



## 5<sup>TH</sup> WEST ASIA CONFERENCE

on

# India's Approach to West Asia: Trends, Challenges and Possibilities

March 29-30, 2022



Via-  
Cisco WebEx

organised by

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

## 5<sup>TH</sup> WEST ASIA CONFERENCE

### INDIA'S APPROACH TO WEST ASIA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

March 29-30, 2022

#### **CONCEPT NOTE**

The Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) has been organising its biennial West Asia Conference (WAC) since 2014. Over the years, this flagship event has dealt with a number of critical issues facing West Asia and North Africa (WANA) region including the paradigmatic shifts in the region's geopolitics, the growing impact of ideological and socio-political movements, and the global, regional and intra-regional responses to the regional developments. The Conference has been an important platform for academics, analysts, policymakers and government officials to discuss issues of mutual concern and explore newer avenues for cooperation. Invitees, both institutions and individuals, stretching the vast expanse of WANA as well as other parts of the world, participate in the Conference to discuss issues in a free and frank manner.

India's relations with WANA go back to historic times with artefacts found in archaeological sites of Indus Valley, Harappa and Mesopotamian and the Sumerian civilisation underscoring trade and cultural ties in ancient times. Geographic proximity and maritime connectivity played a significant role in establishing mercantile contacts between the Arabian Peninsula and Indian Subcontinent. Although post-Independence India's relations with the region were inhibited by ideological considerations, the post-Cold War recalibration in India's foreign policy opened avenues for reconnecting with the WANA region.

In order to deepen cooperation and engagement with the neighbourhood, India has adopted the 'Neighbourhood First' policy. Engagement with the WANA region is a key component of the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and the government has taken a proactive approach towards its neighbourhood. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, since 2014, India's relations with WANA have witnessed a qualitative transformation leading to strengthening of bilateral relations with the regional countries. The change has been visible not only in the frequency of political and diplomatic engagements but also in growing cooperation in newer fields including business, investments, security and defence. Recent cooperation between India and the countries of the West Asian region to fight the COVID-19 pandemic underlines the strong bonds of friendship.

Further, India's 'Think West' policy focuses on its western neighbourhood with renewed emphasis to accelerate the pace of engagement with these countries. This has been an important pillar in India's foreign policy in the recent years. The WANA region, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, is significant for India for a variety of factors, most importantly for its energy security and as host to millions of Indians who live and earn

their livelihood there. There is also a mutuality of interest in maritime security as well as in fighting international terrorism and religious radicalism. Indian interest is also connected to peace and stability in the region because of the natural linkages between South and West Asia regions.

India's bilateral trade with the region is around US\$ 200 billion. India imports more than 60 percent of its energy requirements from the region. There are about nine million Indians living in the region whose safety and security is a concern for New Delhi. Any challenge to regional security situation or weakening of the economies in WANA will have a direct impact on the economy and security of India. As a result India has developed strategic partnerships with regional countries, especially with the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar and Oman without ignoring other important regional countries including Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain and the Palestinian territories.

India favours peace and stability in the region and seeks partnerships with all like-minded countries towards economic prosperity for the people of India and the WANA countries. Towards this end India has not hesitated in participating in multilateral fora including most recently, engaging in a dialogue in October 2021 with the foreign ministers of the UAE, Israel and the United States with the objective of harnessing the collective resources and expertise for developing economic cooperation.

Despite the growing engagement, India must deal apace with the challenges of existing regional tensions, social polarisation, deteriorating humanitarian situation, terrorism and religious radicalism in the region. Even after a decade of the Arab unrest, the impact of the regional upheaval on the politics, security and economy of the region continues to remain high. India has persevered in its engagements, successfully navigating the turbulence in the Arab world.

Against this backdrop, the MP-IDSA is organising the 5<sup>th</sup> West Asia Conference on the theme **"India's Approach to West Asia: Trends, Challenges and Possibilities."**

The following key questions, along with many others, would be discussed during the conference:

1. What are the changing components of India's growing engagement with the WANA countries?
2. How have the WANA countries responded to India's regional policy and what are the expectations in New Delhi?
3. With renewed focus on West Asia, what would be the possible new political, security and economic challenges and opportunities for India in the region?
4. Keeping in mind the changing regional political dynamics in West Asia, what should be the future trajectory for India's foreign policy towards the region?
5. How does the involvement of extra-regional powers, such as the United States, Russia, European Union, China and Pakistan, affect India's policy towards the region?

## **CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

**Day One**  
**Tuesday, March 29, 2022**

**Welcome Remarks: 11:30 AM –11:40 AM (IST)**

**Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy**, *Director General, MP-IDSA, New Delhi*

### **SESSION ONE: 11:40 AM – 01:40 PM (IST)**

#### **India and West Asia: Adapting to Changing Realities**

**Chair: Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy**, *Director General, MP-IDSA*

Speakers: 15 minutes each

1. Amb. Dr. Ezzat Saad El Sayed, *Director, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, Cairo*  
*Egyptian perspective of India- Egypt bilateral relations*
2. Dr. Ali Al Qarni, *Director, Asian Studies, Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Riyadh*  
*Saudi-India bilateral relations: Opportunities and challenges*
3. Amb. Talmiz Ahmad, *Former Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman West Asia: New challenges and fresh alignments in a turbulent regional scenario*
4. Amb. Dore Gold, *President, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, Jerusalem*  
*Why the Quad?*

#### ***Q&A Session***

### **SESSION TWO: 03:00 PM – 05:30 PM (IST)**

#### **Regional geopolitics and security in West Asia**

**Chair: Prof. Gulshan Dietl (Retd.)**, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*

Speakers: 15 minutes each

1. Dr. Andrey Kortunov, *Director General, Russian International Affairs Council, Moscow*
2. Prof. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, *President, Ankara Centre for Crisis and Policy Studies, Ankara*  
*Central-South Asia in the changing geopolitics of Western Asia: The New Spice Route*
3. Prof. Zaid Eyadat, *Director, Centre for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan*  
*Middle East Geopolitics: Regional turmoil with cross-continental ramifications*
4. Mr. Goor Tsalalyachin, *Executive Director, The Abba Eban Institute for International Diplomacy, Reichman University, Herziliya, Israel*
5. Dr. Muddassir Quamar, *Associate Fellow, MP-IDSA, New Delhi*  
*Non-State actors and regional stability in West Asia*

#### ***Q&A Session***

**Day Two**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

**SESSION THREE: 11:00 AM – 01:00 PM (IST)**

**Energy and Diaspora**

**Chair:** **Dr. Meena Singh Roy**, *Senior Fellow and Head, Eurasia and West Asia Centre, Tillotoma Foundation*

Speakers: 15 minutes each

1. Prof. S. Irudaya Rajan, *Chairman, International Institute of Migration and Development, Thiruvananthapuram* and Dr. H. Arokkiaraj, *Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Youth and Development, Chennai*  
***Challenges facing Indian migrant workers in the Gulf during the Covid-19 pandemic***
2. Dr. P. K. Pradhan, *Associate Fellow and Coordinator, West Asia Centre, MP-IDSA*  
***Indians in the Gulf during the pandemic: Analysing response from India and the regional countries***
3. Dr. Abdulla Al Abbasi, *Research Fellow, Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat), Manama*  
***Exploring the future of India-Gulf ties in the power sector***
4. Dr. Vrushal Ghoble, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*  
***Geopolitical shifts and West Asia's energy equation with India: Analysing economic and strategic gains and losses***

***Q&A Session***

**SESSION FOUR: 03:00 PM – 05:30 PM (IST)**

**Strategic and security cooperation**

**Chair:** **Prof. Shamir Hasan**, *Aligarh Muslim University*

Speakers: 15 minutes each

1. Dr. Joseph Kechichian, *Senior Fellow, King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*  
***The security of the Arab Gulf States and India's growing security ties with GCC member states***
2. Dr. Hasan Al Hasan, *Research Fellow for Middle East Policy, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London*
3. Dr. Mandana Tisheyar, *Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran*  
***Indo-Iran Relations: From strategic partnership to paled friendship***
4. Prof. P. R. Kumaraswamy, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*  
***India and WANA: Emerging Dynamics, Challenges and Opportunities***

***Q&A Session***

**VOTE OF THANKS**

**Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Bipin Bakshi**, *AVSM, VSM, (Retd.), Deputy Director General, MP-IDSA*

# **PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS**

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# **ABSTRACTS**

**Day One: Tuesday, March 29, 2022**

**Session One: 11:40 AM – 01:40 PM (IST)**

**India and West Asia: Adapting to Changing Realities**

### **CHAIR**

**Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy, *Director General, MP-IDSA***



Amb. Sujan R. Chinoy is the Director General of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, since 3 January 2019. A career diplomat of the Indian Foreign Service from 1981-2018, he was India's Ambassador to Japan and the Republic of the Marshall Islands from 2015-2018, and earlier, the Ambassador to Mexico and High Commissioner to Belize.

A specialist with over 25 years of experience on China, East Asia and the Asia-Pacific, he served in Indian Missions in Hong Kong and Beijing and as Consul General in Shanghai and Sydney. He also served as India's representative to the First Committee at the United Nations in New York dealing with Disarmament & International Security Affairs and in the Indian Mission in Riyadh. At Headquarters, in the Ministry of External Affairs, he served as Director (China) as well as Head of the Expert Group of Diplomatic & Military Officials tasked with CBMs and boundary-related issues with China. He also served on the Americas Desk dealing with the USA and Canada, and as Officer on Special Duty in charge of press relations in the External Publicity Division. On deputation for four years with the National Security Council Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office, he worked on internal and external national security policy and anchored strategic dialogues with key interlocutors around the world.

He is fluent in English, Chinese (Mandarin) and conversant in French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Arabic, Urdu and French-Creole. He also speaks Hindi and Gujarati. His long career includes extensive involvement in economic issues. He has contributed to Indian newspapers and journals, besides lecturing at numerous Govt. Institutions, think-tanks and universities in India and overseas.

He schooled at the Rajkumar College (Rajkot), read English Literature at the Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara, Gujarat, and gained his Master of Business Administration from Gujarat University in Ahmedabad. He has an advanced Diploma in Chinese (Mandarin) from the New Asia Yale-in-China Chinese Language Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He was an Exchange Student at the Otomon Gakuin University in Osaka in 1978.

## SPEAKERS

**Amb. Dr. Ezzat Saad El Sayed**, *Director, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, Cairo*



Amb. Dr. Ezzat Saad El Sayed is the Director, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, Cairo. In 1985 he completed his Ph. D. in International Law, with specialization in International Law of Human Rights, Ain Shams University, Cairo. From March to September of the year 2010, he served as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Americas & OAS. As a part of his academic publication, he authored *The International Protection of Human Rights within the framework of regional organizations* (Thesis for PhD), Cairo, 1985. He also authored "The law of treaties and the international conventions on the protection of human rights", *The Egyptian Journal on International Law*, Vol.39, 1983, pp.256-310. Besides his native language which is Arabic, he has a strong grip on French and English.

### **Egyptian perspective of India-Egypt bilateral Relations**

Egypt-India relations are gaining a special importance in light of the evolving international environment, and the multiple political, economic, commercial, and cultural dimensions of these relations. As for the political facet, the two countries share a common political understanding, based on a long history of regular contacts and cooperation on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. As for the economic aspect, it is obvious that our main approach to relations with India depends on promoting trade and investment opportunities between the two countries, which actually means leaving relations in the hands of the private sector, as it is the main engine of trade and investment issues, while the Indian state is now - by virtue of its economic weight and international aspirations - dealing with our region from an integrated strategic perspective, through which India aims to direct its bilateral relations with the countries of the region to be in favour of a broader regional perspective that achieves the "synergy" required by the nature of international economic relations at the current stage.

Despite the numerous challenges and difficulties the world faced in 2021, due to the repercussions of Covid-19 and the uncertain global environment, it was a very successful and fruitful year at the level of bilateral relations between India and Egypt.

Bilateral cooperation in the defence sector received considerable attention over the past few years. With the visit of the Indian Air Chief, Marshal VR Chaudhari PVSM AVSM VM ADC, to Egypt, and his subsequent meeting with the Egyptian Air Force Commander, Field Marshal Mohamed Abbas Helmy. This year also witnessed cultural exchanges between the two sides, which are a continuance of a centuries-old history of contacts and cultural exchanges between Egypt and India. The rich partnership existing between the two countries provides a broad framework for new ties and for further cooperation in various fields.

**Dr. Ali Al Qarni**, *Director, Asian Studies, Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Riyadh*



Dr. Ali M. Al Qarni is the head of the Center for Asian Studies at Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dr. Al Qarni served at the Saudi embassy in London as the official spokesman and head of media and communication. He also served as deputy head of mission and subsequently chargé d'affaires at KSA embassy in France until 2015. He also served as an advisor at Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Foundation (MiSK).

### **Saudi-India bilateral relations: Opportunities and challenges**

The paper focuses on Saudi Arabia and India bilateral relations. It shall argue that both countries enjoy strong, cordial and friendly relations reflecting centuries old interaction and cooperation. The paper will map out the history of the relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1947 until present. It will reflect on the periods of suspicion between the two countries, and elaborates to show how strong desire and high-level visits from both sides took the relationship to an unprecedented level of close cooperation, which resulted in the elevation of the relationship to a ‘strategic partnership’. The paper will also look at the economic, trade and investment ventures and reflect on the current figures and whether both countries have explored their full potential. It will also shed light on the geopolitical concerns of both sides and the security issues of both GCC and the subcontinent. The paper shall also address the cultural and people to people ties which have always been at the heart of interactions between the subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula.

**Amb. Talmiz Ahmad**, *Former Ambassador of India to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman*



Amb. Talmiz Ahmad joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1974. Early in his career, he was posted in a number of West Asian countries such as Kuwait, Iraq and Yemen and later, between 1987-90, he was Consul General in Jeddah. He also held positions in the Indian missions in New York, London and Pretoria. He was Joint Secretary for Gulf and Hajj in 1998-2000.

He served as Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia twice (2000-03; 2010-11); Oman (2003-04), and the UAE (2007-10). He was also Additional Secretary for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 2004-06, and Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi, in 2006-07. After retirement from foreign service in 2011, he worked in the corporate sector in Dubai for four years. He is now a full-time academic and holds the Ram Sathe Chair in International Studies, Symbiosis International University, Pune.

He has published four books: *Reform in the Arab World: External Influences and Regional Debates* (2005), *Children of Abraham at War: The Clash of Messianic Militarisms* (2010) and *The Islamist Challenge in West Asia: Doctrinal and Political Competitions after the Arab Spring* (2013). His latest book, *West Asia at War: Repression, Resistance and Great Power Games*, was published in early March 2022.



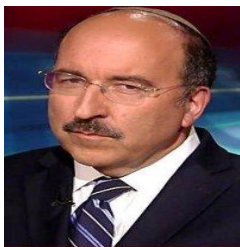
He writes regularly in the Indian and West Asian media and lectures on the politics and economics of South and West Asia, Eurasia and the Indian Ocean, political Islam and energy security issues.

**West Asia: New Challenges and Fresh Alignments in a turbulent regional scenario.**

West Asia is today in the throes of remarkable changes. In response to perceptions of a possible US disengagement from the region, West Asian states have already initiated a series of remarkable interactions among themselves which are free from US direction and control. These include: One, Turkey's diplomatic outreach to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel that have overturned existing divisions and confrontations that were founded on rival ideological and strategic interests. Two, both the UAE and Saudi Arabia have been proactive in establishing their presence in the ports and islands in Yemen, the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, creating an integrated security landscape that binds the Persian Gulf with the Red Sea. Three, the outcome of the discussions relating to the revival of the JCPOA will have important implications for Iran's domestic scenario and its regional posture. Finally, the world has committed itself to energy transition, with global energy security facing considerable uncertainty due to the Ukraine conflict and the attendant sanctions on Russian energy supplies. These developments are taking place in West Asia even as both Russia and China have expanded their footprint across the region, with significant economic, political, military and logistical connectivity initiatives. These projects have the potential to change the US-led global order and provide space for a variety of players seeking to assert their interests and role in regional matters.

These developments have important implications for India's abiding political and economic interests. They demand that India review its traditional transactional and bilateral view of regional ties and adopt a holistic approach that places it as an active player in the regional strategic scenario.

**Amb. Dore Gold, *President, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, Jerusalem***



Amb. Dore Gold is President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He served as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in 1997-1999, and as the Director General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015-2016. In that capacity, he was instrumental in expanding Israel's ties in Africa, the Arab world, and Far East. He has served as an advisor on international issues to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and as an envoy to the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf States. Gold

has a BA, MA, and PhD from Columbia University.

As a senior diplomat and recognized scholar, Gold is called upon regularly to share his expertise. He delivered testimony at the US House of Representatives for special Congressional hearings on recognizing Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights (2018); moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem (2017); and before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Israel's rights to defensible borders (2011). In 2009, he debated Justice Richard Goldstone on the veracity of the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict.

He has written books on the Middle East, including three New York Times bestsellers, and his articles appear in major international publications.

## Why the Quad?

The Quad represents a significant development in the evolution of the international system. In the past, what guided the formation of new multilateral bodies was chiefly the political legacy of the region in question. Thus, many bodies were formed as a result of the continuing influence of the British Empire and later, the British Commonwealth. There were also ideological bodies that brought states together. The Quad brings together states - - Israel, India, the UAE - - with the US, which is like their mother country. There is a glue that binds them as well as pragmatic considerations.

States are increasingly expressing their concerns and even doubts about old alliance structures from the Cold War period. Because of the quality of their bilateral ties, a group like the Quad can provide new reliability that is currently being sought by many Western states.

**Session Two: 03:00 PM – 05:30 PM (IST)**

**Regional geopolitics and security in West Asia**

## CHAIR

**Prof. Gulshan Dietl**



Professor Gulshan Dietl retired as a Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, where she also served as the Director of the Gulf Studies Programme and the Chairperson of the Centre for West Asian and African Studies. She was a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, New York (1993-94), a Guest Research Fellow at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (1998-99), a Visiting Professor at the University of Kashmir (2004), an Associate Director of Research at the Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris (2008), a Visiting Professor at the University of Southern Denmark (2010), a Visiting Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (2012-13) and an ICSSR Senior Fellow at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (2013-2015).

Her areas of teaching, research and research guidance are: 1. Theory and History of International Relations and 2. Domestic Developments, Foreign Policies and Security Issues in the Gulf and West Asia with special reference to Democratization, Political Islam and Energy.

Her publications include *The Dulles Era: America Enters West Asia* (Lancer International, New Delhi, 1985), *Through Two Wars and Beyond: A Study of the Gulf Cooperation Council* (Lancer Books, New Delhi, 1991), *Saudi Arabia: People, Politics and Policies* (National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2006), *Contemporary Saudi Arabia and the Emerging Indo-Saudi Relations* (Shipra Publications, New Delhi, 2007; Co-edited), *Democracy and Democratization in the Gulf* (Shipra Publications, 2010; Edited), *India and the Global Game of the Gas Pipelines* (Routledge. Oxon, New York and New Delhi, 2017), *Global game of the Oil Pipelines* (Routledge. Oxon, New York and New Delhi, 2022).

She has contributed book-chapters and articles which have appeared in *International Studies*, *Strategic Analyses*, *Pacific and Asian Journal of Energy*, *The Hindu*, *Times of India*, *Iranian*

Journal of International Affairs, The South, Arabia, The Middle East, The Middle East International, Orient, Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs, India Quarterly, India International Centre Quarterly, Economic and Political Weekly, Mainstream, the COPRI Working Paper Series, the Gulf Studies Programme Occasional Papers Series, IDSA Comments and Briefs among others.

## SPEAKERS

**Dr. Andrey Kortunov**, *Director General, Russian International Affairs Council, Moscow*



Dr. Andrey Kortunov graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) in 1979 and completed his postgraduate studies at the Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1982. He holds a PhD in History. Dr Kortunov completed internships at the Soviet embassies in London and Washington, and at the Permanent Delegation of the USSR to the UN. In 1982–1995, Dr Kortunov held various positions in the Institute for U.S. and Canada Studies, including Deputy Director. He taught at universities around the world, including the University of California, Berkeley. In addition, he led several public organizations involved in higher education, social sciences and social development. Since 2011, Andrey Kortunov has been the Director General of RIAC. He is a member of expert and supervisory committees and boards of trustees of several Russian and international organizations. His academic interests include contemporary international relations and Russian foreign policy.

**Prof. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol**, *President, Ankara Centre for Crisis and Policy Studies, Ankara*



Prof. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol graduated from Boğaziçi University (BU) Department of Political Science and International Relations in 1993. Having completed his postgraduate studies at BU in 1995, Erol was accepted to the doctoral program at BU in the same year. Having completed his doctorate at Ankara University in 2005 and received the titles of Associate Professor in the field of "International Relations" in 2009 and Professor in 2014. Prof. Erol has been continuing his academic career as a faculty member at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Department of International Relations since 2018. His articles and reviews were published in many journals, and newspapers, occupying as an editor in academic journals, Prof. Erol has been working as the Founding President of Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies (ANKASAM) since 2016. He is speaking English, Russian and Turkish.

### **Central-South Asia in the Changing Geopolitics of Western Asia: “The New Spice Route”**

Geographical definitions in international relations are shaped according to the geographical location, interest, and political aims of the hegemon state. The defining of geography by a non-regional power means rejecting shared culture, history, geography, and historical practice from the interests of the regional states, and therefore the regional realities. Undoubtedly, this

situation often restricts the geopolitical perspective, depth and perception of other countries and makes it difficult to accurately identify and solve problems and crises encountered by them. For this reason, the historical experience, current developments and common welfare of the countries of the region, apart from general acceptance; need a new conceptual definition on the basis of threat-risk and opportunities. The point in question is also valid for the “New West Asian Geopolitics”. This expanded new geography that will include Central Asia and South Asia; requires a new geopolitical definition in accordance with the spirit of the region, its dynamics and the realities of the new international system under construction. It is seen that the new geopolitical definitions centered on the region push us to a new evaluation in the context of Land and Sea geopolitics. In this context, it would not be wrong to evaluate the Indo-Pacific region on the axis of “Sea Geopolitics”; and also, the Caspian-centered geography called “Middle Corridor” on the axis of “Land Geopolitics”. The corridors in these two geopolitics will be able to turn “New West Asia” into an area of prosperity, security, and stability with its complementary dimension. Defining these two geopolitical lines as the “New Spice Route” would be the most accurate name for the search for a new future within the scope of the historical reference of the region. Therefore, the “New Spice Route Project” will come into prominence to the “New West Asia” as a much stronger regional integration movement to the new world order under construction.

**Prof. Zaid Eyadat**, *Vice President of International Affairs, Quality and Accreditation, the Director of the Center for Strategic Studies at The University of Jordan, and a member of the Royal Committee to modernize the political system in Jordan, and the member of The National Economic workshop*



Prof. Eyadat is Professor of political science and international relations, and the founding dean of the Prince Hussein School of International Studies at the University of Jordan. He has received visiting professorships and scholarships from several different American and European universities, including Georgetown University-USA.

His research interests and areas of expertise include: geostrategic and strategic analysis, game theory and modeling, methodologies, human rights, public policies, political Islam, Islamic philosophy and ethics, Middle East politics, and refugee and migration issues.

He also has advisory roles in many governmental and non-governmental institutions, including the Royal Hashemite Court of Jordan, where he worked at the office of H.M. King Abdullah the second from 2006-2011.

Professor Eyadat is also one of the founders of the “All Jordan Youth Commission”, a non-governmental organization that designs policies and programs that encourage political participation and civic engagement, with the aim of integrating Jordanian youth into the political process. Furthermore, he chairs the board of trustees of the Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), and is a member of the Steering Committee of the Center for Global Ethics and Politics at the University of Luiss and the Institute of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), and a member of the editorial boards of several scientific journals.

Publications:

- A Better World – Global Justice Between Leviathan and Cosmopolis Writings of Political Philosophy (Translation)
- Islam, State and Modernity: Muhammad Abdel-Jaber and the Future of the Arab World
- Migration, Security, and Citizenship in the Middle East.
- Transition without Players: The Role of Political Parties in the Arab Revolutions
- The Arab Revolutions of 2011: An Illustrative Model
- The Rationality of Political Violence: Modeling Al-Qaeda against the United States
- The Calculus of Consensus: An Alternative Path to Arab Democracy

### **Middle East Geopolitics: Regional turmoil with cross-continental ramifications**

At the heart of the broader West Asia and North Africa (WANA), the Middle East's security environment is essential for the region's stability, prosperity, and avenues of cooperation. Multifaceted waves of insecurity, instability and conflict throughout the last decade, mainly triggered by political demands and economic hardships, shaped the structural and power dynamics and unleashed forces that have significantly affected the region's international relations and economic ties.

The recent onset of Russian-Ukrainian conflict has once again exposed the Middle East and Black Sea region to highly-likely strenuous consequences; by exacerbating the existing food insecurity in many Arab countries, including Lebanon and Syria that largely depend on Ukrainian/Russian wheat exports, and reducing US' capacity to contain terrorism across the region; which does not seem probable in the foreseeable future.

Given the longstanding ties between WANA and India, geographic proximity, interdependency and maritime connectivity, it has become more vital than ever for WANA and the Middle East to gear their focus to the proactive engagement with India in the realms of business, investment, security and defense, and to diversify their list of allies and sources of trade, development and stability.

**Mr. Goor Tsalalyachin**, *Executive Director, The Abba Eban Institute for International Diplomacy, Reichman University, Herziliya, Israel*

**Dr. Md. Muddassir Quamar**, *Associate Fellow, MP-IDSA*



Dr. Md. Muddassir Quamar is Associate Fellow at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses, New Delhi. He has a Ph.D. in Middle East studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Dr Quamar research areas include Middle East strategic affairs, political Islam, politics and foreign policy in the Gulf, Turkish affairs and India-Middle East relations.

### **Non-State Actors and Regional Stability in West Asia**

Conventionally, international affairs is dominated by state actors. Therefore, non-state actors are seldom a focus in policy making. In West Asia, non-state actors have existed and wielded influence for long. However, after the 2010-11 Arab uprisings, the region has witnessed a proliferation of non-state actors and their influence. Different types of non-states actors are present and active in West Asia today. But broadly three types of non-state actors – transnational terrorist groups, transnational ethnic or ideological groups and armed national or sub-national militants and insurgents – pose serious threats to regional security and stability. While there is a degree of clarity and consensus on how to deal with the first type, there are serious differences and divergences on the latter two. Some of these, such as Hamas in Palestinian territories, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq and the transnational Muslim Brotherhood, wield such influence that they challenge or undermine state authority. It is, therefore, important for both regional and external powers to discuss and assess the threats posed by them, and device policies accordingly.

## **Day Two: Wednesday, March 30, 2022**

### **Session Three: 11:00 AM – 01:00 PM (IST)**

#### **Energy and Diaspora**

#### **CHAIR**

**Dr. Meena Singh Roy**, *Senior Fellow and Head, Eurasia and West Asia Centre, Tillotoma Foundation*



Dr. Meena Singh Roy is a Senior Fellow and Head, Eurasia and West Asia Centre, Tillotoma Foundation, Distinguished Fellow, Middle East Institute (MEI), New Delhi and former coordinator Eurasia and West Asia Centre at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). Her area of specialisation is Eurasia and West Asia. Prior to joining IDSA, she was a senior research scholar in the Department of African Studies, Delhi University. She has researched on subjects of national security, arms transfers and theories of International relations and sanctions. She was associated with Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies and London School of Economics for her research work. She was a visiting Research Fellow with German Institute of Global and Area Studies Institute of Asian Studies (GIGA) in 2014.

She has several peer-reviewed articles and papers focused on West Asia and Central Asia. Her major publications have been on India-Central Asia relations. She has also been involved in net assessment reports and strategic gaming on West Asia and Central Asia. She has published a monograph titled *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: India Seeking New Role in the Eurasian Regional Mechanism* (2014), books titled, *International and Regional Security Dynamics: Indian and Iranian Perspectives* (ed.) (July 2009); *Emerging Trends in West Asia: Regional and Global Implications* (ed.), (2014), *Persian Gulf 2016-17 India's Relations with the Region* (co-edited with Prof. P. R. Kumaraswamy), 2017; *Ideology, Politics and New Security Challenges in West Asia* (ed.), 2018, *Changing Security Paradigm in West Asia:*

Regional and International Responses (ed.), 2020 and completed the joint Delhi Policy Group and the IDSA Task Force report on *West Asia in Transition in 2015*. Her forthcoming book is on *The IRGC: An Enigma*.

### Membership of Professional Institutes and Societies

- Central Eurasian Studies Society, United States
- Member of the Advisory Board of Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies and Centre for Inner Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
- Member of Board of Studies in Defence and Strategic Studies, Punjab University, Chandigarh and Studies in Defence and Strategic Studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala.
- Member of the International Editorial Board of the *Central Asian Affairs*, Brill NV, Leiden, Netherlands.
- Member of the Advisory board of *International Studies*, Sage

### SPEAKERS

**Prof. S. Irudaya Rajan**, *Chairman, International Institute of Migration and Development, Thiruvananthapuram*



S Irudaya Rajan is Chairman of the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), India and chair of the KNOMAD (the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development) thematic working group on internal migration and urbanization, World Bank. Earlier, he was a Professor at the Centre for Development Studies, and Chair, Research Unit on International Migration (RUIM), funded by the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India (2006-2016). Dr Rajan is the Founding Editor in Chief of Migration and Development (Taylor and Francis) and the editor of two Routledge series - India Migration Report and South Asia Migration Report. He is lead editor of the new Springer series – South-South Migration. Rajan has published extensively in national and international journals on demographic, social, economic, political and psychological implications of international migration. Professor Rajan has coordinated eight major large-scale migration surveys in Kerala since 1998 (with K C Zachariah), Goa (2008), Punjab (2009), Tamil Nadu (2015) and instrumental for Gujarat (2011).

**Dr. H. Arokkiaraj**, *Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Youth and Development, Chennai*



H. Arokkiaraj is Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work at Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Tamil Nadu. At present, he is also jointly coordinating India's country case inventory on mobility and COVID-19 for the Mobility, Livelihood and Wellbeing Lab (MoLab) at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany. Previously he was a Postdoc Fellow at Leibniz Science Campus, Germany. His research interests include international labour migration, student

mobility, human trafficking particularly in Gulf countries and intra-Asia. He has published widely on international labour migration from India to Gulf countries. He holds a PhD in Social Work from the University of Delhi.

### **Challenges facing Indian migrant workers in the Gulf during the Covid-19 pandemic**

In India, Southern states dominated the flow of migrant workers to Gulf region, in recent years, Northern states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar tops the list. However, the available data shows, due to pandemic, a large number of non-resident Keralites returned from the Gulf, for example, United Arab Emirates. With this background, this research examines two key research questions 1) how Indian migrant workers in Gulf countries are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) what challenges Indian migrant workers returned from the Gulf countries face due to pandemic? The findings of this article were generated by conducting interviews with returned migration in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. The preliminary findings indicate that returnees faced wage theft, reduction in remittances and increase in the cost of migration and reduction in employment. It also shows that while the returnees from the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu (Southern states) are keener to return to Gulf or other countries as compared with returnees from Uttar Pradesh. Further, workers returned to UP have established livelihood in their place but returnees from the Southern states are waiting for the borders to reopen. Therefore, there is a variation between migrants on how they are adapting their lives and future plans to cope with the pandemic.

**Dr. P. K. Pradhan**, *Associate Fellow and Coordinator, West Asia centre, MP-IDSA*



Dr. Prasanta Kumar Pradhan is an Associate Fellow and Coordinator of the West Asia Centre at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi. He holds a doctorate degree from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Since joining MP-IDSA in 2008, he has been researching on foreign policy, security and strategic issues in West Asia, and India's relationship with West Asia and the wider Arab world. He is also working on the implications of Arab uprisings for the region and India.

Dr. Pradhan is the author of *India and the Arab Unrest: Challenges, Dilemmas and Engagements* (Routledge, London 2022), *Arab Spring and Sectarian Faultlines in West Asia: Bahrain, Yemen and Syria* (Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2017) and the monograph *India's Relationship with the Gulf Cooperation Council: Need to Look beyond Business* (MP-IDSA, New Delhi, 2014). He is also the editor of the book *Geopolitical Shifts in West Asia: Trends and Implications* (Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2016).

Dr. Pradhan has published several research articles in reputed journals and has contributed chapters to several edited volumes on security and strategic issues in West Asia and India's bilateral relations with the region. His current research project is titled "The GCC in Crisis: Implications for the Region and India".

### **Indians in the Gulf during the pandemic: Analysing response from India and the regional countries**



**Dr. Abdulla Al Abbasi**, *Research Fellow, Bahrain Centre for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat), Manama*



Dr Abdulla Alabbasi is a Research Fellow at Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (DERASAT). He obtained a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from King Fahad University for Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He has an MSc and PhD in renewable energy from the University of Surrey, UK. Dr Alabbasi is a chartered engineer with over 10 years of experience and regularly publishes in international peer-reviewed journals. He is also a member of global organizations and think tanks, including the International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRE), Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

### **Exploring the Future of India-Gulf Ties in the Power Sector**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the republic of India both have the ambitious agenda of promoting renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions. These plans are based on their international commitment and their need to reduce dependence on finite resources. However, the integration of renewable energy technologies, particularly wind and solar, can affect the stability of the network, and they require a deep understanding of the electrical grid, consumption patterns and operational aspects of electrical systems. For instance, renewable energy can increase the ramp in the load profile when the consumer demand is less than renewables' output. This effect of renewable production is often termed the "duck curve", and it requires careful consideration through the planning stages and policy formulation.

One of the promising approaches to tackling the associated challenges of renewable energy is cross-border electricity interconnectors. The GCC countries have joined forces to develop an interconnected transmission grid. The GCC link is used mainly for supporting the GCC networks during blackouts and emergencies. Recently, the mandate of the GCC interconnector has been expanded further to boost power trading in the region and increase cooperation with the neighbour countries. India has also announced the initiative of 'One Sun, One World, One Grid', which envisions a globally interconnected electricity grid to complement the plans of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) for round-the-clock solar power production.

Looking at the GCC countries' and India's strategies in the power sector, this study is an attempt to explore the possible cooperation between the GCC countries' and India's power sectors, particularly in developing an electrical interconnection between them. This interconnection can increase the deployment of renewable energy in GCC countries and India, and enhance the stability of the networks. It can also optimise the supply for dispatchable and non-dispatchable power plants in order to meet the growing demands in both regions.

**Dr. Vrushal T. Ghoble**, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*



Dr. Vrushal T. Ghoble is a faculty at the Centre for West Asian Studies (CWAS), School of International Studies (SIS), JNU. He is published in journals and books. His areas of interests are geopolitics and geoeconomics of the region, energy dynamics; broadly West Asia in IR. He has presented papers on the region in national and international conferences. Dr. Ghoble was a 'Visitor' to Brussels, Belgium under the EUVP in 2019.

## **‘Geopolitical Shifts and West Asia’s Energy Equation with India: Analyzing Economic and Strategic Gains and Losses’**

West Asia is experiencing some crucial transformation. The rentier arrangement that endorsed the bonding of regimes with its people is corroding; as major challenges arrive at their doorstep. The revenue based regimes through which the West Asian states were identified, face an unsteady ground today. The paper highlights the geopolitical changes and points at the realigned strategic behavior of the regional actors, which can be seen through their changing strategy and policies. In the midst of these geopolitical realities, Asia’s energy transaction has increased. India’s entry particularly is privileged by its access to West Asia’s vast hydrocarbon resources and it continues to enjoy its energy trade with the region; including investments and assets. Apparently, a traditional mode of diplomacy is replaced by a proactive involvement. According to IEA, India’s daily consumption of oil totals to 4.8 mbd, and is projected to increase to 8.7 mbd by 2040. India imports about 85 per cent of its oil requirements, majority coming from West Asia. While there are diversified LNG imports, EIA says, India’s key supplier is Qatar. The paper attempts to build a profile of India’s energy situation, linking it to West Asia. The prevailing insecurities ascending from the crisis within and outside the region, forms a good case for revisiting the policy options; especially, when the share of the West Asian hydrocarbons in India’s import basket has not been steady in recent years. In view of this, conflicts and India’s import of oil from elsewhere and its potential impact on imports from West Asia need critical scrutiny. Panic buying resulted in bloated oil prices and inflation. Russia – Ukraine crisis and discounted Russian oil is a reference in this regard. The paper addresses the surging oil prices and its impact for India. It further looks into the expanding interplay of relationship that is transactional, but is also geo economically induced; while assessing gains and losses for New Delhi vis-a-vis West Asia.

**Session Four: 03:00 PM – 05:30 PM (IST)**

**Strategic and security cooperation**

### **CHAIR**

**Prof. Shamir Hasan, *Aligarh Muslim University***



Prof. Shamir Hasan retired as Professor at the centre of West Asian Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, India. He is M.A in Politics from School of International Studies, JNU and M.Phil and Ph.D from Centre of West Asian Studies, AMU, Aligarh. He has taught Politics and Contemporary Political History of West Asia and guided research on related subjects. He has published number of papers in various prestigious journals. He has been Sectional President for 'Countries Other Than India' at the Indian History Congress, Delhi University, 2007.

## SPEAKERS

**Dr. Joseph A. Kéchichian**, *Senior Fellow, King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*



Dr. Joseph A. Kéchichian is Senior Fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research & Islamic Studies in Riyadh, Sa‘udi Arabia, and the CEO of Kéchichian & Associates, LLC, a consulting partnership that provides analysis on the Arabian/Persian Gulf region, specializing in the domestic and regional concerns of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Yemen. He held the post of Senior Writer with the Dubai-based Gulf News between 1 January 1995 and 31 August 2017, and served as the Honorary Consul of the Sultanate of Oman in Los Angeles, California, between 2006 and 2011. Kéchichian received his doctorate in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia in 1985, where he also taught (1986-1988), and assumed the assistant deanship in international studies (1988-1989). Between 1990 and 1996, he labored at the Santa Monica-based RAND Corporation as an Associate Political Scientist, and was a lecturer at the University of California in Los Angeles. The author of sixteen published books, his latest titles are *Sa‘udi Policies towards Migrants and Refugees: A Sacred Duty* (with Fahad L. Alsharif), Sussex Academic Press, 2022; *The Attempt to Uproot Sunni-Arab Influence: A Geo-Strategic Analysis of the Western, Israeli and Iranian Quest for Domination* [A translation of *Istihdaf Ahl al-Sunna (Targeting Sunnis)*, by Nabil Khalifé], Sussex Academic Press, January 2017; *From Alliance to Union: Challenges Facing Gulf Cooperation Council States in the Twenty-First Century*, Sussex, 2016; *‘Iffat Al Thunayan: An Arabian Queen*, Sussex, 2015; *Legal and Political Reforms in Sa‘udi Arabia*, Routledge, 2013; as well as the forthcoming *The Arab Nationalist Advisor: Yusuf Yassin of Sa‘udi Arabia*.

### **The Security of the Arab Gulf States and India’s Growing Security Ties with GCC Member-States**

In 1981, Arab Gulf countries joined in the Gulf Cooperation Council alliance to defend themselves, though they relied on traditional western allies for security guarantees. This was certainly a given within the larger oil for security axiom and, this much must be acknowledged, within the Cold War environment that prevailed for decades and that saw the conservative monarchies in the Western camp. In the aftermath of several wars and the more recent expressions of withdrawal from the area by the United States, ostensibly because the Cold War was over, GCC leaders increasingly turned to Eastern powers to fill apparent vacuums. Even if the preference was for China to gradually replace the United States, and in the aftermath of the Russian attacks on Ukraine that redrew the world’s maps, GCC leaders were wary of the global struggle for power. For many, ongoing reappraisals necessitated an expansion of bilateral and multilateral ties with other countries, which is where India can add value. As a neighboring power with a stake in its energy markets—as well as a significant human presence and their financial remittances—Delhi was well positioned to contribute to the stability of the region though it was unclear whether such a presence was perceived as an entanglement. This paper proposes to raise some of these concerns and recommend potential solutions to better serve GCC and Indian interests.

**Dr. Hasan Alhasan**, *Research Fellow for Middle East Policy, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London*



Dr Hasan Alhasan is a Research Fellow for Middle East Policy at the IISS. His current research interests include Asian-Middle Eastern relations with a focus on South Asia and the Gulf, the foreign policies and economic statecraft of the Arab Gulf monarchies, and regional security in the Gulf. Hasan's doctoral thesis at King's College London examined Indian foreign policy towards the Gulf region. Hasan previously served for five years as senior analyst on foreign policy and national security at the Office of the First Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain. He has earned degrees from

Sciences Po Paris, the London School of Economics, and King's College London and is a 2007 recipient of the Crown Prince's International Scholarship Program in Bahrain.

### **India's Defence and Security Cooperation with the GCC States**

The INS Viraat's excursion to Gulf waters in 1999 inaugurated a period of closer defence and security cooperation between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states. Enabled by India's economic growth and the expansion of its naval capabilities, the pace of India's defence and security cooperation with the GCC states has coincided with a broader improvement in India-GCC relations. Since India adopted a Look West policy in 2005, India's defence cooperation with the GCC states has grown to include logistics agreements, bilateral and multinational joint exercises, and exchanges of high-level delegations. India's defence cooperation with the GCC states, especially in the naval domain, has gained in importance as India has increased its naval footprint in the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea since its anti-piracy operations began in 2008. Although the GCC states have not traditionally been key exports markets or defence industrial partners for India's arms industry, there are growing signs that India is seeking to expand its defence cooperation with the GCC states in these directions. The improvement in India-GCC relations has also facilitated cooperation on counterterrorism and organized crime, leading to intelligence sharing and several high-profile extraditions by the GCC states of suspects wanted on terrorist charges in India.

This chapter aims to place India's defence and security cooperation with the GCC states into a broader typology of India's defence and security cooperation patterns beyond its borders. It traces the evolution of India's defence and security cooperation with the GCC states from the late 1990s onwards, contextualizing the cooperation within the broader frame of India-GCC relations. To do so, the chapter relies on an original and extensive dataset of India's defence and security cooperation with the GCC spanning the period between 1999 and 2021, supplementing the data with interviews involving experts, practitioners, and former diplomats.

**Dr. Mandana Tisheyar**, *Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran*



Dr. Mandana Tisheyar is an Iranian Ph.D. graduate from school of International Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) located in New Delhi, India. She was a member of Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament Research Centre during 2001-2006 and a member of the Institute of Strategic Studies in Tehran from 2008 to 2010. From March 2013 to December 2015, she was Acting Director of Institute of Iran and Eurasia Studies (IRAS). She is also a member of the Central Eurasia

Program (CEP) in the International Research Centre, University of Tehran. From November 2013 till February 2022, she began her new work as director of international academic cooperation in Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU). In December 2021, she was appointed as the chair of the board in Iranian Peace Studies Scientific Association (IPSAN). As an assistant professor, she is faculty member of Department of Regional Studies at the ECO College in Allameh Tabataba'i University and teaches in Department of Indian Studies, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran. Her research fields are Indian Studies, International Political Economy, Geopolitics, Iran's Neighborhood Policy, and Future Studies.

### **Indo-Iran Relations: From Strategic Partnership to Paled Friendship**

Although the long-standing ties and friendship between Iran and India have a long history and according to Jawaharlal Nehru, no two nations in the world are as close to each other as Iranians and Indians, however, in the 21st century, relation between the two countries has fluctuated greatly and is declining. From the beginning of the talks on strategic partnership between the two countries that mentioned in the Khatami-Vajpayee joint statement, until today, that India pursues "Think West" policy, relation between the two countries has reached its lowest level in various dimensions.

In this article, the author tries to show how the main trends of cooperation between Iran and India in the last two decades have been declining. It will then examine the consequences of declining cooperation between Iran and India for both countries, and finally examine some strategies for improving relations between the two countries.

**Prof. P. R. Kumaraswamy**, *Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*



Prof. P. R. Kumaraswamy teaches contemporary Middle East at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, since 1999. During 1992-1999 he was a research fellow at the Harry S Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Jerusalem. Since joining JNU in September 1999, he has been teaching, researching and writing on various aspects of the contemporary Middle East. He obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Madras in Defence Studies. His publications include Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Ringside View (Routledge,

forthcoming); Squaring the Circle: Mahatma Gandhi and the Jewish National Home (New Delhi: for ICWA, 2018); India's Israel Policy (Columbia University Press, 2010); Historical Dictionary of the Arab Israeli Conflict (Scarecrow Press, 2015); India's Saudi Arabia Policy: Bridge to the Future (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, co-author); and Handbook of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, edited). In October 1999, he set up Middle East Institute, New Delhi ([www.mei.org.in](http://www.mei.org.in)) and serves as its Honorary Director. He also edits Persian Gulf: India's Relations with the Region (Palgrave Macmillan), Contemporary Review of the Middle East (Sage) and Middle East Book Series (KW).

### **Emerging Dynamics, Challenges and Opportunities**

The economic consequences of the Covid pandemic are compounded by the continuing downturn of American influence in the wider Middle East. The Biden Administration's pursuance of the nuclear negotiation is not accompanied by a strategic vision towards Iran, the Persian Gulf or the wider Middle East. Will the 2022 nuclear deal be more enduring and acceptable and bring stability to the region than the 2015 agreement? These uncertainties have

contributed to a regional fluidity, and even traditional American allies have increased their engagements with Russia, China and the EU as well as with their erstwhile adversaries. The crisscross confabulations are without clearly defined faultlines. None of the key players are sure about the final outcomes of their engagements with regional and extra-regional players. The expanding regional search for a stable and dependable friendship offers Indian an opportunity to expand its political contacts with all major players with the twin objective of increasing its geo-economic footprints and dependable deliverables.

## VOTE OF THANKS

**Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Bipin Bakshi, AVSM, VSM, (Retd.), Deputy Director General, MP-IDSA**



A multifaceted Scholar, Warrior and Sportsman, with singular achievements in youth empowerment, sailing, and national security, Maj Gen Bipin Bakshi, AVSM, VSM, Retd is also an author of two graphic novels on war heroes and holds a PhD in Information Warfare.

He joined the Para Engineers on commissioning from Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun in June 1982, where he won the Sword of Honour and a Gold Medal. He was also awarded the Gold Medal at the College of Military Engineering, Pune from where he pursued BTech in Civil Engineering and later attended prestigious courses at the Defence Services Staff College, Higher Command and National Defence College.

Maj Gen Bipin Bakshi is a recipient of Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) for his service in the Kargil Sector during Operation Parakram as the Commanding Officer of an Engineer Regiment, which was awarded GOC-in-C's Unit Appreciation under his command in January 2004.

He has served in the UN as a Peacekeeper in Angola during UNAVEM-III and has been an instructor in Young Officers (YOs) Wing, College of Military Engineering, Pune, Tactical Wing, School of Artillery, Devlali, and the IG Training of National Security Guard (NSG), Manesar. He has held several notable appointments including the command of an Infantry Brigade on the Northern Border and an Infantry Division on the Western Border, as well as important staff appointments four times in the J&K Sector.

The Singapore Battery accommodation at Devlali was constructed under his command for which he was awarded the Army Commander ARTRAC Commendation Card in 2005. He was also awarded the DG NSG Commendation Card in 2018, for his tenure in the NSG where he had the added responsibilities of running the National Bomb Data Centre and that of Station Commander, Manesar Garrison.

During his last tenure as Additional Director General (ADG), National Cadet Corps (NCC) of the Northeastern Region, he pioneered the first-ever Brahmaputra Sailing Expedition-2019, which earned a mention in the Limca Book of Records 2019 and his contingent won the Republic Day NCC Competition 2020 for the first time among 17 NCC Directorates of the country.

A keen sailor, he has won four medals at the national level in sailing and has been recently elected as the Senior Vice President of the Kite Boarding Association of India. His latest graphic novel on the NSG operation at Pathankot in 2016 featured in The Week magazine in February 2021.

He was awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) on 26 January 2021, in recognition of his dedicated service to the nation.

## **CONTACT PERSONS**

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