



Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road
New Delhi

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Press Release

on

Round Table Discussion

on

“Iraq-the Recent Developments”

(17 July 2014)

A Round Table discussion was organised on the recent crisis in Iraq by the Indian Council of World Affairs. The Round Table discussion entitled “Iraq-the recent Developments” focussed on the rise of Islamic States in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its larger implication for the region and India.

In his introductory remarks, DG, ICWA, Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia stated that Iraq, at present, and is passing through a very difficult and complex situation and has become a global hot spot. Ambassador Bhatia, reflecting upon the core of the recent crisis, mentioned that issues involve sectarian, ethnic, territorial and political dimensions too, apart from regional and global one.

The Round Table discussion was chaired by Ambassador Sanjay Singh, former Secretary (East). In his initial remarks, the Chair said that it was a timely initiative taken by ICWA because the rise of ISIS and subsequent developments in Iraq and neighbouring countries were matter of great concern for India, too. Offering a snapshot of Iraq’s history, Ambassador Singh told the audience that Iraq had been a cradle of civilisation, of multiple empires and Caliphates in the past.

Speaking on the theme of “Iraq: Past and Present”, Professor Zikrur Rahman told the gathering that Middle East had never witnessed the sectarian strife of the level it has been experiencing today. He added that Iraq in particular has remained a deep-rooted secular and a

nationalist entity. According to him, it all began after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when the US employed the policy of sectarian division and started addressing the nation in terms of Sunni, Shiite and Kurds to the detriment of a national identity.

Professor Gulshan Dietl said that the dynamics of ISIS is changing so rapidly that it has been reduced to Islamic State (IS) now. Expressing her views, she told that the uninterrupted expansion of ISIS was a real concern for the neighbouring nations.

Mr. Prakash Nanda, Editor, Geopolitics, highlighted the issue of Indian hostage crisis in Iraq. He called for the application of new tools like the Special Operational Command which could be useful to deal with such crises in future. He drew attention of the audience towards the relevance of Indian software power which commands high respect among the West Asian nations.

Ambassador Dayakar confined his presentation to the issue of future prospects for Iraq and how India could respond to the evolving situation. He was optimistic about a united Iraq in near future and that there were no immediate dangers to its territorial integrity.

It was broadly agreed that Iraq is in turmoil and predicting the future and evolution of events is almost impossible given the flux in the situation. The round table discussion was attended by diplomats, scholars, academics and media persons.
