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## **Report**

on

### **Three-Day International Conference**

on

## **“Democratic Upsurge in West Asia and North Africa: Global Concerns and Implications for India”**

**Organised by**

**Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies,**

**Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi**

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The Three-Day International Conference on the theme “Democratic Upsurge in West Asia and North Africa: Global Concerns and Implications for India” brought renowned scholars from seven different countries- Jordan, Egypt, Syria, China, Japan, Iran and the US and 103 paper presenters within India came from different Universities of various states. The inaugural session was Chaired by Prof Chintamani Mahapatra, Rector-I, JNU, and Vice Chancellor Prof. M. Jagadesh Kumar delivered the Inaugural speech. There were 16 academic sessions running parallel and two Diplomatic sessions. The 16 sessions covered wide ranging topics of current times and the turmoil in the West Asian region and how India should respond and the role India needs to play. The two Diplomatic sessions was chaired by Mridul Kumar, Joint Secretary, Gulf Division, MEA and Dr. B. Bala Bhaskar, Joint Secretary, WANA Division, MEA. Mr. Piyush Srivastav, Joint Secretary, ICWA chaired one session of the Conference. The sessions were of vital importance that attracted large audience and vibrant interaction. The Diplomatic session was a brainstorming workshop (under Chatham House rule) of diplomatic initiatives which have been critical in certain aspects of bilateral relations. The session aimed to put together repository of diplomatic initiatives, maneuvers and deft handling of instances or issues often small or singular but with far reaching consequences.

It was one of a kind of open door discussion ushering in people from academia, diplomatic circles, and policy makers. Ambassadors from the West Asian Region like Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco and bureaucrats from India holding important posts and seasoned diplomats were invited to discuss on the policy issues between India, West Asia and the Regional and Global concerns. The first academic session was held in Convention Centre, Audi-II, JNU, on the *theme: Understanding Arab uprising and Democratisation Deficit* by Prof. Ashwini K. Mohapatra. He gave an overview of the problem around democratization and the process it goes through. The main focus of the paper was around the case of turkey, which witnessed democratization in 1980's. Post 1990's international factors and agencies started promoting democratization through four ways, namely popular consent, control mechanism, consensus and conditionality. What happened after regime change? Why even turkey after having all the preconditions still fails the parameters of fully fledged democracy? These were some of the major questions raised through the paper. The paper concluded with the critical analysis that democratization is a critical process which requires a combination of democratic regression and place of violence together. Factors and players of actors both are equally important for a developing a successful democracy. The second paper was on *End of Rentier Regime, Beginning of Democratisation?* by Prof. Girijesh Pant. He begins with the broader question; does the beginning of end of renter regime mean beginning of democratization? And if the process keeps on going than democracy will eventually happen. Major themes discussed in the paper were about the relationship between rent and rentier. The presenter clarifies rent as the ultimate power of the state and if rent is not going to be available to you, than what comes as the next logical step. The presenter directs towards a futuristic assessment of the post rentier regime, a new setup where there is hope for political changes. The papers engage with characteristics of a new kind of economy- 'post oil economy'. This economy is distinguished by a new millennial generation which is structurally very different from the previous generation. They are a very active youth with extreme disappointment in the wrongdoings of the system as well as the organisations like ISIS. These people are driven by the pragmatic outlook and materialistic goals. Prof Pant discussed the orientation of the Arab human development report 2016 which was strategically titled as 'youth power' therefore

the stability of the state depends on how the youth engages or disengages with it. He emphasized the urgent need for a new social contract to engage the people with the economy. Lastly, he ended with a futuristic note that this change is slowly happening with the shift in the nature of state in post-oil economy where millennial class is acquiring the space of stake holders. The third speaker Prof. A.K.Pasha spoke on *Uprisings in the Arab world and the future of Arab Monarchies*. The literature on 'Arab Spring' since the time of its commencement in 2011 has targeted the Monarchies in Arab world. But the reality even today after almost 6 years of struggle remains the same. Monarchies in the GCC countries are there to stay. The presenter argued that there is a huge lack of information about anti-monarchy demonstration in these six GCC countries and two other monarchies. There is urgent need to realize the need of the people of these countries today. Finally the presenter asserted that 'sooner the monarchies listen to the voices of the people, soon the problem will solve'. Prof. Bansidhar Pradhan was the fourth presenter and spoke on *Imposed Democratization in the WANA Region and its Implications*. He started with questioning the whole western paradigm of democratization. He characterised the enterprise as misguided by cultural essentialism and use of hard power which has serious implication. Noting cultural essentialism, Prof Pradhan raised the question of universal acceptability or adaptability of democracy. He emphasized the need for a thorough understanding of the pre-conditions required for favourable growth of democracy. He criticizes the development approach which comes with the notion of democracy. The presenter sees the birth of ISIS in terms of negative impact of Dysfunctional democracy. In WANA, democracy is being propagated to the cost of human life. Finally he concluded with the argument that democracy cannot be imposed as it is contradictory to democracy by definition. The process of democratization is a gradual one and external powers should understand the sensitivity attached with the phenomenon altogether. Prof.A.K.Ramakrishnan the fifth presenter presented a paper titled *Revisiting the Intellectual Legacy of Jalal-e-Ahmad*. The presenter focused on the role of famous Iranian intellectual Jalal-e-Ahmad who is well known for his work Gharbzadeghi (Westoxification), which provided a critique of Westernization of Iran under the Shah. Prof. Ramakrishnan described Jalal-e-ahmad as secular intellectual who explained religion as the spirit of spirit-less market. Even though he belonged to a religious family yet had a secular approach and was supporter of Mohammad Mosaddegh. The presenter talks about the way in which Jalal-e-Ahmad has reflected on the changing nature and character of Iranian society. His concept of westoxification describes west as toxic which has entered into the body of Iranian society therefore creating a need in the society for treatment. Finally the presenter concluded with argument that understanding of his intellectual legacy from critical standpoints on nativism and the Zionist enterprise and from a feminist perspective would place his contribution in the contemporary reality of Islamic republic and its place in the world.

The first day parallel session was held in Convention Centre, JNU Committee Room under the title *Public Discourse and Civil Activism* chaired by Dr. Riham Bahi from Egypt. The first speaker Mr. Prem Mishra, presented a paper about; Discourses on the Role of New Media in the Post Arab Uprisings Regional Order. Most important points that he has mentioned are, the importance of the media in general as platform to represent, and deliver ideas and ideologies. According to him, what could be observed from the out breaking of Arab spring is that it, the political revolution associated with media revolution as well. It meant revolution on the mainstream media controlled by the governments or what we call it the formal media which propagate the interests of the political

authorities. The usage of the new media technology during the Arab spring reflected the need of the Arab communities to represent themselves as they see themselves not like their governments wanted them to be appeared. So in that sense, new media has given a voice for voiceless people, it represent some kind of identity to the people which were hidden or behind the scene for long time. It is like the real face of the Arab societies and their ambitions is trying to be clear in front of the whole world. And that is “the power of new media”. Which helped the world to see the differences within these societies. For example the people of Gaza strip see the world in a different way that West Bank sees it. So when world could see the inhuman situation that Gaza’s people are suffering from, they could find some justification for the way that Hamas is using un peaceful way seeking to achieve their needs or goals. Or at least helped to understand why Gaza’s strip people are supporting Hamas.

Mr. Prem sees that there are different times of media; one it was CNN age, then Aljazeera Age, but now it is the new media age. According to the widespread of using and accessing to internet in Arab countries despite all the restrictions from the political authorities still people could find their own ways to access and challenge and represent themselves as they want. He refers to importance of cassettes voice, which were used by Al Khomeini during the Islamic revolution in Iran. As the Arab spring. We were saying that with the invention of T.V the world became a small town. But the reality that the people in Arab world were never portrayed as they see themselves, rather as the political authority dictated the way it should be represented.

Mr Prem finds that there a negative aspect of new media that can be misused by terrorists groups to propagate their ideology and agendas. As conclusion, he saw that the revolution is not going to end at this point. With wide usage of the young generation to new media, despite all the attempts from the political authority to sophisticate the freedom of speech atmosphere it will always find its way to express themselves as they wish and want on one hand and to help the whole world understand them better on the other hand. Comments from chair: there are some views see that new media as divisible mechanism, rather than unified one. Second point; there is a relationship between the new media and the weakening of political institutions, which can represent the people’s aspirations and needs. She disagree with some people who, call the Arab spring as online or Facebook or virtual revolution. The second paper was presented by Priyanka Chandra On “Renegotiating the Public Sphere: Religious-Secular Debates on Civil Society in the Arab States.”Focusing on Egypt she spoke about the evolution of the civil society in that Arab world region. She gave a broad historical background to the originated discourse of civil society that shaped most of religion- secular debates, those that dates back to the traditional political Islamic discourse on the “role of religion in society”, “the nature of state”. She emphasized that within the Islamic modernism thinkers played a significant role in civil society discourse, who could engage with modernity and western civilization, and evolve their own “organic conceptualization” of it. So many questions were debated like; what kind of the state should be established? How should society function and in what way? What should the role of women be in society? Such discourses played significant part in structuring the political field.

Traditionally the concept of civil society, was more considered to be western originated concept, while the roots of the discourse in Civil Society can be found in Islamic modernism, during

19-20 century the modern Islamic thinkers were able to find some engagement with the western civilization, and modernity. They were able to question such ideas and rethink about “open up the space for rethinking of the “nature of the state” “the nature of citizenship” “the role the individuals can play in society” and they could develop “organic system of thoughts “ based on these ideas. Islamic modern thinkers like Jamal Alden Al Afghani, his theory of “co-existence” “the modern nation of state” and “universe Islamic community”. Muhamad Abdu, worked on cooperating “secular” and “modern” idea of “reform” or “Taj deed” both legal and educational system, he could bring a “modern Islamic approach of “constitutionalism”

Tahtawi’s, contribution of “introduction of rational science” those and so many others, help us to understand that Islamic modernism has origins with contemporary civil society today and it has political discourse as it being shaped primarily because its engagement with the West which is remarkably different from binary categorization and position the whole discourse was based. The debates between secular and religious were rigorous. It differed according to the scholars and their trends, but the debate was always there. We can see, Hassan Hanafi rejecting the idea of “Islamic state”, because it fragments the Egyptian nation. Sadik Jala Al Azem, saw civil society, secularism, as Western, and because of the lack of cultural relevancy, he called it “orientalism in reverse” because by adopting such western ideas, orientals are “orienting themselves.”

All previous points contributed on the discourse and those debated were not virtual but rather it was shaping what was happening in the real world and engaging real politics at that time. The religious-secular discourse, has filtered down to very specific issues such as “Islamic feminism” “secular feminism”, and “right of political participation.” The Secular- Islamic debate over the years was mostly contesting and contracting each other. That led to varieties of ideas and open up the space for such kind of “chaos of ideas” but it is something necessary for this kind of revolution to take place. The third paper was by Dipanwita Chakraborty on “Protests in Israel 2011.” According to her, the political discourse in Israel was limited to the security and foreign affairs since 1949-2009. But this reality changed in 2011 when series of protested movements known as “social protests”. The public discourse shifted now to focus on “negated domestic issues” “housing” “health” “education” “raising cost of living”. In her opinion, there are three major reasons behind those movements; First, *deteriorating the equality of life*: since 2005 the price of housing was raised by (44%), while the wage was dropped to (15%). The food prices had raised 27%. Second, *Rising tax burden*: (60%) of the economic burden issues shared by only (29%) of the population with the shrinking middle class. Beside “the high birth rate” of the orthodox citizens, which created a difficult situation, because they don’t pay taxes, they don’t serve in the military, they are completely subsidized and this subsidy is being paid by the shrinking middle class. Third, *the lack of the support from government*: since 1996 all governments have slashed spending on health, education and social services. The protestors asked for; reducing the costs of housing in Israel. 1. A new taxation system would be implemented (which would include lower indirect taxes and higher direct taxes) 2. Free schooling from an early age 3. Privatization of state-owned enterprises would end. 4. More resources would be invested on public housing and public transportation. As a response to those demands, The Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu initially reacted to the protests by announcing a new housing plan, appointed a committee to pinpoint and propose solutions to Israel's socioeconomic problems, The

committee's task was to hold discussions with "different groups and sectors within the public", and subsequently make proposals to the government's socioeconomic cabinet. The protests ended by 29 October. Despite the broke out of the protests in Israel in 2011, it cannot be considered as Israeli Spring, according to the differences between two cases. But the greater achievement of the protests is changing in social agenda, this became a priority for all political parties. The Fourth paper was presented by Manzer Jahan Ujala on *A Discussion on the Dynamics of Human Rights Discourses in the Post Arab Spring Scenario*. Through her paper she analyzed the power structure within and between the states, which facilitate the abuses of human rights in the Arab world and explained about the dynamics of the HR discourse in post Arab spring period giving clear, simple definitions of HR; that they are the rights which are inviolable, indivisible and innate. Some refer to Human Rights likings with morality as well, respecting the human life itself. Some has seen that Human Rights through external conditions can developed their positions, accordingly state create those conditions. But what if the state itself becomes the one who is violating those rights? That is why we see another scholar who argue, that it should be "independent agency" which could fulfill the people's rights. In that sense there is no separation between "rights" and "Duties". Then she discussed the applicability of Human Rights in Arab world. She sees that Arab states consider Human Rights as western ideas and that is why it is difficult to be adopted, even though that she refers to time when the human rights declaration was approved, all Arab countries accepted including Iran , except Saudi Arabia which had reservations on two matters; the gender equality, and freedom of religion. The problem is within the application side to it. And then on the light of the current Human Rights discourse in Arab world, she gave significant distinction between universalism and culturalism. Saying that universalism; argues that Human Rights are innate. While Culturalism argues that rights are not innate, they are "social constructed"; being that it will differ from society to another, and from culture to another that would give wide spectrum for analyzing Human Rights along with the interests of those who are responsible to protect it, which would facilitate its violation at the same time. Universalism as well is going under big question after 2003 US war in Iraq beside the double standards of the West, when it comes to violations of Human Rights on Arab countries. That gave the Arab states the stronger plea refuse to Human Rights discourse imposed by occupied powers. She concluded, despite the complicated, and situation of Human Rights in WANA after the breaking out of Arab spring, it could somehow end the domination of Arab regimes, to dictate Human Rights in name of imperialism. And until the democracy could spread its wings in WANA region, the Human Rights situation will stay under constant question. The last paper presenter was by Azeemah Saleem on *Nation-State Building in Post QaddafiLibya: A Fragmentary Wave of Democratisation*. The sudden fall of Gadhafi had created a political vacuum in Libya. Without being any prepared scenario about the future how the state should be constructed. She divided her paper into three approaches according to the process for establishing state. First, *the national transitional council (NSC)*; which was the only council established after breaking Arab spring and it was who led the revolution but without any theoretical or institutional framework to the form of the new state, its main concern was just to overthrow Gadhafi. After they got that, the council attempt to monopolize the power, of peripheries, militias, and tribal elites. This kind of "sudden power" within this approach turned toward "centralization policy" this was just repeating to what Gadhafi used to have, he wanted to establish democracy, through establishing "Al Jamahiriya" very centralization approach. The NSC also adapted "political isolation mass", means anyone was working with Al Gadhafi government

considered being betrayer, they were moved from their positions that again led to lack of experience, and vacuum in the work places. Second approach, *Federal state*; historically Libya is divided into three different regions, within the regional fragmentation it has its own tribal fragmentation, which further divided into militias, again social classes divisions. So with this approach dividing what is already fragmented was not consider to be the best scenario for Libya. Third approach. *Political institution*; the elections was held after toppling Gadhafibut it suffered from serious problems, which led to form political institution disable to fulfill the urgent needs of the situation. Adding to all that the division between the Islamist and secular vision about the future of the state. Make each side establish two different governments as they want. She concluded that the voice now in Libya is for the force, each party wants to fulfill their own interests through force. Using international intervention to make regime change in Libya has worsened the situation, and such kind of imposing democracy from above is unworkable as the experience has taught us from Iraq and now Libya.

The second session was on the theme *Situation in Egypt: Implications for India*. Eng. Nasr Agiza, from Egypt. He spoke on *Egypt and India and Democratic Upsurge in Middle East*. The presenter emphasised the crucial role energy plays in West Asian politics, in fact he goes on to find links between each and every problem this region has coming out from energy. And he also emphasised that inside West Asia there are such regions without energy resource which are comparatively out of problems. Overall the paper touched upon issues like relationship between India and Egypt, non-alignment movement (NAM), Arab spring, Gas in Egypt, Energy map in India, future cooperation between Egypt and India in energy and mineral resources. Dr.Riham Bahi, Associate Professor from Cairo, spoke on *Regime Security and Egyptian foreign policy* The presenter assessed the various levels of power Egypt has today which makes it perfect contender for coming out as a regional dominant power in contemporary West Asia. She discussed about two types of power; material power and ideational power both are available in case of Egypt. Now that United States is withdrawing from the region and rebalancing with Egypt the larger question is who will fill in the vacuum it will create. The presenter strategically eliminated Russia and China finally leaving Egypt as the best possible option for the region. She concluded with the statement that the perception of Egypt as 'the mother of the world' still sustains and such perceptions are well accepted by the West Asian countries as well. The third presenter Ashiya Parveen presented on *The Arab Uprising in Egypt: People, Power and Change*. The presenter gave a general overview of the arab uprising in Egypt and how the historical process took its turns and tolls. The major question she focused on was about the failure of reconciliation between the islamist and the non islamis after the uprising. She argues that the Islamist did make their attempt in adapting to the various shift but the non islamist due to the impact of islamophobia remained hostile to them. Therefore the Muslim Brotherhood eventually lost the space which they had acquired and was indeed a hard earned space. Dr. Mahendra Pratap Rana the fifth presenter presented a paper on *United States and Arab Uprising with special reference to Egypt*. Dr Rana started his presentation with the question of changing dynamics of international relations focusing on US and its relationship shifts and turns with Tunisia and Egypt. He argues that as US had good relationship with these countries they were not the real target of arab uprising. In fact to him the real target of US was Libya and Algeria, as they were the champions of democracy. He questioned the basic premise of US under which it wants to propagate democracy in these countries. He highlights the negative impact of the freedom houses in this region

and how they are responsible for destabilization of the regions stability. He concluded that even US today regrets and bears the fruits of what it was sown in this region which was completely unknown to them also the process of democratization is not a one day business thus the will of the people and the society is utmost important for any fruitful change to occur. The first day, Second session was held on Committee Room and Chaired by Dr. Sajad Ibrahim under the title *Beyond Borders: Ideology, Ethnicity & Homeland*. The first paper dealt with *The State Formation and Legitimacy Crisis in West Asia: With Special reference to Kurdish People* by Prof. Ripu Sudan Singh. He basically explained about the historical development of the state formation in referring to 1848, Westphalia Peace Treaty, and how the modern notion of the states emerged. According to Dr. Singh the question of formation of the states in WANA region is very important if we want to understand the legitimacy crisis of those states especially on the light of Arab spring this question of state legitimacy is coming to the fore again. After World War II, the shaping of new states in WANA region began. With shaping of the new states, the ethnic minorities in those regions started to question their rights to be accepted as sovereign entity, and the Kurds in return did not accept the legitimacy of those new existence countries. However Arab spring has brought back these questions especially on the light of uprising the Kurds in Syria, Iraq and turkey. Their battle with ISIS has worsened the situation, and made their ambition to establish their own nation state. Dr. Singh also distinguished between state nation, and nation state, saying that state nation; like India which can manage several nations within its borders. Dissolving other nations within one is something impossible. In a sense not accepting the differences in identities and nations within state, it is the case for Kurds. The state is a political and geopolitical entity, while the nation is a cultural and/or ethnic one; the term "nation state" implies that the two coincide geographically. In the case of Iraqi Kurds, they were given separation in Kurdistan. But that was not case in Syria, Iran and Turkey. Dr Singh thinks that it is kind of idolism to achieve nation state for the Kurds. He concluded by saying that; under the violation of liberty and equality of the minorities such as Kurds the legitimacy of the state always be under question process till they could address this matter. Along similar lines Dr. Suchitra Dagar, presented her paper on Kurdish Question in the Conflict Prone West Asia, she mentioned that there are so much similarities with the previous paper, with one major difference about; the establishing nation state for the Kurds is urgent necessity as a way to find a solution to the Kurds question especially that the Kurds issue was utilized from regional and international powers to provoke instability in the concern countries like Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. Large numbers of internal and external factors prevent a Kurdish state from forming today. The primary factors are; the geographic and tribal fragmentation and disunity of the Kurds; the varying levels of political and socioeconomic development in each country; the lack of a single Kurdish language, a common political platform (party, movement, front) and a common national leader. More recently their battle with ISIS considers being the major challenge. Especially after the terrifying massacre in Korbani in Syria. She concluded that despite of all the obstacles admitting the right of the Kurds to establish their own sovereign state is best solution. But the dynamics of doing that is be put on the shoulders of the Kurds themselves. The second topic was on *Whither the Two-State Solution? Future Prospects of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* presented by Dr. Mushtaq Hussain. He focused on the last major events that happened regarding the two state question. First; the UNSC resolution (2334), second; France Middle East conference which organized on Paris on January in 2017, third; the momentous visit of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to US when the president Donald trump and the US commitment to establish 2 states. This solution was

put on the table since 1990, but still could not put on processing. Despite all the obstacles facing two states solution, Dr Hussain said that according to the most respected Palestine organization, Palestinian Council for research, brought out that the results of the survey was held on 13 Mar 2017, shows that huge majority of the Palestinian still support two state solution, 60% still believe that 2 states solution is the best option they have rather than three or one state. With 47% of Palestinian population support this solution. At the same time for most Palestinians, a two-state solution under the Trump administration is not a likely outcome. According to the poll, the vast majority of Palestinians, a whopping 70 percent, believe that the chances for creating an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel during the next five years are slim, or non-existent. On the Israeli side 2007 public opinion poll showed that (68%) of Israeli population still support 2 states solution. So the main question of Dr. Hussain paper is if the majority of both people are supporting two state solution so what is reason behind not applying it. He sees that the problem is with “unilateralism” on both sides. He defines unilateralism; the power acquisition between 2 sides in a conflict situation, in order to achieve a victory on the negotiation process. It means it will not be equality during the negotiation process, which means there will be no Win- Win solution or mutual gaining outcome. In the case study, Israel is more powerful than Palestinian side, with regard of military, state institutions, economy, controlling the borders, and civil society aspects. Most of unilateralism from Israel side are negative but, withdrawal from Gaza strip in 2005 considered to be positive one. From Palestine side the attempt to get recognition as dependent state from UN and become a full member in UN. He sees that with so much difficulties which Mahmood Abbas is facing he has no choice but to go through this unilateralism policy, Dr, concluded by saying according to the data given he believes that 2 state solution is the best and most favorable scenario for the future. Contradictory to this optimistic view, Sunil Kumar on the light of his research on *Palestine Question post Israel's 2015 elections: continuity and Change*. He found that March 2015 elections in Israel were conducted over a wide range of issues, but first and foremost were seen as a referendum on these key questions. That is why 2015 elections should be red on that scene. Netanyahu's Likud victory in the Israeli Knesset elections marks the first confrontation between Likud and Labor since the latter's loss in 2000. The biggest message to be understood from the results of this election is that the Israeli people do not want “two-state solution” and refuses to withdraw to the 1967 borders. Coinciding with Trump winning the US elections, who has designated an ambassador to Israel who opposes Palestinian statehood, the opportunities to establish two states are very weak. Last paper presented by Shabana Parwin, on *Fatah-Hamas: Conflict and Its Regional Impact*. The 2009 legislative elections in Gaza and the West Bank marks a turning point in Palestine politics. From 1996 when the first legislative elections were held, Fatah had dominated the Palestinian national authority. Hamas made history in 2006, sweeping away Fatah's monopoly of power. A new phase in Palestinian politics dominated by Islamic political culture began, although Hamas won political power, they had severe difficulties in exercising it. For Hamas it was critical to bring the security forces under the control of its government. When Abbas reinforced the Palestinian Guard and made it answerable directly to him, and also established an organization tasked with monitoring the borders, which in practice meant the crossing between Gaza and Egypt at Rafah. Hamas responded by establishing security forces until, a body that took its orders from Ismail Haniyeh's government's interior ministry, thereby challenging Abbas's authority. The conflict took an international dimension after the US worried about the empowerment of the Hamas government. Regional powers politics soon conflated with growing civil

strife when one of the border crossing Rafah became the scene of the most serious confrontation in 2006. She concluded that Palestine tragedy is not confine on the conflict with Israel but as well from internal problems within the same Palestinian house, with the involvement on regional and international parties, the scene become even more complex. Between different kinds of layers of conflicts there is only common victim the Palestine people suffering since 1948.

The sixth session of Three-day International Conference started at 9:30 AM, with the theme “*India and the WANA: History, Culture and Soft Diplomacy*”. Overall 5 scholarly papers were presented covering the theme, chaired by Dr. Jamal M. Moosa. The first paper, titled as “India-West Asia Cultural Engagement- An Abrahamic Tradition”, was presented by Dr. Khurshid Imam. The paper covered various aspects of cultural and social people to people interaction or Track 2 diplomacy, and its role in strengthening state-state relations through the pages of history. Significance of Hajj and other sacred places including Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazereth was highlighted, which attracted the followers of Islam, Judaism and Christianity even before the discovery of oil in the region. The paper also threw light on the Indian diasporas in WANA and vice versa, particularly on how Indian Jews were influenced by the prevailing caste system in India in their culture and community organization. It also covered the scholarly aspect of the cultural assimilation with the Mughal emperor, Akbar, translating the Jewish literature and philosophy. Finally the presenter discussed the current situation of Indian Jews in the state of Israel and their influence on its culture, society and politics. The second paper by Dr. Gurusiddaiah C. was titled as “Pre-Colonial Trade and Commercial relations between India and West Asia: A Historical Perspective”. He traced the trade relations between the two regions through the Indus Valley civilization and Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabian Peninsula from ancient to medieval till modern time when India was brought under the British colonies and trade relations with West Asian weakened since then. The paper described the role of Arab shippers, travelers and merchants and their accounts giving ample amount of information about the trade and commercial relations between the two regions. The paper also covered the role of Haider Ali, the ruler of Mysore and his son Tipu Sultan in strengthening military and trade relations with Turkey, France, Oman and Persia where trading settlements were also set up. The third paper, presented by Dr. Monalisa Lenka, was on “the Soft Diplomacy of India in the WANA”. The presenter traced the origin and use of the term “soft diplomacy” and defined it, pointing out the sources of soft power. She gave the examples of International Yoga Day ( 21<sup>st</sup> June), Bollywood Cinema, food, art and culture as the sources and tools of India’s soft Diplomacy in the region. She also cited the recent agreement with Iran on Chahbahar Port in 2016, and India’s diplomacy of maintaining good relations with all the major powers in the region including Shi’a, Sunni, Muslims and Jews. The fourth paper was presented by Ms. Melissa Cyrill on “India’s Renewed Engagement with West Asia and its Digital Public Diplomacy”. She focused her paper on India’s diplomacy in WANA mainly after the NDA under Mr. Modi came into power. She talked about the disengagement of US in the region with more engagement of China with Iran. The paper covered the high level visits to and from the region including Oman, Qatar, UAE and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which she described as the second circle of India’s neighborhood. She also threw lights on India’s engagement with WANA for energy concern, security co-operation, investment and trade development through relaxation in FDI rules. She presented two case studies of Israel- India’s pragmatic approach towards Israel in the field of military hardware, technology,

agricultural R&D, and GCC- India's enhancing ties with UAE signing 14 MoUs in defense, maritime, SMM enterprises, agriculture, balancing ties with all the major stakeholders in the region. The fifth paper was presented by Dr. M. V. Bijulal on "Struggles as Political Communication: Migration, Life worlds, and Human Rights Questions in GCC". The paper covered the worker's struggles and strikes in GCC, the "undignified situation" of workers and their exploitation in GCC countries. He argued that ethical perspective of human beings and structural notion of nationals is being violated, and that the social class is organized in a way that the labor force is controlled by a few in the Arab world. He also talked about the lack of political concern in this field, but he more critically looked at the academic efforts done in this direction, and not only on the remittances and foreign reserves. He also highlighted the role of democracy in this regard and questioned the government efforts to provide and ensure a dignified labor situation.

The Parallel Session VII of the conference, chaired by Prof. Faisal Mehmud, started on third day at 2:30 PM in Committee Room, in which four papers were presented under the theme of "*Cleavages and Conflicts in WANA*". The first paper was presented by Dr. Amit Singh Kushwaha on "Democratization Process in the Post Saddam Iraq: Achievements and Challenges". The presenter highlighted the current situation in Iraq analyzing the political development including the impact of ethnicity diversity in the state. He also put forward the external and internal challenges posed by the intervention by US and its allies, as well as Kurds, Shi'a and Sunni due to its federal structure. The paper also drew attention towards the lack of democratic institutions, rentier economy, unconsolidated market, and India's role in stabilization of Iraqi economy and its politics. Dr. Liyaqat Ayub Khan presented the second paper titled as "Arab Public Sphere and Democratic Upsurge". He talked about the democratic values in public sphere, Arab unity and nationalism. He also emphasized that democracy is needed for taking the people's struggle forward, where he focused on how the social network and media is giving the public sphere the shape of democratic sphere. He also threw some light on the religious public sphere. The third paper on "Situating Sectarianism in Iraq: Towards a Contextualized understanding of Islamic State", was presented by Mr. Derek Verbakel. He tried to interpret the rise and fall of ISIS, where he talked about how the sectarian identity constitutes the politics in Iraq, and how the religious identity is politicizing the secular minds for the hunt of power seen in the political parties and society. He also analyzed the sectarian organization through the pages of history. The fourth paper was on "Effect of Decline in Oil Prices on Oil Importing Economies with Special Reference to India", by Ms. Tuba Noman. She talked about how the rise and fall in oil prices is going to affect the Indian economy. She traced the history of oil crisis and concluded that upsurge in oil production by the US led to the decline of oil price in the Arab world. She also argued that decline in oil prices is good for India but not in long run as it may affect other sector negatively.

Day Two, Session III was on the theme *Internal Dynamics In The Gulf*. The first speaker Jasim Husain presented a paper titled "Structural Changes in GCC economies: Implications for the World in general and India in particular". The speaker spoke about economic implications on GCC countries, especially in regard to the Indian workers in the Gulf, after the chaos of Arab Spring in 2010. The economy of the Gulf States suffered in terms of increase in cost of living, increase in value added tax, slashing of fuel subsidies etc. Prof. Mohammed Azhar's paper on "Indian Expatriate

workers in GCC Countries: Impact of the Changing Oil Prices” discussed the Indian expatriate in GCC countries. The emphasis was laid upon the effect on Indian workers as well as the Indian economy every time there is oil price rise or a decrease in price. While the demand for the Indian labourers increases during oil price rise, the Indian economy suffers a great deal. The effect is opposite when the prices fall. Dr. Namie Tsujigami presented a paper “Female Domestic Workers: Relationship with their female employer in Saudi Arabia”. The speaker explained the relationship between domestic workers and their female employer, emphasising upon the condition of female domestic workers in Saudi Arabia. These workers have from time to time complained of torture and exploitation in the hands of their employer. Dr. Md. Muddassir Quamar “India –GCC Cooperation in Higher Education: Prospects and challenges”. The speaker highlighted the disappointing state of educational ties between India and GCC. While there is a strong presence of Indian workers in GCC, the same participation is not visible in higher education between the Indian universities and the students from the Gulf. Dr. K.M. Sajad Ibrahim, “Nationalistic Policy of GCC and the Declining Prospects of Indian Diaspora.” The paper discussed the problem of unemployment and job cut faced by the Indian workers after the GCC governments decided to change their labour market strategies to employ their own nationals, while limiting the dependence on Indian expatriates. Prof. Javed Ahmad Khan “Islamic Financial Market of the Arabian Gulf: Issues and Challenges” There is a need for an interest free Islamic Banking system in India. These banks have seen a steady growth and expansion in the last five decades across the Arabian Gulf and their presence is visible even in Russia and China, except for India. These banks are expanding across the world, though they continue to face challenges from their more conventional counterpart financial institutions in the region and elsewhere.

Day Two – Parallel session III on the theme, *Politics Of Religion And Society*. This session had six speakers and the main argument was on Religion as a dominant factor in shaping the social and political structure of West Asia. Dr. Sumaiyah Ahmad “Rise of Islamic Activism of Women in WANA: Radicalism or Democratic Upsurge” The first speaker talks about how women have played a very important role in the conservative radical Islamic organizations such as Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hezbollah, National Islamic Front Party of Sudan among many others. Abdul Rahim PZ, “Arab Uprising or Arab Disaster: What the Islamic Movements and Islamists learned from Six Years Long Humanitarian Crisis” The main argument of the paper was concerning the Islamic State that compelled the traditional international Islamic movements to change their activism. Shabista Naz “Reclaiming Feminism in the Era of Uprising: The “Feminist Spring” of Morocco.” The speaker focussed on Moroccan female movement and their tryst to change the misogynist Moroccan laws. The feminists emerged after the Arab uprising in which men and women equally participated. Ram Sarik Gupta “British India Policy in the Formation of the Gulf States” The speaker has given a detailed account of how British policy towards India before independence has effected WANA region and how this policy played an important role in shaping politics in Gulf region. Dr. Anas.S “Human Rights of Minorities: Insecure Social Experiences of minorities in India and Egypt” The speaker talks about the human rights of minorities in West Asia. His case study is Coptic Christian of Egypt. The main argument of the paper was the political rights and the status of Coptic Christian during different regimes in Egypt. The second day, session IV on the theme Iran And Syria: Regional Dimensions was chaired by Prof. A.K. Ramakrishnan. The first speaker Prof. Jawaid Iqbal spoke on

"The Syrian Conflict and its Impact on Lebanon" and according to him Syria has played a central role in Lebanon ever since the creation of the Lebanese state in the early twentieth century by carving out Syrian regions to the Mount Lebanon territory. Therefore, for stability to be established in Lebanon, it is critical that a resolution to the Syrian crisis is evolved. Tanvi Hooda "Iran's Posturing Post Nuclear Deal" The region has witnessed a major shift in the regional geopolitics with the emergence of more actors since the Iranian nuclear deal. This has made Iran more careful of the actions and moves it takes. Vinisha U "Syrian Crisis and Iran's Struggle for Regional Hegemony: An Analysis" Iran's involvement in Syria is an expression of its interest in furthering a Shi'i "Axis of Resistance" and ensuring logistical access to its allied groups, Hezbollah and Hamas, on the Eastern Mediterranean. Tsupokyemla, "Syrian Crisis: Legitimacy Question" While geopolitical considerations are important, domestic circumstances have to be taken into account while analysing the reasons for the contestation of Assad's leadership as part of the Arab Spring. This approach further helps with understanding why he continues to enjoy wide support in Syria. Niharika Tiwari "The US Iran Nuclear Deal and Responses from Israel and Saudi Arabia" Two major regional players in West Asia, Israel and Saudi Arabia, did not respond in a very positive manner to the US Iran nuclear deal owing to their own political and strategic priorities. However they did not derail the deal either due to the strong international consensus on regulating peaceful use of nuclear potential by Iran. Parallel Session IV, The GCC And The Regional Geopolitics. This session mainly focussed on Iran-Saudi relationship. Factors that effected there relations and the implications of the rivalry in the region was discussed. Dr.Wasi Raza "War in Yemen and Saudi Dilemma." The speaker talks about the Houthis of Yemen, who were marginalised and how the Saudis attacked shias by its branded Wahhabism , only to secure its own interest. Murari Singh "US- Iran Nuclear Deal and Regional Responses." The speaker tried to explain the US-Iran relationship that changed after 1979. He elaborated about the sanctions and the response of various regional powers on the nuclear deal between P5 and Iran. Dr. Md. Abdul Ghaffar "Shooting Stars ? Turkey and Qatar since the Arab Uprising" The speaker discussed the foreign policy of Turkey and Qatar and the implication on the region. It also discussed the current Turkish Government's move from a 'zero problems' stand to creating a rivalry within the region. The paper also mentioned how Qatar played the role of a hard and soft power in the region, according to circumstances. Amardip Kumar "Power Balancing Between Iran and Saudi Arabia: The Role of US". The main argument of the paper revolved around Iran and Saudi playing the game of power. The US invasion of Iraq has affected their relations while fighting for regional supremacy. They are creating problems between Shia and Sunni for their own power interest. Rincy Mathew, "The struggle for regional Hegemony in West Asia : Revisiting Saudi –Iran Rivalries in the Post Arab Spring" The speaker explains the Saudi-Iran rivalry through various regional and external actors. Until the Arab Uprising in 2011, Iran and Saudi Arabia competed for influence primarily in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain and to some extent in Palestinian territories. When Arab spring reached Egypt, both the countries too stand according to their own vested interest mainly being, regional supremacy. Khairunnisa Aga "Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979) and the shia Upsurge in Lebanon" The speaker discussed how the monarchy and its authoritarian rule was challenged during the Iranian revolution inn 1979. The paper substantiated the argument with the rise of the Hezbollah in Lebanon and nits journey from a resistant group to a political player in the country. Session V Global Concerns And External Actors Prof. Jia Haitao "China's security concerns and strategic considerations about its Maritime lifeline". The speaker discussed China's security concern on its

maritime lifeline. China is one of the world's largest oil importers and wants cooperation from India to secure China's interesting order to bring mutual cooperation and lasting peace in the region. Dr. Rafiulla Azmi "US and Democracy Promotion: A Case Study of its Role in making and Unmaking of the Egyptian Revolution". The speaker spoke about Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath and the role of US in promoting democracy in the region. The speaker emphasised upon the role America has taken upon itself to promote democracy in the region though its role in a crisis is questionable, often doubted for manufacturing crisis in the region. Dr. Omair Anas "Understanding South Asia in Turkey's 'Multidimensional' Foreign Policy" The paper elaborated upon the relationship that Turkey has with South Asian states in accordance to its own vested interest in the region. The paper also discussed the current ruling elite's policy shift from being dependent on Europe to searching for new allies in South Asian region for security. Wael Deirki "The Genesis of the Current Upheaval in West Asia" The speaker discussed the upheavals in West Asia, citing political goals and personal ambitions of the leaders as the real problem makers in the region. The speaker touched upon the domestic, regional and international factors that contribute to the turmoil in the region. Dr. Zahra Abotorabi "Iran-GCC Relations: The US Factor" The speaker elaborated upon Iran-US rivalry and its implications on Iran's future. The paper also discussed Iran's relationship with GCC states is also a very important contributing factor to Iran-US relations. Parallel Session V Constants and challenges "Social Media and the Arab Spring: The Role of Egyptian Women in the Uprising" Social media plays a crucial role in the case of Egyptian women in the Arab Spring, but only as an enabling tool, not a cause for participation. Puyesh Kant Sharma "Environmental Consequences of Conflict in Post Saddam Iraq" The experience of Iraq demonstrates that casualties of war and destruction are often accounted for in terms of socio-political and economic losses, but very rarely in terms of environmental losses. Awnish Murari "Status of Women and Civil Laws in Saudi Arabia" More so than religious doctrines, it is the limitations imposed by the Saudi state towards half of its civilian population that accounts for the lack of Saudi women's access to basic civil privileges. Poonam Khatana "The Uncertain Future of the Syrian Refugee Children: Barriers to their Education in Jordan" Education is a stabiliser whose healing effect is particularly critical for children who have experienced trauma. An appropriate education policy is therefore the moral responsibility of Jordan and regional actors so as to ensure a sustainable future for Syrian refugee children. Manjari Singh and Prof PR Kumaraswamy "Jordanian Parliamentary Election: Who Won and Who Lost?" The 2016 election demonstrates the complexity of the Jordanian political system with regard to tribal groups, Islamist forces, women, and minorities. All four groups registered substantial gains but one remarkable aspect is that Jordan was able to conduct timely elections despite domestic upheavals and economic turbulence. Jatin Kumar "China's Contemporary West Asia Policy and its Implications for India" Heavy Chinese engagement in the region does not preclude the numerous opportunities in the region for India to play a bigger role. Instead, it is India's slow approach to make use of these opportunities that hold it back.

Day 3, Session VII Energy And Economic Issues, John Roberts "Democracy in Turkey: Implications for Regional Energy Security" The speaker emphasised upon Turkey's role in global energy security and problems the country face from the radical PKK group that targets Turkey's ambitious pipeline projects. Dr. Md. Mojahid Azam "Pipeline geopolitics in West Asia: Implications for India". The speaker pointed out India and China's intensified diplomatic, economic and defence

linkages with Asia and Central Asia for what is termed as a “Resource war”. The speaker discussed how India and China have made attempts to purchase equity in oil operations in West Asia and Central Asia and their rivalry concerning oil gains from the region. Dr. Sameena Hameed “Energy Security and Maritime Issues: Opportunities for India-WANA partnership” The speaker talked about India’s dependence on WANA region for energy supply and how the country needs to secure its energy interest in the region. The speaker concluded that both GCC and WANA need to be more practically involved in maritime security to meet the requirements of the future. Dr.Vrushal T. Ghoble “Energy as a Source of Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the East Mediterranean” The speaker discussed the existing energy structure and the possible expansion of the pipelines in the Mediterranean region after the recent discoveries of natural gas in the region. This discovery has made the Mediterranean, strategically important. The paper discussed Greece and Turkey’s role as consumers of the discovered gas and how the region with its abundance of natural gas could bring more economic prosperity for the region.

Day 3- session viii Strategic relations and collective security Dr.Fazzur Rahman Siddiqui “Rise of Islamic Parties and the Islamic State in the wake of the Arab Uprising: An Overview” The speaker argued about two Islamic parties of the region, Muslim Brotherhood and Al Nahda and the difference between them. Al Nahda claim to be an Islamic party but it doesn’t allow sharia debate unlike Muslim Brotherhood. The speaker also talked about the challenges these parties are facing to distinguish themselves from the militia Islamic/Radical parties. Prasanta Kumar Pradhan “Saudi Arabia and the War in Libya” The main argument of the speaker is the Saudi policy of Libya after Gaddafi. Speaker analysed the Saudi approach towards the popular protest against Gaddafi and war in Libya. Speaker also highlighted the dual standards of Saudi regime. On one hand it supported the protesters and the international political, diplomatic and military efforts to overthrow Gaddafi, while on the other hand, Saudi sent its forces to Bahrain to protect the Khalifa regime. Dr.Zakir Hussain, Speaker explored India’s policy towards WANA and highlighted India’s interest and benefit it receives from West Asian Countries. Apart from energy, huge amount of remittances are also coming from West Asia. Every year large number of Indian Muslims visit Mecca and Medina for pilgrimage. While on the other hand, West Asia also depends upon India for food security and people from WANA region have always had great hopes from India. Aditi Prashant Jadhav “The changing Dimensions of India’s Diplomacy in the WANA region. Speaker explored the changing dimension of the Indian diplomacy in the WANA region while highlighting Indian interest towards West Asia and Visa- Versa. Dr. H.A. Nazmi “Stable Qatar can quench India’s Energy Quest” The speaker highlighted India and Qatar’s relationship that is very old. This relationship can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Indian scholar Shawalli Ullah visited the Qatar tribes. The paper also explored India’s growing relations with Qatar since 1973 and their bilateral policy till 2015.

The conference concluded with the valedictory session chaired by Prof. Manoj Pant, Dean, SIS and the valedictory address was delivered by Prof. Zikrur Rahman, former Director, India-Arab Cultural Centre. The Convenor of the Conference Dr. Mahendra Pratap Rana delivered the concluding vote of thanks.

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