



International Relations Conference 2015

October 10-11, 2015

Special Edition

Symbiosis International University

Pune

Gulf Region vital to India's Energy Security Landscape



Photo: Symbiosis School Of Photography

The IR conference was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India, Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari.

Kabir Upmanyu

The Symbiosis Institute of Media & Communication, on October 10 and 11 2015, held the third iteration of its annual International Relations Conference that saw the participation of several eminent personalities in the field. With the theme of the conference entitled 'Link West: India and the Gulf', there were several pertinent issues

that were deliberated upon.

The second panel discussion, centering around the theme, 'The Gulf Region in India's Energy Security Landscape', saw the likes of Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India; Indrani Bagchi, Senior Diplomatic Editor, The Times Of India; Jyoti Parikh, Executive Director, Integrated Research and Ac-

tion for Development; and Maqbool Ali Sultan, Former Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sultanate of Oman, sharing their knowledge on the same.

Delivering the keynote address on the theme, Dharmendra Pradhan took off by stating the fact that oil/hydrocarbon energy and the Gulf Region are synonymous, thereby underlining the absolute

hegemony of this region in the energy context. He praised the efforts of the Modi-led NDA government in facilitating not only the look-east policy, but also accompanying it with a concomitant 'Link west' where the emphasis lies on growth of bilateral trade. Recognizing India and the gulf as inseparable energy partners, his focus was on capitalising on the foundations of the achievements so far to build a relationship beyond the simple buyer-seller straitjacket, to one marked by 'vibrant partnership' between the two stakeholders. Within the ambit of such an enhanced relationship, he advocated a more active approach to skill development, along with driving attention to the scope that exists in terms of cooperation in sectors beyond (but linked to) energy such as real estate, infrastructure and transportation.

On the other hand, Indrani Bagchi, an expert on India-Gulf diplomacy as a journalist, put forth a different kind of perspective. Starting off by describing earlier discourse on the Gulf region as being preoccupied with pipelines, she eventually pointed out that the whole issue of energy security has become a lot more 'multifaceted and complex.' Elaborating on the issue, she said, "Today, we are looking at a very different energy, climate future. And we are looking at a very different India. The question I would look at is: What are the different areas that go into the complex mix of energy security." Her emphasis was on oil reserves, the

need (for India) to invest into the gas economy, and India's strategic and security footprint across the Gulf countries, all within the context of a rapidly transforming relationship with a dynamic future full of potential.

The last speaker for the panel discussion, L.C Sharma provided a detailed statistics-heavy analysis into the economics of the energy-based relationship of the Gulf and India. He stressed on two major factors in the matrix of energy security. Firstly, whether the country has large reserves and the ability to take advantage of them, and secondly the alternative where the country has a large body of foreign

"The Link West Project is a very crucial part of Indian foreign policy and its very timely that Symbiosis has done a conference of this nature."

-Indrani Bagchi

exchange reserves.

The relevance of the discussion was best summed by Indrani Bagchi, who said, "The Link West Project is a very crucial part of Indian foreign policy and its very timely that Symbiosis has done a conference of this nature with such fabulous participation on the subject."

The Prowess of Soft Power: India reaches out to the Gulf



Photo: Febin Jose

"The conference would have been merely 'speculative', if not for Prime Minister Modi's visit to the UAE": T.P.Srinivasan.

Vritti Issar

With the context of 'Link West: India and the Gulf', the International Relations Conference, organized by Symbiosis International Univer-

sity, on October 10 and 11, led to interaction between ambassadors of various Gulf countries, renowned journalists, and students. The last session of the conference focused

on the importance of educational and cultural ties between the Gulf countries and India, and the panel included personalities directly involved in the education sector.

Mr.Dino Varkey, the Group Chief Operating Officer and Board Member of Global Education Council Systems Limited, began his speech with the background of his family, and how they came to establish a strong educational ground, which now caters to a very large number of students. He expressed the importance of how countries need to increase their expenditure on public service, especially education, as it is a direct factor in the quality of human capital. According to Varkey, "the two countries (India and UAE) have the potential to build a transformative economic partnership, not only for the sustained prosperity of these two countries, but also to advance powers of the

region." Besides the need for educational ties, he stressed on developing social harmony.

Dr. Dileep Padgaonkar, an eminent journalist and RK Laxman Chair Professor, Symbiosis School of Liberal Arts, introduced to the audience, the exclusive metaphor of 'jalebi', and its diverse versions in different countries. He traced the history of jalebi, and stated that it was passed on to India after traveling through multiple countries, and now, India is exporting it to the world. He vocalized this as a rock-solid example of 'soft power'; "the jalebi's popularity is a solitary reminder that food and language, arts and ideas, values and lifestyles, are all products of a give and take, between the peoples of the world". He highlighted the fact that the youth must be aware of the give and take of cultures, and the exchange of ideas that takes place between these two parts of

the world. His laid emphasis on soft power being a force that makes you think, and 'exposes your mind to the outside world'.

The Kerala angle was brought in by Ambassador T.P.Srinivasan, who is the former ambassador of India to Austria and Slovenia and also the Vice Chairman and Executive head of Kerala Higher Education Council with rank of Vice Chancellor. He stated that there is no aspect of Kerala life which has not been affected (either positively or negatively) by the communication between the state and the Gulf.

The panelists discussed the phenomenon of 'soft power' and how developing it could prove advantageous to both the countries. As T.P.Srinivasan mentioned in his speech, the conference would have been merely 'speculative', if not for Prime Minister Modi's visit to the UAE.

Iraqi envoy backs India's bid for UN Security Council

Sruthi Ganapathy Raman

"India is an important country and is capable of being the new member of the United Nations Security Council," said Iraq's ambassador to India Mr Tahseen Ahmad Berwari, while addressing the third session of the International Relations Conference held at the Symbiosis International University on Sunday.

At the second day of the two-day conference, the third session saw speakers talk about India's Relations with Iran and Iraq. "Iraq remains an important source of crude oil and has the potential for wider economic cooperation under normal conditions," said Ambassador T.P Srinivasan, the moderator for the discussion, quoting the Vice President who inaugurated the conference on Saturday.

The speakers for the session included the ambassadors of Iran and Iraq to India, former ambassadors of India to Iran and Iraq and senior Indian journalist Saeed Naqwi. "Iraq was one of the first Arab countries to recognise India

after independence and from the early 1950s, bilateral agreements in different sectors commenced between the two nations," Ambassador Berwari said.

Quoting Iraq as "mini India", he then talked about the various similarities between the two nations. "India is a huge example

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- Tahseen Ahmad Berwari

from which we can learn the art of co-existing with different cultures. We welcome India to come to our country and transfer to Iraq, those values that makes India what it is today," he said.

Referring to the impact of the Gulf war and the imposition of

sanctions on Iraq which strained its relations with India, he said, "The wrong policies of the then regime of Iraq made it impossible for us to continue the good relations we shared with our neighbouring countries, especially India".

Talking about the economic relations, the ambassador remarked, "For India to get more crude oil in the next 20-30 years, Iraq would be its ideal partner". The former Indian Ambassador to Iraq, R.Dayakar then spoke about India's relations with Iraq in the post 2003 paradigm prospects and challenges. "The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US-led coalition forces brought about tectonic changes in Iraq, drastically altering its domestic and foreign policy orientation," he said.

Speaking about the importance of relations between both the countries, the former Indian ambassador said, "Iraq and Iran for that matter are our trusted suppliers of oil and gas. Therefore the dynamics of our relations always matter, with co-dependency playing a major role," he explained.



Photo: Vritti Issar

"For India to get more crude oil in the next 20-30 years, Iraq would be its ideal partner": Mr. Tahseen Ahmad Berwari

Of overcoming barriers, creating opportunities and changing perceptions about brand 'India'

Sruthi Ravindranath

"Overcoming barriers is important to strengthen trade and investment. The first step would be to change GCC's perception about 'Brand India' and the companies functioning here", said Mr. Aseem Srivastav, Managing Director of Kirloskar Ebara and Board of Director at Kirloskar Steel, at the fourth session of the International Relations conference here on Sunday.

The session, 'India- GCC: Trade and Investment Ties', chaired by Dr. Girijesh Pant, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, called for answering GCC's and India's plans to diversify trade and relations, the course of direction of investment and the kind of strategic economic engagement India should get in play. "It has always been the same story about India- about how our products are not trustworthy and durable. We, as business houses have to introspect and change this perception.

In 15 years, the growth of trade between GCC and India has increased from \$ 5.5 billion to \$ 200 billion, but there's still a misconception about Indian products", Mr. Srivastav said. He suggested that with support from the government, by understanding and respecting culture, by working on marketing and ensuring sustainability, we can



Photo: Vritti Issar

"One of the ways to boost trade is by focusing on investments, which in turn creates trade opportunities": Mr. David Rasquinha

strengthen the ties and avoid discrepancies between the parties.

However, Mr. David Rasquinha, Deputy Managing Director, EXIM Bank of India felt that the problems faces by GCC Companies were trade opportunities. "Fiscal consolidation is necessary, but it might have

an impact on Indian workers in the Gulf", he said. "FDI inflows from GCC to India is \$ 3.6 billion, which is just 1.4% of India's total global inflows. One of the ways to boost this is by focussing on investments, which in turn creates trade opportunities", he added.

Mr. Kamel S. Al Munajjed, Managing Partner, Urjuan Real Estate Development Company had similar suggestions. "FDI inflow from Saudi to India is \$ 58 million, whereas inflow from India to Saudi is over \$ 2 billion. Opportunities for us can be increased by boosting FDI, bilateral

trade, strategic partnerships and tourism", he said.

Citing the trade relations between India and Saudi Arabia, he said that the two countries shared a millennial relationship. "Saudi Arabia is one of the topmost traders in India. Indian labour force is also a stronghold here. The Indian labour population in Saudi Arabia has increased from 3,000 in 1975 to a whopping 3,000,000 in 2015. This shows the significance of the relationship", he added.

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- Aseem Srivastav

Strengthening Indo-Gulf security

With America gradually stepping back, there is an opening for another giant



Talmiz Ahmad raised concerns over the rise of Jihadi forces

Photo: Symbiosis School of Photography

Chinmay Rautmare

The 3rd International Relations Conference kicked off with the opening track addressing "The Regional Security Scenario in the Gulf." Track One began with the address of Chairperson of the panel, Ambassador Ranjit Gupta, who gave the geo-political and security scenario of the Gulf.

He also touched upon the various fronts where India can enhance the bilateral relations between the giants of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The next panelist to address the gathering was Dr. C Raja Mohan who is a distinguished member of Observer Research Foundation. He stressed upon the role of India in the Gulf se-

curity scenario in the upcoming years. According to him, India will be drawn into the political scenario because of the inter-dependence between the sub-continent and the Gulf. Elucidating on India's role in facilitating security in the Gulf, Dr. C Raja Mohan identified six setbacks which we have to overcome:

India and the Gulf: Rediscovery in a global context



Photo: Febin Jose T

Dr. Bhalla spoke about the failure of the govt to internationalise education

Satata Karmakar

"India and the Gulf have rediscovered each other in the new global context," said T.P Srinivasan, the former Ambassador of India to Austria and Slovenia, while speaking about the Link-West policy of India and the Gulf in the fifth track of the International Relations Conference held at Symbiosis International University, Lavale.

He started off his speech by stating that "This conference would have been speculative if Indian Prime

Minister Mr. Narendra Modi had not visited the UAE," and moved on to recount a situation where once, the Indian economy was not very well off and many Indians were migrating to the Gulf in search of work and better education. Kerala, which ranks at the top for the provision of higher education and high literacy levels, has benefited the most by the two-way interaction between the Gulf countries and India, he said. "What we see today is the Indian diaspora in the Gulf and the cultural interac-

tion that has led to a strategic partnership between the two", he says, as he recounts progress in the state of Kerala where he is also the Vice Chairman and Executive Head of the State's Higher Education Council. He says that such a migration was "mutually beneficial as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) wanted somebody to get their deserts to bloom." On touching upon trade and commerce ties, Mr. Srinivasan said that commerce increased during the time of migration from India to the Gulf.

The former Ambassador traces the Indian traders who started dominating the people from the Gulf and how this later led to a change in the average Indian's lifestyle from that of wandering Bedouins to a settled urban lady. Moving on to Gender Ration and Disciplines, Dr. Veena Bhalla, the Joint Secretary since 2013 discussed the challenges that India has to face while accommodating 40 per cent of its female international students from the Gulf countries. She also added that, "The interest of the public universities in international student mobility seems to be waning. This is probably because of the lack of resources and finance; or because there is difficulty in finding teachers willing to undertake the responsibilities of a foreign student advisor." Dr. Bhalla concluded by highlighting the failure of the Indian government to internationalise education in India.

What do we think about the region? We need to think about the region on its own terms. We need to address the basic differences in the conceptualization of the term "West Asia" and "Middle-east". Domestic politics From British era, domestic politics has created numerous disturbances in foreign policies of India. Even though interests of the people from homeland are of immense importance, when it comes to global platform, we need to think on long term solutions. Need to understand internal contradiction of the region Middle-east is not a simple and monochromatic region. It has many dimensions and internal conflicts such as Arab vs. Persia. Dealing with such complicated politics must be of foremost importance while devising any strategy for the region.

Transcending "Anti-Americanism" America, in order to feed its national interest, had played different roles in the region. America now has attained a stable position where it can take care of its interests without intervening in Gulf. The Pakistan factor We need to think beyond our obsession towards Pakistan. In the last decade, Gulf region is seen to

be at a state where it is ready to build ties with India overlooking its association with Pakistan. Rise of China 75% of China's industry depends on the natural resources from the Gulf. With America gradually stepping back, there exists a platform open for another giant to come forward. "There is a range of things that we can do between the use of force and doing nothing," he concluded.

The next speaker, Talmiz Ahmad who was a Former Ambassador of India, briefly gave his insights on the scenario and situations between India and the Gulf. Displaying his concern over the rise of the Jihadi forces, Talmiz Ahmad said, "Islamic state is the next generation of terrorism and has the potential to take over global Jihad." According to Mr. Talmiz Ahmad, there is a need to prepare a platform for dialogue, so that the principle players of the region can sit together and enter into fruitful discussions. "BRICS, a diplomatic Indo-China-led group, provides an Asian platform which has a direct and abiding interest in the security of the Gulf region," concluded the Retd. Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad.

Diversification: New buzz word in GCC

Shilpa Nair

Underlining the importance of culture and need for diversification, the fourth session of the International Relations Conference held at Symbiosis International University on Sunday, gave an insight into the investment and trade aspect of India-Gulf relations. The session "India-GCC (Gulf Co-operation Council): Trade and Investment Ties" was chaired by Girijesh Pant, Professor of Energy Studies Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and comprised of speakers from the industry. The session began with the panel laying the foundation for the discussion that Gulf Co-operation Council is looking for diversification of economies and would stress on areas for diversification. "Culture eats strategy for breakfast", said Pankaj Khimji, Director of the Khimji Ramdas Group of Companies and further emphasized the significant role played by culture in strategic relations between countries.

Moving on to the investment and trade part, Khimji said that Oman is looking for co-investments with India and other infrastructure projects based in India. Transport and logistics, training in educational, vocational and technical skills that could help in employability of people of Oman, tourism and rail con-

nectivity were some of the areas that he said needs improvement.

"There is so much that India can do in Oman and I am happy that companies like Larsen & Tourbo, Nagarjuna, Tata, Infosys etc. made good use of the opportunities in Oman", he added. M V Satish, the Senior Vice President and Head of Buildings and Factories at L&T, spoke about its presence in the Gulf. He said that L&T, which is at the 9th rank in ENR Top Contractors in Middle East, made a revenue of \$5 billion in the past 5 years and orders worth \$7.5 billion are under execution. L&T's business lines in Middle East include airports, hospitals, hotels, public buildings, communication systems, roads, railways etc. Giving advice to the young business minds that were present at the venue he said, "If you want to know what kind of business you want to do in Middle East, do some business in which you have core competency and something that you are confident of". Further, he complimented the Middle East for their skills, uncompromising attitude towards quality and the kind of professionalism with which they do their work. He ended his speech by saying that 'Jugaad' should really give way to innovation and core competence should be the foundation on which India should build its relations with Middle East and GCC.

Sanctions created a new environment of cooperation between India and Iran: Ansari



Iranian ambassador Gholamreza Ansari speaking on India-Iran ties

Photo: Vritti Issar

Arundhati Sarkar

The sanctions that had been cast upon Iran created a new environment of cooperation between India and Iran, said Gholamreza Ansari, Iran's Ambassador to India on speaking about the Link-West policy between India and the Gulf on the second day of the International Relations Conference 2015, held at Symbiosis International University, Lavale.

"Iran's economic relations prior to the withdrawal were concentrated on Europeans. But during the sanctions, it was a blessing in disguise that we found our best assets for economic cooperation, are our neighboring countries and regional countries," said Mr. Ansari. Before the sanction was lifted, India was considered to be one of Iran's leading oil import destinations, said the Ambassador. On the recent regional developments in Afghanistan, Mr Ansari said, mutual struggle against Taliban by India

and Iran is on the rise. Regarding the growing threat of ISIS, both countries consider the escalation of religious intolerance to be dangerous. In view of India's links with countries of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf Region, he said "India's role in the region is expanding, and therefore Iran and India can have more exchange of views, likewise much potential fields of cooperation may exist in Central Asia, Persian Gulf as well as Pacific region."

In the case of SAARC, Iran currently enjoys the position of an observer and seeks to become a full member in future. "The biggest need of the SAARC countries is to have access to energy sources and Iran by enjoying enormous oil and gas reservoirs, can meet this need," said Mr. Ansari. Iran's entrance and involvement in this association will enormously facilitate development in the transportation and communication sector, benefitting the mem-

ber state, believes the ambassador. The Ambassador concluded by emphasizing on the political determination of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that gives hope of betterment in relations between the two countries in all sectors of culture, economy and politics.

Mr. Saeed Naqvi, was one of the panelists of the track. Mr. Naqvi introduced himself as a "footloose, fancy free journalist" and opined, "We only have one version of things." The view that the Americans, Saudis, Turks, Qataris were openly financing proxies in Syria, is what was sold to us. It might be a result of an uprising sprouting out of nowhere against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad. Mr. Naqvi also spoke on the difference between the diplomatic mumbo jumbo that the Americans and Russians portrayed.

"World's energy supplies need to grow at 8-9%" :Maqbool Sultan



Photo: Symbiosis School of Photography

Dr. Jyoti Parikh spoke about the need to diversify energy sources.

Indira Basu

The topic of discussion in the latter half of Day One of the International Relations Conference at Symbiosis International University (SIU) was "The Gulf Region in India's Energy Security Landscape".

The panel discussion was presided over by Ambassador Sudhir T. Devare, and the keynote address was delivered by Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Govt. of India. This session was graced by the august presence of Dr. Jyoti K. Parikh, the Executive Director for Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADE) along with other imminent panelists like HE Maqbool Ali Sultan, a Former Minister of Commerce and Industry, Sultanate of Oman, Ms. Indrani Bagchi, the Senior Diplomatic Editor for The Times of India (TOI) and Mr. Rajnath Ram, the Joint Advisor for Petroleum and Energy, Niti Ayog. HE Ali Sultan voiced his concerns regarding population explosion and its adverse effects on our natural resources. He said, "7 billion people use energy every day. By 2035, the world population is projected to be 8.5 billion. 1.5 billion people in addition will require energy."

Emphasizing on how the world is constantly evolving, he added, "Energy security is not a single prob-

lem faced by a single country. It is estimated that to meet the basic needs of its population, the world's energy supplies need to grow at 8-9%." Further, focusing on the initiatives taken in order to cement Indo-GCC relations, His Excellency (HE) mentioned that India and Oman are exploring other means of cooperation and mutual benefit – some of these endeavors being an under-sea pipeline, a crude park that would provide for the short and long term storage of crude oil, among others. As examples of potential cooperation between India and Oman, he mentioned that joint investments and active research would help both parties. Dr. Jyoti Parikh commenced her address by highlighting the Indo-Oman cultural ties that had been established long before oil was discovered in the Gulf region. "Development deficit needs to be brought down by more and more cooperation", said the IRADE head. She emphasized on an exchange of electricity between India and the Gulf while stressing on how important it was for the nations to focus on climate change and sustainable development. "Solar energy is not enough; we need to diversify in terms of energy sources", she said.

India's most meaningful and best external relationship is with the GCC countries

Tabu Agarwal

The international Relations Conference 2015 was held to recognize the strategic importance of the countries of the Gulf for India. The Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri. Mohammad Hamid Ansari along with Mr. Girish Bapat were the guests of honour for the event.

The "Regional Security Scenario" was the prime focus of discussion in session 1 of Day 1 of the International Relations Conference 2015. Mr. Shivshankar Menon, Dr. N. Janardhan, Dr. C. Raja Mohan and Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad delivered some important keynotes during the session. The discussions were preceded by Ambassador Ranjit Gupta, former member of Nation-

al Security Advisory Board, former Ambassador of India to Yemen, Venezuela, Oman, Thailand and Spain and a Distinguished Fellow, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies saying, "Over the last four decades, the GCC countries have become India's pre-eminent oil supplier, a leading trade partner with 8 million Indians living and working there and sending annual remittances of 35 billion dollars plus. Though largely absent in public perception and frankly even hardly recognized by successive Indian governments, India's most meaningful and best external relationship is with the GCC countries."

Mr. Shivshankar Menon, a former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, further add-

ed to the discussion that, "If India is so vitally connected to the Gulf; oil, gas, remittances, holy places, etc, then why is our security footprint in the West Asia and Gulf so light?" He talked about how because of our growing familiarities with the region and an increase in our capabilities, more and more awareness of the nature of the divisions in the region and the complexity of the problems is coming to the forefront. The Primary Maritime Security threat in the region continues to loom large and steps to bolster the security of India's coastline were also among the primary concerns discussed by Mr. Menon.

He stressed on the need of a strategic partnership in the Gulf because of the complexities in

that region. Later, he concluded by saying, "It is important to change the way we think about our approach to these problems."

One of the other distinguished panelists was Dr. N. Janardhan, political analyst and Honorary Fellow at the Center for Gulf Studies. Calling the region as 'The New Gulf', he discussed about West Asia always finding itself in US's troubles. Also there were discussions about Iran being the biggest beneficiary and Arab spring giving rise to Iranian autumn. "Hassan Rouhan's winning and subsequent talks with the West culminated in the nuclear deal which means military option is off the radar and Iran's return to International mainstream is imminent apart from

its economy receiving a boost", he added. He asked for a possibility of a new collective security architecture, one that would include both Asian and Western powers without excluding the US. "India should reciprocate to the overtures made by the gulf countries", he concluded.

Over the last four decades, the GCC countries have become India's pre-eminent oil supplier