but it became active in the 1970s. UNIDO was also established during that period. A number of UN organisations and other initiatives on the part of the developing and developed countries were also launched during the 1970s.

The concept of North and South was a new concept. I understand that it was formulated as a concept by experts like Jagdish Bhagwati and Harry Johnson. They termed North as the group of developed countries and South as a group of developing countries, because broadly it is in the northern hemisphere that developed countries are there and in the southern hemisphere there are developing countries. This dichotomy of North and South was very interesting. North-South dialogue emerged as a phenomenon for asserting the autonomy of South; that is how the non-aligned movement started.

During 1975 onwards and then again in 1979 there were strong views in the Non-aligned Movement that we must have a Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries. The basic idea was that the analysis done by developed countries or even by the UN organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions like World Bank, IMF, etc., and the GATT (now WTO), were not suiting the interests of the developing countries. They were appearing to serve the cause and the interests of the developing countries, but they were not. For instance, even I did a joint study at that time to show how of the aid given to the developing countries, 90 per cent was spent in the developed countries only. The conditionality of aid was the buyback arrangements or purchasing goods with technology backed capital goods from developed countries.

The result was that aid was flowing back into the developed countries and not in the developing countries. That was the

time when Raul Prebisch evolved an extremely important theory of international relations. Raul Prebisch was a great man from Argentina. He said that terms of trade for developing countries are deteriorating in a very subtle and important dimensions of international trade and international relations. That means developing countries were getting less for their commodities. They were not sending manufactured goods, but they were sending commodities. They were getting less and less of manufactured goods. Commodities means raw materials and intermediate goods - all these were going to developed countries. After getting processed they were being sent back to developing countries at multiple prices. Payment done by the developing countries was more of an outgoing nature than the aid received. Terms of trade deterioration were extremely important dimensions of the North-South dialogue and were eye opener for the kind of exploitation which the developed world was continuously doing, even after the independence of the developing countries.

At the same time, there was a centre periphery theory in the Latin American region, which again emphasised the same point: the centre being the developed world, and periphery being the developing world. Periphery was not allowed to manufacture. Manufactured goods were not produced in the developing countries. They were all produced in the developed countries. Their prices were much higher than the price being paid for raw materials. All such things together made creation of a think tank

for developing countries. There are many other factors which I may not be able to narrate all of them here. The basic idea was to evolve an intellectual capital of the developing world, to assert its own autonomy in decision making and having its own thinking on various subjects.

There used to be resolutions for Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries. The 7th Non-Aligned Summit held at New Delhi resolved that there is need for Research and Information System (RIS). Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, made it a point that we must take the initiative. She appointed G. Parthasarathi, Chairman of RIS who had been there right from the Nehru's times, a very seasoned diplomat, extremely nice person. I had the privilege of working with him more than a decade. A man of few words, he had been the representative of India in the United Nations. People knew him as a man of few words, but lot of action; very affectionate person. Later on, I should share this, people started saying that G. Parthasarathi loves you more than his son, that kind of relationship I had developed out of my own attitude towards him and his love for me.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty was a well-known professor under Jan Tinbergen, a Nobel Prize winner, with whom I also had the privilege of working in Bangkok earlier. They made G. Parthasarathi, Chairman and Sukhamoy Chakravarty Vice-Chairman.

The formalities were completed and registration was done way back in 1983, immediately after the Non-aligned Summit. But it took again one year to take shape. They had hired a place at India International Centre, and kept paying the rent for about a year until they appointed me as the first Director. I still remember how G. Parthasarathi called me. Sukhamoy knew me very well as an economist. I had done my PhD in the Delhi School of Economics and my PhD thesis was highly praised by Harry Johnson and Tintner. They had written saying that it is the best thesis that they had seen on game theory and applications of game theory to international trade and investment. Harry Johnson was so open that he wrote me a letter that he wanted to do work on these lines. He mentioned that you have done it, so you take a copy of my paper on scientific tariff and development and trade, which was published in the Chicago journal. He said that I should continue to work on this. He himself wrote on seeing my paper in the Indian Economic Journal. That is how the intellectual sincerity and promotion and encouragement takes place in foreign countries. I'm sorry to say that we in India still lack such academic commitment and appreciation.

Jan Tinbergen was supposed to be the sage of research in the social sciences. He was the guide for Sukhamoy Chakravarty (check – it is different elsewhere – to be uniform and correct). I had the privilege of working with Jan Tinbergen in Bangkok when I was working in the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE) of that time. Raul Prebisch was

connected with us right from the beginning along with a number of other stalwarts of the international reputation who were well known to G. Parthasarathi. They were associated with us in some capacity or the other. I had the interview of more than 40 minutes with G. Parthasarathi, which was more of a very informal chat and he appointed me.

I had already become economic advisor in the Finance Ministry earlier. I was Member Secretary of the Alexander Committee on Import Export Policies, way back in 1976-77; so some reputation was there. With that background, G. Parthasarathi immediately picked me. He was such a lover of scholarship and students. He was the first vice chancellor of JNU. He built the JNU right from scratch. Such a great person, such a stalwart and diplomat and statesman; I am yet to find in present times at least. I said "Sir, I should be given Secretary's rank or Additional Secretary's rank". He agreed to give it immediately. Then I mentioned that I had to vacate my house. Immediately he telephoned to Madam Gandhi, and as a special case, I was given a house in Type V quarters and also adequate remuneration.

The NAM resolution used the term 'Research and Information System' and thus the name of institute was picked up like that. Otherwise for an institution, the name Research and Information System has not much relevance. But still that was supposed to the objective of the RIS to develop a network of institutions

and should act as a Think Tank for the Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries; this is how it all started.

The place was hired for setting up RIS in the India International Centre. I think C.D. Deshmukh was the Chairman those days so they could easily get the place in the India International Centre. We had to hire some carpenter to do the designing and so on. All senior and junior colleagues were working in cabins which were merely 40 square feet. My room was on the first floor and they used to say that this is the place where CD Deshmukh, as President of the India International Centre, used to stay. I used to feel very proud: he must have been sitting in this direction or he must have been sitting on this chair. I used to get inspiration by remembering CD Deshmukh saab. My room was reasonably good. It was very open with a veranda where I used to go out whenever my head was getting burdened with the pressure of the work. A statement of one of the Sanskrit scholars is that the achievement is not in the infrastructure or paraphernalia but in the will of the man concerned; that is what our people proved. We started with hired furniture from India International Centre. My table was also taken from the India International Centre.

At that time Secretary of the India International Centre was Mr Lalit Joshi. I still remember he was very jovial and indologically stimulating person. He used to take lot of interest and had great respect for me. We made the cabins and recruited the staff that was a big job. I had a Secretary, again a part time hired from the Ministry of External Affairs. You know, the initial

budget was Rs. 5 lakh. You can laugh how an institution can run with mere Rs. 5 lakh. I still remember next year, I got the budget increased to Rs. 10 lakh. I went to the Ministry. Financial Advisor said that in one year, you could not make 100% increase in the budget. I said, “Look, here is my resignation. I am an academician. I don’t care for positions of power. I said that straight away I would resign if you could not make it Rs. 10 lakh which was pittance. An internationally recognized institution has to have resources. He immediately got up and said all right, Rs.10 lakh for this year. Now the budget of RIS is in crore of rupees.

I had to get a Secretary. Earlier I was working in the Institute of Economic Growth for some years, and then I worked in the Centre for Policy Research. Tish Malhotra who was working for me earlier readily agreed to join me. Later on, I made him a Publication Officer. He was the first recruitment. Along with him, Krishnan and Kiran gave a great secretarial assistance during my stay at RIS. Kalyan Raipuria was given as a loan from the government, the Ministry of Commerce. I can’t name all the people, I am sorry. I got V.L. Rao who was my colleague in the Trade Development Authority, a great asset. Later on, I got Shri G.A. Tadas, Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, Dr Nagesh Kumar and Kalyan Raipuria, Dr Rajesh Mehta and a number of other people I recruited: Upendra Das, S.K. Mohanty, and R.G. Nambiar & K.C. Reddy (to check) were there as a visiting professors. My father has taught me one lesson: whatever you do, do it well.

Don't think of the results, they are left to God. With that spirit, with that philosophy of Indian ethos, I started working. NAM had identified the need for holding the 2nd RIS conference of the networking institutions. Hardly a few institutions were there; Yugoslavian, Sri Lanka and Egypt institutions were there. In Latin America, Brazil and Mexico were very active. On this side, the Philippines was active; a number of other institutions were also there. We had to organize the 2nd RIS conference and we did that on 20-22 November 1985 at New Delhi. It was a major event.

Before the Harare NAM Summit on 3-7 September 1986, there was a resolution that RIS or NAM should produce a report on the world economy from the viewpoint of the developing countries, just as the World Bank produces the World Development Report. It was serving the cause of the developed countries more than that of the developing countries. By that time the NIEO had been declared. Lima target was declared for manufactured goods - 25 per cent of the world manufactured goods to be produced in the developing countries. GSP, i.e. generalized system of preferences, had been launched by UNCTAD. Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, had all used the GSP a lot and inroads were made in the manufacturing arena of the developed countries. GSP served a lot for the developing countries to increase their manufactured goods exports. Then GSTP was evolved among the developing countries. A number of regional trading blocs had emerged. By that time SAARC was also created. ASEAN was very active in the Latin American

region. OECD had already set up the European Economic Commission. A number of fast changes in the geo-economic and geopolitical map were taking place- not so much in the geopolitical map, but as a result of geo-economic changing, geopolitical maps were also undergoing changes. Therefore, the world was wanting such a report.

RIS took it as a challenge. We launched a project called World Economy in the Mid-80s. Lo and behold! If you have good intentions and firm commitments, God always helps you. We discovered a lady called Ms. C.J. Batliwala, who had the experience of working in the World Bank and the IMF. She was working in Reserve Bank. We approached her and took her on loan to the RIS. She spearheaded, I should say, a report on the world economy. We called it as World Economy in the Mid-80s. In those days, the IMF had become very weak. The exchange rate system had undergone terrible change. Developed countries were asserting that the developing countries should open up the capital markets; capital account convertibility and all such pressures were there. She prepared the report along with the team of RIS that had myself, Nagesh Kumar, R.G. Nambiar, Dr Rajesh Mehta, Dr Nagesh Kumar and Dr Santosh Mehrotra. The epic team was there and produced a number of chapters of the report. It was nicely produced to match the World Development Report of the World Bank.

It was decided that I should go to Harare. With this spirit, I took about 500 copies of the report. That was the first major

breakthrough in the image of RIS, I should say. I went from Delhi to Bombay and after overnight stay, next morning I had to take the flight to Harare. At the airport on the conveyor belt, all the copies got scattered. A number of people going to the Harare summit from ministries were there. No one came to my help. I put all copies together. Airlines people helped me to put them together. Then I took them to Harare. There I asked the hotel people to help me to repack them.

We had also already organized a seminar on African economic crisis in the RIS earlier. A number of participants including Dr Rob Davies of the Zimbabwe University had come. He was of great help during my stay at Harare. He called a journalist to interview me. That journalist saw our report on the World Economy in the Mid-80s. The next day edition of the Harare Herald newspaper carried an entire supplement on our report.

Our Indian delegates from Ministry of External Affairs, even our great Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi noticed it. They started looking for me - where this Panchamukhi was staying. I'm sorry for saying all this; all this is a personal story. But then next day, two other people came specially and interviewed me.

The report created a great impact and people started using it. That was precisely the purpose of RIS, i.e. to provide inputs to the deliberations of the international nature for the developing countries. This was done right in 1986, just after two years of our launching into it. I thank all my colleagues, who had joined by

that time and contributed to it. I had the privilege of taking it to Harare and presenting it there.

There we also organized a seminar on African economic crisis with the Zimbabwe Economic Society. That also made an impact there. At that time Africa was in deep crisis and it was also one of our agenda for work. Later we also produced report on African economic development.

Another study that had a very significant impact was 'Missing Middle in Africa'. Missing Middle means that for the African economies in the name of technological transformation, the developed countries were sending their high flyer technologies. Thus, there was either a bullock cart or a helicopter. The middle portion, which is technologically relevant for developing countries, was missing. Unless we fill that gap, the development process cannot take place in a continuous manner. The missing middle was again a turning point in the history.

The India International Centre convened a Conference on 2-5 October 1987 at New Delhi to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Asian Relations Conference held in India in March 1947. The commemorative conference had the objective of making Asia as one economic area like Europe. Extremely valuable inputs were provided by diplomats, intellectuals, private sector and others. At that time, our prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi had come. All the participants, and paper writers were introduced to Rajiv Gandhi. When came near me I blurted out, saying, Sir, "our institution had prepared the report 'The World Economy

in the Mid-80s', which had referred to in his press interview at Harare". He was surprised and stood there for a few minutes and mentioned "Are you Dr Panchamukhi?" Everyone started asking me what the Prime Minister was talking to me? That kind of impact our report had created.

When SAARC came into being and we were designated as the institution for doing work on trade, manufactures and services, I was the chairman of the SAARC committee and visited all SAARC countries as leader of the Indian delegation. There were lots of issues in the SAARC area. Pakistan was always a bottleneck for the SAARC process. The arguments of the other countries were that India is not opening up, India had a lot of non-tariff barriers; India's tariff rates were very high.

Initially SAARC was not meant to include economic areas; it was only cultural, tourism and so on. We produced a very valuable report on trade and production complementarities in the SAARC region and development cooperation in trade manufactures and services. It became the blueprint for economic issues to be included in the SAARC agenda. I visited Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Later, we started SAARC Survey for Development and Cooperation like the world economic survey. They were asking India should open up the imports of goods from the other countries. I said, "What do you export?" In Nepal they said, "We will export biscuits and noodles." I suggested they should evolve the concept of trade creating joint ventures for production. You get Indian investment in goods, which

could be purchased back by India. This is how China does. This is how America does. They all invest in the countries to produce goods and get them exported back at a cheaper rate to their own countries. You should do that. They were all surprised that we never thought of it.

Nepal was also talking about the transition points. I asked how much trade was taking place at the present transition points. They said we didn't know. I suggested to first do the survey of how much trade was taking place. If there would be any need for additional transition we would have additional transition points. Across the border, there were no places to hold the goods, what is called storage banks. First there should storage points. That is how we countered their points and got a number of people to convert to our thoughts.

We organised a very major seminar with the support of a person of repute like Rehman Sobhan of Bangladesh. He was the Director of the Bangladesh Institute for Economics and very close ally of RIS and on the thinking of developing world. We organised an internationally acclaimed conference and later published the Volume on 'Towards Asian Economic Area'. We suggested that it is not only SAARC but also all the countries of the Asian world, should together make an Asian economic area. We evolved a concept of Asian Economic Area and published the volume as 'Asian economic area' which became a big document for deliberations at the Asian level for mutual cooperation and development. In the Volume Towards Asian Economic Area

volume, we have a very good paper on Basic Needs approach by Gopalkrishna Tadas. We also have papers on concept of new Asian economic area by Rehman Sobhan and me.

Around that time WTO emerged. I remember we had such educating meetings every day in the afternoon at four to study WTO document page by page, because many of us did not know about WTO. Agreement on agriculture, trade related intellectual property rights, services and number of other intricate things were there. WTO emerged as a substitute for GATT because some of the developing countries were having lot of access to manufactured goods in developed world because of the GSP. The developed world thought that they were losing the game. They had created a number of non-tariff barriers. Tariff barriers were low, but non-tariff barriers were very high. I can't give examples, but a number of non-tariff barriers had emerged as bottlenecks for the exports of manufactured goods from developing countries. They wanted to reverse this process by putting liberalisation of trade as the motto for global world trade.

The entire WTO has the philosophy of bringing the market forces. They asked India to reduce subsidies for agriculture and reduce tariffs. We were having product patenting earlier; they wanted to convert it into process patenting. A number of our drugs were produced by different processes in India. We were able to export. This had hurt their markets. That is why they wanted to have the validity of process patenting. There was a big fight on that. There was an advisory committee for WTO

negotiations and S.P. Shukla happened to be one of the members of the WTO committee.

At the same time, a number of new thoughts came in the world economic scene through the South Commission. At the same time environment become a big issue. L.K. Jha was the member of Brandt Commission. He had set up an advisory body and I happened to be a member. Every week, we used to meet. L.K. Jha was a meticulous person, a great ICS person. He used to call me, Muchkund Dubey, Vijay Kelkar, and so many others. Brandt Commission emphasized the concept of interdependence. It asked the developed countries to think that developing countries are not a strain on you, but they are the source of supply of labour. They are the markets and you depend upon them. Thus, there is interdependence; therefore, you must transfer resources to developing countries for helping them. At the same time, 1 per cent of GNP as the transfer of resources from the developed countries to the developing countries was the UN resolution. One per cent of GNP, not GDP, GNP is higher than GDP in the developed countries because of the higher contribution of services earnings there. South Commission asserted at that time for South-South cooperation. We were the stalwarts for South-South cooperation.

When Julius Nyerere, the former president of Tanzania, Chairman of South Commission, came to India, he held a conference; RIS had organized that conference. Dr Manmohan Singh was the chairman in those days. Manmohan Singh had his

tenure as Secretary General of South commission had become the finance minister of India. Earlier, he used to argue that developed countries should open up and so on; globalization is not a solution. I argued the need for selective globalization, not outright globalization and selective market opening in the developing countries. There was need for reduction of non-tariff barriers in the developed world. A number of points appealed to Nyerere. Suddenly he took Dr Manmohan Singh aside and told him to send me to South commission. At that time South Commission work was over. South Centre had been established and I went there and wrote a paper. At that time, the developed countries wanted not only freedom for movement of goods and services, but also they wanted movement of capital. The multilateral agreement on capital movements was going on. We were against it because we should have freedom to choose the capital that comes into our economies. We also had a committee which looked into the foreign investment. We wanted that kind of freedom. But later on they withdrew there also.

Julius Nyerere wanted a paper to be prepared to criticize this multilateral agreement on investment. I went to Geneva and worked in the South Centre for four months under United Nations salary, so to say, and wrote this paper. This was used as a background document for the Singapore non-aligned conference held during that time.

On WTO, every day, we used to have meeting. Our friend Biswajit Dhar had studied it. I must name him. He used to

explain to us page by page. On Intellectual Property Rights he worked a lot. Shri G.A. Tadas had started work on Basic Needs approach. At that time, the Basic Needs were also another agenda of the United Nations and we worked on that. Biotechnology had become a new area for work. Genes of the products are taken away and developed. Biotechnology was very new subject. I remember once I went to discuss with Sukhamoy Chakravarty on biotechnology. He asked me what do you know of biotechnology; I was floored. I said I know this much and that was enough, he said and asked us to start the work. We started and Nagesh Kumar took a lot of initiative. At that time, we sent Sachin Chaturvedi to the Netherlands to get training and orientation in the Biotechnology Centre of Netherlands. They had done a lot of work in Netherlands. I remember Sachin did a lot after going there and now he's such a competent Director General. I'm amazed by the kind of transformation and self-development that has taken place in him. I admire him and feel proud of him. I'm now a old man, so I can say I feel proud of him. I have the privilege of saying that. We started a journal called, Biotechnology Development Review.

Before that, I should say, right from the beginning, we started the approach of occasional papers. A number of stalwarts wrote occasional papers. In 1984 itself, Raul Prebisch had visited India. We had organized a lecture by him. Raul Prebisch at the age of 82-83 stood up for more than one hour to deliver his lecture. We were all amazed by the kind of commitment which he had.

Gamani Correa used to be of great help to us along with Lal Jayawardane from the World Institute for Development and Economic Research in Helsinki. I remember once I travelled with Dr Manmohan Singh to WIDER for presenting a paper. Lal Jayawardane at his institute had started the work on basic needs approach. We wanted them to sponsor a project and did a very good job with it then.

I have also something special to say on the organization of an institution or running an institution. I was also new to this task, but somehow the nature, culture, and the training, which my parents gave to me, have given me, I should say, a new personality to handle the human relations and also organizational aspects. My father was a great archaeologist and Indologist. He was also director of an institution of archaeology and spearheaded a big museum on Karnataka history. With excavations of manuscripts and inscriptions he built a big museum, which was taken over by the Karnataka University later. He had his own ethos and never gave up the individual, traditional, even orthodox style of functioning. He used to go to excavation sites along with the staff. I remember one of his photographers, K.S. Upadhyay used to say that, it was very difficult to go with your father to these excavations. Because he would keep fasting until 12 o'clock and do his puja; we also had to fast. This kind of discipline with which he worked is not very easily amenable. But it is worth it; that is how they all used to praise and appreciate.

My mother, though illiterate in the modern sense of the term, was such a highly cultural treasure and cultural wealth. She used to tell me several times, as I had opportunities of going abroad after my Ph.D. in her innocent way as to why I should go to study there. I should go to teach there. That is how she had the conception of Indian leadership. We say we are Vishwaguru, yes definitely at one time, with the Upanishads, Vedas, Puranas, Bhagavad Gita, Kautilya Arthashastra and such a rich treasure of wisdom associated with them. It was lost over time because of this slavery and intellectual dominance of the outside world. The inner feeling of a traditional lady, like my mother was that that we are Vishwaguru, so I should go there to teach.

Ultimately in my life I never went abroad to do PhD. I used to say quite proudly that I am an indigenous product. I am an efficient import substitute. I am sorry for repeating these words. They occur to me as I am talking here in extempore manner. My philosophy was to do things which bring name to us. Do everything with what Japanese industrial culture says, commitment, competence and consistency.

Our Dharma and karma yoga concept in Bhagavad Gita is the same thing. We should do our prescribed duties with diligence, commitment, competence, consistency, and as a service to God, as a service to nation, as a service to mankind. This was the definition of dharma. Dharma is not just rituals traditional methods of doing puja and spending time on concentrating on

rituals. No, it is a public principle of dedicating oneself to the cause of the public without selfish motives, that is dharma.

Our Acharyas emphasized the need for duty. The prescription of the Bhagavad Gita is that you do your duty without worrying about the results; they come on their own. This is the kind of message that keep coming to us again and again. I can keep on quoting any number of such traditional words of wisdom to see how lifestyle is governed by the traditional sources of our literature.

It is because of the training in Sanskrit and Indology, right from the childhood at home, that I'm at home in economics as well as in Indology. I was the Chancellor of Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati for 10 long years. At one time I was handling six or seven top positions. I was Managing Trustee of the Indian Economic Association Trust for Research and Development. I was chairman of the Indian Econometric Society. Currently, I am continuing as the Chairman of the Indian Econometric Society Trust for Research and Development.

This kind of attitude to do the work selflessly was my motto. That was one philosophy, which I feel we should imbibe. Now in the government or even in the private sector, the attitude of doing work for rewards has increased so much, that we have lost the concept of dutifulness. That is why Prime Minister Modi ji has chosen to name the Rajpath, the Kartavya Marga. The first philosophy of life is to do your duty meticulously. This

comes from the training and culture at home and our faith in the traditional wisdom. That is also as a message for the future.

An institution can be built, if the Director is a selfless person. I tell you, in most of the institutions, a number of articles are published by the director but I should not be wrong if I say 80 per cent of them are authored by the junior colleagues, Director just lends his name. Once a junior colleague came to me and said he would make his paper as a joint paper. No, I said you have done it on your own. You acknowledge my help and guidance but publish it in your name; you should get the credit for it. That is how the Director should be free from his own self-interest. Most of the time, directors want credit for themselves, that ruins.

The second point I want to say that institution should be a place of love and mutual respect. Mutual respect and love are missing in 99 per cent of the institutions and also in the bureaucracy. It makes the persons demotivated. I remember once one of the colleagues came to me with a long memo, saying that this was wrong and that was wrong. I read that memo and kept it in the drawer. I said look you tell me what needs to be done. I don't like to be boss in the office. I don't like to give memos and to take memos. You come and discuss with me; I'm available all the time. Your problem we would resolve together, it is an institution of joint venture. I kept that memo in my drawer and asked him one by one all his points. Some were solvable, some he realized that they were not solvable. He went completely satisfied. I remember in office, I used to talk to

the receptionist, peons, drivers, Amit and Satyavir, all of them with affection. Satyavir was a person who was giving milk to our house. Once he said “Sir, give me a job” He know driving so I gave him a temporary driving job. Later on, he became regular. He became almost an ADC for me throughout my life.

I remember how we should treat the people. Once G. Parthasarathi sent me a boy for consideration for a job; he was the son of the dhobi (washer man). Next time he asked me what happened whether there was no vacancy or there was no possibility. I told him Sir Dhobi’s son had come. He got angry: “Why do you call him dhobi’s son? Call him by his name. He has his own personality.” I apologized. This was the nature of our G. Parthasarathi. As a human being he was extremely cordial to all the people, but highly disciplined.

At another time a cell phone was lost in the organization. Everyone started accusing an individual. I called that individual and asked him whether he had really taken or not. Initially, he dillydallied but later on he admitted, he had.

Once one officer was not coming to the office regularly, he used to come and go away. Then I called him and discovered that he had lots of family problems, his wife was not cooperative. I called his wife also; both of them came together. They admitted that they had been discordial to each other. Later on he became very regular and did an extremely good work on data collection and data archiving and so on.

Again I found a very senior officer was having quarrels with his wife. I called both of them and explained to them that this was not in their interest. They managed to get together. I don't want to name the person. But anyway, relationships in the office are to be cordial. I find in the bureaucracy and in institutions relationships of mutual disrespect, memos and complaints should not be there. I remember once Jaffar, a peon, used to go on Fridays for Namaz and come late a little bit. All other people complained against him. Then I asked them; "Do you not go to Sai Baba Mandir on Thursdays and come late to the office." They were silenced. That is how we must understand each other. Jaffar always used to come and wish me that Allah would always keep me happy. He was a father of nine children. While going abroad, I used to give some money to him and also to the receptionist. I would tell the receptionist that I was going to such and such place and return by this time. My household people used to say that I talked a lot with the driver. I told them he was a person who was doing lot of work for me. The work culture should be such that it should give importance to everyone. If driver does not come or a house keeping person does not come one day, the entire office is disturbed. That is why in Bhagavad Gita Krishna says that there is an interdependence in the interrelations of the work done by everyone. He says if the work cycle is broken then the entire system collapses. That's why you must consider everyone as an important person in the world.

In our system, at no time, the varnashrama system was meant to bring in the differentiation, discrimination and submissiveness of one or the other. They were all professional categorization of the society for a smooth functioning of the society and social order. Later on, the British introduced this division among the varnas and made them fight with each other. I can vouchsafe very strongly that it was the trick of the British to make us fight with each other. Otherwise, there was a lot of cordiality among the varnas. Grahastha, Brahmacharya, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa are meant with different marginal propensity to consume and marginal propensity to save. You are moving from one lifestyle to the other to conserve resources. Sometimes in grihastha ashrama you will use more of the resources, but later on you will reduce them. In sanyasa you are supposed to reduce the claim on resources. Today, the sanyasis are much more rich and capitalists. I am sorry for saying that but sanyasa was meant to give a resource balance in society.

Then let's talk about environment. The old concepts of environment were not just Prithvi, Vari, Tejas, Vayu, Akash but they also meant time, consciousness, mind etc. Time is an important resource; you should not pollute it. Consciousness is an important resource, you should not pollute it. Mind is an important resource, you should not pollute it. My thinking is that our development concepts have originated from the ancient thoughts of wisdom, not just out of the modern thoughts of wisdom. The economic science is not western; it is indigenous to

India. Kautilya's Arthashastra gives us an extremely important welfare model. I am combining them the way in which I developed the institution and also the wisdom or the approaches with which the new society should adopt.

I feel development is an indigenous process. We don't need to develop only by importing technologies. If your human resource is not ready to use that technology, that technology will be wasted. Therefore, human resource has to be the basic element for developing an economy and the approach of human resource has to be pure. It has to be productive and totally detached and duty oriented. Therefore, if the mind is polluted, the entire environment is polluted. I always say that a new development paradigm should be launched. The new development paradigm requires a new approach to our social science also. The new approach to social science should define man as a holistic entity.

You may wonder, I'm talking philosophy, religion and so on. To me, the religion, philosophy and the Vedic way of life are the most accurate description of the way of life. It is not just ritual, not just yagna, not just pooja, upanyasa, but it is meant for giving you a basic philosophy of life. The new development paradigm should consider man as a holistic man, a combination of materialism and spiritualism. We are now moving too much towards materialism. Many consider capital development and capital accumulation are the only source for development. No, you must also develop the spiritual aspect of it. Happiness is not just a function of your material possession or of material objects.

It is also a state of life, a state of mind, which makes you happy. The spiritual dimension gives you concepts like happiness, contentment, general welfare, global welfare, selflessness etc. All these are values, which are imbibed in our ancient wisdom, and we must combine them and consider as a holistic man.

Recently I spoke on C.R. Rao centenary celebration about holy metrics, that is combining spiritualism and materialism. We must evolve new parameters of development. That is the message to the new world. I am very glad that in the G20 initiatives, a number of ancient Indian thoughts are being propagated. I heard in one of the seminars of the G20 initiative about Archana, how important it is.

In the modern world, consumption is considered to be the engine of growth, whereas in the spiritual world, restraint on consumption is the engine of growth. Restraint on self-consumption, maximization of consumption of the society as a whole is the objective, not maximization of the individual consumption; there is a difference. If you want to appropriate all the resources to yourself, and continue to consider it as yours, then you won't make the resources available for others. There is the whole concept of daana, the whole concept of satisfying with restraint on consumption. Again, I may quote Bhagavad Gita where Krishna says that your enemies are not those sitting in Kauravas side, but your enemies are desires and anger. He deplores on the craze for more and more.

Once when Dr Murli Manohar Joshi went to an international conference, the concept of sustainable development came up due to Brundtland Commission on Environment. The idea was to put restraint on not only the consumption of the rich, but the idea is to have restraint on everybody's consumption. This refers to the basic needs of life, nothing more than that. If you say more is required, it should be by sacrificing rather than by appropriating. That is why this entire new approach in United Nations came after discussions with me, I should say without any hesitation. Dr Murli Manohar Joshi introduced the concept of sustainable consumption. That became a hit in the United Nations Conference. Thus, the new concept of sustainable consumption emerged as a contrast to the concept of sustainable development. As I said already, environment of minds should not be polluted, and time should not be polluted. If a project time overruns, you have done the pollution of the time resulting in cost overrun. That is why the new approach to philosophy is required; a new paradigm of development has to be evolved.

I am glad that the G20 initiatives, in the seminars organized by Sachin Chaturvedi, as leader of the intellectual side of the G20, are emphasizing on the Indian ethos and wisdom and giving to the world an Indian philosophy of life. I feel the entire concept of development and social science should undergo change. I end up by giving you the most beautiful, comprehensive philosophy or rather model of welfare, multidisciplinary model of welfare by Kautilya Arthashastra. It was published only 200 years ago, but

it is known to us all for more than 2300 years. But that wisdom was lost for such a long time. In Kautilya's Arthashastra, dharma does not mean religion, rituals and so on. It is a value system. As I said, dharma is duty mindedness, dutifulness and value system. Capital is not necessarily the source for happiness. If you don't have capital, you borrow, and if borrowed capital is not enough, you again borrow. That is the kind of indebtedness that is coming today, because of the non-sustainable consumption. To have the right kind of capital formation, you need the right kind of political system, the governance. People at the helm of affairs should observe restraint on use of resources and power - how beautiful it is. Corruption is due to the fact that each one has lost his control on his own senses. He wants to first expropriate for himself, and then leave it for others. It is wrong to say that in our royal system the kings and so on were not replaceable. Kautilya's Arthashastra says you can throw away the king if he is not functioning according to the principle for a king. There are many examples of kings being discarded.

You should have modesty in your approach. You must have the capacity to respect the elders, respect the scholars. The elders in terms of knowledge, in terms of age, in terms of experience, in terms of wisdom should be respected. If they are discarded, then that Rajya cannot survive. Rajyam is governance, not just king and so on. Vignanam means scientific temper. We must understand that Paramatma exists everywhere and He alone owns the resources as per the Ishavasya Upanishad. All the

resources belong to Him, not to the state alone. Such a profound socialism was there in our Upanishads.

Wisdom means to know that Paramatma owns everything. Wisdom comes as the first set of sutras in Kautilya's Arthashastra. Arthashastra deals with the statecraft, talks about the appointment of ministers, talks about the principles of state governance, principles of conquering others, principles of state ownership.

The first set of Arthashastra principles deal with the model of welfare and this should govern our philosophy and approach to development in the future. So, I feel RIS should continue to function as a think tank of the developing world. Non-alignment in the economic field is still valid. There is still a lot of exploitation taking place and we should see that intellectual input is provided to remove this. The whole approach of start-ups which Modiji has started is serving a tremendous amount of interest of the people. It is giving scope for indigenous skills. Skill generation is another area which RIS should take up. I find in our place where I'm staying here, Mantralayam or like other many other places, skills are very much lacking. I feel 80 per cent of the jobs could be created if skills are created at the grassroot level. RIS should undertake special studies on grassroot level literature, grassroot level problems of development. Here, of course, women's initiatives are there in local and micro-level development. Instead of spending time on macro level issues, we must spend more time on micro level issues which are

relevant for the Indian context, Indian villages. You must adopt villages and transform them to serve their welfare and interest. Some new approach is required. I feel we must move away from Adam Smith and Ricardo and come to the indigenous wisdom. There is a need for doing this kind of things. I wish RIS a very very bright future, not only forty years, but four hundred years so to say.

One of the other areas for RIS was to develop the documentation centre because we had to start from scratch to build a library which is useful for work on developing countries. We started doing that and evolved a good documentation centre which was used by all the network institutions. In that process, I must really record with appreciation, with gratitude, with admiration the contributions made by our Vice-Chairman, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty. Sukhamoy Chakravarty was known as an encyclopaedia on social sciences. He was admired by Jan Tinbergen in a very crisp statement, "He came to me as a student but he left me as my teacher". That is how he gave credit to Sukhamoy Chakravarty.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty used to visit our documentation centre in the evenings. He would give a ring to me from the Planning Commission that "Panchamukhi, I am coming. Keep that biscuit of the IIC ready for me." He would first of all go to documentation centre and go through the books and suggest ten or twelve new books to be purchased. That is how our documentation centre developed and became one of the best

Documentation Centres in the developing world. Later on while doing our work on GSP, tariff preferences, WTO etc., it was extremely useful for us. That is one point I want to highlight and express my gratitude to Sukhamoy. He left us at a very young age and later on Dr Manmohan Singh became our Vice-Chairman. When G. Parthasarathi left us, I was at his bedside. We wanted Dr Manmohan Singh to continue as Chairman. Manmohan Singh also made very significant contributions to the development of the RIS.

It is with great pride that I recall we also organised a major conference, the World Economic Congress in 1986. That was again just two years after I took over as the Director General of RIS. At the World Economic Congress, there were more than 3000 delegates from all over the world, most Nobel Laureates had come. I was the convener and had singlehandedly with the help of the RIS staff organised the event very successfully. I also produced a paper along with my colleagues in the RIS on Agriculture-Industry relations and later on I was given to edit one of the volumes of the World Economic Congress which was published by the Macmillan's. It was published with joint editorship with Jeffrey Williamson of Chicago. I had the privilege of getting this credit as a result of this organisation and there the RIS worked almost as the Secretariat. I cannot mention the amount of work, manual work, physical work, and intellectual work. I remember one of the stalwarts of the future Nobel Prize winners, Professor Robert J. Aumann, game theorist was to come

from USA, Chicago and he is an Israeli. At that time Israelis were not given visas to India; so there was a problem. At 10 o'clock in the night in the US, I gave a ring to Muchkund Dubey. I must take the name of Muchkund Dubey as he also helped us a lot in developing RIS. He made the arrangement for visa.

Muchkund Dubey was very active in the SAARC period as Foreign Secretary. He supported us in doing the study on trade manufactures and services. When we were to go from IIC to India Habitat Centre, first Habitat Centre refused our application because we are not doing any work on habitat. Then we evolved some programmes of work on habitat and showing how housing development is part of the development process again resubmitted our application. At that time, G. Parthasarathi, myself and Muchkund Dubey went to the office of the India Habitat Centre persuaded them to give space to RIS. We have a very coveted space in the India Habitat Centre as the RIS office. Initially the money for paying to the India Habitat Centre was also rejected by the Ministry of External Affairs but later on it was Muchkund Dubey who helped us in getting the funds for the purchase of the RIS. Thus, Muchkund Dubey has played a tremendous role in developing the RIS and he has been an orator, a good speaker on the causes of development.

I am once again thanking Sachin Chaturvedi and all the people of the RIS for giving me this opportunity. RIS is my home because I worked for 18 long years and developed it from my heart and I am happy.

RIS: TOWARDS A PROACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE TRACK-II PLATFORM FOR INDIA'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY



NAGESH KUMAR

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Globalization of economic activity became a defining trend of the world economy since the mid-1980s. With India also embracing globalisation with reforms and liberalization since 1991, cross-border trade and investments have become increasingly important factors for development as well as channels of transmission of global economic trends. Increasing global economic integration has also been accompanied by an increasing internationalization of economic policy-making with the completion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and the emergence of WTO. Alongside that, regional and bilateral free trade arrangements (RTAs and FTAs) and preferential arrangements have emerged as important factors shaping global production, investment and trade patterns. These trends have added a lot of complexity to the economic policy-making of emerging countries like India which have to respond to the growing agenda of trade negotiations to protect their interests, evolve their own regional and bilateral economic cooperation arrangements with other nations to promote their interests and take other necessary strategic interventions to protect and promote local industry. This requires highly specialized analytical inputs. A country of

India's size and international economic interests needs strong and effective think-tanks which can provide such analytical back-up for policy making.

RIS has emerged as a premier policy think-tank having shaped the emerging development policy agenda over the years in multilateral, regional and bilateral contexts. The Fortieth Anniversary provides an occasion to take stock of its past achievements and define the future trajectories of the institution. In what follows, I reflect briefly on the highlights of its contributions and achievements during 2002-09, the period I had the privilege to serve as the Director-General and lead the RIS team.

Strengthening the Development Dimension in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations

An important pillar of RIS' work programme focused on global economic governance with a focus on WTO's ongoing Doha Round negotiations and supported the policy making on select issues such as Investment, NAMA, SPS, multilateral environmental agreements, and IPR related issues.

Tilting the Outcome of WTO Negotiations on Investment: An important highlight of RIS' work on multilateral trade negotiations in run up to the Cancun Ministerial has been in the area of multilateral framework on investment (MFI) that industrialized countries were seeking to evolve under the Singapore Issues and which was opposed by India among other

developing countries. However, developing countries were losing the ground in the absence of a substantive position against it. To respond to this RIS prepared a paper a paper on Investors' and Home Governments' Obligations making a case for balancing of interests of host governments, investors and home governments by incorporating investors' obligations and home government obligations in a proposed Multilateral Framework on Investment, as per the mandate of the Doha Declaration. This study formed the basis of an official submission on the subject by India and co-sponsored by five countries including China to the WTO's Working Group on Trade and Investment.¹ This proactive submission proved to be a turning point in the debate at the WGTI. A stormy debate followed at the ensuing sessions and brought the developed countries on the defensive for once. The EU for the first time showed willingness to drop contentious Singapore Issues from the agenda at the Cancun Ministerial in September 2003, which, however, collapsed. Eventually, the Investment issue along with two other issues was dropped from the agenda of the Doha Round in the July Package adopted at the end of July 2004.²

World Trade and Development Reports (WTDR): RIS launched a new series of flagship reports in 2003 to highlight the development concerns and asymmetries arising from the ongoing negotiations. *World Trade and Development Report 2003* launched at the WTO's Cancun Ministerial Meeting was widely discussed and set the tone of interventions by

developing countries.³ *World Trade and Development Report 2007* was presented to developing country negotiators at the WTO Public Forum in Geneva among other locations and was received well.⁴ RIS continued to produce policy papers on different items on the agenda of WTO negotiations.⁵

A Southern Perspective on Intellectual Property Rights: RIS contributed to the debate on the development effects of strengthening of intellectual property rights world-wide under WTO's TRIPS Agreement.⁶ Many of RIS proposals on the reforms of IPR system were taken on-board by the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR), established by the British Government in 2001, in its report.

Global South's responses to the Global Financial Crisis: RIS brought together senior experts from think-tanks in the Global South and international institutions at a major international conference organized in February 2009 to discuss on the responses to the global financial crisis of 2008/09 and launch the silver jubilee celebrations of RIS. The outcome document of the Conference summarized key policy responses to be taken at global, regional and national levels.⁷

India's Role in the Emerging East Asian Regionalism

RIS has been deeply involved in shaping the agenda of India's Look East Policy, adopted at the time of economic reforms of

1991, under which it has engaged ASEAN and became its Summit-level dialogue partner in 2002.

Securing India's Place in the East Asia Summits: Although successful in becoming a Summit-level dialogue partner of ASEAN, India had failed to become part of the ASEAN+3 Summits that started in the wake of the East Asian crisis, bringing together the ASEAN countries, Japan, China and South Korea and launched the Chiang Mai Initiative. The East Asia Vision Group in its report in 2001 had established the feasibility of an East Asian Community built on ASEAN+3 formula. Perceiving the potential emergence of a major community in India's immediate neighbourhood of which it is not a part of, to be inimical to its interests, RIS proactively articulated a vision of an Asian Economic Community based on JACIK –Japan, ASEAN, China, India and Korea – which could evolve into a broader community in a phased manner.⁸ RIS studies provided convincing evidence, through CGE model simulations, how a JACIK based community would be superior to ASEAN+3 based one, enhancing welfare gains for each of the participants primarily due to profound synergies between India and the ASEAN+3 economies. An aggressive programme of policy advocacy followed around the proposal with a series of high-level policy dialogues, involving policy think tanks from all the JACIK countries organised in New Delhi (March 2003, November 2005, November 2007), Tokyo (November 2004), Taiyuan, China (September 2005), Singapore (November 2006), besides numerous presentations/

roadshows made in different ASEAN+3 capitals. Based on RIS research and policy inputs, Prime Minister Vajpayee talked about the Asian Economic Community based on JACIK in his speech at the ASEAN-India Summit in Bali in October 2003. Subsequently, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, elaborated it in his speech at the ASEAN-India Summit in Laos in November 2004 arguing that the (JACIK-based) Asian Economic Community could become ‘an arc of advantage, peace and shared prosperity’. At the Laos Summit a decision was taken to launch the East Asia Summit in 2005. Having already articulated its interest in being part of a broader scheme of Asian economic integration, India was invited to participate in the first East Asia Summit held in December 2005. Therefore, the proactive work of RIS at the track-II level reinforced by the Track-I diplomacy helped India to become part of the East Asia Summit, that includes leaders of ASEAN and all its dialogue partners including the US and Russian Federation.

Shaping the Agenda of the East Asia Summit: RIS continued to engage the think-tanks and thought leaders to reflect on the agenda of the EAS.⁹ RIS represented India in the Comprehensive Economic Partnership of East Asia (CEPEA) Study Group established in 2007 as per an EAS mandate, and hosted one of its meetings, following which the negotiations were launched for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership of East Asia (R-CEP).^{10,11} RIS also represented India on another EAS mandated Expert Group formed to conceptualise the establishment of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA).

In view of its contribution, RIS was invited to represent India on the Regional Institutional Network (RIN) of ERIA and has contributed to several ERIA studies.¹²

Vision of ASEAN-India Partnership: ASEAN-India Partnership Vision 2020 was prepared by RIS as per the mandate of the ASEAN-India Summit 2003, in collaboration with think-tanks of all the 10 ASEAN countries (organized under the framework of the ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks) formed the basis of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity, adopted at the ASEAN-India Summit 2004.¹³ RIS continued to provide intellectual stimulus to the ASEAN-India Partnership through Eminent Persons Lecture Series as well as other publications, eventually hosting the ASEAN-India Centre.¹⁴

Economic partnership with other East Asian Countries: India also pursued deeper engagement with Japan, Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, among other East Asian countries, under its LEP through comprehensive economic partnership agreements. RIS contributed to the track-II studies.

Fostering South Asian Economic Cooperation

RIS has been deeply engaged in shaping the economic cooperation agenda in South Asia under the SAARC and BIMSTEC frameworks, from the beginning.

SAARC Regional Study of Trade in Services in SAFTA Treaty: RIS prepared this study with national focal points in each SAARC country as per the mandate of the SAARC Summit

in Dhaka adopted in March 2008.¹⁵ Subsequently RIS was mandated to prepare a draft South Asia Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) by the SAFTA Ministerial Council which was later adopted by the grouping.

Future Directions of BIMSTEC: Studies were prepared in collaboration with the think-tanks of Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh, as mandated by the Yangon Ministerial Meeting and was presented to the First Summit of BIMSTEC held in Thailand in 2004.¹⁶ RIS continued to focus on the BIMSTEC agenda.¹⁷

South Asia Development and Cooperation Reports (SADCRs): RIS had launched a series of flagship reports prepared in collaboration with South Asian think-tanks in 2001/02 to foster the South Asian identity, make a case for cooperation, identify potentials and offer policy lessons to exploit them. The *SADCR 2004* prepared on the eve of the 12th SAARC Summit held in Islamabad helped in building a positive atmosphere for advancing the economic cooperation agenda including the signing of the SAFTA Agreement.¹⁸ The *SADCR 2008* prepared on the eve of the 15th SAARC Summit sought to advance the agenda beyond SAFTA to cover transport connectivity, trade facilitation, and energy.¹⁹

Institutional Architecture for South Asian Cooperation: Jointly with the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) of Sri Lanka, RIS launched the *South Asia Economic Journal (SAEJ)* in 2000 to promote scholarly research on South Asian cooperation. The journal quickly achieved a big following and became a highly

reputed peer-reviewed journal published by Sage Publications and abstracted in the *Journal of Economic Literature* of the American Economic Association. RIS-IPS partnership also led to the launch in 2008 of South Asia Economic Summits (SAES) supported by a network of think-tanks in the South Asian countries and global partners. Both *SAEJ* and *SAES* have proved resilient and have continued to grow despite the geopolitical sensitivities that have affected the official SAARC process.

Proposals for strengthened Transport Connectivity in South Asia: Recognizing that poorly developed overland connectivity was not allowing the exploitation of intraregional trade, RIS developed proposals for transport corridors that could be revived in the region.²⁰

India's Approach to Development Partnership and South-South Cooperation

Promotion of South-South Cooperation has been an important mandate of RIS and has covered a number of activities throughout.

Shaping the Agenda of India's Development Partnership and South-South Cooperation: RIS has contributed numerous policy notes submitted to the Government to shape the India's approach towards South-South Cooperation including on preferential treatment to the least developed countries that formed basis of India's Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme for the Least

Developed Countries announced at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of WTO in 2005.

Policy Proposals for the NAM Summits and UNCTAD XI:

At the request of the Government of India, RIS prepared policy papers on India's approach towards the NAM Summits held in 2003 and 2006.²¹ RIS also made submissions to the preparatory process of the UNCTAD XI as an accredited NGO and issued a document reflecting a development perspective.²² It has also undertaken studies to support the negotiations of the GSTP-III Round.

Setting the Agenda for India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA)

Economic Cooperation: RIS played an important role in guiding the Indian position towards IBSA in its early formative years. RIS prepared a report for the Government of India on the potential of trilateral grouping and in run up to the Brasilia Summit held in 2006. RIS represented India on the IBSA Academic Summits and hosted one in 2008, in conjunction with the 3rd Summit of IBSA Leaders held in New Delhi.²³

Framework of South-South and Triangular Cooperation:

RIS prepared a key paper for the Asia-Pacific Development Cooperation Forum, held in Bangkok in 2008 outlining a framework and recommendations for promoting SS and Triangular Cooperation in a transparent and inclusive manner, which also served as the background paper for the UN EcoSoc Session 2008.²⁴

Africa-India Partnership: RIS hosted a major conference of senior Indian and African academics to reflect and contribute to the agenda of the India-Africa India Forum Summit hosted by India in April 2008.²⁵

South-South Cooperation in New Technologies such as Biotechnology: RIS had launched publication of the *Asian Biotechnology and Development Review*²⁶ and a series of biennial Asian Biotechnology and Development Conferences in collaboration with think-tanks of other Asian countries to foster cooperation in exploiting the development potential of new technologies and minimize the threats.²⁷

Strategic Responses to Globalization

RIS also focused on India's domestic policy agenda to maximize the opportunities and minimize the threats from globalization.

Employment-Oriented Export Strategy: RIS prepared this study for the Government of India which provided major inputs for the National Foreign Trade Policy adopted in 2006.²⁸

Enhancing the 'Quality' of Foreign Direct Investment: RIS also produced studies that pioneered a concept of 'quality' of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows and role of different policy measures including performance requirements to enhance it.²⁹

India's RTAs Policy: RIS prepared a policy note at the request of the Government on policy options for India against

the background of rising tide of FTAs/RTAs globally and in the region.³⁰

Studies on Outward Orientation and Innovative Activities of Indian Enterprises: RIS also paid attention to analyze the impact of outward FDI undertaken by Indian enterprises on their competitiveness.³¹ Extensive studies on intellectual property protection and other factors impinging on enterprise-level innovative activity were also undertaken.³²

Strategic Approach towards Competitiveness in Knowledge-Based Industries: RIS undertook a major study sponsored by the Government of India on factors and policies determining enterprise-level competitiveness in manufacturing sector backed up with detailed field-work based studies of five knowledge-based industries which came up with a comprehensive set of recommendations.³³

Institutional Networking, Outreach and Capacity-Building in the Global South

In tune with its mandate, a major emphasis in the work programme of RIS has been on promotion of Networking and development of working links with similar think-tanks in other developing countries for facilitating capacity building and joint collaborative programmes.

Institutional Networking: RIS developed strong institutional links comprising joint activities, publications, and policy dialogues with: the South Centre, Geneva; Institute for Southeast

Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore; Development Research Centre (DRC) of State Council of China; Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo; Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER); Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta; Korea Institute of International Economic Policy (KIEP); Institute of Developing Economies (IDE) of Japan; International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD), Bangkok; Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka; South Asia Watch on Trade, Energy, and Economics (SAWTEE), Kathmandu; NAM Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC), Jakarta; Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences; among other institutions. These networking links have been fruitful for conducting regional studies.

Representing India in Regional and International Networks:

RIS represented India on the boards of regional networks such as Asia-Pacific Research Network of Trade Research (ARTNET set up by UN-ESCAP), International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), Geneva; SAARC Network of Researchers on Global Financial and Economic Issues of the SAARC Secretariat; South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), Kathmandu; Think-tank of Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Indian-Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG); 16 institutions network of the Economic Research Institute of ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), another track-II network of 16 countries conducting a study of CEPEA, and established the ASEAN-India Network of Think-tanks and the New Asia Forum.

Building Analytical Capacity in Developing Countries: In order to contribute to the analytical capacity of officials and researchers of other developing countries RIS launched a four weeks long training programme on *International Economic Issues and Development Policy* (IEIDP) in 2005/06 (in conjunction with the Government of India's ITEC Programme). This programme has attracted middle-level officials dealing with international economic issues in developing countries with a focus on the least developed countries. In 2007/08, a new Capacity-Building Programme on *Global and Regional Economic Cooperation Issues* (GRECI) with a focus on CLMV/ East Asian countries was launched with funding support from the ERIA, the regional institution established under the framework of the East Asia Summit process. From 2004, RIS started hosting IFS probationers for a weeklong attachment to expose them to the development perspective on global economic governance and strategic responses to trade and investment-related issues which may help them in their work in the missions. Short-term training programmes were also conducted for mid-career officials of the government of India from the economic ministries.

To sum up, therefore, RIS has built substantial expertise on international economic issues and an effective track-II platform for economic diplomacy. It has been able to play an important role in shaping the national policy and economic diplomacy agenda as well as negotiations in multilateral and regional

frameworks to protect India's strategic interests through its proactive policy research and advocacy. Through its institutional networking and outreach, it became increasingly visible in the global forums dealing with trade and investment, to be able to intervene effectively to bring development perspective. It began to contribute to capacity-building in developing countries as a part of India's development partnership. As India emerges on the global scene as the fifth largest economy, on its way to the third, playing an important role in influential global/ regional forums like the G20/UN/NAM/BRICS/SCO/EAS/WTO/IMF/World Bank, the work for institutions like RIS is cut out. One can only wish it greater success and effectiveness in its work, as it enters the fifth decade of its evolution!

Endnotes

- ¹ Investors' and Home Country Obligations (WT/WGTI/W/152, dated 19 November 2002) jointly submitted by India, China, Cuba, Kenya, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.
- ² For a detailed discussion of MFI debate in WTO and RIS contributions to it, see Carlos Correa & Nagesh Kumar. 2003. Protecting Foreign Investment: Implications of a WTO Regime and Policy Options, London: Zed Press.
- ³ RIS. 2003. World Trade and Development Report 2003: Cancun and Beyond, New Delhi: Academic Foundation
- ⁴ RIS. 2007. World Trade and Development Report 2007: Building a Development-Friendly World Trading System, New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- ⁵ See for instance, RIS. 2003. Cancun Agenda: Environmental Requirements and Developing Country Exports, RIS Policy Brief #5; among several others.
- ⁶ Kumar, Nagesh. 2003. 'Intellectual Property Rights, Technology and Economic Development: Experiences of Asian Countries', Economic and Political Weekly, XXXVIII(3):209-226 (based on a submission to the CIPR).
- ⁷ RIS. 2009. Financial Crisis, Global Economic Governance and Development: Responses of Asia and the Global South, RIS Policy Brief #41, <https://www.ris.org.in/en/node/660>

- ⁸ See for instance, RIS. 2003. Relevance of an Asian Economic Community, RIS Policy Brief #1; Nagesh Kumar, Editor (2004) Towards an Asian Economic Community: Vision of a New Asia, New Delhi and Singapore: RIS and ISEAS, among numerous papers and briefs issued.
- ⁹ See RIS. 2006. Towards an Asian Economic Community: An Agenda for the East Asia Summit, New Delhi & Singapore: RIS and ISEAS; RIS. 2006. Regionalism with an 'Asian Face': An Agenda for the East Asia Summit, RIS Policy Briefs #28; RIS. 2007. Broader Regional Economic Integration in Asia: An Agenda for the East Asia Summit, RIS Policy Briefs #33; Nagesh Kumar, K. Kesavapany & Yao Chaocheng, Editors. 2008. Asia's New Regionalism and Global Role: Agenda for the East Asia Summit, New Delhi & Singapore: RIS & ISEAS.
- ¹⁰ For executive summaries of the CEPEA reports, see <https://www.dtn.go.th/file/get/file/1.20220314aa814c993f9df066abcc39cd176d68f6162209.pdf>
- ¹¹ India has participated in the RCEP negotiations and may join the Agreement at some point in future.
- ¹² See for instance, Nagesh Kumar, Editor. 2008. International Infrastructure Development in East Asia: Towards Balanced Regional Development and Integration, ERIA Research Project Report No 2
- ¹³ See RIS. 2004. ASEAN-India Vision 2020: Working Together for a Shared Prosperity, ASEAN-India Network of Think-tanks, New Delhi: RIS.
- ¹⁴ See for instance, RIS. 2004., India-ASEAN Partnership in an Era of Globalization: Reflections by Eminent Persons, New Delhi: RIS, <https://www.ris.org.in/en/node/508>; Nagesh Kumar, Rahul Sen & Mukul Asher, Editors (2006) India-ASEAN Economic Relations: Meeting the Challenges of Globalization, Singapore and New Delhi: ISEAS and RIS.
- ¹⁵ RIS. 2009. SAARC Regional Study- Potentials of Trade in Services under SAFTA, <https://www.ris.org.in/en/node/456>
- ¹⁶ RIS. 2004. Future Directions of BIMSTEC: Towards a Bay of Bengal Economic Community, in collaboration with the IPS of Sri Lanka, IITD of Thailand, and CPD of Bangladesh.
- ¹⁷ See for instance, RIS. 2008. Deepening Regional Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal: Agenda of the BIMSTEC Summit, RIS Policy Briefs #38.
- ¹⁸ RIS. 2004. South Asia Development and Cooperation Report 2004, New Delhi: RIS
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MY PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON RIS

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DR BISWAJIT DHAR

Former Director General, RIS



My introduction to RIS was in 1986, when I got associated with an UNU project quite accidentally. I was absolutely elated to join the project team as the legendary economist, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty was the project leader. It was an absolute joy to work with Professor Chakravarty, who was then the Vice-Chairman of RIS and intellectual spirit driving the institute. Another fortuitous meeting with Professor Chakravarty in 1988, brought me even closer to him. In course of our interactions, Professor Chakravarty asked me if I would join RIS, an offer that was simply too tempting. When I had accepted the offer to join RIS, little did I realise that Professor Chakravarty was shaping me intellectually, helping me to set out on an immensely satisfying and fruitful journey as a researcher. I must say that I could not have undertaken this journey without the space to express oneself freely that RIS had provided, and for which I must thank our then Director, Dr V.R. Panchamukhi. Moreover, Dr Panchamukhi's wholesome involvement in our studies provided us with real-time peer review, ensuring that RIS studies maintained high academic standards. I must mention that in its first decade, RIS was extremely fortunate to have Mr G. Parthasarathi as its Chairman, whose presence inspired all of us.

I was fortunate to receive occasional advice from Dr Manmohan Singh, the second Chairman of RIS. Although I had long years of association with Professor Arjun Sengupta, I had a relatively brief interaction with him in RIS. Professor Sengupta was a great motivator: his vision was to make RIS as one of the finest research institutions. Unfortunately, we lost him too soon. Ambassador Shyam Saran headed the institution leadership at a critical juncture and provided a degree of stability.

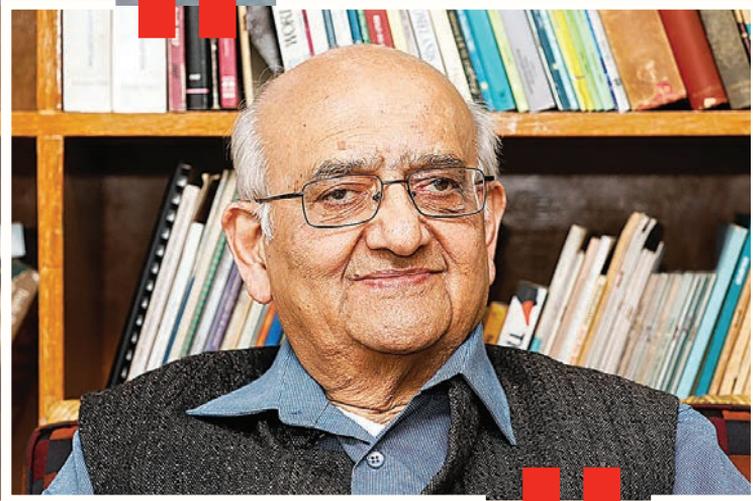
I was extremely fortunate to be a part of RIS especially because the institute brought me in close contact with several academic giants not just of India, but from South Asia and beyond, including Professor Muchkund Dubey and Professor Rehman Sobhan. This was the institute that enabled me to make some close friends through whom, RIS has built strong and enduring institutional relationships, especially with South Asian think tanks.

RIS was established to give voice to the aspirations of the countries of the South, but well before the institution had completed its first decade it had become even more relevant. The global North had undertaken series of moves that resulted in restricting the policy space available with the countries of the South, to undermining their development objectives. RIS was one of the very few research institutions of the South that resisted these moves, which was recognised both in the country and beyond. I cannot express in words the immense sense of satisfaction and pride of being a part of a wonderful institution

for 18 years, which has always put the larger interests of the South above all other considerations.

As RIS completes four decades of its existence, its stakeholders must realise that the institution will increasingly become more relevant as it articulates the voice of the South in the challenging times ahead. Aspirations of the South remain largely unfulfilled and, therefore, RIS needs to put in much larger efforts to ensure that the South realises its cherished goals. I remain hopeful that “my institution” will continue to strive for a stronger and a more prosperous South, the dream of its founders, Ambassador G. Parthasarathi, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Professor Muchkund Dubey, among others.

RIS – BUILDING A MORE COOPERATIVE GLOBAL COMMUNITY



REHMAN SOBHAN

Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD),
Dhaka, Bangladesh



RIS was born around 1983 in New Delhi, located at the Habitat Centre. My good friend V.R. Panchamukhi was appointed as its founding Director General (DG). He was by then an economist of renown with the commitment and capacity to get this new think tank up and running. If I am not mistaken, G. Parthasarathi, (known to all as G.P.), one of the India's most eminent political and foreign policy experts, who chaired the Policy Planning Committee set up to advise the Prime Minister, possibly conceived the idea of RIS as a think tank of the Foreign Ministry but with a special focus on economic issues. At its foundation, RIS was projected for a more exalted role than serving India and was designated as the Research and Information System for Non-Aligned and Developing Countries (RIS). This vision perhaps originated in G.P's commitment to the idea of a strong global non-aligned movement where RIS could play an important role in providing the intellectual infrastructure for such a movement.

This conception of RIS as a think tank with a transnational mission was what encouraged Panchamukhi to reach out to me in Dhaka where I had just taken over as Director General of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), then

Bangladesh's most eminent facility for development research, which as with RIS, was also sponsored by the government. Panchamukhi aspired that BIDS, along with other think tanks in South Asia and beyond, would come together to build a collaborative vision for the region and beyond through a body of quality research on various dimensions of development cooperation.

One of our first collaborative ventures was a conference convened at RIS in the mid-90s on Asian economic cooperation attended by scholars from some of the leading think tanks of the region. Panchamukhi and myself co-edited the volume which collated the valuable presentations made at the conference.

This tradition of international and regional economic cooperation has since emerged as the distinguishing feature of RIS which has now become something of a brand name. I remember advising Panchamukhi that the original title which included 'the non-aligned and other developing countries' was too long for most people to digest. As it has transpired RIS has survived as the recognized identity of the organization as the non-aligned movement (NAM) progressively lost its relevance in the wake of the end of the Cold War which had created the bipolar world order which had inspired NAM.

My own interaction with RIS has been built upon a shared vision for a more integrated South Asia. Following the Asian conclave convened by RIS, Panchamukhi took the initiative and reached out to me to establish a South Asian Economic

Association where RIS would serve as the secretariat. For various bureaucratic complications this idea did not progress very far, but RIS did engage itself in further initiatives to promote South Asia cooperation. It took on the responsibility of publishing a biennial South Asian Economic Survey (now called South Asian and Development Cooperation Report) which was and remains a landmark document on the state of the South Asia economies and their regional interface.

When I retired from BIDS in 1989 and moved to set up the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), as a civil society think tank in 1993, one of our primary missions was to promote South Asian cooperation. Since RIS had already built up a strong body of scholarship in this area, it was natural for CPD to partner with RIS in institutionalizing this mission to bring together some of the regions leading think tanks to work collectively to give substance to the idea of an integrated economic community. Out of our joint endeavors, the South Asia Centre for Economic Policy Studies (SACEPS) emerged around 2000 with RIS, CPD, the Lahore University of Management Science (LUMS), the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IIDS), Nepal, as founding institutions. By this time Panchamukhi had retired and Nagesh Kumar had taken over as DG of RIS. Nagesh played a heroic role in contributing to the development of SACEPS, committing RIS to undertake a number of valuable studies, hosting a number of conferences and board meetings for the organization and

establishing a South Asia Economic Journal (SAEJ) which he co-edited with Saman Kelegama of IPS. SACEPS was initially anchored at CPD but then eventually it moved to Kathmandu as part of a process of rotating responsibility among its partner institutions. As part of this process SACEPS is currently centered at RIS in New Delhi with its current DG, Sachin Chaturvedi as the Executive Director and Professor Deepak Nayyar as the co-chair with Syed Akmal Hussain from Pakistan.

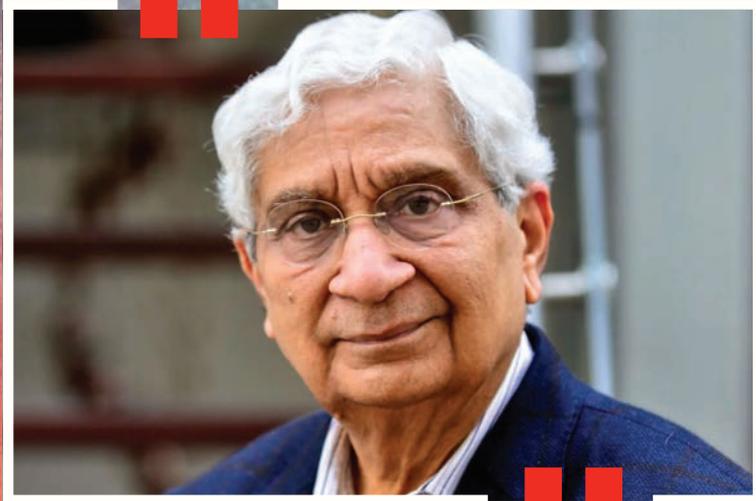
Sachin, who succeeded Nagesh Kumar as DG of RIS, has taken the organization to new heights and has been instrumental in perpetuating the tradition set by his predecessors in widening the global reach of RIS. Today RIS has moved well beyond the domain of working on South Asia, the non-aligned and the developing world and is engaged in exploring India's economic interface with the global community which incorporates the US, EU, Japan and other developed as well as emerging economies in Africa and Asia.

In recognition of its global outreach RIS has been invested by the government of India with the major responsibility of bringing together think tanks from around the world to provide inputs which can be serviceable to India in its capacity as convener of the G20 which was convened in New Delhi in September of this year.

My concluding message to Sachin Chaturvedi and his colleagues is to both recognize and commend RIS on the four decades of inspirational work which has elevated it into one of

the leading global think tanks. My one hope which I leave with RIS is to ensure that its global journey should not distract it from its foundational commitment to build a South Asian Economic Community. I am happy to see that RIS and CPD are continuing to have close collaboration, both on a bilateral basis and as partners in the South Asia Economic Summit initiated one and half decades ago. I am hopeful RIS will take more energetic steps in future to broaden and deepen this vision of a South Asian economic community.

RIS - A THINK TANK FOR GLOBAL SOUTH



DEEPAK NAYYAR

Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and
former Member, RIS Governing Body/Governing Council



This is indeed a special occasion. RIS has completed four decades of its life in the quest to provide a think tank for the developing world. It has been an eventful forty years, laced with successes, in the transition from infancy and childhood to adulthood and maturity. Yet, as an institution, the RIS is young. And it has miles to go in the journey to its destination. It should continue to think big and think long to acquire an international reputation in excellence at the intersection of research and policy from the perspective of developing countries situated in the wider global context.

I have been associated with the RIS as an idea and an institution since it began life, essentially as an economist and an academic for whom the subject of developing countries in the world economy has always been an important hub in research interests, then as much as now. I moved to New Delhi in 1983 around the time RIS was born, just before it was established. This association began because of the then Vice Chairman Sukhamoy Chakravarty, who was a former teacher, a professional colleague and, later in life, a close friend. He introduced me to Mr G. Parthasarathi, the founder Chairman, and Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, the founder Director General. And I was part of many strategic discussions and thinking at RIS in the early years. The bond

grew stronger in the mid-1990s because of a coincidence. In 1995, I was elected President of the Indian Economic Association, succeeding Dr Raja Chelliah. At that time, Dr Panchamukhi was a most active member of its executive committee, so that the RIS was the institutional home for the virtual entity that organized an annual conference and published a professional journal. For me, the Indian Economic Association connection led to more synergies with the RIS, including selection committees for faculty members and the successor of Dr Panchamukhi as Director General. My association with RIS continued when my erstwhile colleagues and friends Dr Arjun Sengupta and Mr Shyam Saran served as successive Chairmen of RIS during 2004-2010 and 2011-2017 respectively. I was also a member of the RIS Governing Council from 2010 to 2016. There is one more connection which has continued. In 2014, I was persuaded by founders of SACEPS, a virtual network of development research institutions in all the South Asian countries, which seeks to promote dialogue and cooperation among countries of the sub-continent, to assume the role of Co-Chairman. At the same time, the Executive Secretariat of SACEPS was moved to the RIS in New Delhi, which continues.

To start with, RIS was established as the Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries. The global context was very different at the time. It was a world in which the West was dominant, while the East provided some countervailing political power, in the form of

an ideological struggle between capitalism and communism manifest in the Cold War. For the Rest, non-alignment was a political act of being equidistant from both sides in the super-power rivalry. More importantly, perhaps, for the post-colonial states in the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, it was about solidarity in creating an identity of their own and carving out a niche for themselves. The world has changed profoundly since then. The distinction between East and West vanished with collapse of communism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in 1990, as capitalism emerged triumphant. The world of competing political ideologies was replaced by a world with a single dominant ideology, and a unipolar world in which the United States was the dominant economic and political power. Non-alignment progressively lost its relevance.

In 2004, the RIS was renamed, dropping the word non-aligned. However, this unipolar world lasted less than two decades. The financial crisis in late 2008, which led to the Great Recession, turned out to be the deepest crisis in capitalism since the Great Depression. This eroded the triumph of capitalism. The G7, in effect G1, was replaced by the G20. But that is not all. The first quarter of the 21st century has witnessed a distinct shift the balance of economic power in the world, attributable largely to the rise of Asia, particularly to China, though many other countries have contributed to this profound transformation.

Thus, the erstwhile distinctions between the North and the South, or the West and the Rest, are also far more diffused. And the

world continues to change. The Russia-Ukraine war has created a new geo-political divide, with the West on one side and Russia-China on the other. But a large number of developing countries have consciously decided not to choose sides in this conflict. These nations straddle the three continents of the Global South: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru in Latin America; Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa in Africa; Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam in Asia. Taken together, this diverse group of twenty-five countries accounts for 45 per cent of world population and 18 per cent world income. Even if these countries have refused to choose sides, it would be a mistake to think of this as a new incarnation of the non-aligned movement. It is not about solidarity. It is driven far more by the pursuit of economic, political or strategic national interests.

Yet, the problems of the developing world, both old and new, continue to exist. Absolute poverty has been reduced but persists. The rapid economic growth would have reduced poverty much more, were it not for that rapid increase in economic inequalities between people within countries. Furthermore, growth did not lead to commensurate employment creation, so that underemployment and unemployment continue as chronic problems. The international economic architecture created soon after World War II, when the developing world had no voice, is characterized by an enormous democratic deficit

in international politics despite the pronounced shift in the balance of economic power. The world, already in the midst of a difficult economic conjuncture attributable to the Corona virus pandemic, a slowdown in economic growth and double-digit inflation, is confronted with mounting economic, social, political and environmental challenges. This situation is juxtaposed with more frequent natural disasters across the world – forest fires, excess rainfall, floods, high temperatures, droughts, receding glaciers, rising sea levels and so on– confirming that climate change is a clear and present danger for humankind. There are multiple intersecting crises, as a consequence of which the poor and the marginalized are the most vulnerable everywhere in the world. The need for international collective action has never been greater.

In my view, the *raison d'être* of an institution such as RIS at this juncture is even stronger than it was forty years ago. It can and should reinvent itself as a think tank for the Global South, using the intersecting space between research and policy, to highlight the common causes and stress the importance of collective action, for the developing world as a whole. In doing so, it could facilitate the articulation of a collective voice and help forge solidarity among countries, not only in pursuit of development that would improve the wellbeing of their people, but also in their quest for a more equitable international economic and political architecture which is long overdue. This is both a challenge and an opportunity.

RIS - A THINK TANK FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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DR S.R. HASHIM

Former Member, RIS Governing Body/
Governing Council.



I am happy to recall my close association with RIS during 1995-2005. I was a member of Governing Body and Governing Council for three terms during that period and had the privilege of working with Chairmen Dr Manmohan Singh, Shri K.C. Pant and Dr Arjun Sengupta. Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, the then professor of International Economics in Bombay University was brought in as the first Director General of RIS in 1984 and remained in this position for the next 18 years. As the founding DG, he gave shape and direction to the work of RIS and provided the much needed institutional stability in the initial period. Dr Panchamukhi was succeeded by equally distinguished DGs and I am happy to see that RIS continues to have dynamic leadership in Professor Sachin Chaturvedi.

In the then prevailing environment of the Cold War, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of which India along with Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Indonesia (under the leadership of Nehru, Tito, Nasser and Sukarno) was a founding member, was born out of the legitimate fear of developing countries that they would be the worst sufferers of an open confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States. Born in 1961, the important objective of NAM was to evolve strategies to avert such a confrontation. The movement, in 1984, turned to one of

the most important concerns facing the developing countries, i.e., search for a new 'world economic order'. The movement in its course, took a clear anti-imperialist position, endorsing all liberation movements. The Movement openly attacked the 'information monopoly held by the capitalist world' and recommended creation of an alternative information network. Accordingly, in 1976, the meeting of the Coordination Bureau of NAM at Algiers recommended establishment of a Research Information System (RIS) in member countries. RIS in India was established in 1983.

The Post-Cold War era was marked by a big thrust towards trade liberalization. WTO came into existence in 1995. Whereas GATT had mainly dealt with trade in goods, the WTO had a much wider mandate to cover also the trade in services and intellectual property. After the initial thrust of liberalisation of trade, new trends and concerns have emerged. Trade rules have not kept pace with changes in global economy. Changing technology, changing business practices, and wider global integration of the production systems have raised new issues. Regional groupings have emerged. Sustainability has become a big concern and sharing the economic burden of sustainability between developing and developed world remains a contentious issue. In the wake of high economic integration the new world transport corridors have acquired importance as never before. Newly emerging conflicts are adversely affecting the developing countries putting strains on food and energy availability.

Policy making and international trade agreements involving such a wide spectrum of activities demand highly nuanced and technically informed negotiations. I am happy to observe that RIS has admirably performed with the needed research and information support to policy making in India. RIS has made its contributions through seminars and symposiums, reports, documentation and research publication. RIS has also organized orientation and training programmes for young policy makers in developing countries. Just to recall only a few of the activities, in the very first year of the start of its functioning, RIS invited Dr Raul Prebisch to deliver a lecture on North- South and South-South economic relations. RIS made significant contributions at the Eighth World Economic Congress held in New Delhi, 1986. RIS hosted South Commission with H.E. Julius Nyerere and others members in 1989. RIS brought out a publication *The World Economy in the Mid Eighties*. Some of the other important publications were *African Economic Development: An Agenda*, *Biotechnology Revolution and the Third World*, *Economic Cooperation in the SAARC region and India and ASEAN: Issues in Sectoral Dialogue Partnership*. RIS provided important input on G15 Agenda in 1990. RIS launched a flagship publication *South Asia Development Cooperation* in 1999. The fourth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Yangon mandated RIS for preparation of paper on future direction of BIMSTEC (2001). *World Trade Development Cooperation Report* was launched at Cancun, Mexico in 2003. During the last decade

RIS has brought out publications on prospects of blue economy in Indian Ocean, ASEAN-India Development Cooperation, sustainable development goals, Indian science diplomacy, non-tariff barriers and several other important topics. More recently RIS has provided information and research support to the preparation of G20 India Presidency by organizing interactive sessions on G20 priorities for India and has supported the event in many important ways.

RIS has emerged as a think tank not only for India but for all the developing countries, fully justifying its new name Research Information System for Developing Countries. Over the four decades of its existence, this institution has established itself as an important repository of research, information and knowledge on issues confronting the developing countries. RIS has fully justified its existence in terms of aims and objectives with which it was established.

I am sure RIS will maintain its vigor and dynamism in handling the new emerging issues in the world in future. My best wishes for RIS.

CHARTING FOUR DECADES OF RIS JOURNEY SOUNDS BETTER



AMBASSADOR S. SHASHANK

Former Foreign Secretary



This year, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), I find myself recalling the institution's profound influence on shaping India's international economic policies, and my own journey with the organization. Reflecting back to my time as the former Foreign Secretary, the early 2000s was a period of considerable shifts in the Indian international relations landscape. Guided by the founding values of the RIS, we provided significant inputs to navigate these transformations, influencing policymaking and enhancing India's position on the global stage.

During this period, India was treading the shifting sands of an evolving global order. This was a time when our engagements with key international groupings such as SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, IBSA, and later BRICS were in a dynamic phase. Their significance in India's foreign policy calculus was increasingly gaining importance, requiring a nuanced and informed understanding of the evolving geopolitics. The research inputs provided by RIS contributed significantly to our diplomatic discourse and negotiations, facilitating India's strategic engagements with these alliances.

RIS, with its public-service orientation, was uniquely positioned to provide balanced and impartial policy advice. This was a time when India, faced with allegations of protectionism to avoid mounting foreign reserve deficits, needed to adopt a balanced stance, one that deftly negotiated the path between protecting our domestic industries and aligning with the global agenda of free trade. The work of RIS helped chart the course of our economic diplomacy, marrying our national interests with the imperatives of the global economy.

Distinctly, RIS' balanced orientation distinguishes it from other institutions, some of which may be influenced by industry funding or foreign interests. This impartiality ensured that our research outputs were uninfluenced by vested interests, offering unbiased policy advice to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Government of India.

During my tenure at RIS, I was privileged to work on numerous projects focusing on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Bilateral Trade Agreements (BTAs), pivotal for enhancing India's economic integration with the global marketplace. I was also fortunate to work closely with Shri K.C. Pant, a guiding force who championed our efforts to strengthen India's economic diplomacy.

As for my personal contributions, I take immense pride in bringing RIS closer to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), as the former Foreign Secretary, emphasizing the criticality of economic diplomacy in our external affairs. This integration has not only increased the relevance of our research but also ensured that our policy recommendations found resonance at the highest

levels of government. This partnership accentuated the role of economic diplomacy in our external affairs, a dimension that has since become a cornerstone of our foreign policy.

A key aspect of our work was in interlinking various think tanks for a coherent view on Indian international relations. Through academic exchanges, policy dialogues, and collaborations, we facilitated a cross-pollination of ideas that significantly enriched our policy discourse and allowed us to offer a more informed and comprehensive policy advice to the Government of India.

Finally, one of the crucial decisions that came to fruition during this period was the appointment of the esteemed Dr Nagesh Kumar as Director-General of RIS. I had the privilege of being on the selection committee that oversaw this appointment, a decision that was to set the stage for the sustained growth and increased relevance of RIS in the years to come.

Today, as I look back, it fills me with immense pride to have been a part of this remarkable institution during such a transformative phase. RIS has played a significant role in shaping India's economic diplomacy and has been instrumental in ensuring that our national interests, and that of all developing countries, find their just place in the world order.

As we walk on the journey to the next forty years, we do so with the knowledge that RIS will continue to provide informed and nuanced policy recommendations, guiding India's economic diplomacy in an increasingly interconnected world. I look forward to witnessing the contributions RIS will make to India's and the Global South's story in the global international order.

RIS: THE WELLSPRING OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM



LAKSHMI PURI

President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)



In the 1990s, when I was head of Economic and Multilateral Economic Relations Divisions for nearly six years in the Ministry of External Affairs, the RIS was an essential ‘think factory’ to help us make policy and conduct diplomatic negotiations in national interest. I had the privilege and the comfort of drawing upon this treasure house of research, analysis and ideas to power India’s innovative approaches and outreach during the first decade of India’s successful foray into the economic diplomacy terrain. In keeping with its mandate, RIS helped give meaning and substance to India’s long held vision of solidarity and mutually beneficial economic cooperation with the developing regions and countries of the South and their causes. RIS research and analysis also aided in evolving and honing India’s positions on global economic, financial and technological governance and rules of the game and on the equitable provisioning of global public goods for the developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Small Island States of the Caribbean and the Pacific.

There were four vectors of India’s economic diplomacy then as now that we pioneered in that decade to coincide with the liberalization and opening up of our economy. The first - South-South Economic and Technical cooperation or ECDC and TCDC pursued through the ITEC programme, was the largest in the world, providing training to over 1000 nominees a year and executing pilot projects in developing countries. The second

was a strengthened focus on trade, investment and technology promotion with all countries of the North and South. The third was the assessment and formulation of developing country interests and positions on longstanding and emergent issues of North-South contention and cooperation and global economic and financial governance and rules. Last but not least was the forging of inter-regional, regional and sub-regional alliances and economic cooperation agreements - South-South and North- South.

The RIS role was most prominent in undergirding the third and fourth focus areas. It became a vehicle through which decision influencers and makers in MEA and Ministry of Commerce and Trade could thoroughly examine, discuss, dissect and evaluate options in foreign economic policy. It was also a bridge between the government and trade and industry for calibrating positions in various fora in advancing national interest. It was fortuitous that this period was seminal in terms of the number of economic cooperation projects I was tasked to either initiate or nurture.

G-15, an interregional South-South grouping aspiring to be a counterpart of the G7 was one I was in charge of advancing. RIS supported me with their research through all the annual summits, especially the one held in New Delhi in 1994, helping to prepare its agenda and outlining cooperation in the food sector for example.

The enunciation of India's Look East policy was an effort by the government of India to cultivate extensive economic and

strategic relations with the nations of Southeast Asia to bolster its standing as a regional power and a counterweight to the strategic influence of China and overemphasis on its historically Look West tendency. Initiated in 1991, it marked a strategic shift in India's perspective of the world. I was involved in giving substance to Sectoral Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN and to later shepherd the relationship through to the full Dialogue Partnership in 1995. RIS provided invaluable analysis and inputs to guide our interaction and make impact. Today the Act East policy of PM Modi's government continues to be provided support by RIS.

As an offshoot of the Look East policy, I also negotiated for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). This is a sub-regional economic and technical cooperation grouping among the Bay of Bengal countries that is thriving today; which again received inputs from RIS.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC) which, as the late Nelson Mandela suggested, was based on "the natural urge of the facts of history and geography" to broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic cooperation bringing together 2.7 billion people from 25 countries whose shores are washed by an Ocean that is named after India. It has today evolved into IORA, a dynamic forum for expanding cooperation in diverse

areas including in the frontier domain of the Blue Economy and ocean governance.

RIS provided valuable studies in the initial years on themes ranging from complementarities among IORA countries including in trade, prospects for economic and scientific cooperation and relevance of a Payments and Clearance Arrangement among IORARC countries. RIS continues to be the repository of valuable research and convening support on the Blue Economy related vision and policy blueprint of India and related cooperation.

The RIS also prepared studies on many emerging issues of global economic and financial governance and North South cooperation ranging from Multilateral agreement on Investment to the labour clause in international trade. RIS also played a key role in preparing Indian and other developing country positions for UNCTAD Conferences and South-South Cooperation/G77 summits. It participated in many 1.5 and 2.0 track dialogues held around official meetings and negotiations.

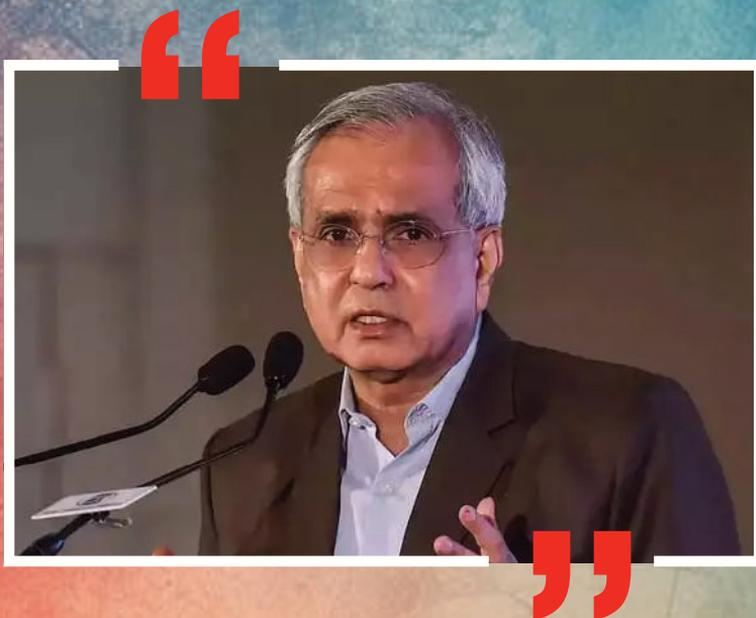
During my seven years heading the flagship International Trade Division of UNCTAD-UN Conference on Trade and Development - a veritable OECD of the Global South as also a forum for North-South negotiations - I again had the opportunity of interacting with RIS when we set up a Network of Development Think Tanks of the South

I remember having the privilege of working during those days with DGs Dr V.R. Panchamukhi and later Dr Nagesh Kumar as

well as Professor Muchkund Dubey, former Vice-Chairperson, RIS (formerly Foreign Secretary); former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh as Chairperson, RIS; and other distinguished Chairpersons of RIS, including K.C. Pant, Dr Arjun Sengupta, Ambassadors Shyam Saran (formerly Foreign Secretary) and Mohan Kumar (former Indian Ambassador to France) and Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, currently Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. I have also had the pleasure of knowing and interacting with current RIS DG Dr Sachin Chaturvedi.

As RIS completes 40 years of its service to building a solid foundation of research and analysis so essential to government of India's policy making and negotiations in crucial areas of economic diplomacy, it can be proud of its exemplary track record and contribution. A resurgent New India is moving towards assuming its place in the comity of developed economies by 2047, a Vishwaguru seeking to champion the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and their achievement by the Global South in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. India will always need such a brain trust to give political leaders and officials the ideational tools to define and serve India's enlightened interest in the world. To be an informed Voice of the Global South in G20 and multilateral fora, government of India will need to draw upon the knowledge and wisdom which RIS must continue to be the wellspring of.

RIS: CHANGING ROLES WITH CHANGING NEEDS OF DEVELOPING ECONOMIES



RAJIV KUMAR

Chairman, Pahle India Foundation, Delhi;
and former Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog



It is entirely to the credit of its leadership and the faculty that while the Non-Aligned Movement has slipped into history, the Research and Information Systems (RIS) established in 1983, to serve as the intellectual powerhouse for NAM, has not only survived but gone from strength to strength. I have seen it grow from its very inception when its offices were set up in the India International Centre, across the gardens from my own working space in ICRIER. I dare say that during the early eighties the two organisations could be seen as representing two contrasting world views. RIS, guided by the world view of its founder, the formidable Shri G. Parthasarathi, worked to articulate and strengthen the voice and position of the non-aligned countries on the world stage. ICRIER, founded by the brilliant ICS officer, Dr K.B. Lal, on the other hand, saw the establishment of a liberal rule based global economic order in which all signatories were equal participants and where there were no ideological divergences, as the sine qua non for the advancement of all developing countries including of course India. That both RIS and ICRIER have continued to thrive over the years, reflects India's enviable reality of allowing sufficient space for the thousand different ideas to bloom in the public domain and shape the policy narrative.

RIS has been fortunate to have high quality professionals committed to academic excellence and to institutional development as its leaders. I say this on the basis of both personal and professional interaction with at least three of them who between them led RIS for more than 35 years of its forty year evolution. Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, Dr Nagesh Kumar and Dr Sachin Chaturvedi, who presently leads the organization, have ensured that RIS has its own distinct and substantial imprint on various dimensions of India's international economic relations and on India's negotiating positions in global forums. Under their leadership, RIS has established a vast network of partners in other emerging economies, which enables it to leverage its own strengths in influencing global and domestic policy narrative. As a result, RIS is today an active participant in a number of global and regional networks like the IBSA Academic Forum; ASEAN India Network of Think Tanks; BRICS Academic Forum; South Asia Centre for Policy Studies to name some of them.

Furthermore, as a part of its sustained effort to build domain expertise for India's relations with partner countries, RIS has established a number of centres for regional studies and for fostering cooperation. The more prominent ones are: ASEAN-India Centre; Global Development Centre; Forum for Indian Development Cooperation; Forum for Indian Science Diplomacy; Blue Economy Forum; Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Forum and Forum for Indian Traditional Medicine, among others. These centers within RIS and the global

and regional networks of which RIS is a member, reflects the wide spectrum of global issues and policy challenges on which RIS is presently engaged. At the same time, RIS has provided substantive technical and academic backstopping support for the Ministry of External Affairs, for India's participation in important forums like BRICS, G20, BIMSTEC and SAARC.

It is indeed creditable that despite its intensive engagement with the MEA as its designated think tank capacity, RIS has also developed some unique data bases, which are used by researchers in India and other emerging economies. These include the Macro and Trade Database (1956-2021); Development Cooperation Database (1946-2022) and the Trade Classification for Low, Medium and High Technology Products. These have been used by RIS faculty to make theoretical and methodological contributions as reflected in the development of the NTB Index; FDI Performance Index; Basic Needs Framework; Cost of Non-Cooperation, etc. The very large number of publications by its in-house faculty and visiting scholars is also testimony to RIS' continued focus on building analytically strong research capabilities.

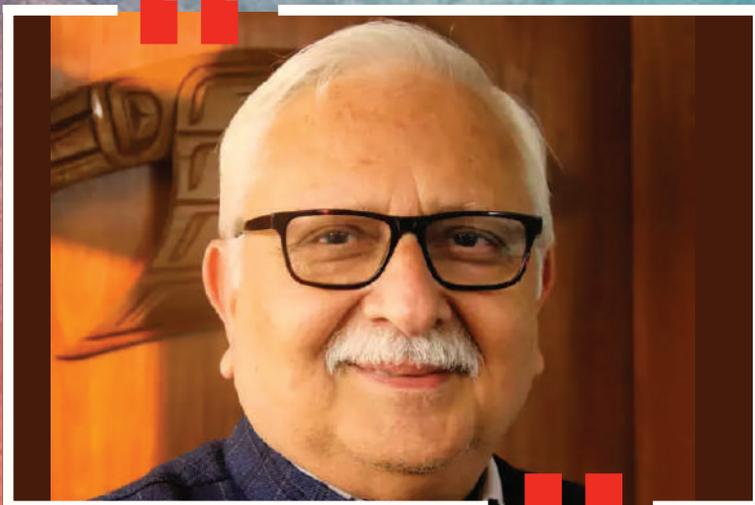
Overall, RIS and all its friends like me, can look back with a great deal of satisfaction at the achievements over the last four decades. The most significant of these, to my mind, have been to give analytical backstopping for India's negotiating positions in the various WTO rounds and providing the academic framework for India's positions in important global forums like the BRICS

and G20. This has been in plentiful evidence over the last year in which India assumed the presidency of the G20. RIS has excelled itself as a substantive knowledge partner for as many as seven working groups of the G20 and for disseminating the knowledge about G20's multifarious activities and initiatives in a large number of universities.

Going forward, I wish RIS all the very best for its future. It will see its role get further enhanced as India emerges as the third largest economy in the world and occupies an even more influential position in multilateral and regional negotiations and on global platforms. I am sure RIS will be endowed with sufficient resources to attract the best talent available world-wide to join its faculty. And at the same time it will enjoy the needed academic autonomy to put out evidence based and analytically rich research output that will provide an objective basis for the evolution of India's economic diplomacy.

THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IS IN MULTILATERALISM

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RAJESH TANDON

President, Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

Shifting Trajectory of Development Cooperation

International development cooperation emerged in the decade of 1950s mostly as North-South Cooperation intended to assist the recently decolonised countries in the global south. As the primary goal was to help develop the nation-states, most financial assistance and technical cooperation was channelled from government to government (G2G). The dominant mode of partnership was between the government of a developed country and a developing country. With the emergence of inter-governmental multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and International Financial Institutions, G2G cooperation was further bolstered. In the following years, both bilateral and multilateral institutions started considering NGOs and civil society as legitimate and capable actors along with the private sector in advancing the development cooperation agenda. Nevertheless, most development cooperation initiatives operationalised through development projects preferred to work with a single actor at a time either through G2G or civil society to civil society (C2C) mode.

A host of initiatives by the UN system such as establishing the Non-governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) and Confederation

of NGOs (CoNGO) affiliated with the UN headquarters were clear indications to expand the UN's engagement with the NGOs and civil society (Martin and Tandon, 2014).¹ Simultaneously, the other multilateral development banks such as the World Bank and Asia Development Bank also started recognising civil society as a legitimate actor in development cooperation. A shift in policies for adopting a multistakeholder approach within these multilateral and bilateral agencies became apparent through Paris Declaration (2005), Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and later through the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011). Much of these efforts, however, did not adequately acknowledge the significant contribution of South-South Cooperation in international development cooperation. It was only the Busan Partnership Document which explicitly recognised the critical role of South-South Cooperation and multistakeholder engagement in achieving global development goals.

The Indian development cooperation dates back to the time of the country's independence. In fact, the first instance even goes back to the pre-independence interim government formed in 1946 (FIDC, 2016)². Chaturvedi (2015³ & 2016⁴) in his seminal works on Indian development cooperation observed that India's development assistance programme has the twin objectives of mitigating poverty and revitalising economic growth in partner countries, and currently works through five implementation channels: capacity-building and skills

transfer, technical cooperation, grants, development finance (including concessional loans and lines of credit), and trade and investment (which also include credit lines). This broad portfolio of modalities allows for flexibility that makes it attractive for partner countries in the global south. However, Bandyopadhyay (2016) observes that although India's development cooperation practices are guided by the framework and principles of South-South Cooperation, however, they are yet to utilise the potential soft power and density of relationships that NGOs and civil society can bring to this compact. The South-South Cooperation conceptually acknowledges and envisages the role of people-to-people contacts in extending solidarity between developing societies. However, Indian development cooperation modalities and their deployment—largely government-to-government and business-to-business—do not optimize soft power, which substantially resides outside the state. This state-centricity in South-South practice makes it truncated and inadequate, as it does not tap into the energy, talent, knowledge, expertise, and network of relations available with Indian CSOs.

India Leadership: Championing South-South Multilateralism

The second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation⁵ held in March 2019, 40 years after the first Conference held in Buenos Aires, also popularly known as BAPA+40, was momentous in the history of South-South and

Triangular Cooperation. The conference not only recognised the past efforts of south-south cooperation and triangular cooperation but also emphasised the critical role these need to play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It sought complementarity and convergence among north-south, South-South and Triangular Cooperation to reach the overarching goal of poverty eradication in all forms and dimensions. One of the most significant outcomes of the conference was an enthusiastic acknowledgement of multistakeholder engagement in South-South and Triangular Cooperation including the contributions of civil society, academia, philanthropic organisations, and private sectors among other stakeholders in the implementation of SDGs.

In the Indian context, the contribution of civil society organisations in South-South Cooperation involving multiple stakeholders has been documented by Bandyopadhyay and Tandon⁶ (2016) and Bandyopadhyay⁷ (2017). In the context of triangular cooperation, it was further reinforced by an OECD study (Chaturvedi and Piefer-Söyler, 2021)⁸ that the implementation of triangular cooperation projects happens mainly through non-governmental channels, notably civil society organisations, the private sector, research institutes and others.

Forum for India Development Cooperation: Decade of Multi-stakeholder Actions

The Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC) was launched in January 2013 to develop a robust knowledge repository on policies, programmes, and practices of India's development cooperation. It intended to engage civil society, academia, media, and the private sector among other actors in the development cooperation trajectory of India through research, dialogue, outreach, and convening. FIDC aimed to analyse trends in South-South Cooperation and contextualise Indian policies by facilitating discussions across various sectors and stakeholders. It worked towards raising awareness about development cooperation policies through a variety of activities. Over the years, FIDC has made significant efforts to bridge the gap between Indian CSOs and the government on policies and programmes related to development cooperation, external affairs, and international relations. It strongly advocated for mechanisms to institutionalise civil society engagement not only in India's development cooperation efforts but also in other multilateral forums such as BIMSTEC, IBSA, BRICS, and G20 among others.⁹

The past efforts of FIDC stood out on several accounts. FIDC has contributed to developing a solid knowledge base on different dimensions of India's development cooperation within the framework of South-South Cooperation. Despite its long-standing development cooperation practices and notwithstanding announcing a stew of diplomatic priorities, India had somehow, shied away from conceptualising,

articulating, and communicating its principles and policies of development cooperation. As India's development cooperation efforts started to expand both in terms of the volume of resources and modalities, there was a growing consensus within the political administration as well as within the academia, think tanks, civil society groups and media that a few principles and values must be articulated coherently. FIDC played a crucial role in intellectualising India's own development cooperation values and principles basing not only on past practices but also to guide future development cooperation. What is known as south-south cooperation today, much of its clarity came from numerous discussions organised across the global south. FIDC has offered one of the most influential intellectual voices both domestically and internationally by clearly articulating such values and principles as respecting national sovereignty and independence, non-interference in domestic affairs, national ownership and autonomy, equality and mutual benefit, non-conditionality, voluntary, demand-driven, etc. (Chaturvedi and Mulakala, 2016).¹⁰ This is not to say that the articulation of all these values did not have its own share of academic and intellectual criticism, but it will be hard to imagine that the expansive development cooperation practised and promoted by India would be devoid of any guiding principles and values.

The other contribution of FIDC has been toward enhancing awareness and knowledge among Indian CSOs on the practice of south-south cooperation as well as supporting intellectual

engagement of academia in India's development cooperation and south-south cooperation by fostering a community of research-practice praxis involving civil society and academia on south-south cooperation (Bandyopadhyay, 2016).¹⁰

Roads Ahead

India's dynamic and inclusive leadership as Chair of G20 has provided new opportunities for further deepening 'new' multilateral development cooperation based on inclusion, mutuality, respect and shared vision. Moving forward, greater convergence between earlier approaches to south-south cooperation and triangular development cooperation is likely to happen as challenges of achieving SDGs post-pandemic and climate resilient development are important factors in development cooperation.

The national platform of FIDC has set an important process of dialogues between think tanks, civil society and government. Its role in deepening knowledge about new ways of practicing 'new' multilateralism will become critical. It can also showcase a model of domestic development partnership to other BRICS, IBSA and emerging regional platforms. Many countries of global south can evolve their own endogenous models, learning from Indian experiences. FIDC triggered several initiatives around teaching development cooperation from the perspective of 'new' multilateralism. Young researchers and development professionals can be offered wider opportunities for credit-based and other forms of learning.

One of the critical factors in the roads ahead towards 'new' multilateralism is stronger network of civil society and thinktanks amongst global south. While independent networks currently operate, there is a need for more regular interactions and conversations regionally and globally.

Finally, we acknowledge the roles played by RIS and its leadership in enabling and anchoring a process of inclusive dialogue across civil society, academics, private sector and government. This critical role of its dynamic leadership has facilitated 'bridging across' diverse actors and making development

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FOR 40 YEARS NOW,
RIS HAS DISPLAYED
IMPRESSIVE
CREDENTIALS AS A
THINK-TANK



ANDRÉ DE MELLO E SOUZA

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I first visited RIS' headquarters in India Habitat Centre (IHC), New Delhi, in 2014, just before the second edition of the Delhi Process Conference. I had been invited to this Conference and arrived a few days earlier, at the request of the newly appointed Director General Sachin Chaturvedi, to help with preparations. At that occasion, I remember being surprised to find fewer researchers and staff and a smaller space than I had expected. After all, by then RIS had already displayed an impressive list of achievements and gained much recognition in the global development community, particularly after the first edition of the Delhi Process Conference held in 2013. In the light of these achievements, I had come to expect a much larger think tank, and had to conclude that RIS, already at that time, punched much above its weight.

The accomplishments of the Delhi Process – in which I have been involved and participated in all editions except for the first one in 2013 – are indeed difficult to overstate. At that time, there were still few venues to discuss South-South cooperation, and little joint action between Southern researchers to generate endogenous, evidence-based knowledge on the subject, so the series of conferences specifically aimed at filling this gap was truly groundbreaking. The creation of the Core Group and the

Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) were largely the result of discussions that took place in those conferences. In general, it has become commonplace in international events to refer to the Delhi Process as the most important forum for discussing South-South Cooperation. Bringing together many researchers and practitioners, joining academia, civil society, governments and international organization representatives in the pleasant and well-equipped facilities of the IHC, the Delhi Process has come a long way since 2013, being held every year since then except for interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RIS' work with United Nations bodies, oftentimes in the ambit of the NeST, should also be mentioned. It has been an active and prominent member of the Global Thinkers and South-South Galaxy of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). It has also played an active role in BAPA+40 – the United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation – held in Buenos Aires in 2019, with the sponsorship of numerous side-events and the speaking role of its researchers in many more.

I have also worked closely with RIS in the ambit of the BRICS Think-Tank Council and BRICS Academic Forum. Most of the editions of this Forum held during the Indian presidency were coordinated and organized by RIS. More recently, RIS was a member of the organizing committee of the T20 during the Indian presidency and organized flagship events in several Indian cities, including in Bhopal. All of these events provided

channels for think tanks and their researchers to influence policy at the international level. They also offered a beneficial spinoff helping to create, expand and consolidate think-tank networks and collaboration.

Putting together major international events like these is no simple task. As someone who has also been involved in organizing similar events in Brazil, I can better appreciate the challenge. My institution, the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and myself have benefited and learned from RIS in its approach to South-South Cooperation and the BRICS and T20 processes. In this sense, I think it would be fair to say that RIS not only researches and discusses South-South Cooperation, but also directly practices such cooperation. In this regard, RIS' role in offering Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), a capacity building platform that trains officials from numerous countries, should also be mentioned.

In addition, let me point out that RIS has done an impressive job in paying tribute to India's traditional welcoming attitude towards foreigners and, in addition, to exposing us to the country's long history and rich and diverse culture. For someone like me who comes from the opposite side of the globe and from a country not only geographically distant but also with very distinct historical trajectory and cultural influences, this is something to be highly valued. More generally, in initiatives such as the BRICS or pertaining to South-South Cooperation, the importance of exchanges that allow us to learn more from each

other's countries and societies should not be overlooked. It not just promotes Indian soft power but also helps to bring together countries that historically and traditionally have interacted largely by means of intermediation from the North.

While working closely with the Indian government, RIS maintains its autonomy as a think-tank. As such, it has come to achieve that very rare combination in institutions of its kind of producing top-quality research while simultaneously maintaining political relevance and influence. As someone who has worked for 14 years in a governmental think tank, I am in a position to better acknowledge this meritorious combination.

Under the leadership of Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, RIS has developed a firm Southern stance to global development while at the same time never failing to engage and maintain an ongoing dialogue with the representatives of high-income economies. It provides an Indian perspective to global and regional processes while keeping the door open for the viewpoints of other major stakeholders in these processes. In so doing, it honors its roots in the non-aligned movement and helps to address the most pressing needs and challenges of the developing world. Yet, RIS also understands that these can only be addressed by also bringing Northern countries to the negotiating table. It hence appreciates the value of dialogue and compromise which – particularly in the times we live in – are so badly needed in international politics.

As RIS celebrates its 40th Anniversary, it can be proud of its extensive achievements and the key role it has played among Indian and international think-tanks at a relatively young age. I am honored and proud to have partnered with RIS and worked closely with its team of researchers on so many different projects and initiatives for over 10 years now. I only hope that in the years to come we continue to count on the research, the publications, the events, the inputs in international discussions and the overall support of RIS while we struggle to change governance structures and policies in ways that respond to the legitimate claims of the South for greater global justice and well-being.

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF RIS: SHAPING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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ANTHEA MULAKALA

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Introduction

On its 40th anniversary, Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) stands proudly as a leading institution that has significantly impacted the discourse on international development cooperation, south-south cooperation, and global governance institutions. RIS has been at the forefront of promoting dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and innovative solutions to foster inclusive development. This tribute highlights RIS' remarkable journey, the annual Delhi Process series, the exceptional contributions of its Director General Sachin Chaturvedi, and the institution's continued relevance in the development cooperation space.

A Trailblazer in Development Cooperation: For four decades, RIS has been a trailblazer in the realm of development cooperation. Through its extensive research, RIS has provided valuable insights and policy recommendations that have influenced the strategies of governments and international organizations. RIS' emphasis on South-South Cooperation and its commitment to fostering equitable partnerships have helped reshape the global development landscape.

Annual Delhi Process Series: Rethinking Development

Cooperation: Since 2013, RIS has hosted the annual Delhi Process series, a hallmark event that brings together prominent and less-heard voices from diverse backgrounds. Through inclusive dialogues, this platform encourages critical thinking, explores emerging challenges, and identifies innovative solutions to global development issues. The Delhi Process has served as a catalyst for transformative outcomes, promoting inclusive partnership models, discussion of alternative discourse and institutions, gender mainstreaming, SDGs integration, and the role of technology in development.

Key Outcomes from the Delhi Process Meetings: The Delhi Process has yielded tangible outcomes that have shaped development policies and practices:

Inclusive Partnership Models: By advocating for more inclusive partnerships, the Delhi Process has empowered smaller nations and marginalised communities to actively participate in development initiatives.

Alternative Discourses and Institutions: RIS has promoted critical and challenging dialogue on the status quo of development cooperation and sought actively to revise and reform this with insights and experience from the global south.

Gender Mainstreaming: RIS' emphasis on gender mainstreaming has led to the integration of gender perspectives in development cooperation, ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of women in all aspects of development.

SDGs Integration: The Delhi Process has been instrumental in aligning global development efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, catalyzing action towards their achievement.

Leveraging Technology and Innovation: Through the Delhi Process, RIS has highlighted the potential of technology and innovation in addressing developmental challenges and bridging digital divides.

Acknowledging Sachin Chaturvedi's Impact: Director General Sachin Chaturvedi has been a driving force behind RIS' success. His expertise and visionary leadership have elevated RIS' standing in the global development arena. As an inaugural participant and critical contributor to The Asia Foundation's Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation Series since 2011, Dr Chaturvedi has extended RIS' influence internationally. I am grateful to him for co-editing with me, the first-ever volume on India's development cooperation, *India's Approach to Development Cooperation* (Routledge, 2016).

RIS' Continued Relevance in Development Cooperation: As RIS enters its fifth decade, its importance in the development cooperation space remains unparalleled. This is particularly evident through the critical role RIS plays in supporting India's role as G20 chair in 2023. The world faces new challenges that demand innovative and inclusive solutions. RIS' role as a knowledge hub, fostering meaningful dialogues, and promoting collaborative partnerships will continue to be indispensable in shaping the future of development cooperation.

Conclusion: As we celebrate 40 years of RIS, I salute its significant contributions to the discourse on international development cooperation, south-south cooperation, and global governance institutions. The annual Delhi Process series, under the visionary leadership of Sachin Chaturvedi, has been instrumental in rethinking and reshaping development cooperation. RIS' continued relevance in the development cooperation space is vital as we strive for a more equitable and sustainable world. Congratulations to RIS on its milestone anniversary, and here's to a future filled with even greater impact and transformative change!

**INCLUSIVE AND
INTELLECTUAL POLICY
ENGAGEMENT AT
THE HIGHEST LEVEL—
CONGRATULATIONS TO
RIS@40**



PROFESSOR DORIS SCHROEDER

Director of Centre for Professional Ethics, UCLan School
of Sport and Health Sciences, UK



Sincere congratulations to RIS@40 and especially to its Director General Professor Sachin Chaturvedi. After 40 years, RIS stands out as a beacon of intellectual policy engagement, and I am privileged to have enjoyed 20 years of cooperation to date.

The collaboration between RIS and the Centre for Professional Ethics, UCLan UK started in Cairo in 2003. A decade after the adoption of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD 1992), the **benefit sharing** objective of the CBD required further policy and academic work in which RIS and the UK team joined forces. Results were disseminated to various audiences, including at COP 9 in Bonn in 2008 (see below). One of the main impacts of our work was that the European Commission added compliance with the CBD to their ethics check list, which meant that adherence to the CBD's benefit sharing clauses became compulsory for recipients of European Union funding.

Our main axis of collaboration after benefit sharing was **access to essential medicines and the intellectual property rights system**. Dr Milto Ladikas and Professor Thomas Pogge from UCLan UK and Dr Ravi Srinivas from RIS enlarged our teams, which also included world famous philosopher Professor



Sachin Chaturvedi (left) and Doris Schroeder (second from right) " at COP 9 in Bonn 2008.



Sachin Chaturvedi (third panellist from left), Doris Schroeder (panellist on the right) in Brussels, 2016.



Sachin Chaturvedi (top second from right), Doris Schroeder (top left) and Peter Singer (bottom right) in Oslo, 2008.



Peter Singer. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, equitable access to medicines has become even more pressing and this thematic collaboration is ongoing through the project.

In the last 10 years, further collaborative work focused on the **ethics of emerging technologies**, in particular, synthetic biology and nanotechnology. RIS' experience in providing advice on South-South collaborations and innovation for development filtered through to European audiences, for instance at events in Brussels (see 2016 event below). The possibilities for inclusive innovation, taking account of the needs of the marginalized, whilst still providing commercial profits were of particular interest around the globe.

From the start, it was impressive to see Professor Sachin's endeavours to bring **ethics into policymaking**. As a moral philosopher, I had not previously met a government-based economist with such a strong interest in ethics. It seems that a combination of economic questions with moral philosophy is a long-standing tradition in India, which Professor Sachin and RIS are carrying forward into the 21st century.

This approach aligned fully with a RIS-organised T20 event in Bhopal in January 2023. The conference deepened work on the overall objectives of India's G20 presidency: more inclusivity in our 'one world' and a focus on wellbeing and sustainability rather than a sole emphasis on GDP. Or as expressed in the Bhopal Declaration:

Breaking the decades of dominance of neo-classical growth models, the new development transformation must assign emphasis on social, environmental, cultural and ethical factors of wellbeing than per capita income alone.

To improve inclusivity, Professor Sachin and I agreed at the Bhopal event¹ that a new type of policy brief is needed, one that incorporates ethical values. Our innovative values-driven policy brief on the inclusion of the African Union in the G20 initiated this action and was immediately covered by NATURE:

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NEWS | 06 April 2023

Researchers back African Union to join G20 group of largest economic powers

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01014-z>

To date, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, the UK, the US and the European Union have officially expressed support for a G21 (G20 plus African Union), that's 12/20 of the G20 and there remains a hope that India can achieve this master-stroke of inclusion during their presidency.¹



what unites RIS with one of the oldest ethics research centres in Europe (we are celebrating 30 years since the founding of the Centre for Professional Ethics in 2023).

With the increased cooperation between our teams in 2023, I look forward to many more productive years of collaboration with the highly engaged team at RIS under the ethics-driven leadership of Professor Sachin Chaturvedi. All the best to RIS for the next 40 years!

Endnotes

¹ <https://youtu.be/CCgQ5ntnrxE>

RIS – A VERY MUCH NEEDED THINK AND DO TANK!

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STEPHAN KLINGEBIEL

Chair Research Programme, Inter and Transnational
Corporation, German Institute of Development and
Sustainability, Germany



The political changes in the international system in recent years have been profound. One decisive factor is the enormously increased role of actors from the Global South. India is of outstanding importance in this respect: the country itself is a central shaper of international relations, it challenges unjust global governance structures, it uses its opportunities to act as the Voice of the Global South and, last but not least, it is a sought-after partner. All this is more than evident in 2023, when India is using and shaping its G20 presidency very purposefully. India is doing a lot to put development issues on international agendas, including the agendas of Western actors.

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) can rightly claim to be a major player and contributor in this context. With tremendous dynamism, it covers an enormous range of topics. It combines elements of a think tank with those of a do tank in an astonishing way (Klingebiel *et al.* 2023): Analysing, designing concepts, but using a hand on approach, for example when it comes to offering training programmes for people from other developing countries.

RIS and Its Role for the Development Discourse

In my view, perhaps the most visible sign of RIS' work is linked to the issue of development cooperation. Very early on, RIS - led by the current Director General, Professor Sachin Chaturvedi - saw the new dynamics of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation since the beginning of the 2000s and promoted its conceptualisation.

The "Delhi Process" organised by RIS since 2013 has set standards. Unlike intergovernmental formats, it not only serves to bring about consensus on content, but also to allow for controversy in a positive sense. How different are South-South cooperation and Western Development Cooperation? What are the commonalities for South-South Cooperation actors and where are the differences? How can international platforms be used or reformed?

RIS thus became a place where a critical look was taken at the Global Partnership for Effective Development CoOperation (GPEDC) created in 2012, where the sense and usefulness of the new measurement tool TOSSD (Total Official Support for Sustainable Development) was argued about, and where BAPA+40 (Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (20-22 March 2019)) was pre-thought and pre-discussed and the major event was also post-processed.

For many southern and some northern think tanks, some inter-national organisations, southern development agencies and some government officials, the Delhi Process has become a

brand name. The Delhi Process has an important role per se as a networking platform, but additionally through the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST), in whose creation and continuation RIS has played a major role.

RIS also helped shape debates in many other ways, It can be seen from its own analyses of the specifics of the Indian Development Compact (Chatruvedi 2017): “The new development compact is between actors of the South, rather than the North-South exchange that characterised earlier arrangements; it is no longer about the imposition of conditionalities for recipient countries but more on the principles that govern South-South Cooperation (SSC) such as mutual gain, non-interference, collective growth opportunities and indeed an absence of conditionalities. The modern concept of a development compact provides for development assistance that works at five different levels, namely trade and investment, technology, skills upgrade, lines of credit (LOC) and, finally, grants”.

In addition, there were a number of incisive analyses with international co-editors (Chaturvedi / Fues / Sidiropoulos (eds.) 2012), which were formative for the international discourse. We have collectively addressed the changing discourse towards “contested collaboration” in a voluminous work (Chaturvedi *et al.* (eds.) (2021)). The introduction states: “Along with changing narratives, development cooperation has been subject to increased norm competition. The norms and standards for implementing development interventions are more diversified with a changing institutional landscape of development cooperation (...).”

Longstanding Partnership

As IDOS (German Institute of Development and Sustainability), the former DIE (Deutsches Institut fuer Entwicklungspolitik / German Development Institute), we now have a long history and close partnership with RIS. Many RIS participants are in our Managing Global Governance (MGG) format, numerous joint workshops and conferences, joint analyses, visiting scholars in both directions and, above all, countless enriching debates. This has contributed a lot to my thing and thinking of many colleagues.

RIS is also an important partner for the triangular cooperation that India and Germany want to pursue together more intensively. A Joint Declaration of Intent on Triangular Cooperation was signed during the cabinet consultations of both countries in 2022. This is a clear indication of how conceptual debates might also contribute to the design of policies.

The Way Forward: Trust

The political changes in the international system in recent months and years have been profound. They have given the Global South as a group a new identity boost - similar to “the West” and important Western economic and security alliances (Klingebliel 2022; Nath / Klingebiel 2023).

An entrenched camp formation is not helpful in finding solutions; it stands in the way of better international cooperation and makes it difficult to take a proactive approach that involves a leap of faith. Approaches to counteract entrenched block

formations and to create effective formats for exchange and understanding are therefore important. Examples of issue-specific alliances that do not organise themselves according to North-South patterns could point the way forward.

The existing long cooperation between RIS and the individual people working there has created trust. This is an important basis for open and constructive debates. RIS is an important place in India to address such issues, to discover different perspectives, to better understand differences and to create more common ground in some places.

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MY MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF RIS

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DR R. G. NAMBIAR

Former Senior Fellow, RIS

About RIS

The Research and Information System for the Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries (RIS) is an autonomous body set up under the External Affairs Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi. The aims and objectives include: (a) providing analytical support to the developing countries on issues of North-South dialogue, and also at the regional/multilateral level; (b) building up or improving their capacity to face challenges of the emerging world economic scenarios; (c) maintaining a system of links among the various research institutions of these developing countries; and (d) developing a databank/processing centre on global and regional problems of developing countries. RIS started functioning from February 1984 at India International Centre (IIC), Lodhi Road, New Delhi. It was led by well-known statesmen civil servants and eminent economists: the late G. Parthasarathi (formerly Chairman of Policy Advisory Committee) as Chairman; Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty (formerly Chairman of Economic Policy Advisory Committee to then Prime Minister, (Shri Rajiv Gandhi), as Vice Chairman, Dr V.R. Panchamukhi

another noted economist as Director General, and supported by a team of eminent Researchers: Dr R.G. Nambiar, Dr Rajesh Mehta, Dr Nagesh Kumar, Gopal Tadas, Saroj Mohanty and Mahendra Lama.

My Memories of RIS

My association with RIS starts from 1986. I was working at the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research as Professor, SPIESR, Ahmedabad; and was there since 1974. I had just returned from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, United States after completing a two-year post-doctoral programme, sponsored by the Ford Foundation in 1982. A major event at Ahmedabad around that time was the forthcoming All India Economic Conference to be held in 1984. Dr Manmohan Singh was the Conference President. Several well-known economists of India were to attend the conference. Dr V.R. Panchamukhi, whom I knew from his Bombay University days, had sent me a note that I should meet both Dr Manmohan Singh and Professor Sukhamoy Chakraborty at the Conference venue. I met both of them along with Dr Panchamukhi. There they extended me an invitation to join the RIS that was being established in Delhi. Dr Panchamukhi also gave me two options: first shifting permanently to RIS, Delhi, or, second come to RIS on deputation from Sardar Patel Institute. I opted for the second option and joined RIS in 1986. Two other research faculty, who had already joined RIS before me were Dr Rajesh Mehta (who is now no more), and Dr Nagesh Kumar.

Besides, there were a few research support staff: Gopal Tadas, Saroj Mohanty, to name a few.

Our immediate preoccupation was with two successive events that were to take place concurrently: first the VIII World Economic Congress being hoisted by RIS in Delhi; and second was preparing a report on the eve of UNCTAD VII conference to be held in Geneva in 1987. We were working day and night for hoisting the World Economic Congress that was being attended by Nobel laureates including Professor Kenneth Arrow. Arrangements had to be made to receive the delegates coming from all over the world, receiving them at airports/railway stations and transporting them, arranging their accommodation, printing the conference paper, session arrangements, catering arrangements, etc. The time at our disposal was very short. We used to reach office at 9 O' clock in the morning and stay till midnight.

When the World Economic Congress was over, the next was the forthcoming UNCTAD VII Conference to be held in Geneva. An altogether new trade issue was trade in services, until now excluded from all international discussions as these were classified as non-tradeables. However, with the advent of computers and electronic media, whatever until now treated as nontradeables, became tradeables. The debate was whether services to be included in trade agenda. On the one side was US and other developed countries orchestrating inclusion of services in trade negotiation. On the other side was India and

other developing countries, who were opposed to be inclusion of services in trade agenda. Their plea was that their service sector was in infant stage; and will not be able to compete with the technologically superior service industries of developed countries. That led to sharp division between developed and developing countries. Thus the UNCTAD VII Conference was significant. RIS had prepared two volumes: one was “The World Economy in the Mid-Eighties” and the second “UNCTAD VII and the Global Challenges”.

Yet another challenge was to complete a study sponsored jointly by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi and Free University, Amsterdam, Netherlands under the Indo-Dutch Program on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD). The study aimed at finding out the potential complementarities among various groups of countries in developing world. That warranted extensive empirical analysis of finding similarities and dissimilarities of import-export structures and cost patterns. The empirical results from the study was brought out in a volume titled “Complementarities in Trade and Production” (by V.R. Panchamukhi, R.G. Nambiar, Rajesh Mehta, Gopal Tadas and Saroj Mohanty).

After spending five years in RIS, I returned back to Sardar Patel Institute in 1991.

RIS over the Years

RIS was established with a clear mandate of providing analytical support to developing countries on issues of North-South dialogue, building up capacity to face challenges of the emerging world economic order, and preparing a database and processing centre on global/regional economic problems. Set against this mandate, RIS has emerged over time as an independent forum of developing countries for fostering policy dialogue on international economic issues: debt crisis in Latin America, growing wave of deregulation and privatisation, concern of the developing countries in multilateral trade negotiations, i.e. to say, for providing a Southern perspective on global economic issues. Not less is the contribution made by several researchers over the years who have enabled RIS to climb to these heights through their research work and still continue to do so.

RIS: THE THINK TANK

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V L RAO

Former Senior Fellow, RIS



I am glad to say that I spent a very fruitful time in RIS during 1989-1996 as Senior Fellow. I also officiated as Director-In charge for a few months when the then Director and Founder, Dr V. R. Panchamukhi, was away on an assignment.

The working environment in RIS was so good that we could not only produce output that is of use to policymakers, but also research papers that we were presenting in academic seminars and publishing in academic publications. This is immensely satisfying since we could bring some analytical rigour to policy-related work and a practical touch to academic work.

One of the first projects with which I was associated in RIS was a study on Trade Financing in India, sponsored by the ADB. I presented the study in a conference in the ADB, Manila. One day I met the CMD of ECGC in an airport lounge and mentioned to him about our study. We had some discussion about how to make use of it. He said that we would be in touch. After some months, a surprising thing happened. I used to receive cyclostyled copies of circulars from some Ministries. I used to quickly glance at them and send them to our Library. One such circular I put in the OUT tray, but took it back since it was unusually short. It said that I was appointed as a part-time Director on the Board of the

ECGC for a period of two years. The ECGC used to have some country classification based on which they were deciding the premium rates. Also, they were revising the classification after a considerable interval. I suggested increasing the parameters for deciding the categories, increasing the number of categories, and a system for continuously monitoring the developments in each country so that the premium rates could be fine-tuned accordingly. The ECGC assigned some of its officers to prepare the system under my guidance. It was prepared and implemented afterwards.

Another challenging project was our study on India-Sri Lanka cooperation sponsored by WIDER, Helsinki. During our stay in Sri Lanka, we met the Minister for Rural Development. He was so much impressed with our suggestions on small- and cottage-industries that he said that he would make available a site of choice to the Government of India for establishing an Industrial Estate outside Colombo. When a delegation of some chambers of commerce from Sri Lanka visited India for a joint meeting with some chambers of commerce in New Delhi, I was the only non-business person invited to the meeting. The Sri Lankan side found my interventions useful and invited me for a separate session with them.

One of the several milestones for RIS was that the UNESCAP designated the RIS as India Focal Point for the Network of Research Institutions on International Trade. I was the coordinator for the project. We conducted a National Seminar on international trade

research. During the seminar I announced that we can provide on request data on foreign trade that we have in digital form. Prior to this, these data were have to be compiled manually. When one of the participants made the request, he was provided the data on floppy disks in just two hours' time. He appreciated the facility

I notice from the RIS website that it is doing remarkable work on different areas of public policy. I look forward to RIS attaining greater heights in the years to come.

FEW THOUGHTS ON MY ASSOCIATION WITH RIS

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DR K.C. REDDY

Former Consultant, RIS



I am delighted to learn that Research and Information Systems for Developing countries- (RIS) is completing four decades of its rich experience in the field of international trade as development relations. RIS, initially identified among academics across the Third world as RIS for Non-Aligned and other Developing Countries, and started as a think-tank on trade and strategic relations with a focus on the development requirements of the Southern World, has evolved into one of the renowned research and consulting institutions of the country to advise the Governments' on matters relating to trade, investment, technology, etc. from the stand-point of Third World. RIS, thanks to its founding fathers, in particular G. Parthasarathi, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty and Dr V. R. Panchamukhi have designed its organizational structure appropriate to reorient its agenda and action programmes to suit to the evolving requirements of the Third World with comfort but without losing its quality and relevance to the times. This solid foundation is largely responsible for its transformation into its current status as an Institute of global reputation. From Dr Panchamukhi to the current Direct General Professor Sachin Chaturvedi through an academic star, Dr Nagesh Kumar who

has grown with RIS as an international development economist, RIS had a smooth transformation and this made the institution more vibrant and focused. Over the years RIS has provided, valuable information base through networking and contributed significantly for growth and balanced development providing them with quality academic leadership.

I was one of the few academics outside the New Delhi think thank to have got an opportunity to work with a team of renowned development economists largely thanks to Professor K.L. Krishna and Dr V.R. Panchamukhi. As an young academic from a State University from Andhra Pradesh, basically with a focus on teaching, I was advised by Professor K.L Krishna to work with DrV.R. Panchamukhi and his team to broaden my understanding of global development issues with focus on the Third World. As a teacher and researcher in the field of international development economics I took the opportunity as a challenge to work in a completely new environment focusing on research of high quality.

My association with RIS during 1995 not only enabled me to broaden my understanding of development issues but helped me to reorient my teaching and research responsibilities at my parent institution, Andhra University with a refreshingly better perspective for the benefit of generation of both post-graduate and PhD students. During my one year stay at RIS, I had the privilege of working with both academic stalwarts of those times, Professor Sukhamoy Chakravarty and Dr V. R.

Panchamukhi, established academics like Dr R.G. Nambiar from Sardar Patel, Ahmedabad and Dr I.N. Mukherjee from JNU and also emerging scholar who became an institution builder like Dr Nagesh Kumar. My stay was both comfortable and rewarding thanks to these gentlemen and also very young scholars like Dr G.A. Tadas, Dr M.P. Lama and Dr S.K. Mohanty who always helped me with their helping hand to focus on studies during my stay. I was saddened to learn that a colleague, a bright star of RIS, Dr Rajesh Mehta passed away at very young age.

RIS has given an opportunity to several scholars outside Delhi-Bombay group to disseminate knowledge and information through their engagement in research, RIS across the country. I was one of the fortunate few.

It is by now rightly identified across the world that knowledge is power and information is the basic source of that knowledge. RIS started its work, forty years ago with that goal largely because of the visionary academic leadership. Then and even now the world at large, in particular the Third World look towards RIS as an authenticated source of valuable information which has been the basis for several policy decisions on trade, technology and investments in India and global trade and development intuitions. RIS has always been at the forefront in initiating dialogue through its in house studies on various development issues impacting the living conditions of people of the Third World; the range is both diversified and broader covering issues like South-South Co-operation and G20. I am proud to be a part

of this great legacy, though in a small way and hope that RIS will continue its march towards becoming a premier global international development institute on trade and development issues which are getting increasingly complex over the years. I am confident that the present leadership under the stewardship of an able academic-administrator, Professor Sachin Chaturvedi will achieve the goals for which RIS was started.

RIS – FORMIDABLY MEMORABLE FOUNDING YEARS

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MAHENDRA P LAMA

Former Research Associate, RIS



After some of us involved in sports activities - in both Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University- were selected to serve the IXth Asian Games in Delhi as Liaison Officers in 1982, at least few amongst this team were again interviewed/invited to serve the 7th Non-aligned Summit held in New Delhi in March 1983 as Documentation Officers. Both these historic events were globally watched and celebrated. I was then doing my Masters in Economics from JNU. The NAM Summit hosted by Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India and was attended by an array of widely known leaders from one hundred plus developing countries and other invitees including Fidel Castro Ruz, Yasser Arafat, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, JR Jayawardane, Anirudh Jugnauth, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Sultan Ali Kishmand, Daniel T Arap Moi, Mir Hussein Mousavi, Mohamad Hosni Mubarak, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Gen HM Ershad, Mumoon Abdul Gayoom, Gen Zia Ul-Haq, Sam Nujoma, Hafez Al-Assad, S Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahayyan and Peter Stambolic. The famous Indira Gandhi-Fidel Castro hug outside the Summit venue at Vigyan Bhavan was a wonderful sight splashed all over the national and global newspapers.

This Summit was not only far reaching in terms of its deliberations and contents, but for India, it was a Herculean responsibility as for next three years it took the historic leadership of the NAM. This Summit was held against the backdrop of the release of the widely debated Report entitled “North-South: A Programme for Survival” (1980) by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI) appointed in 1977 under the Chairmanship of Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of Germany and also the UN General Assembly Resolution on New International Economic Order (NIEO) in 1973. The NAM leaders were keen to see that the countries in the North would effectively implement the key recommendations. There was enthusiasm all around.

The establishment of Research and Information System for Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS) in New Delhi was one of the core outcomes of the decision taken in the NAM Summit in 1983. In 1986, I joined RIS as one of the first group of researchers. The institution was at an infant stage in terms of physical infrastructures, larger orientations and functional dynamics.

However, at this very nascent stage of this institution building process, four distinctly striking features and doubly inspiring practices could be witnessed: i) it was headed by a widely respected diplomat and academic G. Parthasarathi as the President and well known academic Dr V.R. Panchamukhi as the founding Director; ii) highly committed researchers joined

and started working on wider yet very relevant themes that had reeled the thought process among the developing countries in a collective manner; iii) celebrated academics, policy makers, diplomats and public intellectuals started visiting the RIS and started participating in the enlivening debate and discourses; and iv) a team of efficient and dedicated management staff joined to support the larger administrative and logistical facilitations.

Research and Study Themes

RIS drew the major research and study themes from four critical sources, viz. the proceedings of various summit meetings of the NAM; core global issues as highlighted in the UNCTAD and G 77 discussions, the debates in the multilateral institutions like World Bank, IMF and GATT and the emerging phenomenon of South-South Cooperation after the North started showing symptoms of withdrawal from the North-South Dialogue. So broadly our initial research and study themes in RIS were in areas of terms of trade, technology transfer, development financing and debt management, balance of payment crisis, biotechnology, multilateral institutions, regional blocs, economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC), various development models and also specific regional studies like on Africa, South East Asia, South Asia and Latin America.

In all these areas of studies four abiding principles that bound our research team were i) rigorous studies with sound methodologies, ii) cross regional and trans-continental narration

and new information and knowledge generation, iii) intensive policy coverages and practicable policy inputs and iv) extensive networking with other research and policy institutions and quick dissemination to all stakeholders across the continents.

Developing countries being essentially producers of primary commodities witnessed a secular decline in their terms of trade. The Prebisch-Singer findings deeply influenced our writings. In the RIS Digest (mouthpiece of RIS) of January-June 1987, my endearing colleagues GA Tadas and S.K. Mohanty wrote “Growth and Instability in the Primary Commodity Market”. And I wrote another research brief on “Primary Commodities: Decline in Apparent Consumption by the Developed Countries” wherein I concluded with substantive data revelations:

“The technological innovations leading to the making of some substitutions for prevailing raw materials and other commodities have further undermined the trade prospects for primary commodities in the coming years. Substitutions have been introduced in a massive scale, challenging the very fabric of the importance of hitherto vulnerable and non-renewable raw materials. Among the major items which have faced irreversible challenge from substitute products are copper, aluminium, bauxite, jute, cotton, sisal, rubber and wool. Between 1980-85 the consumption of iron ore fell by 2 per cent a year. The world consumption of natural rubber dropped from 57 per cent at the beginning of the 1950s to 35 per cent at the beginning of the 1970s. Similarly, the manufacturing output grew at an average of

2.1 per cent a year during 1979-85 whereas world consumption of aluminium was static. During this period copper usage fell. The innovations of micro-electronics are considered to be the most serious one. Its cheaper information handling potential is pushing production towards greater information intensity rather than energy and material intensity.”

When Raul Prebisch passed away on 29 April 1986, RIS organised a series of discussion meetings that recalled his rich contributions. I remember, two very widely respected public intellectuals Sukhamoy Chakravarty and Muchkund Dubey spoke so eloquently on Prebisch’s widely read development theories. I still have the notes taken then. Similarly, when Gunnar Myrdal breathed his last on 17 May 1987, there were series of presentations where I remember to have listened to an analytical tribute by P.R. Brahmananda of Bombay University.

By 1987, RIS had published a large number of books like “The Third World and World Economic System”, “Money and Finance in World Economic Order”, “African Economic Crisis”. As a young researcher, I used to really enjoy reading occasional papers published during 1984-1987 like “The World Crisis: How to Serve the Interests of the South? (Jan Tinbergen), “ Industrialisation, Foreign Capital and Technology Transfer: Mexican Experience (S. Miguel Wionczek), “ The Inequity of International Economic Order (Raj Krishna); “The Bangkok Agreement : An Evaluation of Preferential Trading Arrangement” (I.N. Mukherji); “Adjustment To What End (S. Guhan), “Developing Country

Debt in the Mid-1980s” (Dragoslav Avramovic), “A Social Development Planning Model for Malaysia” (M.G. Kanbur and Syed Othman Alhabshi), “The Functioning of the international Monetary System” (Arjun Sengupta), and “On the Reforms of the international Trading System” (Vijay Laxman Kelkar). Many of these renowned scholars in fact, used to visit RIS and deliberate in our in-house discussion meetings.

RIS gradually acquired the shape of an independent think tank wherein a range of study projects would be commissioned on critical international economic issues by both governmental and private organisation from within India and abroad. These study reports were widely publicised as they contained in them significant policy inputs. There were hardly any institutions that exclusively devoted to studying, deliberating and producing documents and research papers on the issues that carried the common concerns of countries in the South and collective efforts to resolve them. RIS stood tall and unwavering in this very particular area of studies and policy formulation.

I vividly recall that every UNCTAD global meeting like UNCTAD VII in 1987 used to be provided with a strong knowledge and policy support by the special report produced for this specific occasion by the RIS. The UNCTAD VII report was actually carried by the team of Indian delegates led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. All the researchers from RIS and some invited experts used to contribute to this very special report.

By the mandate given by the NAM, RIS also became a venue of global interaction and networking. Universities had their limitations. Therefore, various meetings participated by distinguished visitors, scholars, experts, diplomats and other professionals from across the contents started happening at RIS in the form of seminars, conferences, workshops, policy discussions etc. RIS went beyond all these in many respects. One of the most significant events it hosted in collaboration with the Indian Economic Association founded in 1918 was the Eighth World Economic Congress of the International Economic Association in December in 1986. The venue once again was Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi. The theme of the Congress was “The balance between industry and agriculture in economic development”. The participants included globally celebrated economist like Amartya Sen and Nobel Laureate like Kenneth Arrow. The top attractions from India included Manmohan Singh, Sukhamoy Chakravarty, L.K. Jha, V.K.R.V. Rao, Y.K. Alagh, Abid Hussain and some others. Oh, what an event this was, a proud and memorable moment for India and RIS.

One of the most professional aspects of RIS was its vibrancy in terms of institutional reaches and ability to identify the powerfully emerging yet common concern issues. Immediately after the first and founding SAARC Summit in Bangalore in 1985, RIS leadership could assess and perceive that trade cooperation among the SAARC countries is going to be both crucial and sensitive too. We all then started examining how

trade facilitated the integration process in South East Asian region, Latin American Free Trade Association and European Economic Community. What did it mean for them to follow the widely deliberative theoretical path of starting with preferential trading arrangement and moving into free trade regime and then graduating to customs union and common market finally leading to a sought-after phenomenon of economic union.

At RIS, this finally led to a policy oriented volume on trade, manufactures and services which was published as *Economic Cooperation in the SAARC Region : Potential, Constraints and Policies* in 1990. This report/volume actually became a firm basis for floating the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAFTA) by the SAARC Summit leaders in 1993 which was operationalised in 1995.

The terms like Newly Industrialized Countries, flying geese, external shocks, Baker Plan, primary commodities, terms of trade, technology transfer, debt rescheduling, financial restructuring, substitutes brought by the synthetics, cooperation and integration, regionalism and sub-regionalism, etc. figured frequently in our descriptions. Some of the names that prominently figured in our research affairs included Jan Pronk, the then Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, Dragoslav Avramovi, the then governor of the National Bank of Yugoslavia, Julius Nyerere, Tanzanian anti-colonial activist and President of Tanzania, Dr Manmohan Singh, then the Deputy Chairman of the Planning

Commission and Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Kaname Akamatsu, Japanese Economist who floated the idea of Flying Geese model of development, Willy Brandt former Chancellor of Germany, Muchkund Dubey, India's Permanent Representative in the UN and many others.

I left RIS in 1990 and joined the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division of National Dairy Development Board in Anand, Gujarat and worked under the extraordinarily professional leadership of Dr Verghese Kurian. Later in 1992, I joined JNU directly as an Associate Professor.

The RIS Team and the Lighter Moments

RIS was acutely sensitive as far as the recruitment process was concerned and looked around for hiring the best available researchers and other staff members. We had a senior level team consisting of R.G. Nambiar, V.L. Rao, K.C. Reddy, Rajesh Mehta, Nagesh Kumar and Santosh Mehrotra. At the next layer of core researchers, my colleagues were Saroj Mohanty, G.A. Tadas and P. Subramanyam. We frequently invited scholars and policy makers and experts from other national institution including C.J. Batliwala from Reserve Bank of India. Then we had technical professionals and junior researchers like Sushma Pandit, Beena, C.S. Puri and Rana. They really took care of both XT and AT machines and always used D Base, Lotus and Word Star. Rana's expertise in computer games used to mesmerise all of us.

The management team was led by J.P. Doonga, and consisted of Tish Malhotra, N.N.Krishnan, V Krishnamani, Sujata, Kiran, Kala and others. Library was looked after by Sarita Gambhir and Sheela Malhotra. The support staff were Amit, Hira, Jaffar Bhai and Balwan.

We were housed in a longish back portion of India International Centre and could access some of the facilities provided by the prestigious IIC. All researchers were given small cubicles possibly of 25 square ft.

The day used to start with a 'Suprabhatam' greetings of Nambiar who always had a mouthful of 'paan'. Hira provided us tea/coffee and pakoras and rotis and aloo curry for lunch. The most beautiful part of his operation was a small name wise chit he would handover on the next day of salary credited in the Bank of India at Khan Market. His chit meticulously contained what we ate throughout the month. Subramanyam's lunch was wonderful that consisted of rice thoroughly mixed with homemade nimbu-aam achar and eaten with hands.

Tadas, Mohanty and Me went to either Lodhi Garden or Khan Market for a walk and discussed politics to international relations, food to language and family to future prospects. The stationary shop at Khan Market had rich varieties that attracted us there quite often. Mohanty used to be choosy about his pens. RIS gave us the first set of scientific calculators. I still remember its model- LC 1006S which we could use for doing basic correlation-regression.

Jafar bhai used to tell us about what was happening in the first floor where Director and core administrative staff were housed. He had his own style and used to be tough with his compatriots. Mani was in charge of accounts and he gave a monthly salary slip generated by a dot matrix printing machine which looked like a *janam patri*.

Our revered Director V.R. Panchamukhi was pious to the core and we used to hear that he cooked himself at home. He mostly ate cream cracker, delite-Good Day and thin arrowroot biscuits in the office and always wore smart dress. Well versed in Sanskrit, he often mentioned “Yoga Karmasu Kausalam” from our *Bhagwat Gita* meaning that yoga is not only a physical and spiritual training but a practice in every affair of day-to-day life. He had influenced his support-driver Amit so much that whenever I used to go to my home town Amit used to give money to me to offer to the famous Mahakal Mandir in Darjeeling. He hailed from a tea garden in Darjeeling.

We adored Sukhamoy Chakravarty for his erudition, simplicity, softness and language of expressions.

I was given the additional task of compiling materials for RIS Digest (a quarterly mouth piece of RIS) that contained mainly original research briefs, and editing, and publishing them. It was printed at Crescent Press, near Central News Agency Office in Connaught Place, New Delhi. The technology by then had moved from simple letter press done by the compositor to bromite printing where we used to cut and paste the corrections

on a roll of printed materials. Then it was photographed for the offset printing. The printing paper used was maplitho ss 90 gsm. Since the deadlines used to be tough and strict, Grover - the Manager, Singh - the technician and myself, remained in the press far beyond midnights for many days. Those copies of RIS Digest are now memory-assets that adore Basantlata-RP Lama Memorial Library in Sabina's Castle in Darjeeling.

I must mention that RIS gave me the first platform to learn about the process and tricks of institution building and trained me on the finer nuances of institutional ethos. Later NDDDB sufficiently enhanced my knowledge about how rural India is intimately linked to urban India as shown by its flagship programme like Operation Flood that finally led to White Revolution. Debureaucratism and zero corruption were the key features of NDDDB then. This was the second training I received in the institution building process. I did use these orientations and skills in building the South Asia Foundation led by IK Gujral and Manmohan Singh, two highly respected public figures of India, Central University of Sikkim and other institutions. Today I am deeply content with a feeling of Nirvana as I could work with both Verghese Kurian, the Father of White Revolution and M.S. Swaminathan the Father of Green Revolution who was the founding Chancellor of Central University of Sikkim.

RIS today is one of the most prominent think tanks and sought after policy making institutions in India. Whenever,

I visit RIS and see some of my old colleagues in both research and management, I smilingly salute them for their commitment, dedication and perseverance. They are the ones who kept the RIS flag aloft. I feel nostalgic and remember my bus ride (No 615) from JNU to Jor Bagh and smooth walk to Lodhi estate. The present Director General Sachin Chaturvedi is a product of RIS who grew up with the institution and its ethos and practices. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Director General for his stupendous work and consistent dedication to take RIS to the Global South once again. My warmest wishes to all the RIS team.

MY MEMOIRES IN RIS

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G. A. TADAS

Visiting Fellow, RIS



After I completed my post-graduation studies in economics from Karnataka University in Dharwad, my uncle persuaded me to come to Delhi as I was interested in pursuing higher studies in economics. That was in June 1983. As it happens with young minds, I enthusiastically grabbed the opportunity. It was in Delhi that I happened to meet Dr V. R. Panchamukhi at a function. I knew he was also from my hometown and I took the opportunity of introducing myself as ‘a person with good track record as a student, a rank holder from pre-university level till post graduation and a gold medallist’. He took interest in me and guided me how I should go about in pursuing my higher studies.

I kept trying for admission to PhD courses, but a few attempts made me realise that getting into PhD directly was not an easy task; the better way was to start with MPhil. Considering my financial position, I thought of taking up a job first. Luckily, I could also find one in Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) as economics and statistics officer. I worked on a study involving analysis of data on credit and fertiliser consumption in different parts of the country and the factors that influenced differential patterns across country. That was interesting as it was my first

assignment. Subsequent to that study, I handled mostly statistics on fertiliser production, consumption and fertiliser industry related matters.

It was in April 1984 that I learnt about setting up of RIS that triggered interest in me to try for a research position as I had interest in development, trade and finance related areas. However, almost after one year I got an opportunity to try for opening in RIS. Facing big-wigs like Prof Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Professor K.L. Krishna and Professor Panchamukhi in the interview itself was exciting and a learning experience. It was in May 1985 that I could join RIS as Research Associate. I was guided by Professor Panchamukhi on what books, journals and articles I should be reading. I was also guided on writing style required in research and how and when to use quantitative techniques especially in understanding causal relationships between economic variables and impact analysis. In this sense, it was a deep learning experience in the first 2-3 years of stay at RIS. During these foundation years, I could get grip over sources of data availability at the national and international levels which we extensively used to understand trends in macro-economic indicators across countries.

RIS came out with two publications based on intensive data and research. The first one was “Savings Investment and Trade in the Third World” in 1986 which analysed consumption and savings behaviour, incremental-capital output ratio (ICOR), and trade functions covering about 100 developing countries. One

of the interesting finding was the inverse relationship between net imports to GDP ratio and the savings rate suggesting that foreign savings had a tendency to substitute domestic savings rather than complementing it. The second one was 'Macro-Economic Profile of 100 Developing Countries' in 1987, which estimated critical macro-economic parameters like marginal propensity to consume, savings rate, investment rates, exports and imports based on time series data. The objective was to bridge the information gap that existed about developing countries regarding critical macro-economic parameters. These studies gave me an opportunity to work with Dr Rajesh Mehta who had a deep understanding of econometric techniques, he was a very nice person to work with and learn about mathematical tools in analysing economic problems.

I also had the opportunity of engaging in the Second Conference of the RIS Coordinating Institutes held in New Delhi in 1985. RIS also made a significant contribution at Eighth World Economic Congress held in New Delhi in 1986 where I had the opportunity of meeting world renowned economists and Nobel Prize winners like Professor Kenneth Arrow. These events gave me a good opportunity to know perspectives of international experts on economic issues. I am happy to mention that this initial grounding enabled me to contribute to the Report brought out by the RIS on "UNCTAD VII and Global Challenges" on the occasion of UNCTAD VII global conference held in August 1987.

I would like to share another interesting association with India International Centre (IIC), where RIS was initially housed after its formation in 1984. IIC used to organise many interactive panel discussions in the evening by inviting experts and senior policy makers on a regular basis. I used to attend most of them with a curiosity to know and understand different perspectives. Seeing that I was keenly interested and regular, IIC asked if I could summarise the proceedings. In the process, I came in close association with Dr Malcom Adiseshiah, who used to Chair most of these discussions. He used to guide me also on how to summarise so that it could be linked with the main discussions. I attended many such discussions during 1987-89 covering wide spectrum of areas which, *inter alia*, included: (1) Forty years of economic development: UN agencies and India; (2) Regional economic arrangements; (3) The economies of the states of the Indian Union; and (4) Sustainable development. In the volume on Forty years of economic development, I co-authored with Dr Malcom Adseshiah on “An overview of the UN system and India”, which indeed was a privilege considering his contributions and stature during those days. I enjoyed interacting with him and learnt a lot from him.

In the subsequent years, I worked on diverse issues of trade, structural adjustment and reforms in the East European countries due to dis-integration of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Some of the papers which I consider worth recalling are: (1) “East European Reforms and Developing Countries’ Trade

Prospects: A Medium Term Perspective”, Artha Vijnana, Vol. 32 (3&4), Sept-Dec 1990. A revised version of this was again published under the title: “East European Developments: Impact on Trade of Developing Countries”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 26(19): May 11, 1991; (2) “Structural Adjustment and Development”, RIS Digest, Vol. 9(3): September 1992; (3) “India’s Trade Policy Making: Some Issues”, Denouement, July/August 1992; (4) “Structure and Growth of India’s Financial Sector”, RIS Digest, Vol. 10(4): December 1993. I continued to benefit from my association with Dr Mehta continued in some of these articles. Working on diversified areas gave me confidence and broadened my understanding of economic research in a multi-faceted framework. Further, the practice of regular interactive discussions among RIS research team on emerging economic issues was a very learning experience. Interaction with RIS research faculty, viz. Dr R.G. Nambiar, Dr V.L. Rao, Dr Nagesh Kumar, Mahendra Lama, S.K. Mohanty benefitted me immensely. It was around this that I remember Dr Sachin Chaturvedi joined the RIS.

In the subsequent period, I started working on trade in services with focus on financial sector which was emerging as an important area in view the on-going negotiations on Trade in services under the Uruguay Round. I produced some research papers in these areas : (1) “Structure and Growth of India’s Financial Sector”, RIS Digest, Vol. 10(4): December 1993; (2) “Some Issues in Liberalizing India’s Financial Sector” in

Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), *Trade in Services: The Uruguay Round and After*, August 1994. I worked further on interlinkages in financial development in India, which was published in *Financial Services and Consultancy Services: Issues in International Trade*, Sage Publications, 2000, much later after I had left RIS in 1995. Another study which I think is worth mentioning is on “Is Trade Deindustrialising India?”, which was published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 15, 1994. This was the paper I worked with Dr R.G. Nambiar, with whom I had a very close association and learnt a great deal about applying input-output framework in analyzing impact of trade policies on industry and employment. I may mention that both of us continued to work even after I left RIS to join IDBI in their Research & Planning Department and he went back to Sardar Patel Institute of Economic Research, Ahmedabad. We later worked on a paper on “Is Import Liberalization Hurting Domestic Industry & Employment”, which was presented at a Platinum Jubilee Seminar, Department of Economics, University of Mumbai, in March 1998 and subsequently published in *Economic & Political Weekly* in Feb. 1999.

I was also at the same time working on a totally different research area related to basic needs issues and social aspects of development. Starting from early 1990s there was intense debate going-on on what constituted economic development. There was a growing discontentment with defining economic development only in terms of growth in GDP and per capita income in the

context of increasing economic and social inequalities and poor social development, be it education, health or gender inequalities. UNDP came out with Human Development Report propounding Human Development Index (HDI) in the early 1990s, whose constituents were per capita income along with literacy rate and life expectancy at birth. S.K. Mohanty, who is now a Senior professor at RIS and myself started working together under the overall guidance of Dr Panchamukhi on basic need issues in development covering a large number of developing countries. We tried to examine performance of the developing countries in basic needs fulfillment of the people by studying trends in education, health, inequality, access to potable water and studied if growth in per capita income would also lead to progress in these basic needs indicators. It was observed that it may not be so and that improvement in basic needs indicators required deliberate government policies and interventions. It was also noticed that improvement in basic needs indicators would have a positive impact on the growth of per capita income. We computed basic needs index (BNI) for many developing countries using the principal component analysis. We also did comparison with HDI and found that HDI explained only part of the variations in social sector development or access to basic needs. The study came out as RIS monograph in 1995 and I understand Sage Publications had shown interest in publishing the same, which perhaps could not be pursued.

It was during this study that both Mohanty and myself used to have intense debate on development paradigms and I could see his keen interest and great capacity in analysing interlinkages in economic indicators. I also cherished working with Dr Mohanty on an in-depth study on production and trade complementarities among developing countries under the overall guidance of Dr Panchamukhi. We tried to identify trade potentials among developing countries through analyzing production, consumption and trade complementarities using the 'cosine method' and 'gravity model' which was emerging as a useful tool in the analysis of complementarities. This came out as book viz. "Complementarity in Trade and Production : Intra-South Potentials" published by Sage Publications in 1995.

I continued to work on social aspects of development. One of my papers on "Social Aspects of Development: Asian Experience" appeared in a prestigious book edited by Dr Panchamukhi and Dr Rehman Sobhan, titled 'Towards an Asian Economic Area' published by Macmillan in 1995. Around the same time I was also given the task of organizing an international conference on "UN 2000 Goals towards the 21st Century: Development Priorities for Women and Children in Asia" in April 1995 in association with Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), Geneva and Council for Social Development, New Delhi. I had the opportunity of working with Dr Krishna Ahooja-Patel of WWSF who was known to be spear-heading the cause of women in development. This international conference enabled

me to understand nuances of coordination, management and inter-personal relationships to make the event successful. I had the opportunity of working closely with the RIS administration team who were very cordial and forthcoming in extending any guidance and help in making arrangements for the global conference. I would especially like mention names of Tish ji, Krishnan, Mani, Kiran, Sarita (the Librarian) who extended help anytime of the day. It is heartening to mention that I was one of the co-editors of the book that was published post the conference much later in the year 1999 : “Women and Development” along with Dr Krishna Ahooja-Patel and senior professor Dr S. Uma Devi of University of Kerala, who had extensively worked on the issues of women participation and gender inequalities. A paper on “Social Development and Economic Development” co-authored with Dr Panchamukhi and Dr Mohanty was included in the volume.

Recognizing my efforts and works on social development and multifaceted research areas, I was asked to handle a short time assignment with UNESCAP on “Poverty Alleviation & Agriculture in the Asian region” between June-August 1995. I had the opportunity of visiting UNESCAP at Bangkok for about three weeks where I had the opportunity of interacting with the experts in the areas of development and agriculture. I consider it a very useful assignment as at the end of it, the report prepared by me was discussed with many experts and in the process I had a good exposure in terms of knowing their views. I think

this was my last assignment at RIS, post which I left RIS to join research department of IDBI in September 1995, the then premier development finance institution (DFI) of the country. I must say that my stay at RIS was very eventful and I was involved in undertaking research in many emerging areas during those years which enabled me to come out of 'formative phase of my career' to contributing some things of my own. I have seen RIS growing in stature over the years and people would look at RIS for ideas and initiatives on any global economic issues.

The experience I gained helped me immensely when I joined IDBI and took initiatives in bringing out internal publications on economy, industry and policies that were circulated amongst all the IDBI officers and also to selected officials in Government, RBI and industry. It is this foundation that I had in RIS that motivated me to continue in research in policy related areas even after I started working in IDBI in the mainstream areas of project finance, infrastructure finance, risk management and government and corporate debt securities market. I continued to publish papers whenever I could find time and opportune occasions. I also used to deliver guest lectures at many workshops for corporates, bank officials, management institutions, and bank training institutes. Some of the publications worth mentioning are : (1) "Foreign Direct Investment, Domestic Savings and Trade Intensities", (jointly with Professor B.L. Mungekar), published in Professor B.L. Mungekar, Professor D.M. Nachane and Professor M.J.M. Rao (eds), Indian Economy in the New Millennium, Himalaya

Publishing House, Mumbai, 2001; (2) “Demand Side Factors in Infrastructure Sector : A case Study of Road Projects” (jointly with Dr M.K. Datar), published in Dr S. Sriraman (ed), Transportation System Studies and Policy Analysis, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, 2010; (3) “Infrastructure Finance : Issues’ published in Payabhut Bhoutik Suvidha, Vol. 3, Mumbai, October 2010. Whenever I used to visit Delhi on official engagements, I would take the opportunity of meeting my friends at RIS and update myself about emerging areas of research. I have seen RIS making significant contributions in the past over 8 years in the areas of S&T, South-south cooperation, triangular cooperation, trade value chains, G20 deliberations, SDGs, etc. under the leadership of Dr Sachin Chaturvedi. His contribution and initiatives in the area of triangular cooperation and S&T are well known. Dr Mohanty has made significant contributions to trade, trade value chains and regional arrangements.

My efforts, commitment and of course blessings of almighty and well wishers that I could reach the position of Executive Director in IDBI. When I took voluntary retirement from the services of IDBI in September 2019, Dr Sachin asked me to work on the need for a new DFI in India. As I had worked with a premier DFI and I had also seen IDBI and ICICI, two premier DFIs converting themselves into commercial banks post economic reforms of the early 1990s and long-term lending for manufacturing and infrastructure had receded post the closure of these DFIs, I thought it was time to examine the need for setting

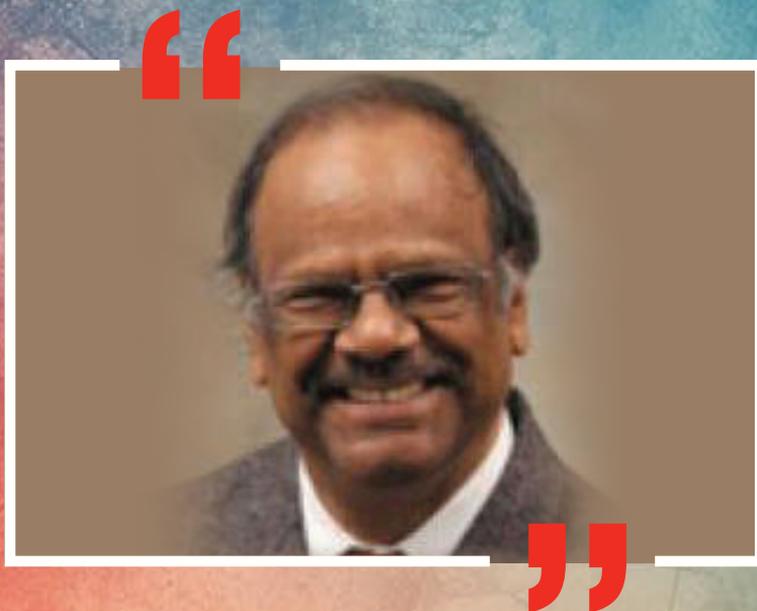
up of a new DFI. This assignment kept me busy during the Covid year of 2020 when I presented my paper on the subject through Webinar that was attended, *inter alia*, by eminent panelists, viz. former Dy. Governor of RBI, Ms Shyamala Gopinath, Professor Stephany Griffith-Jones, Financial Markets Director, Columbia University, and Dr Janmejay Sinha, Chairman, BCG, India.

I am happy to see that Government announced setting up of National Bank for Financing Infrastructure & Development (NaBFID) in the Union Budget of February 2021. The spill-over effects of this paper kept me busy through 2021 and 2022. I had the opportunity of taking up an assignment with Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID) on “Financing India’s Industrial Transformation: Some Policy Lessons from International and National Experiences” which was carried out jointly with Dr Nagesh Kumar, Director General, ISID and Dr Santosh Kumar Das of ISID. Around the same time, Dr Sachin offered me to join back RIS as a visiting fellow to work in the areas of finance and development. I would say I am indeed privileged to be back in RIS and for the last one year to be associated closely with India G20 Presidency through my participation in Think20 deliberations in the capacity as one of the Chairs of “Task Force 6 : Accelerating SDGs : Exploring New Pathways towards Agenda 2030”. I will be happy to contribute whatever I can to the RIS work programme, with practical experience and diversified research background in the field of development,

finance and policy making that I have gained during the past nearly 40 years.

My greetings to Dr Sachin on the occasion of RIS@40 and for his stewardship in taking the organization to greater heights in the past few years and to all the RIS faculty and team, and my best wishes for its further glory in future.

CHALLENGES OF RESEARCH ON EMERGING ISSUES OF GLOBAL ECONOMY



PROFESSOR MANMOHAN AGARWAL

Adjunct Fellow, RIS



At the non-aligned summit meeting of 1983 the need was felt for an institution that would respond to the needs of developing countries. The United Nations Conference for trade and Development (UNCTAD) had been established in 1964 to formulate policies regarding all aspects of development, as developing countries believed that existing international institutions like GATT (now replaced by the World Trade Organization), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank were not properly organized to handle the particular problems of developing countries. All countries, including developed countries¹, had to approve the work programme of UNCTAD. The US and UK governments under Reagan and Thatcher were particularly unresponsive to the interest of developing countries. Also a number of attempts were made to eliminate UNCTAD.

* With the United States abstaining, the International Monetary Fund last night approved a controversial loan of \$5.8 million to India over the next three years, designed to help that country turn its balance of payments deficit into a surplus, Hobart Rowen, Washington Post, November 10, 1981. Furthermore, the Reagan administration had wanted India to borrow from the private markets. Many developing were already facing the consequences of borrowing in international private markets, consequences soon to engulf them in the debt crisis.

RIS was to coordinate with research organisations in other developing countries to develop policy options for developing countries in the manner of operation of existing international economic organisations and also analyse measures to foster South-South Cooperation (SSC).

Right from its inception its first DG, Dr V.R. Panchmukhi sought to develop a culture of research integrity. While being responsive to the needs of the Ministry of External Affairs, he did not let this colour the research programme or the research output of RIS. The quality of its research enabled it to develop deep relations with organizations in the developing world as well as with the United Nations, particularly its South-South Cooperation Unit. It has held many conferences jointly with the UN in New York.

Its outreach has sought partners at different levels in the area of development. Its conferences have drawn in researchers from all over the world. It has also organized training programmes to develop bonds and understanding among researchers and practitioners at lower levels. These training programmes helped propagate ideas on SSC among young researchers and motivated them to further develop how SSC could be fostered and become ambassadors for SSC in their own countries.

Some of the training programmes had a very practical bent. The Export Import Bank of India (EXIM) sponsored a training programme on trade. This was very important as initially trade cooperation was at the heart of SSC. Such programmes

introduced the participants to the theory of international trade and how it has evolved over time. But it went beyond this to develop the theoretical case for SSC in trade and how such trade could be fostered.

Also, as the world economy has evolved and faced newer problems, RIS has moved to develop policies to tackle these newer problems. For instance, as pandemics have become more common, RIS has moved to see how SSC can help in dealing with them. It has moved on two fronts. One is how the rules of intellectual property at the WTO can be suitably modified to enable developing countries to access cheaper sources of medicines. Second, how alternative systems of medicines can be mobilized to tackle these problems.

RIS has strong research programmes in areas such as the blue economy with its implications for SSC in the countries around the Indian Ocean. It also has a strong research programme on India's relations with South East Asia, dovetailing into India's policies to develop stronger relations with our neighbours to the east. In this context it has stressed the importance of connectivity.

The recent expansion of the BRICS by addition of six new members, Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE points to the unhappiness of the South with the existing system of international economic governance. Ever since the 2008 financial crisis many countries on the south have faced an adverse economic environment and have performed poorly. The

international system has not done enough to ameliorate their condition.

RIS faces new challenges on how to tailor its research programmes to mesh with the emerging issues of the global economy and the objectives of developing countries. The New Development Bank established by the BRICS has been successful. This has led to more countries wanting to join it. Also more countries want to join the BRICS. Can the two processes be separated? What does expansion of the BRICS mean in the current geopolitical situation, the Ukraine war and the sanctions against Russia on the one hand and border tensions between India and China on the other. Of course, geopolitical factors are not a part of RIS' remit. But to the extent that they impinge on economics, RIS cannot ignore them.

SSC is desirable and a mantra that everybody swears by. But the flesh is weak and progress has been limited. Research at RIS continues to face numerous challenges as it seeks to push forward SSC. The recent expansion has provided new areas of research of how this can strengthen South-South cooperation.

A JOURNEY OF LEARNING AND IMPACT: MY YEARS WITH THE RIS



PROFESSOR T.C. JAMES

Visiting Fellow, RIS



I had the unique opportunity to observe the work of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) as an outsider and also as an insider, and now as a faculty working from a distance. My journey with RIS began in the 1990s when I first encountered this organization through friends who were faculties in it. These interactions marked the beginning of a longstanding relationship that would later develop into a deeper professional involvement. During this period, I had the opportunity to witness the impactful initiatives undertaken by RIS and its commitment to empowering developing countries through research and information sharing. RIS was one of the leading research institutions that provided input to the Indian government during the WTO/TRIPS negotiations. The Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement has had a significant impact on the development of IPRs in developing countries.

In 2009, when my engagement with the government was over, I was invited by the then Director General of RIS to join the organization as a consultant to work on research on traditional knowledge and medicine, biological diversity, and IPRs. I joined on 1 January 2010. The work in RIS was diverse and

challenging and the institution provided me with opportunities to engage in in-depth research, policy analysis, and advocacy on a wide range of international trade and development issues. Through our work, we contributed to the development of policy recommendations that aimed to balance the protection of indigenous knowledge and biological diversity with the broader development goals, and also current issues such as regulations on clinical trials.

While there were many, two memorable research studies of this period come readily to mind. The first was as part of Innova P2 project involving collaboration among several universities and research institutions spread over many countries. My area was traditional medicine in India and China and as part of the study, we travelled extensively in India and China. The interactions with the traditional medicine practitioners and pharmaceutical firms were quite eye-opening being a first for me. I especially remember our (Professor Sachin Chaturvedi and myself) visit to Kottackal Arya Vaidyasala in Kerala after extensive interactions with the traditional medicine industry people at Kochi. Incidentally, during this journey, the title of the book to be brought out after the study occurred to us. The project also led us to fruitful interactions with India's beloved former President, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who blessed the final volume, *The Living Tree: Traditional Medicine and Public Health in China and India*, with a beautiful Foreword and also released the same in 2014. He observed that the volume offers much food for

thought and makes a valuable contribution to the literature. He also hoped that academics, policymakers and others involved in making health more accessible and affordable will find the volume relevant in their work. The study made the bonds with Professor Sachin Chaturvedi and Dr Ravi Srinivas quite strong.

The second was on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) regime under the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) 2002 done in 2013-14. Engaging in research that addresses critical environmental and legal issues is a commendable endeavour in itself. The study on ABS was conducted in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The partnership between RIS and GIZ brought together expertise from different realms – environmental conservation, economics, legal analysis, and international cooperation. It was part of a broader global initiative, including Brazil and South Africa, to assess the progress and challenges faced in implementing the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization 2010. The study delved into the intricate domain of ABS under the Biological Diversity Act of India. It covered the states of Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu and also documented the legal provisions available in India for ABS. The visits to remote and hilly areas, sometimes traversing long distances on foot, and interactions with the local and tribal people were great learning experiences. Both commutations involving long hilly regions not easily accessible by motor vehicles and communication with the

people in their local dialects were great challenges. The study's findings provided a comprehensive analysis of India's ABS framework, shedding light on its strengths, gaps, and potential areas for improvement. By investigating cases of access and benefit sharing across various sectors, from pharmaceuticals to agriculture, the research illuminated real-world challenges faced by stakeholders and the implications of the legal framework. The study's insights offered a nuanced understanding of how ABS regulations intersected with existing intellectual property rights and traditional knowledge protection mechanisms. The results were presented in the Dialogue on Practical Ways Forward for the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol held in Cape Town, in January 2014. The guidance of the project lead, Dr Biswajit Dhar, was illuminating. The researcher Mr Vinayak Pandey was quiet and painstaking. As we reflect on the past, the study's legacy endures as a source of inspiration for future collaborations that can drive positive change on a global scale.

The year 2015 brought a significant milestone in my journey with RIS as I was honoured with the position of a Visiting Fellow by the new Director-General, Professor Sachin Chaturvedi. This saw a shift in my focus towards healthcare policy, traditional medicine, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the pharmaceutical industry. As a Visiting Fellow, I delved into the complexities of healthcare systems, examined the challenges and opportunities for the Indian pharmaceutical industry, analysed the role of traditional medicine in modern healthcare paradigms,

and contributed to the discourse on achieving the SDGs through informed policy choices. It was also the time India pushed greatly for the traditional medicine systems and established the Forum on Indian Traditional Medicine (FITM) in RIS because of its track record.

The academic interactions of RIS became very intense since 2015. It is a bare statement of fact that RIS converted itself into an important player on the global academic stage. With a strong commitment to fostering international collaboration, RIS has played a pivotal role in India's bilateral, multilateral and international development partnership programmes, particularly in the domains of public health, traditional medicine and intellectual property rights. RIS has consistently championed the cause of South-South cooperation, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. Drawing on its multidisciplinary expertise and extensive networks, it serves as a bridge between research, policy formulation, and implementation. This unique positioning has enabled RIS to contribute significantly to India's development partnership initiatives across various sectors, with public health, traditional medicine and intellectual property rights standing out as prominent arenas of engagement. It has been instrumental in shaping and enhancing India's engagement with the world in these critical areas including clinical trials and medical devices.

RIS' involvement in India's public health development partnerships has been characterized by its commitment to equity,

access, and sustainability. Collaborating with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, and civil society, RIS has facilitated knowledge exchanges, research collaborations, and policy dialogues. Through capacity-building workshops, technical assistance programmes, and research dissemination, RIS has empowered partner countries to strengthen their healthcare systems, address health challenges and improve health delivery.

Some of the research works in these areas included *India-Africa Partnership in Health Care: Accomplishments and Prospects*; *Public Policy and Economic Development: Case Study of Indian Pharmaceutical Industry*; *Health, Nature and Quality of Life: Towards BRICS Wellness Index*; *China's Policy Initiatives for National and Global Promotion of TCM*; and *In-depth Study on Protection of Traditional Knowledge, Traditional Cultural Expressions and Plant Genetic Resources*.

RIS also took the leadership in India's work on Sustainable Development Goals by organising early academic and research interactions with central and state governments, and international organisations. One of the early studies on the subject was *2030 Agenda and India: Moving from Quantity to Quality – Exploring Convergence and Transcendence*.

An unforgettable experience of this period was the work with the Speaker's Research Initiative set up by Hon'ble Speaker Sumitra Mahajan. It was launched with a workshop on Sustainable Development Goals in July 2015. The Prime Minister

who attended the inaugural function appreciated the initiative to make the Members of Parliament aware of issues on a specific topic through the aid of experts in the area.

With the onset of 2022, a new chapter began as I transitioned to working with RIS from a distance. The global circumstances necessitated a shift to remote work, underscoring the organisation's adaptability and commitment to continuing its mission despite challenges. This phase has exemplified the importance of technology and virtual collaboration, allowing me to remain engaged and contribute to RIS' endeavours from afar. RIS also commenced bringing out its publications in different Indian and foreign languages now. One example is the Discussion Paper *International Discussions on Indigenous People and India* which was brought out apart from English in different Indian languages and Spanish. RIS also took the lead in studying the *IPR issues of Traditional Medicine*.

In recognition of its contributions to the promotion of traditional medicine, the AYUSH Ministry set up the Forum on Indian Traditional Medicine (FITM) in RIS. It has been facilitating dialogues between traditional medicine practitioners, the pharmaceutical industry and policymakers. It has also been focussing on the challenges to bring innovation in traditional medicine and also the need for evidence-based medicine. One of the recent initiatives is the peer-reviewed *Journal of Traditional Medicine*, which has got an able editor in Dr Namrata Pathak. As RIS continues to spearhead initiatives that bridge the gap

between traditional and modern healthcare, it contributes to a more comprehensive and holistic approach to well-being, both within India and across the globe. I am happy that I have been able to be part of these studies and initiatives.

The year 2023 was made memorable by India's chairmanship of G20. RIS played a leading role in the T20 process. I, of course, had the fortune to attend T20 meetings in the past too. But the launch of the Task Force on LiFE, Resilience and Values for Wellbeing. Its focus on sustainable production and consumption, transition to a green economy, building ethics and integrity in financial institutions and real human wellbeing as the measurement of progress are some of the principles that RIS has been advocating at international fora for quite some time. The academic exchanges that RIS and the Task Force organised during the year have laid a global foundation for these high principles to be part of national and international governance and policymaking. I am sure RIS will carry forward this initiative in the future. This and the BRICS meetings were great opportunities to interact with international experts in various fields like Professor Thomas Pogge, the philosopher who propounded the idea of Health Impact Fund.

During my tenure, I had the privilege of working alongside a dedicated and diverse team of individuals who contributed significantly to our shared goals. Almost all my young friends, who made invaluable contributions in our research, were fresh from the universities. Some of my colleagues embarked on new

opportunities, seeking fresh challenges and growth in their careers. Their departures were bittersweet, as I understood that their professional journeys were taking them toward brighter prospects, and I was proud to have been part of their development. Others chose to pursue higher studies, a decision that highlighted their commitment to continuous learning and personal advancement. Their pursuit of knowledge served as an inspiration to the entire team. Additionally, a few of my colleagues transitioned into the well-deserved phase of superannuation, having dedicated their years of service to our collective mission. Their retirement marked the culmination of a remarkable journey and provided an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for their enduring contributions. Many are still there playing stellar roles in making the RIS sky bright. Despite the varied paths taken by my colleagues, their camaraderie and the collaborative spirit we shared continue to resonate within the work we do, serving as a testament to the enduring connections forged during our time together.

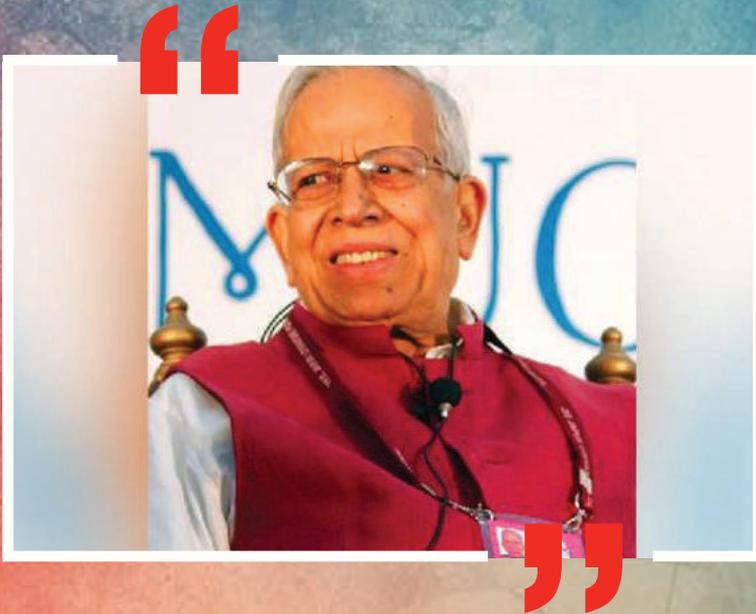
In retrospect, my experiences with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries have been nothing short of transformative. From initial interactions in the 1990s to assuming roles of increasing responsibility and influence, I have had the privilege of witnessing the organization's evolution and impact. RIS's dedication to research, information dissemination, and policy analysis remains steadfast, and I am proud to have

been a part of this journey. The past was great but I visualise a greater future for RIS given its inherent strengths.

I find RIS as a bright star in the research and international relations firmament. RIS can conduct in-depth research and analysis on various aspects of international trade, development, and economic policies, focusing on the interests and concerns of countries of the South. This research can contribute valuable insights to policy discussions and help shape informed decisions. It can serve as a platform for advocating the interests of developing countries in international forums and negotiations. By producing well-researched policy briefs, reports, and discussion papers, RIS can help raise awareness and influence global policy discussions. RIS could organise workshops, seminars, and training programmes to enhance the understanding of policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders from developing countries on complex trade and development issues. RIS can gather and disseminate relevant data and information about trade trends, economic indicators, and policy developments such as in the field of public health and traditional medicine that impact developing countries. This information can be crucial for evidence-based decision-making. RIS can facilitate collaboration and networking among policymakers, researchers, and experts from different countries. This can lead to the exchange of ideas, best practices, and lessons learned. Based on its research findings, RIS can formulate practical policy recommendations for developing

countries to address challenges and seize opportunities in the global trade and development landscape. RIS can act as a bridge between academic research and policy implementation by translating complex research findings into actionable policy recommendations that align with the priorities of developing countries. RIS can provide technical assistance and expertise to developing countries during trade negotiations, helping them navigate complex trade agreements and ensuring their interests are well-represented. RIS can monitor the implementation and impact of trade and development policies, providing feedback and suggesting adjustments as needed to achieve desired outcomes. The years that I spent with RIS makes me sanguine about this.

REFLECTIONS ON MY ASSOCIATION WITH RIS



DR RAMGOPAL AGARWALA

Former Distinguished Fellow, RIS



Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), formerly known as Research and Information System for Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries was set up in early 1980s with a view to creating a think tank to provide intellectual support to economic philosophy of non-aligned countries that were inclined toward central planning and believed in a key role for the government in economic development. However, by the late sixties, a crisis in planning was beginning to be felt. In intellectual terms, there was a waning of faith in Keynesian economics and the Government role in economic development. The rise of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US provided a fillip to Hayekian and Friedmanian thinking, with the Washington Consensus emphasizing liberalization, privatisation and deregulation was the emergent theme. The key intellectual thinkers behind RIS, such as Sukhamoy Chakravarty (then a member of India's Planning Commission) were in a defensive position to this emergent theme. There were influential senior Government officials who were for free trade and other market-oriented policies, thereby setting up rival think tanks to promote

their viewpoint, garnering Western support and encouragement. These were tough times for RIS despite being supported by the Government of India.

Despite this, RIS kept at its work with firm conviction. Today non-alignment has been replaced by multi- alignment and the call for multi-polar world are coming from many quarters. While the West still clings to the desire for maintaining its hegemony, a relic of the post-WWII era, many in the public are realising that the pursuit of hegemony is incompatible with pursuit of happiness, which we earnestly desire. But perhaps, as behavioural economics finds in loss aversion, losses are experienced asymmetrically more severely than equivalent gains. Today, RIS has become more relevant than ever. In this atmosphere, RIS has the potential to become the think tank for the G20, going beyond the Global South, and be a catalyst for a new mixture of state intervention and market freedom for provision of global public goods and achievement of sustainable prosperity (in particular, protection from climate change and pandemics) of global family.

My association with RIS began in 1995. At that time, I was working as head of Economic Unit in the Beijing Resident Mission of the World Bank. When I visited India, my old friend V.R. Panchamukhi, the then Director General of RIS, invited me for a talk on reforms in India and China. An open-air discussion was organised in the India International Centre (IIC). I spoke on the risks of Washington Consensus in India and rewards of

reforms with Chinese characteristics. There were in the audience many sceptics about India's reform programs, and I had a good reception. Dr Panchamukhi also introduced me to Shri G. Parthasarathi, the then Chairman of RIS, with whom I had an animated discussion about endogeneity of economic policy and China's emphasis on reforms with Chinese characteristics. I felt an alignment of my philosophy with Dr Panchamukhi, who had deep spiritual roots. He was sympathetic to my views on Swadeshi route for India rooted in our spiritual traditions.

So, when I retired from the World Bank, he offered me a senior position in RIS from where I could develop my Intellectual Swaraj Movement which would also be in line with philosophy of non-alignment embodied in RIS. I was delighted to find comfortable research atmosphere conducive to creative thinking. The leadership was fully supportive of open and free thinking, and I would have occasional debates and discussions with the Director General on issues of general concern. There were plenty of colleagues and peers in town for exchange of ideas. There was a well-stocked library with a very helpful librarian. There were plenty of researchers and summer interns to help in research. Altogether I felt blessed to pursue research to my heart's content in an excellent atmosphere. In the sixteen years during which I was associated with RIS, I was, in addition to assisting the Director General in day-to-day activities, able to produce unorthodox research outputs on three broad topics:

Promoting Regional Co-operation through Reform of Financial Infrastructure in Asia

I was elaborating my theme of financial co-operation in Asia in RIS with funding support from Sasakawa Foundation of Japan. I developed the theme that the then current international financial system was unjust, inefficient and unsustainable. It was unjust because it gave the seigniorage generated by international trade and payment system to the richest country in the world rather than the poorer needier countries and peoples. It was inefficient because the recipients of the seigniorage were using it largely for unproductive consumption when it could be used for productive investments in developing countries. Lastly it was unsustainable because it was leading to ever increasing deficits of the US and creating debt burden at private and public level which are likely to lead to insolvencies sooner or later. I called for moving to multi-polar world of finance where the Asian Reserve Bank will issue a parallel currency as a supplement to the international currency, preferably in SDRs but even in US\$.

In my work on the topic at RIS, I presented my proposal in the context of the sunset of US neo-imperialism and the search for alternatives, including Swadeshi. During the ninetens, the US deficits kept ballooning. In my view, it was largely due to stimulus package introduced in the US to forestall risks of recession created by dotcom crisis and even more severely by 9/11. Backed by market fundamentalism and reserve currency status, the US could go on living beyond its means in a big way.

It created much trade and investment for the rest of the world, including China and India. I elaborated on the risk drawing upon such eminent authorities as Larry Summers. But the going was too good to be looked in the mouth. I kept on writing about the need for restructuring global demand away from the US consumer towards investment in infrastructure in Asia and other developing countries. In retrospect, some of these papers had a remarkable prophetic quality but at that time they were largely ignored in India as elsewhere. It was a tribute to Nagesh Kumar, DG of RIS that he allowed me to publish these controversial papers under RIS auspices.

Understanding the modalities of spectacular success in development achieved by China since 1980 and its bright prospects by 2020

I first published a working paper in RIS on China's prospects of becoming the largest economy in the world, followed by a book under RIS auspices on how the rise of China can be an opportunity and not a threat. I argued that China's economic performance in the two decades since Deng Xiao Ping's reforms constituted the most impressive and most important case of economic development (bar none) and others can learn for it. I argued that the Chinese policy makers systematically rejected the key policy proposals of the established economic theories of the West (which was the prevailing wisdom at the time). This was evident in their following two stage price reforms in

agriculture, setting up of special economic zones and building up civil service and state capacity to manage the economy according to the Chinese philosophy. I noted that in one commodity after another, China was becoming the largest producer in the world and if China continued on its chosen path, it would become the largest economy by 2020.

Enhancing Economic Co-operation between the Newly Liberated Central Asian Republics and India

In an RIS discussion paper (#108) entitled “Towards Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and Central Asian Republics”, which was presented at the 11th SPF-Issyk-Kul Forum “Central Asia and South Caucasus: Growing Political Uncertainty, Tensions” organised in Goa (November 2005), I offered some ideas for enhancing economic co-operation between Central Asian republics (CARs) and India. Through RIS, I noted that there were enormous opportunities for enhanced co-operation between India and CARs as examples of South-South Cooperation. What was needed was to go beyond FTAs to agreements like the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) as initiated between India and Singapore.

In retrospect, the last 25 years of economic history have validated the RIS approach. The era of neoliberalism that characterized the Establishment Economic Thinking since the emergence of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan has sharply

increased inequalities and insecurities in the developed countries themselves and proved utterly incapable of dealing with serious issues of climate change and global pandemics. On theoretical level, there is now greater recognition of the importance of historical, cultural and political forces in designing economic policies for countries and total rejection of universalist one-size-fits-all philosophy of the neoliberal era. In political terms, it is a validation of the philosophy of non-aligned movement which rejected unquestioned adherence to the prevailing philosophy of the day and sought for strategic independence of thinking. This is what RIS stood for, and this is what has been validated by the experience of the last 40 years. It was this atmosphere that helped me to be devoted to my work in RIS and produce some unorthodox pieces.

RIS A Think-Tank of Developing Countries

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) is a New Delhi-based autonomous policy research institute that specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues.

The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged across inter-governmental processes of several regional economic cooperation initiatives. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

For more information about RIS and its work programme, please visit its website: www.ris.org.in



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