



PRESS RELEASE

“India should play the role of an honest broker to bring peace in the region”

1st September, 2017, New Delhi

Ananta Centre organised a session on **“The ‘Trump Doctrine’ for West Asia: Implications for India”** to analyse the implications of the policy of the United States for India and the West Asian region. **Ambassador Ranjit Gupta**, Former Ambassador of India to Yemen and Oman; **Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad**, Former Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia, Oman & UAE; **Dr Meena Singh Roy**, Research Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) and **Ambassador Sanjay Singh**, Former Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India were among the distinguished panelists. The session was moderated by **Ms Indrani Bagchi**, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India.

Ambassador Ranjit Gupta elucidated on the strategic landscape of West Asia which has witnessed a dramatic transformation since revolutionary fervour swept through the region from early 2011 onwards. Current ground realities suggest that Iran has emerged as by far the most influential regional player across West Asia – in Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and now even in another GCC member state – Qatar; Iran’s relations with another GCC member, Oman, have long been better than Oman’s relations with Saudi Arabia. “It is in the context of this scenario that we must evaluate Trump’s actions, policies and statements in relation to West Asia”, he added. President Trump chose Saudi Arabia as the first country to visit and announced the sale of an arms package worth \$110 billion. He also quoted President Trump describing the nuclear deal with Iran as “the worst agreement ever negotiated” and that it would be his “number-one priority to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran” during the election campaign. Yet, the IAEA has only certified Iranian compliance with the deal. A best case scenario would be that Iran continues to abide by it, at least for the short term, gaining global sympathy and support, he pointed.

Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad stated that as far as West Asia is concerned, the single most serious confrontation today is between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The balance of power has changed with the collapse of former President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak which has left Saudi Arabia alone, he added. In order to redress the balance of power in the region, Saudi Arabia saw the installation of Sunni regime in Syria as the means to balance power in the region. There has been a new development and it is suggested that Iraq brings Iran and Saudi Arabia together.

Dr Meena Singh Roy further elaborated that the region is full of strategic surprises, where the GCC itself is divided and Iran has gradually started to gain as a result of its long standing patience. As the US wants to roll back the Iranian influence, destroy the IS and roll out some resolution between Israel and Palestine, it is not going to be an easy ride given the huge technical, military and political hurdles for the region. There is a definite change in America’s approach towards Israel under the new US administration but whether it will deliver or not is still not clear.

Ambassador Sanjay Singh, spoke about the new fault lines being created in Syria, Iran and Yemen. Also, as the region is India's largest economic and trading partner, it is imperative to have good relations with the countries of this region in India's fight against terrorism. In the last three years, the Modi government is playing a very active role in terms of the bilateral relations with the countries in the region. India has a multi-vector foreign policy relationship in the region which has now been elevated to a strategic level.

About Ananta Centre:

Ananta Centre is a non-partisan organization registered under the Indian Trusts Act. It focusses on values based leadership and open dialogue on challenges facing Indian society to help foster its transformation. The Centre engages civil society, business, governments and other key stakeholders to share ideas and bring a wide range of perspectives on issues important to India's development, foreign policy, strategic affairs and national security.

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