

Alyssa Ayres, Ph.D.

Senior Fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia

Council on Foreign Relations

Expertise

India; Pakistan; Bangladesh; South Asia; nationalism and political movements in South Asia; economic development; fragile states; emerging markets; business and foreign policy.

Bio

Alyssa Ayres is senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). At CFR she conducts two projects, one focused on India's role in the world, and one on the new geopolitics of China, India, and Pakistan. In 2015, she served as the project director for the [CFR-sponsored Independent Task Force on U.S.-India Relations](#). She directs the U.S. Relations with South Asia Roundtable Series, blogs regularly for Asia Unbound, and is a contributor to Forbes.com. She is writing a book about India's rise on the world stage.

Ayres served previously as deputy assistant secretary of state for South Asia from 2010 to 2013, covering all issues across a dynamic region of 1.3 billion people (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, and Bhutan), and providing policy direction for four U.S. embassies and four consulates. Trained originally as a cultural historian, she has experience in the nonprofit, government, and private sectors, and has carried out research on both India and Pakistan.

Prior to serving in the Obama administration, Ayres was founding director of the India and South Asia practice at McLarty Associates, the Washington-based international strategic advisory firm, from 2008 to 2010. Immediately prior, she served in the U.S. Department of State as special assistant to the undersecretary for political affairs as a CFR international affairs fellow. Prior to that she worked in the nonprofit sector at the Center for the Advanced Study of India at the University of Pennsylvania, and at the Asia Society in New York.

Her book on nationalism, culture, and politics in Pakistan, *Speaking Like a State*, was published worldwide by Cambridge University Press in 2009, and received the American Institute of Pakistan Studies book prize for 2011–2012. She has coedited three books on India and Indian foreign policy: *Power Realignments in Asia* (Sage, 2009), *India Briefing: Takeoff at Last?* and *India Briefing: Quickening the Pace of Change* (ME Sharpe, 2002 and 2005). Ayres has been awarded numerous fellowships, and has received four group or individual Superior Honor Awards for work at the State Department. She speaks fluent Hindi and Urdu, and in the mid-1990s worked as an interpreter for the International Committee of the Red Cross. She received an AB magna cum laude from Harvard College, and an MA and PhD from the University of Chicago, where her dissertation was defended with distinction. She is a former term member, and has been a life member of CFR since 2010.

