

REFLECTIONS 2017



Real cultural diversity results from the interchange of ideas, products, and influences, not from the insular development of a single national style.

- Tyler Cowen



Message from the Chairman

ANANTA CENTRE is taking firm steps towards becoming an association of choice for those who believe in a society rooted in values, dialogue and debate. I am particularly happy about our activities in 2017.

There were several outstanding programmes that were ambitious in outreach yet immensely successful.

We convened the inaugural edition of the India-US Forum which brought together eminent personalities from both countries to address major issues in political and trade relations and security cooperation.

This year, we introduced an exciting new leadership programme, perhaps the only one of its kind, for the Uniformed Services. It included a mix of officers from the Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, National Security Guards and the Sashastra Seema Bal.

At Ideas India, the initiative of the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellows, the central theme was Challenges to the Idea of India. The deliberations revolved around an interesting mix of topics - gender, caste and race, terrorism, India's youth demographic, digital privacy, agri-suicides, art and spirituality, fake news and even violence as an expression of protest. The multidisciplinary discussions reflected on the need for action and leadership in this time for transformation.

Our Foreign Policy Lecture Series at universities across the country gave students and researchers of International Relations, a unique opportunity to interact with Ambassadors, diplomats and thought leaders and gain insights about Indian diplomacy and understand India's prime foreign policy challenges and opportunities.

The year ahead comes with a lot of promise. There are many expectations. Several new initiatives will continue to unfold. We aim to build on our successes and move forward with values, wisdom and creativity.

Ananta Centre is moving towards its goal of a better and more inclusive society. More the people rooting for values and reason, better the society we build for the future and ourselves.



Jamshyd N Godrej

*Chairman, Ananta Centre and Chairman of the Board,
Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited*

Why we need to be invested in leadership



Govind Ethiraj
KamalNayan Bajaj Fellow and
Founder, Boom Live and IndiaSpend

As a moderator for several kinds of leadership programmes, I frequently encounter successful people from different walks of life.

I find that most achievers at some point in their journey evaluate their success against the lens of a larger social impact. They usually ask themselves if their success can truly be viewed as significant.

I also hear about people wanting to leave behind a legacy. But I have also met some who worry about the legacy that their generation is bequeathing to the future.

As a society we need to identify and nurture such leaders who look at their success through the lens of social significance. Only then can we hope for transformational change in our society and country.

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Mihir Sharma
Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow and
Columnist, Bloomberg View

A country of a billion-plus, with a billion plus challenges, needs millions of leaders if effective change is to happen.

India's challenges are among the most daunting in the world. Their complexity is matched only by their scale; from skilling, to climate change, to social reform, to the creation of state capacity, there are multiple fronts on which development has stalled and millions of Indians' lives are being held back. There is only one way in which India can get out of this trap: if every Indian who has the potential for leadership actually becomes a leader. A country of a billion-plus, with a billion plus challenges, needs millions of leaders if effective change is to happen.

Leadership is not just about energy and enthusiasm; it is also about values. Leaders can only be effective in the often chaotic circumstances of India if their organisations, comrades, and colleagues can be brought to share their sense of mission. This requires leaders to be able to actively propagate and share the values that underlie their vocation, in such a way that their personal involvement is minimised.

Values are thus a force multiplier for leadership – and, in a country where the challenges are so manifold, a force multiplier is precisely what is needed. The Aspen method of creating and nurturing leadership relies not just on finding the right leaders, but also in giving them the network, the vocabulary and the support they need to express and propagate their values. That's the kind of leadership we need to be invested in.

Leadership Programme for the Uniformed Forces

UNIFORMED FORCES are called upon to deal with multiple sections of the society and are therefore most pressed to play their part with sense and sensitivity.

Ananta organised a seminar, in Gurugram, to help these forces build on values-based leadership. The programme brought together a mixed group that included participants from the Police, Central Reserve Police Force, Border Security Force, National Security Guards and the Sashastra Seema Bal, as well as influencers from civil society, media, bureaucracy and business.

The idea behind a mixed group was to help the uniformed forces understand and engage better with multiple sections of the society.



Ananta Leadership Programmes guide potential leaders through a personal journey of reflection and help them move from thought to action.



LEFT
Moderators Charu Sinha, Inspector General, Central Reserve Police Force, Bihar; Govindraj Ethiraj, Founder, Boom Live & IndiaSpend and Masood Hussainy, Vice President, Tata Advanced Systems, with the participants of Ananta Leaders Fellowship.



Ananta: leading Track II diplomacy



Ambassador SK Lambah
Chairman, Council for Strategic &
International Affairs, Ananta Centre

A demographically young country like India must teach its youth to see the world when they look out of their windows.

Public opinion is a powerful tool in a democracy and informed opinion more so. Which is why, a demographically young country like India must teach its youth to see the world when they look out of their windows.

The Foreign Policy Lecture Series that we have initiated does just that by reaching out to students and research scholars in universities across India and encouraging interest in foreign policy among them. These lectures provide a unique opportunity for students to gain insights in the field of foreign policy through interaction with thought leaders and to understand India's prime foreign policy challenges and opportunities.

Traditionally, diplomacy has been the domain of a professionally trained elite group that works behind closed doors away from the public. There was and continues to be merit in this system – formal talks between countries are not conversations over coffee. The nature of talks and the agenda require structure, skill and discretion. The flip side of this situation is that the very structure that keeps talks on track also limits exchange in terms of quality and depth.

Therefore, it is equally important for students and researchers of international relations, defence studies and foreign policy to engage with experts and understand the nuances of shaping India's relationship with the world.



Prमित Pal Chaudhuri
Distinguished Fellow and Head,
Strategic Affairs, Ananta Aspen
Centre and Foreign Editor,
Hindustan Times

Quasi-formal dialogues, between peers from two countries, encourage nuanced conversations and better understanding of each other's issues.

Engaging with different people and cultures brings an appreciation of diversity and its richness. Which is why, a well-travelled person often has a more inclusive worldview.

The same argument holds true for a country. A nation that engages with others at multiple levels is likely to have a better-informed and moderate foreign policy. One facet of this sort of engagement is organised dialogues aimed at building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process. These are designed to build trust and increase communication. They include academics and other civil society actors who can interact more freely and more frankly than high-ranking officials.

Such quasi-formal dialogues, between peers from two countries, encourage nuanced conversations and better understanding of each other's issues. This perspective can be incredibly useful for shaping foreign policies of newly emergent world players like India.

At Ananta, we convene several dialogues and over the years, our Track II efforts have expanded to include dialogues with several countries including the United States, Israel, Japan, Singapore, Turkey, South Korea and China. Each of these talks are unique. If one were to evaluate the transcripts and the agenda of the longer running dialogues I am sure they would document the evolution of India's strategic interest in a changing world order.

But for that we must build up the profile of the Track II platform as an unusually rich manner by which countries can engage with each other. Track II dialogues must contribute to the mind space of our future leaders. India and the world will be the richer for it.

Foreign Policy Dialogues

HIGHLIGHTS 2017

Trump Doctrine for West Asia *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. Participants included Ambassador Ranjit Gupta, Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad, Ambassador Sanjay Singh and Dr. Meena Singh Roy, Research Fellow IDSA. The session was moderated by Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India.

Ananta Foreign Policy dialogues bring together influencers from India and other countries for nuanced talks and better understanding, so that they can help inform policies back home.





Foreign Policy Lecture Series

THE FOREIGN POLICY LECTURE SERIES was launched in 2017 to encourage interest in foreign policy and international relations among students. The series provides an exclusive opportunity to students and young researchers to gain insights in the field of foreign policy through interaction with thought leaders and understand India's prime foreign policy challenges and opportunities. The series also provides an excellent opportunity to the faculty at these Universities and educational institutions to have an in-depth discussion with the visiting speakers.

Lectures were conducted in universities across multiple states including Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Sikkim.



ABOVE

Amb. PS Raghavan, Convener, National Security Advisory Board, speaking on 'India's Foreign Policy in the Twenty First Century: From Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment' at Manipal University, Karnataka on the 15th of September 2017.

LEFT

Lt. General Arvinder Singh Lamba, Former Vice Chief of Army Staff, speaking on 'Dynamics of Change in South Asia: Challenges for India's Foreign Policy' at South Asia Study Centre, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, on the 15th of November 2017.





ABOVE

Vice Admiral (Retd.) Pradeep Chauhan, Director, National Maritime Foundation, speaking on, 'Driving Foreign Policy: A Viable Pan - Regional Alternative to China's Maritime Silk Route / Belt - and - Road Initiative' at Sikkim University, Gangtok, on the 4th of October 2017.

LEFT

Amb. Talmiz Ahmad, Adviser, West Asia & North Africa, Ananta Centre & Former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman & UAE speaking on 'Political Islam and Global Jihad: Challenges for Global Security' at Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune on the 18th of January 2018.

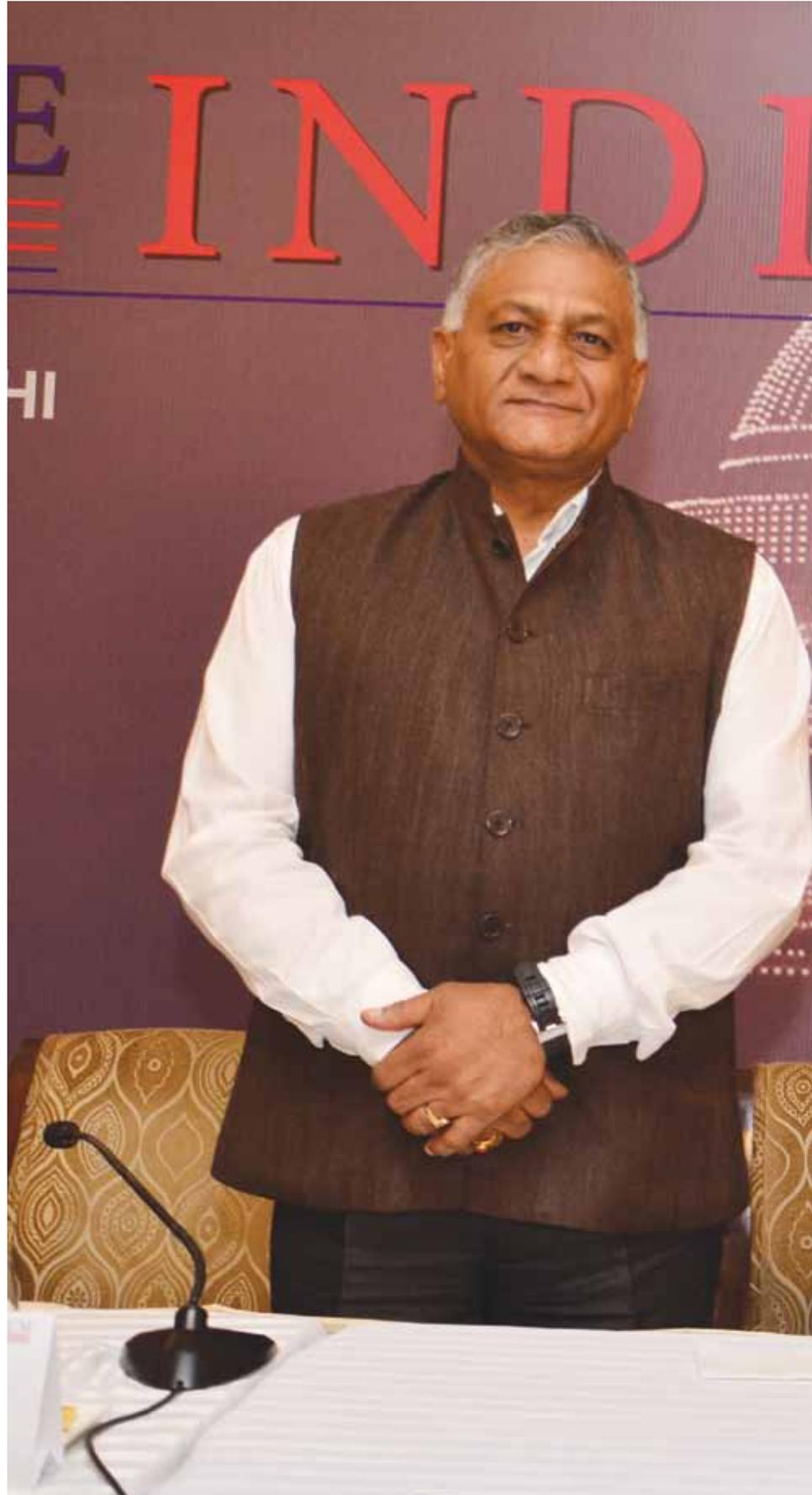
The India-US Forum

THE INAUGURAL EDITION of The India-US Forum was convened by Ananta Centre and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India on 31st July - 1st August 2017 in New Delhi. The Forum brought together more than 40 speakers and 100 participants including Members of Parliament, business and political leaders, eminent media personalities, senior officials and thought leaders to discuss the various dimensions of the India-US partnership. The Forum, which followed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US, addressed major issues in political and trade relations, security cooperation as well as innovation, technology, and environment and energy.

Honourable Minister of External Affairs Smt. Sushma Swaraj gave the inaugural address underlining the essential shared values and challenges of the Indo-US relationship. The Minister introduced the forum as a platform for creating a strategic dialogue between the two countries and acknowledged that the last two decades have witnessed a rapid transformation in India-US relations which has truly become a strategic partnership of global significance.

RIGHT

L-R: General VK Singh (Retd.), Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India, Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India and Jamshyd N Godrej, Chairman, Ananta Centre & Chairman of the Board, Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing Co. Limited, at the India-US Forum.







ABOVE
 MJ Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India, reflecting on the Indo-US Political relations.



LEFT
L-R: Ed McLaughlin, President, Operations & Technology, Master Card, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of Law & Justice, Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India and Uday Kotak, Executive Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited, talking about technology and innovation at the India-US Forum.



ABOVE

L-R: N Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons in conversation with Jackson Diehl, Deputy Editorial Page Editor, The Washington Post at the India-US Forum.

LEFT

L-R: Baijayant Panda, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, John A. Sanchez, Lieutenant Governor, New Mexico, N K Singh, Former Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha & Senior Member, Bharatiya Janta Party, Alice G Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary, the Bureau of South & Central Asian Affairs, US Department of State and Frederick Kempe, President & CEO, Atlantic Council at the India-US Forum.



The keys to successful dialogues



Tarun Das
Founding Trustee, Ananta Centre and
Chairman, Institute of Economic
Growth

Whoever invented the word “Dialogue” needs deep appreciation because “Dialogue” or, discussion and conversation, has become the way forward to address challenges, forge communication and build bridges between people, Institutions, Governments and Nations.

And, this is at the core of what the Ananta Centre does in every aspect of its work. Engage in Dialogue usually based on “Readings” (= A Backgrounder) to develop shared understanding. At high school and college level; at Executive, NGO, Government official and Security Services level; at international level. Ananta Centre is deeply engaged in Dialogue to bring people together.

This is not time for war, even where there are serious differences. The USA-Russia Summit was a Dialogue, the USA-North Korea Summit likewise. To find a way through intractable problems.

The key to successful Dialogues is to Listen, to Understand, to Align. And, preferably out of media attention so that the Dialogue is free and frank. Usually, without even a Record of the Dialogue.

Dialogue serves a very positive purpose and is the way to go, based on full preparation, trained facilitation (“moderators”) and a limited number of persons engaged together.

The key to successful Dialogues is to Listen, to Understand, to Align. And, preferably out of media attention so that the Dialogue is free and frank.



Anuj Poddar
Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellow &
Executive Vice President,
Viacom 18 Media Private Limited

When I read about talks that were not productive, what I derive is that the people in the room were perhaps not committed or groomed adequately to make it work.

When you sit at the table with the mutual resolve to find a solution, you must focus on finding ways to do so. The ability to listen objectively, to reason and persuade, to be accepting of the fact that there can be multiple perspectives and nuances to what we hold to be true - these are all prerequisites for constructive dialogues.

I'd like to share a wonderful piece of advice that would enrichen our lives and make the world a better place: *"Read books by people you disagree with. Listen to others who think differently from you. Watch programming you normally wouldn't watch. Expand your mind and views of the world. As right as you think you are about your own beliefs and experiences, others feel the same way about their own. You'll learn more than you ever imagined if you see the world through beliefs rather than right or wrong."*

- Emily Maroutian

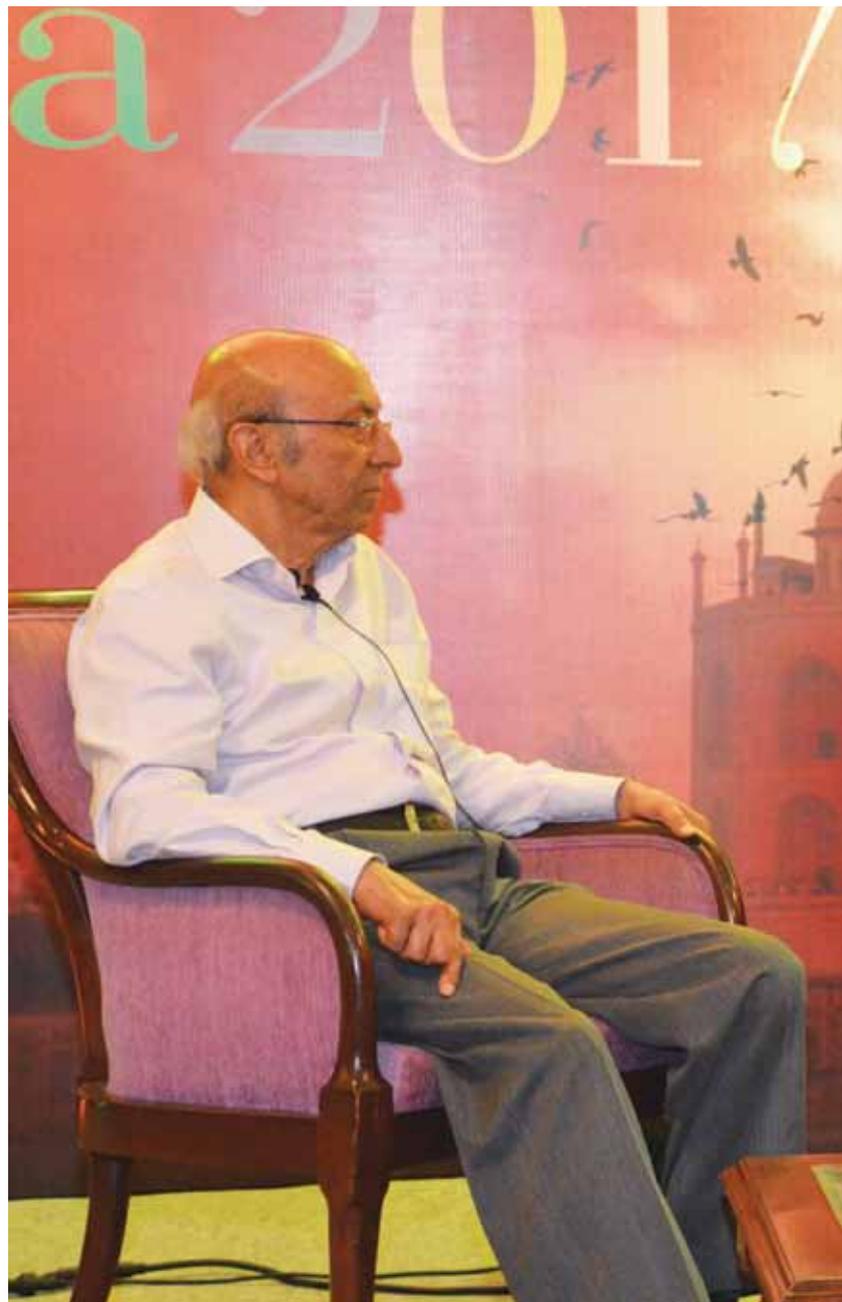
When you sit at the table with the mutual resolve to arrive at a solution, you focus on finding ways to do so.

Ananta Godrej Ideas India 2017

Agra, November 2-5, 2017

The Ananta Godrej Ideas India held its second edition at Agra. It brought together participants from the fields of arts, politics, business, public service and civil society to deliberate on critical issues facing India. The intent was to arrive at actionable solutions through the process of dialogue and debate.

The sessions yielded interesting solutions to the issues tabled for discussion. Another highlight of this event was the showcasing of social projects undertaken by the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellows.



Ananta Public Policy dialogues facilitate exchange and consensus building, between influencers from different stakeholder groups, on issues facing the country.



ABOVE

Bhairavi Jani, Convenor Ideas India 2017 and Executive Director, SCA Group in conversation with Jamshyd N Godrej, Chairman, Ananta Centre and Chairman of the Board, Godrej & Boyce Manufacturing Company Limited and, Tarun Das, Founding Trustee, Ananta Centre and Chairman, Institute of Economic Growth.





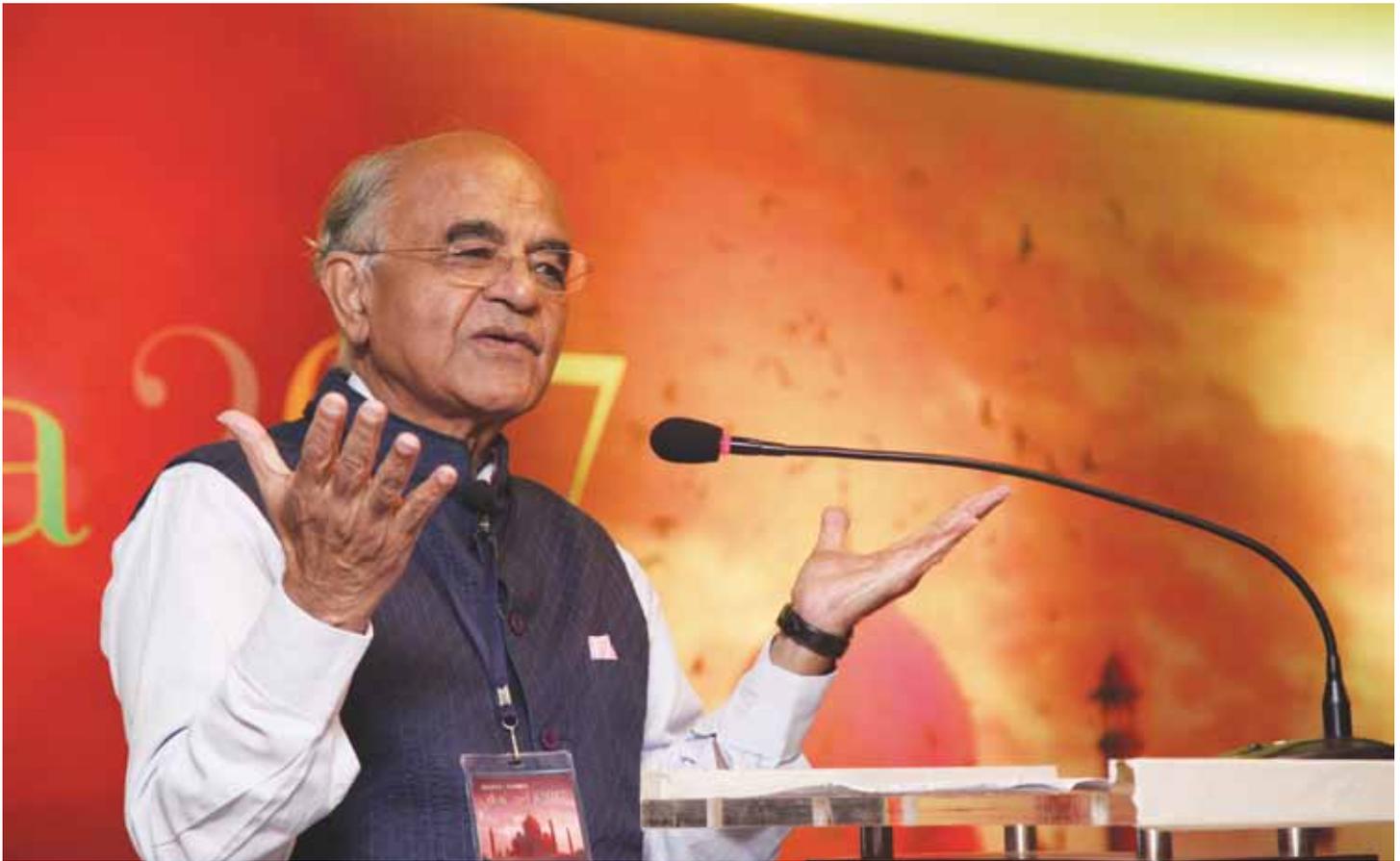
Discussion themes

- *The rise of the mob*
- *Individual liberties vs. legislation*
- *The rising menace of fake news*
- *Terrorism*
- *Climate change*
- *Casteism*









India, US tighten embrace as Trump works on S Asia policy

US Seeks New Approach As Current One Hits Dead End

Indrani.Bagchi
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With junior foreign minister V K Singh meeting US secretary of state Rex Tillerson in Manila during the Asean foreign ministers conclude, it caps a week of renewed engagement between India and the United States. It comes as the Trump administration works on a South Asia policy to deal with one of the longest and most difficult wars in Afghanistan.

Officials from Pentagon and National Security Council were in India this week to participate in a 1.5 track dialogue organised by the MEA and think tank Ananta Centre. Alice Wells, acting assistant secretary for South Asia; Lisa Curtis, senior director in NSC; and Cara Abercrombie from the Pentagon met foreign secretary S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval.

That India is watching the Trump administration's evolving South Asia/AF-Pak policy with interest was clear from foreign minister

Sushma Swaraj's statement at the Indo-US forum. "We appreciate the sacrifices made by US to preserve peace, security and democracy in Afghanistan. However, it is important the international community particularly the US, must remain engaged in Afghanistan so that the gains of the last 16 years are not frittered away," she said.

India has added another \$1 billion to its assistance to Afghanistan. The MEA informed Parliament last week that "Rs 350 crore has been currently earmarked for support to Afghanistan". Trump, said sources, was looking for a new approach. According to reports, Trump complained to his military generals that the US was "not winning" in Afghanistan.

The core of the new policy seems to rest on these pillars: bolstering forces in Afghanistan, bringing down training missions, pursuing IS and al-Qaida and pushing the Ashraf Ghani government to reform to some level of efficiency. The peace and reconciliation process,



Secretary of state Rex Tillerson

which was an important part in the Obama administration, can be placed in a regional context that will involve Afghanistan's neighbours — which makes sense, given the dynamics that fuel Taliban's continued relevance in Afghanistan.

The new policy differs most from the Obama iteration in that it might move away from a time-based effort. Some of these elements have been tossed around by various officials in the Trump administration, mainly defence secretary James Mattis and Tillerson.

Nato commander in Afghanistan General John Nicholson described the war as a "stalemate" and asked for "few thousand" extra troops.

"Offensive capability is what will break the stalemate in Afghanistan," he said in February. But the policy sources said, would be deeper and broader than merely additional troops. The end-game at present is not clear — is it to win the war against the Taliban or to do a peace deal with them, or a sequence of one following the other.

The US NSC spokesperson said. "The national security

India,

Indrani.Bagchi
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With junior foreign minister V K Singh meeting US secretary of state Rex Tillerson in Manila on the sidelines of the Asean foreign ministers meeting, it caps a week of renewed engagement between India and the United States. It comes as the Trump administration works on a South Asia policy to deal with one of the longest and most difficult wars in Afghanistan.

Senior ranking officials from state, Pentagon and National Security Council were in India this week to participate in a 1.5 track dialogue organised by the MEA and t

BIG BUSINESS DURING UAE CROWN PRINCE'S VISIT

India May Assist UAE in Air Defence System

DipanjRoy.Chaudhury@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: India may assist the United Arab Emirates in developing its air defence system and repairing defence equipment, besides providing offshore patrol vehicles as the Gulf country hopes to expand ties beyond its traditional partner Pakistan.

Robust defence ties is a key pillar of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that India and the UAE plan to conclude during Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Delhi as the chief guest for the Republic Day, officials said. India sees the UAE as one of its main destinations for arms exports in the future, they said.

"Air defence is another area where India can assist the UAE given the new-found expertise that India is building

The report further said, "For instance, L&T has procured an order for 100 self-propelled track air defence guns in partnership with a Korean company. The product of the Korean company was not environmentally suitable but the product was acclimatised and made suitable to be used in the UAE. Therefore, acclimatised products being developed in India are products that can meet the UAE's requirements."



India sees the UAE as one of its main destinations for arms exports in the future

The report said that private shipyards in India can provide offshore patrol vessels and designs exist for frigates and corvettes to meet requirements of the Gulf nation.

"The UAE has been buying these from

US tighten their embrace



The Trump administration is working on a South Asia policy

tank Ananta Centre. Alice Wells, acting assistant secretary for South Asia; Lisa Curtis, senior director in NSC; and Cara Abercrombie from the Pentagon met foreign secretary S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval among others.

That India is watching the Trump administration's

evolving South Asia/Af-Pak policy with interest was clear from foreign minister Sushma Swaraj's statement at the Indo-US forum this week. She said, "We deeply appreciate the sacrifices made by the US to preserve peace, security and democracy in Afghanistan. However, it is important that the international community, particularly the US, must remain engaged in Afghanistan so that the gains of the last 16 years are not frittered away."

India has just added another \$1 billion to its assistance to Afghanistan. The MEA informed Parliament last week that "Rs 350 crore has been currently ear-

marked for support to Afghanistan under Budget Estimates-2017-2018".

Trump, said sources, is looking for a new approach, because the current one is not going anywhere. According to reports, Trump complained to his military generals that the US was "not winning" in Afghanistan. The effort, therefore, is to look at new approaches, said sources familiar with the exercise.

The core of the new policy seems to rest on these pillars: bolstering the security forces in Afghanistan, bringing down training missions, pursuing terror groups and pushing the government to reform to some level of efficiency.

anania centre West Asia Digest

MONTHLY 01 AUGUST 2018 VOL. 02 ISSUE 08

Ambassador Taimiq Ahmad
 Adviser, West Asia & North Africa, Anania Centre
 Former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman & UAE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Political Developments
- Oil-related Developments

1 Political Developments

1) Syria – government forces advance in the south: After the success of the government in retaking Aleppo, Hama, Palmyra and finally Ghouta, and securing its capital, the southern campaign began in mid-June as the Bashar Assad regime, already in control of 60 percent of the country, moved to take back the remaining parts from rebel hands.

The south, consisting of the provinces of Quneitra, Daraa and Sweida, has more than one million residents of different denominations. The main rebel forces are from the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which is said to have about 20,000 fighters, though there is a sprinkling of extremist elements across the region. Over the last year, the south was relatively peaceful due to the de-escalation zone put in place by Russia, Jordan and the US, although rebel activities, including the supply of arms and training, was coordinated from a Military Operations Command (MOC) located in Jordan.

The attack was preceded by hectic diplomatic activity, when "rules" relating to the offensive were agreed to by the principal players and the government. The most important interactions were between Russia and Jordan, Israel and the US.

Jordan conveyed that it wanted the south cleared of rebels. It is already hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees and wants them to return home. Jordan is also keen that the Nasib post on its border with Syria is reopened so that it can obtain the \$400 million it gets annually from customs duties and other taxes from cross-border traffic. In return, Jordan agreed to close the MOC, thus ending military and logistical support to rebels in Syria.

Russian diplomatic condition: the militias backed forces would take them within a week decision (to f Given this d

anania centre Africa Digest

MONTHLY JULY 2018 VOL. 02 ISSUE 07

Mr. Prant Pal Chaudhuri
 Distinguished Fellow, Anania Aspen Centre
 Foreign Editor, The Hindustan Times

HIGHLIGHTS

- New Ethiopia: The Rock Star Ruler
- Modi Goes to Rwanda
- New Ethiopia: Geopolitics and the Horn
- Zimbabwe Goes to the Polls

New Ethiopia: The Rock Star Ruler

Ethiopia's new leader, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, has been in office for barely four months but has already achieved the political equivalent of rock star status. Abiy came to power after months of protests against the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) forced the resignation of his predecessor. While Ahmed comes from one of the four constituents of the EPRDF, he is the first to come from the sector representing the Oromo – the country's largest but politically most marginal ethnic group. Wearing Nelson Mandela T-shirts and slogans like "One love, one Ethiopia" have made him popular with youth and the large Ethiopian diaspora.

Abiy Ahmed, at 41 the youngest leader in Africa, has begun dismantling many of the more repressive elements of his government. He has released thousands of dissidents, sacked security officials accused of torture, and spoken positively of multi-party democracy.

Abiy has said he intends to end the state monopolies in aviation, telecom, electricity and logistics. His government also plans an ambitious programme of disinvestment and, in some areas like hotels and railway operations, privatisation. A number of foreign investors have already begun testing his intentions: Kenya's Safaricom has asked to be allowed to introduce its mobile money service M-Pesa.

Abiy's actions will undermine the pillars of the ruling Front's political apparatus. Commentators speculate there will be push back by Ethiopia's military and intelligence agencies which are controlled, as is much

anania centre Af-Pak Digest

MONTHLY JULY 2018 VOL. 02 ISSUE 07

Ambassador TCA Raghavan
 Adviser, Anania Centre
 Former High Commissioner of India to Pakistan

HIGHLIGHTS

- Overview
- Developments in Pakistan
- Developments in Afghanistan

1 Overview

Pakistan: The drama associated with the election contested acquired a fresh intensity with the conviction of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter by an accountability court. It received an added cutting edge when Nawaz Sharif returned from the UK leaving behind his critically ill wife and was immediately arrested and jailed. Certainly, this has injected a fresh narrative into the theatrical politics of this election that has otherwise been dominated by a series of moves whose intent has been to load the dice against the former Prime Minister's party. Whether the sympathy generated by this narrative will constitute the 'x factor' in the coming elections remains to be seen.

This election drama coincided with another factor that had otherwise receded a little from Pakistan-targeted terrorist attacks on public figures.

Finally, the general consensus appeared to be that no matter which party emerged triumphant in the election the first priority of the new government may well be to address the rapidly deteriorated economic situation - in particular on the external front. A mounting current account deficit and very low foreign exchange reserves imply that yet another application for a loan and stabilisation package to the IMF may now be inevitable.

The elections are scheduled for the 25th of July.

Afghanistan: The end of last month's Eid ceasefire has been followed by a series of terrorist attacks across the country underlining yet again the lack of direction in Afghanistan's internal evolution.

News reports emanating from the United States and attributed to high levels of government suggest that a green light had been given to direct talks with the Taliban - a longstanding demand of the latter and one with obvious consequences for the Afghan government and the political architecture in place in that country post 9/11 and the toppling of the Taliban regime by US military intervention.

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MONTHLY JULY 2018 VOL. 02 ISSUE 07

Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar
 Adviser, Central Asia, Anania Aspen Centre
 Former Ambassador of India to Kazakhstan, Sweden and Latvia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Political Developments
- Economic Developments
- India-Central Asia Relations

Political Developments

President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov said that strengthening friendly and fraternal relations with neighboring countries - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan is a priority of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. He noted that development of all-round ties with its strategic partner - Russia will remain an unchanged priority in foreign policy. He added that Kyrgyzstan has raised the strategic level of cooperation with its closest neighbor - People's Republic of China. In future, Kyrgyzstan will develop multilateral relations with Turkey, Japan, Korea, USA, European Union countries and the Arab world.

Kyrgyzstan is growing increasingly wary of China as details of a corruption case involving a project linked to Beijing are revealed. Scandal over a USD386 million contract handed to a Chinese company in 2013, has led to arrest of two former Kyrgyz prime ministers which points to risks facing Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. Kyrgyzstan is heavily indebted to China and is now working to rebalance its diplomacy, moving closer to its neighbors. Concern with China extends beyond the scandal. Bishkek's city council recently rejected a proposal to expand China's embassy. While decision was later reversed, it was embarrassing for China and Kyrgyz authorities.

A detailed report by International Federation for Human Rights (IFHR) has documented how migrants from **Kyrgyzstan** searching for work in neighboring **Kazakhstan** frequently fall prey to forced labor and become targets of mounting discrimination. The report urges Kazakhstan to clamp down on practices enabling slave labor such as employers retaining passports, illegally threatening to deduct wages and take additional measures to stop trafficking of persons.

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed was Chief Guest at inauguration of Astana Investment Financial Centre (AIFC). In their meeting, Sheikh Mohammed and President Nazarbayev discussed avenues to further expand bilateral cooperation. Renewable energy and establishing a knowledge-based economy were identified as areas with rich potential for enhancing bilateral investment. Development of AIFC is expected to create a competitive, efficient and transparent financial market in Kazakhstan, Central Asia and the wider region. Creation of AIFC is an attempt by **Kazakhstan** to steer the nation away from excess reliance on raw commodities like oil and gas.

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Russia Review

MONTHLY JULY 2018 VOL. 03 ISSUE 07

Ambassador P. S. Raghavan
Convener, National Security Advisory Board
Former Indian Ambassador to Russia (2014-16)

Overview

- The Trump-Putin Helsinki press conference sparked controversies
- France-German engagement with Russia intensified
- Russia-backed Syrian forces regained southern and southwestern Syria
- Russia-India-Pakistan-Afghanistan interactions

Row Over Press Conference Obscured Summit Result

The Trump-Putin summit in Helsinki held on July 16 signalled a thaw in US-Russia relations, which have in recent years degenerated into acrimonious mutual recriminations, expanding economic sanctions and military confrontations (through proxies) across Europe and Asia. The two leaders projected cordiality and mutual respect in their joint press conference, though they were frank in expressing their differences.

Impressions about the summit have been dominated by the narrative in American media and political circles that President Trump cut a sorry figure in the press conference vis a vis an arch-adversary – his demeanour was variously described as deferential, submissive and even obsequious. Deep suspicions were voiced that he may have made unwise concessions to the Russian in their one-to-one meeting of over two hours. The most trenchant criticism was predictably over his ill-judged public comments about Russian “meddling” in US elections – bolting the assessment of US intelligence agencies, renewing his old allegations about a cover-up and seeming to enjoin assistance in the investigations.

In actual fact, the joint press conference revealed different shifts in US or Russian positions. There was no mention that President Trump had reiterated the US position on it. He said he had requested that the US should put pressure on Russia to coordinate on Syria between the Russia and the US-led “small group” (including France, UK, Germany). He expressed concern at US withdrawal from Syria. President Trump did not respond to the remarks on Iran need for continued pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear programme and its expanding role in Syria. He repeated the US position on the Stream-2 gas pipeline project, on which he had publicly announced a couple of days earlier.

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Latin America & Caribbean Review

BI-MONTHLY JULY 2018 VOL. 02 | ISSUE 04

Ambassador Deepak Bhejani
Advisor, Latin America & Caribbean, Ananta Centre
Former Ambassador of India to Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba

HIGHLIGHTS

- Political Developments
- Economic Developments
- FOCUS India-LAC

Political Developments

On 17 June, **Colombia** elected 41-year old Ivan Duque of the Centro Democratico (CD) as president by 53.98 percent to left-wing challenger Gustavo Petro's 41.81 percent. Duque starts with a relatively clean sheet, though he is rumoured to be under the shadow of former President Alvaro Uribe (2002-10) who founded the CD in 2013. Initially patron, then the implacable political adversary of the outgoing President Juan Manuel Santos, Uribe and his political following have been critical of the peace accord signed with the FARC, ratified by Congress in 2016 after a narrow defeat in a referendum. The CD won 19 regions (departments) and 19 capitals. CD courts on 19 Senate seats and 32 in the lower house of Congress. When counted with the seats occupied by other like-minded parties, the right will control a formidable block in Congress. On the other hand, with over 8 million votes, Gustavo Petro became the highest-voted left-wing presidential candidate in Colombia. The election, in which 53 percent of the electorate participated, was largely peaceful.

On 25 May, two days before the first round of presidential elections in **Colombia**, President Juan Manuel Santos announced that Colombia was joining the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (**NATO**), the only LAC country to do so. The NATO website earlier carried news of the fact accompli: ‘a partnership agreement with a view to strengthening dialogue and cooperation to address shared security challenges.’ Colombia's relations with NATO go back to 2013, when a dialogue began on including Colombia as one of the ‘partners across the globe’ (outside the Euro-Atlantic area). This was refined in 2016, resulting in an *Agreement of the Security of Information*, and later in 2017 as an Individual Partnership and Cooperation agreement, institutional collaboration, defence education and training. Colombia's accession to NATO has been met with mixed reactions. The United States and other NATO members reacted strongly, accusing Colombia of being a foreign office accused Colombia of introducing ‘a foreign region’.

In **Venezuela**, Nicolas Maduro was declared re-elected with 68 percent of the vote. His main challenger, Henri Falcon, a former principal opposition block, MUD refused to contest and by the National Assembly – dominated by the opposition – full of government nominees sworn in on 27 August. The LAC left congratulated Maduro, the US condemned the results. The Charge d'Affaires (the US Embassy has not had a permanent presence in Caracas since 2015) had led of the political sector in the US Embassy in Caracas to demand that Maduro be held accountable under international law. The Lima Group – Argentina, Brazil, Canada,

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