

CONCEPT NOTE
13th IDSA-BESA BILATERAL DIALOGUE
Wednesday, January 22, 2014

Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
New Delhi

Evolving Political and Security Dynamics in the Region: Implications for India and Israel

During the last few years the West Asian region has undergone tremendous changes. The phenomenon of ‘Arab Spring’ has overwhelmingly altered the political and security dynamics of the region. Transition to democracy in the countries who have successfully overthrown their old authoritarian regimes has been a major obstacle in establishing peace and stability in the region. In this regard, the overthrow of Muhammad Morsi as the elected president of Egypt and installation of an interim government in Cairo and the subsequent violence that followed has been at the centre of regional political activity. Similarly, the situation in Libya and Yemen along with Tunisia represents the difficulties of transition to democracy. The continuing violence, killing and political uncertainty in Syria has also politically divided the region. While Geneva 2 Conference is still waiting to happen, the concerned states have started to harden their respective position. Apart from the UN, the involvement of the key regional players such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and so on has further complicated the political and strategic scenario of the region.

The US-Iran deal promising the stopping of nuclear enrichment of Iran and cutting down the sanctions in return has made the regional political situation look even more complex. The US-Iran rapprochement has been criticised by many regional countries mainly, Israel and Saudi Arabia, two long-time allies of the US. A strong US-Iran relationship can change the political and strategic landscape of the West Asian region. A powerful Iran may try to play even more proactive game in the regional politics which may lead to strengthening of Assad in Syria, Hezbollah and the Shias in the region.

The security situation in South Asia is also very fragile. The continuing instability and insecurity in Pakistan and Afghanistan continue to plague the security situation in the South Asian region. The drawing down of US led international forces in Afghanistan in 2014 presents a real challenge to the region. There is also the threat of increase in violence and instability as also spill-over effect of terrorism not only in India but across the Central Asian region, South Asia and the West Asian region.

India and Israel occupy pivotal positions in their respective regions and are likely to be effected by any change in geo-political landscape of the region. Both India and Israel are deeply concerned with the developments in West Asia as it affects their interests directly. India and Israel also face common threat of extremism and terrorism emanating from the region. It is in this background that the India-Israel bilateral relations have to be carried forward. While West Asia continues to grapple with the evolving situation, India-Israel

bilateral relations continue to grow with cooperation in political, economic, defence and other fields. There are huge potentials and promises of the bilateral relationship between the two countries but at the same time there are a number of challenges too to deal with.

In this background, the 13th IDSA-BESA dialogue provides an opportunity for the scholars from both the sides to deliberate and discuss the issues and developments taking place in the region. The dialogue would be conducted over three sessions on 22 January as under:

Session 1: Round Table on Evolving Global Strategic Environment in South and West Asia.

Session 2: Evolving Political and Security Dynamics in the West Asian Region.

Session 3: India-Israel Bilateral Relations: Challenges and Opportunities.

The dialogue will address the following critical questions during the day.

- (a) What are the major trends in the global strategic environment and their implications for the region?
- (b) How are the major global powers like The United States, Russia and China responding to the new challenges in West and South Asian region?
- (c) How is the situation in Afghanistan likely to impact the overall security situation in the region?
- (d) How is Central Asia likely to be impacted by developments in the region?
- (e) How is India's energy security being impacted by the ongoing developments in West Asian region?
- (f) What are the trends in the evolving political and security situation in West Asian region? How does it impact India and Israel?
- (g) What is the likely impact of ongoing talks on Iran nuclear issue on the region as also India and Israel?
- (h) As India and Israel look to enhance their bilateral ties, what are the challenges and opportunities which need to be addressed for a better and enhanced relationship in coming decade?