

West Asia Monitor

Volume I, Issue IX – May 2015

CONTENTS

SPECIAL FOCUS

"But What's the Alternative?" In negotiations with Iran, it means doing a better job
Emily B. Landau, Senior Research Associate, INSS, Israel

India-Iran and the Aftermath of the Nuclear Framework Agreement
Kanchi Gupta, Junior Fellow, ORF

Yemen between Tehran and Riyadh
Sikandar Azam, Research Assistant, ORF

REGIONAL OPINION

Nuclear Agreement and Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen
Khalid al-Dakhil, King Saud University, KSA

COMMENTARIES

Look again at the Middle East
C Raja Mohan, Distinguished Fellow, ORF

Saudi Arabia's royal opportunity
David Hearst, Middle East Eye

STATEMENTS

MEDIA WATCH

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"But What's the Alternative?" In negotiations with Iran, it means doing a better job

Emily B. Landau

Probably the most common response to the criticism that has been leveled at the P5+1-Iran negotiations over the past year is: "but what's the alternative?" For the Obama administration this of course is a rhetorical question – the administration believes that the critics have no real alternative, which leads them to the inevitable conclusion that these critics are opposed to any kind of negotiation, and what they really want is war.

Indeed, over the past year critics of the negotiations have been marginalized as 'hawks' and 'warmongers', and sometimes brushed aside as incompetents, lacking knowledge and analytic skills to properly assess what is going on. But surely this is not a serious response to the very serious criticism that has been voiced from many quarters, and continues to be voiced following the April 2nd development in Lausanne. In fact, this response is looking more and more like a very lame excuse for a poorly handled negotiation.

There is an alternative to the current negotiation that is neither war nor Iran racing to the bomb: doing a better job at the bargaining table. Indeed, the true answer to the question of what could be done differently goes to strategies of bargaining with a difficult and intransigent partner.

Basic bargaining skills could have engendered a more effective negotiation with Iran, not only over the past year, but since negotiations were first embraced as a strategy for dealing with Iran's violations of its safeguard agreements back in 2003.

The key factor in this particular negotiation – which is a game of compellence for the P5+1, because the goals of the two sides are incompatible – is pressure on Iran, in order to buy leverage at the negotiating table. Until 2012, leverage was in very short supply for the P5+1; only then were good and biting sanctions finally imposed on Iran, and with them the chance to gain some benefits at the negotiating table. But to have the desired effect on Iran's policy, imposing sanctions (as difficult as that has proven to be) is only the first of two essential steps. Once in place, the negotiators have to use the leverage gained thereby with acumen at the bargaining table. To bargain effectively means to communicate your resolve to the other party, while secure in the knowledge that you have something that the other party wants very much (in this case that would be sanctions relief), and that you won't give it up unless you get what you want. It requires getting the message across to the other side that even if they leave the table, you know they will come back because they cannot get sanctions relief without cooperating on a deal.

But if you are afraid to use your leverage because the other side might balk, leave the table or otherwise lash out, then you are basically squandering the effect of sanctions, and they won't help you to get what you want in the bargaining process. Using leverage effectively means dictating the terms of the negotiation to the other party – what topics will be on the table, what will under no circumstances be compromised, and where there is some room for flexibility. But if the other side says they refuse to discuss an issue that you think should be on the table, and you agree not to discuss it because "the other side won't agree to negotiate if it's there", obviously you are thereby strengthening the leverage of the *other* party, not your own. Overall, communicating to the other side that you are eager for a deal, and therefore willing to make concessions even if the other side remains intransigent, has the effect of emptying your leverage of any meaning or ability to impact the other side. By doing so you teach the other side that if they hold fast for long enough, you will lower your demands even further, because you will not give up on the negotiation.

These are the kind of mistakes that the P5+1 negotiators have been making over and over again especially since negotiations began in earnest in late 2013. The US in particular has been communicating an eagerness for a deal, and has been making more and more concessions to Iran, rather than Iran – the NPT violator – making concessions to the P5+1. When Iranian leaders have lashed out at the US and Israel, the Americans kept silent, never pushing back for fear of upsetting the delicate diplomatic initiative. When Iran's president and supreme leader have proclaimed all that Iran will not compromise on, it is not taken seriously by the US, but rather chalked up to "internal politics". Every indication of (partial) progress that is loudly celebrated by the Obama administration and proclaimed an "historic" achievement, later becomes a liability at the bargaining table because it ties the US even tighter to the diplomatic process, making it less and less likely that it will ever back down. When the US projects the sense that it will never risk losing the precious gains it made, this also empties of meaning any threat of military consequences for lack of seriousness on Iran's part, which could have

been an additional effective lever of pressure on Iran in the negotiations.

Negotiations with Iran over the nuclear issue are too important to fail because of the mistakes that are being made at the bargaining table. The arrogance of those that would advocate that every step they have taken in this negotiation is the best step that could have been taken is unwarranted. Negotiators should be cognizant enough of the gravity of the situation to take their critics with utmost seriousness and try to incorporate as many insights as possible in order to improve the results of their negotiations. A failed negotiation is in some cases reversible; nuclear capabilities are not. If Iran becomes a nuclear state down the road it will be in the first place due to Iran's intransigence; but it will also be the result of over a decade of poor negotiating by the international community. With so many experts pointing out the problems and pitfalls along the way, no one will be able to make a convincing case that "there was no alternative." There was, and there still is.

(The writer is a Senior Research Associateand Head of the Arms Control and Regional Security Program at INSS, Tel Aviv)

India-Iran and the Aftermath of the Nuclear Framework Agreeement

Kanchi Gupta

The US recently declared that India and other countries should wait for the conclusion of the final nuclear deal with Iran before actively engaging with Tehran. Even in 2014, after the interim nuclear deal with Iran was inked in November 2013, the US asked India not to increase its crude oil imports from Iran, until it was clear whether or not Iran was cooperating in the negotiations process. These requests followed repeated US suggestions that India reduce its dependence on Iranian oil in order to boost American sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme.

Thus sanctions and US pressure were significant contributing factors in the fall of India's oil imports from Iran by sixty-two percent from 2014 to 2015. Iran, India's second biggest supplier in 2010-11, has now been relegated to the sixth position. New Delhi's evolving relations with Washington have moderated its ties with Tehran over the last decade and India's deepening relations with Israel and the GCC are also likely to impact Indo-Iranian ties.

India-Iran relations were at the peak during then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visit to Tehran in 2001 and then Iranian President Khatami's visit to India in 2003, when both countries signed the Tehran Declaration and the Delhi Declaration respectively. In addition to a number of cooperative measures, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament under effective international control as well as the right to research, production and use of technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes.

India, which supports Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear technology, voted against Iran for the first time at the IAEA in September 2005. India subsequently voted against Iran in 2006, voting to refer Tehran to the UNSC and 2009 and 2011, stating that Iran failed to comply with NPT provisions. India simultaneously began negotiating a civil nuclear agreement with the US in 2004. Initialised with a series of US-India strategic partnership agreements, including frameworks of defence cooperation, the negotiations witnessed a breakthrough in March 2006 with

the conclusion of the civil nuclear agreement or the 123 agreement.

The Hyde Act, signed in 2006, which anchored the 123 agreement contained clauses mandating India's support for US policies on the Iranian nuclear issue. The India-US nuclear deal was essential to India's efforts towards securing international nuclear cooperation and acquiring civil nuclear technology and Uranium supplies from countries like France, Mongolia, Namibia, Argentina, Canada and Australia.

India welcomed the nuclear framework agreement between Iran and the P5 + 1 as a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff. As an increasingly energy dependent country, India awaits the easing of sanctions. However, a number of challenges remain to be addressed before New Delhi and Tehran give impetus to their economic ties. Under conditions of the sanctions regime, India paid for its oil imports from Iran in rupees, which were used by Iran to purchase agricultural products and medicines from India.

While this system boosted Indian exports to Iran, it is insufficient for meeting payments necessary to maintain the current levels of oil imports. India currently owes Iran around USD 8.8 billion. While the rupee system helped India cut down on its current account deficit by containing the outflow of dollars, the depreciating value of the rupee and progress in nuclear negotiations has led Iran to reject full rupee payment for oil imports. In October 2014, Iran stated that while forty-five per cent of the payment can be made in rupees, the remaining fifty-five per cent must be paid through Euros.

As the deal goes through, Iran may withdraw other incentives like tanker services and insurance for shipments that it offered to remain competitive under sanctions. Moreover, as payment channels to Tehran are expected to normalise with the nuclear deal, India's exports of agricultural products to Iran are also likely to suffer with rival suppliers entering the market.

India's others projects with Iran, including the USD 22 billion agreement for the export of LNG and the USD 7 billion Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project have been in limbo for almost a decade. While sanctions have prevented India from building the LNG plant in Iran, pricing issues with Iran and pressure from Washington have elevated the importance of the US as a natural gas supplier to India. Similarly, the IPI has suffered significantly as international pressure, pricing issues and security concerns about the pipeline passing through Pakistan have prevented the conclusion of a final agreement.

Iran was also a major importer of Indian refined products but some leading Indian suppliers halted sales to Iran in 2009 fearing suspension of loan guarantees from the US Export-Import Bank. Thus, while easing of international sanctions will benefit trade ties between India and Iran, both countries need to cross some hurdles in order revive energy relations substantially.

One of the main turning points in India-Iran relations could be the development of the port of Chabahar. In October 2014, the Indian cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a decision to support the Iranian Chabahar port project with a commitment of USD 85 million to develop the port. This is in addition to the USD 100 million worth of investment India sanctioned in May 2013. For both Iran and India, Chabahar offsets Pakistan's port of Gwadar as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Their concerns about Gwadar intensified after Pakistan

handed over operation control of the port to China in February 2013.

Progress on the port, however, has been slow because, in addition to delays from the Iranian side, Tehran believes India's investment and role in the development of the port has not been sufficient. Moreover, China can surpass India's investment in Chabahar. Beijing already offered Euros 60 million to Tehran for upgrading the port in July 2013. Easing of the sanctions regime could bring in bigger players for investing in the development of the port.

India' deepening engagement with the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as Israel could also moderate New Delhi's diplomatic ties with Tehran. The Modi government's high level political engagements with UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Israel have been complemented by stronger partnerships in energy, trade and investment, as well as counter-terrorism. Over the last decade, India has institutionalised security partnerships with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain and has emerged as the biggest purchaser of Israeli defence equipment. Simultaneously, Iran has not featured in New Delhi's diplomatic calendar with the last high-level engagement being Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's visit to New Delhi in February 2014. Thus, as the West Asia region undergoes political turmoil and deep polarisations, India's relations with Iran may not see any spectacular developments.

(The writer is a Junior Fellow at ORF)

Yemen between Tehran and Riyadh

Sikandar Azam

It seems that there is no immediate solution to the Yemeni crisis posed by Houthis. Despite month long airstrikes where the coalition has targeted Houthis' strategic positions and arms, it failed to achieve a major breakthrough on the ground against the rebel group. Instead, heavy clashes between the Houthis and pro-government forces in Aden and al-Dhale'a complicated the life of common people in the country. In a fresh clash at Saudi Arabia's border with the Najran province, Iranian-backed militias targeted observation posts and claimed lives of three Saudi solders.

Furthermore, statements by the Iranian as well as Saudi officials elucidate that this war is escalating within and beyond Yemen, at least, via media between Tehran and Riyadh. In a statement, Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, Chief of Staff of the Iranian armed force, slammed Riyadh, saying that Saudi Arabia "deserves a harsh punishment" for perpetrating serious crimes against the oppressed Yemeni nation.

Riyadh and Tehran, the two major blocs representing Sunni and Shia Islam respectively in the region, have been on opposite sides for decades. Now both regional powers are struggling to ramp up their influence and achieve their desired goals in Yemen.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia-led coalition launched "Operation Decisive Storm" in late March 2015 without any United Nation's mandate, to halt the swift advance of the Houthis in southern Yemen. Saudi officials argued that the operation was necessary to restore security and stability in the country. They emphasised that this will create a suitable environment for Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi to return in the country who is currently in exile in Riyadh. Moreover, officials claimed that Saudi Arabia wanted to protect the Bab al-Mandeb – strategically an important sea passage for the Gulf to transport oil. According to an estimate, approximately 20,000 ships pass every year through this important sea lane. Riyadh felt that Houthis'

control of the Bab al-Mandeb strait would pose a severe threat to global security.

However, Khalid al-Dakhil, professor of King Saud University, KSA, says that this initiative by Saudi Arabia was a message to Tehran that the Iranian influence would not go unchallenged. The Arab Gulf States do not want to see another neighbour state falling under Iranian influence after Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Meanwhile, for Tehran the aerial strike by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition on Houthis in Yemen was unreasonable.

Amid these contrasting views, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif submitted a "four-point Yemen peace plan" to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in mid-March. But Saudi Arabia rejected Tehran's proposal, saying that "Iran should not interfere in the conflict." Similarly, Rajeh Badi, spokesperson of the Yemeni government also rejected Tehran's peace plan saying that "the goal of the initiative is only a political manoeuvre."

On 21 April, in major development, Saudi Arabia declared that the air campaign was over. The official spokesperson of the coalition, Brigadier-General Ahmed al-Asiri, briefing media persons, said that Saudi Arabia has "achieved military goals in Yemen". General al-Asiri also stated that now a new operation "renewal of hope" would be initiated to protect civilians and combat terrorism.

But few hours later Saudi war planes came in action and resumed air raids against the Houthis after the rebel group took a military base in the city of Taiz. This move by the Houthis demonstrates that the strategy adopted by the coalition is not enough to halt the Houthis move in the country.

Yemen's geographic complexity, experiences of the war of 1960s and the Houthis' grip in the country with Iran's allegedly support make this war complicated for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Given these complexities, it is unlikely that Saudi Arabia will send ground troops in Yemen.

In the mean time, as the war enters the seventh week, Yemenis are facing severe crisis, including shortage of basic needs. Despite Saudi Arabia's USD 274 million aid, promised in response to the United Nations' appeal, the situation has hardly improved. People are facing shortage of water, fuel and electricity. Latest reports suggest that the death toll is gradually rising. According to a report issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), more than 551 people have been killed and 1185 wounded in the operation.

The precarious security condition in the country, caused by the lack of a coherent strategy by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and Iran's alleged support to the rebel groups, is worsening with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) attempts of strengthening their grip. In late April, the IS released a video purportedly claiming to establish its new branch in Yemen. Similarly in early April, Al-Qaeda attacked a prison in the coastal Yemeni city of al-Mukallah and freed 270 prisoners. These developments pose serious challenges to the security of Yemen.

Conducting airstrikes, therefore, cannot be sufficient in addressing the crisis in Yemen. It requires an inclusive political approach along with the meaningful diplomatic dialogue with all stake holders to save the country.

(The Writer is a Research Assistant at ORF)

Translated by SikandarAzam

Nuclear Agreement and Operation "Decisive Storm" in Yemen

Khalid al-Dakhil, Professor, King Saud University, KSA

There was a consensus among the Gulf States to start "Operation Decisive Storm" a few days before the announcement of the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1. The operation also indicates that Saudi Arabia and its allies took a calculated step to stop Iran from taking further proactive measure in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf and impose its influence on the countries of the region. However, the main issue of the nuclear agreement with Iran was political rather than technical for three reasons.

First, the agreement will prevent Iran from manufacturing nuclear weapons for a period of 10 to 15 years. This span of time is sufficient to allow a few Arab countries to rush to develop infrastructure for acquiring nuclear technology, not only for peaceful purposes, but also to possess the ability to manufacture a nuclear weapon, if necessary. In this regard, Arab countries could benefit from the Japanese model that is on the verge of a nuclear weapon manufacturing option, known as "a nuclear-threshold state". Of course, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states could accept this option, instead of relying on the United States. But this option is no longer available, as it was three decades earlier. In addition to that, it imposes some restrictions on the freedom of political will on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and their ability to manoeuvre outside the framework of US interests. Meanwhile, any agreement on this option requires a political decision before anything else.

Second, one of the most dangerous threats posed by Iran is the communal plan in the region, through an alliance of political minorities and the use of sectarian militias. Both (the coalition of political minorities and use of militias) constitute the main leverage for Iran to play its role in the region. The Arab world noticed it in Lebanon, before, then in Iraq and Syria. This is a serious risk if Iran is left free to apply this plan to the remaining Arab countries. However, it is very surprising that Iran being on the shores of the Arabian Gulf, the Gulf States were absent from the ambit of nuclear negotiations with Iran. Either the Gulf countries were absent voluntarily or forced to stay away from the nuclear negotiations. It indicates a political stance for the Gulf States or the United States or a combination of both. If the European Union, France, UK and Germany can participate in the negotiation, then why not the Gulf States and the Arab world participate in the nuclear negotiation with Iran, particularly Saudi Arabia?

This brings us back to the political ambition of Iran and its nuclear program. Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as two strong nations in the Middle East, did not come forward as alternatives to counter the risk of Iranian spreading its influence and undermine its destructive and sectarian nature in the region. Meanwhile, the absence of an Arab idea for political reform demonstrates the weakness of the Arab States in the region to counter the theocratic regime of Iran.

Therefore, there is a need to draft an Arab counter plan to tackle the theocratic regime of

Iran that is source of the sectarian plan. For the same reason it is also necessary that Arab States develop military and nuclear capability to counterbalance Iran. A political vision should emerge within the economic and political processes among Arab states based on ideas to develop a counter strategy. This vision should be an alternative to oppose the idea of the sectarian ideology represented by Iran. Therefore, a model with a political vision in the Arab world is necessary to minimise the chance of the Iranian model to extend its influence in the region.

Third, the vision of US President Barack Obama's nuclear deal with Iran is inseparable from this vision, as reported in the New York Times. The US President's conviction is based on three issues. First, Iran has made a breakthrough in nuclear weapons technology; therefore it can no longer be ignored. Second, there is a national consensus in Iran on the necessity of a nuclear program. Obama says that achieving technological breakthrough with a national consensus cancels a military option to stop the program. A military option in this case would only postpone Iran's possession of nuclear weapons for a limited number of years. Therefore, the US President has chosen the diplomatic option of delaying Iran's breakout capability through negotiations, rather than the military option. In the last framework agreement this postponement will be from 10 to 15 years and after that Iran will become a nuclear weapons manufacturing country. So what is the option after the expiry of the agreement? Here comes a third option and America's own military superiority and the option to re-impose sanctions.

Obama pointed out that Iranian military spending should not exceed US $30 billion while the US spending is more than $ 600 billion. However, Obama's vision involves adventure. He believes that lifting sanctions from Iran and the flow of foreign investment will lead to a fundamental change in the Iranian political system. Consequently, Iran will be more interested in democracy, economic development and welfare of its citizens rather than struggle for promoting its ideology. In other words, Obama is hoping that the nuclear deal would lead to a change in the Iranian political system from inside, not from outside as has been the US foreign policy since 2009.

The US President is venturing on an uncertain path as he says that the balance of power will give Iran the space to retreat. But Obama has not taken into account the calculations of the Arab States, especially the Gulf States. I do not think that blame for this should fall on Obama, as much as it falls on Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States. This is because Obama's agreement with Iran means that the Arabs did not provide a comprehensive vision encompassing the regional situation –unrest, disturbances, collapse of states and the Iranian role in all these developments. Obama chose to pursue his vision because he does not see an alternative to the status quo in the region, including the political behaviour of Iran.

In this case, the most important reason for the lack of agreement between Obama's visions with the Arab is a political one. The major powers want to impose it on everyone, as an alternative for the political failure on the part of the Western allies in providing an integrated and compelling vision. The most dangerous thing in Obama's vision of the agreement is not linked to the political behaviour of Iran despite acknowledging this behaviour. Obama chose to focus on the technical part of the agreement while maintaining political differences with Iran.

What is the Arab vision of this agreement as against the American vision? The fact is that there is no clear Arab vision yet, not from the Arab League or any individual Arab country from the region.

The existence of political and economic vision of a state is one of the major elements of balancing power between states along with the military capability. If Obama chose to reach a technical agreement with Iran but maintain political differences, it leaves enough space for the Arab States to make their move, especially for Saudi Arabia.

The agreement gives an opportunity to take the advantage of this space. Gulf States can no longer rely on the US. Relying on the US for security has kept Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States outside the balance of power system in the region, especially after the collapse of the Iraqi and Syrian regimes. Now Saudi Arabia no longer wants to stay out of this equation. In this particular context "Operation Decisive Storm" began before the conclusion of the nuclear deal, to prevent Iran from extending its influence in the Arabian Peninsula. The fact that Saudi Arabia which is leading the coalition in Yemen is known to be calm and not inclined to rush into such decisions. This indicates that the agreement posed a major challenge for Riyadh. Saudi Arabia would not accept extension of Iranian influence in neighbour Yemen, as Iran did earlier in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

However, Saudi Arabia's position has surprised Iran and probably clarified Riyadh's position. It is also because Saudi Arabia is now convinced that its policy of staying outside the regional balance of power has run its course and its national interests requiring entering in this balance of power equation directly. This means that the Saudi approach to its national security and the Gulf will be different and separate from what was its vision before. Then there is the question about what is the vision of Saudi Arabia? Operation Decisive Storm may not be a right choice for the Gulf, but it is a right choice for the Arab world. War was necessary, because leaving the Houthis to complete their coup means permitting another Iranian role in other Arab countries. However, the military option is not enough in Yemen. Instead there should be a political settlement as an alternative to counter Iranian influence.

Source: *Al-Hayat*, 12 April, 2015

COMMENTARIES

Saudi Arabia's royal opportunity

David Hearst, Editor-in-chief, Middle East Eye.

When the late King Abdullah appointed his half-brother, Moqren bin Abdul Aziz, as deputy crown prince last year, he added an unusual rider. The decree stated: "Nobody can change this decision". Well, his successor King Salman just has.

I wrote at the time of the decree: "There is nothing to stop Salman going to the Bay'ah either collectively or individually and reversing the decree in the event of the King's resignation, death or incapacitation." This is what happened in an early dawn decree on Wednesday.

This cabinet reshuffle proves beyond doubt that all power still resides in the king, and that one king can override the legacy of his predecessor. Institutional mechanisms like

the Allegiance Council are but straws in the prevailing wind.

Salman has cleared out all but one of the last remaining supporters of the old regime, and completed the succession from one generation to another. Moqren was not a powerful figure in his own right. He was placed there by Abdullah to keep the seat warm for his son Prince Meteb, who remains head of the National Guard and a minister.

How much longer, we will see. Some sources say that Salman is now seriously considering abolishing the National Guard ministry, which Abdullah latterly established. This would bring it back into the fold of the defence ministry - which of course is headed by Salman's son Mohammed.

Moqren was used as a link man to Sisi's regime in Egypt. Moqren represented Saudi Arabia at the international donor conference in Sharm El Sheikh, not Salman. And when the Egyptian leader wanted to apologise to his Saudi paymasters about the contents of the leaked tapes, in which Sisi himself said: "Man, they [the Saudis] have money like rice," the Egyptian ambassador to Saudi Arabia was seen by Moqren first, before Sisi himself hit the phones.

Saud bin Faisal's exit as foreign minister on Wednesday, was, I understand, planned a long time ago. Bin Faisal, the world's longest serving foreign minister, had run out of road, and even 40 years experience as a time server could not keep him on it. Even he found it difficult to smoothe over the contradictions of serving Abdullah and his successor Salman. Under Abdullah, he led diplomatic efforts to besiege Qatar. Under Salman, he appeared relaxed about the Muslim Brotherhood, and even had a public row with the Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi over Putin's support for Syria. You can't be an advocate for both policies.

His replacement by the former Washington ambassador Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, who is close to the US administration and is considered a liberal, is a sign of Salman's foreign policy orientation: whatever else, Salman wants to keep America close. Al-Jubeir is the first foreign minister appointed from outside the ranks of the House of Saud.

Salman completed his clear out of Abdullah's people through a whole series of ministerial changes. Few traces of the old regime are left.

Who then are the winners and who are the losers? These changes will be music to the ears of Turkey and Qatar, with whom Mohammed bin Nayef - now next in line to the throne - has close relations. If that is the case, the main losers are the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

We already know that relations between Mohammed bin Nayef and Mohammed bin Zayef, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and de facto Emirati ruler are fraught. Bin Zayef has visited Riyadh three times since Salman came to power in January, and only met the king himself once. The chief reason for their fallout is the current Saudi war in Yemen, where bin Zayed is still backing the forces of the ousted strongman, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and still hosting his son Ahmed Ali in Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia is now bombing forces loyal to the Salehs.

The other big loser is Egypt, who has lost both Moqren and bin Faisal, both link pins of Cairo's relationship with Riyadh.

For the kingdom itself, the succession is now complete. The two men running the country and its wars are Mohammed bin Nayef, the new crown prince, and Salman's young son,

Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Hidden among the young prince's plethora of portfolios (he is defence minister, head of the court, head of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs) one factor is more important than all the others.

The two Mohammeds are cousins, but Salman's son is very respectful of bin Nayef. It goes back to the close links bin Nayef's father had with Salman himself. In fact, Mohammed bin Salman goes out of his way to show his respect for bin Nayef, and recently kissed his hand in public. But Mohammed bin Salman has one advantage over his elder cousin, which is that bin Nayef does not have a son. The line of succession, which is so important in these decrees, therefore will be carried on through Salman's own son, and not through bin Nayef. In this sense what happened on Wednesday will have implications for decades to come.

The big question is what Salman will do with the power he now wields. Regionally the kingdom is now fully committed to a contest for power and influence with Iran.

In Yemen, Iraq and Syria, to the south and north of its borders, Saudi Arabia is attempting to show Iran, that there is no more vacuum in the region for them to fill. The outcome of this giant contest is yet to be decided. It may presage a further decade of proxy conflict, which could be at least as bloody as Iraq's war with Iran, bleeding the wealth of both countries.

Or Iran and Saudi Arabia, could reach an accommodation and be the joint architects of a regional peace. Both now have a common ally in Turkey, with whom Iranian trade continues to flourish. But the dimensions of this conflict and its significance can no more be in doubt. Nor can Saudi Arabia's resolve to be a military power on the frontline itself.

Saudi Arabia has long since stopped paying others to do its dirty work. It has become a frontline fighting power in both Yemen and Syria - providing arms and logistics and doing the fighting itself - and the effects are being felt. In Syria, the change in Saudi tactics and its co-ordination with Turkey and Qatar and the groups they fund, are already being felt in the advances of rebel forces against Bashar's forces in Idlib.

This is a sea change from just three months ago when Bashar's forces were advancing and Aleppo was about to fall. Now, for the first time, three powerful rebel groups, none of them angels, Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, and Jaish al Islam, have stopped fighting each other and are co-ordinating their actions. One Iranian commentator, Amir Mousawi, has even suggested that Bashar should move his capital to Tartus, the Alawite stronghold. But in Syria, the so-called Salman doctrine is taking effect.

Mohammed bin Salman's air campaign in Yemen can still go either way. The bombing is now more against Yemeni military targets loyal to the ousted dictator, Ali Abdullah Saleh, than it is against the Houthis. Both are on a revenge mission. For the Houthis, this is payback time for six wars with the government that have devastated their northern homeland. Even though Saleh mounted the wars against the Houthis, he too wants to bring Yemen to its knees, if he cannot have his way by installing his son as president. Saleh appears to have lost all political reason, and according to those still in contact with him, wants to bring the house he built down on himself. While the Saudi campaign is supported in the south, the Houthis are installed in Sanaa, and there

appears to be no-one ready for the moment to fight them there.

The key challenge for the Saudis is to decide on a leader who can unite anti-Houthi and anti-Saleh forces and lead the military campaign on the ground in Yemen. The Muslim Brotherhood linked Islah movement will not fight with all their might until they feel they have a clear mandate to do so, and know which direction Riyadh is heading.

The larger challenge facing Salman is how he will use the absolute power he now has, and whether he will take advantage of a younger leadership to institute real democratic change. The kingdom desperately needs more transparency in its decisions, a bigger distribution of wealth, and to include more groups in the decision making process. The late King Abdullah's one achievement was to send tens of thousands of bright young students abroad for their higher education. They are back now. Can the kingdom absorb what they have learned? Salman's legacy will hinge on the answer.

Source: *Middle East Eye*, 29 April, 2015

Look again at the Middle East

C Raja Mohan, Distinguished Fellow, ORF, New Delhi

India has every reason to hope for a positive outcome in the ongoing talks at Lausanne, Switzerland between Iran and the major powers to resolve their longstanding nuclear dispute. Although the negotiators have missed the self-set deadline of March 31, they are said to be closer than ever before to concluding a broad set of understandings on limiting Iran's ability to manufacture nuclear weapons, in return for the lifting of international sanctions against Tehran mounted over the last decade and more.

US President Barack Obama and his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, deserve strong support from New Delhi for their persistence with the negotiations amid strong political opposition in both countries. The agreement is an important step towards ending the prolonged confrontation between Iran and the West and it could transform the geopolitics of the Middle East, opening up considerable diplomatic space for India.

While Iran had loomed large in India's considerations on energy security, Afghanistan and the engagement with Central Asia, the escalating conflict between America and Iran severely constrained Delhi's freedom of action beyond India's north-western frontiers. As the US ends its combat role in Afghanistan, strategic cooperation with Iran has become absolutely critical for securing India's interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The further decline in oil prices that is likely to follow the agreement will be a huge financial boon for India, which imports most of its hydrocarbons. Some are speculating that oil could hit as low as $20 a barrel once the West eases sanctions on Iran's petroleum sector and Tehran ramps up production in the coming months and years.

Above all, the nuclear deal between Iran and the US is a vindication of Delhi's diplomatic pragmatism that unfolded since India conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. While three successive prime ministers — Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi — sought an accommodation with the global nuclear order, ideologues on the left and right in Delhi denounced India's atomic engagement with America.

A series of Indian votes at the International Atomic Energy Agency a decade ago, in favour of the international community and against Iran, came under extra fire. Many in Delhi demanded that India stand by Iran rather than secure an end to its own nuclear isolation.

Delhi would have looked utterly stupid today if it had abandoned the civil nuclear initiative with the US in the name of "third-world solidarity". That Tehran, despite its many problems with America, would eventually make a deal of its own with Washington was recognised by realists in Delhi's foreign policy establishment.

In assessing the prospective nuclear deal between Iran and the US, it will be quite easy to get lost in the debate over technical issues that will dominate the international discourse. To be sure, there are many technical questions relating to a range of issues — including the future of Iran's uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing programmes, the extent of permissible research and development for peaceful purposes, the rigour of international inspections and the pace of removing sanctions. These questions have been at the heart of the talks between Washington and Tehran since they announced an interim nuclear agreement at the end of 2013, under which Iran suspended its enrichment programme and the US eased some sanctions. Many of these will need to be sorted out before the final agreement is worked out by June 30 this year.

Yet, the motivations for the negotiations and the consequences arising from the nuclear deal are deeply political. Although both the US and Iran have insisted that the talks are limited to the nuclear issue, their goal is to seek a normalisation of bilateral relations.

Delhi should also not be taken in by the veneer of multilateralism that surrounds the talks in Lausanne. Although the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany (the P5+1) are conducting the talks with Iran, this is really about hard bilateral bargaining between Washington and Tehran. In the last few months, some major powers like France have been complaining that Washington and Tehran tend to present decisions already taken at the bilateral level for approval in the multilateral context.

Although there is strong support from the public opinion in both countries for resolving the nuclear dispute and rebuilding bilateral ties, there is powerful political resistance in Washington and Tehran to a nuclear accommodation. In Washington, the Republicans, friends of Israel, supporters of the conservative Arab states and the non-proliferation purists will oppose any deal with Iran. Similarly, in Tehran, those chanting "death to America" for more than three decades will find it difficult to stomach the prospect of a positive engagement with the US. Yet, there has been a convergence of interests between Washington and Tehran over the last decade — for example, in ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein from Iraq. Today, they are on the same side in fighting the Islamic State in Iraq. But many contentions between the two remain. And some of those will survive a nuclear deal.

Progress on the nuclear issue and improved ties with Iran will significantly expand America's options in the Greater Middle East. After two debilitating wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama is trying to develop a more realistic American approach to the region. For Iran as a nation, the extended confrontation with America has been very

costly. Any political détente between the two will set the stage for a comprehensive reordering of the regional balance of power.

For its part, Delhi must gear up to deal with a region that has not got high-level Indian political attention in recent years. As it looks forward to new opportunities in Iran, Delhi must also reach out to its Arab neighbours, some of whom are deeply concerned about the consequences of a US-Iran rapprochement. To secure its massive political and economic stakes in the Middle East, Delhi needs to take a fresh strategic look at the region, discard many of its outdated political assumptions and initiate a sustained political engagement with all the major actors.

Source: *The Indian Express*, 2 April, 2015

STATEMENTS

Shri. Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), MEA, at the Inaugural Session of the Second ORF-MEA West Asia Conference, "Transformations in West Asia: Regional Perspectives" at ORF, New Delhi, 27 and 28 April 2015

India shares deep historical, cultural and civilisation links with the Arab world. The shared belief in anti-colonialism together with the staunch commitment to achieve, preserve and enhance international peace and security through dialogue and consultation forms the basic framework of our cooperation. For India, West Asia is part of our extended neighbourhood. Continued peace and stability in the region is in our strategic interest.

To cite few examples to highlight our deep engagement with the West Asia, the region is home to more than 7 million Indians, who contribute around US$ 40 billion in remittances annually. Our economic and commercial engagement with the region is around US$ 186 billion per annum (2013-14), making it the largest trading regional block. The region is a source for more than 60 per cent of our oil and gas requirement, critical for our energy security. The Maghreb region is a major source of phosphatic and other fertilizers, a significant factor in our food security. The sizable Sovereign Wealth Funds of Gulf countries can offer significant platform for operations of Indian companies, particularly in infrastructure, important for our socio-economic development and 'Make in India' initiative. There is an increased air connectivity and tourism prospects between the two sides (e.g. 700 flights a week between India and UAE). India has also been participating in important UN Peace Keeping Missions in the region especially in Lebanon, Syria and South Sudan.

The West Asia region, post-'Arab Spring,' is in a state of flux and uncertainty, which heightens the difficulty in fully assessing the overall impact of unfolding events. After over four years of 'Arab Spring,' the earlier exaggerated expectations of progress towards democracy have turned out to be misplaced. On the whole, 'Arab Spring' has exacerbated the regional fault lines, heightened regional rivalries with competing ideologies and skewed the regional balance of power. The surge of Islamic State (IS), gaining control over large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, is threatening to jolt the geo-political

paradigm. The Iran nuclear issue has further compounded the crisis. Recent flare-up of fighting in Yemen and on-going civil war in Syria and Libya only highlights the complexity and severity of the crisis. Militia infighting in Libya has seen Islamists pitted against tribal and pro-democracy rebel groups, thus threatening wider regional stability. There are a large number of foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq from around 83 countries. The easy mobility of extremists and rising number of foreign jihadis in the region has increased fears of the possibility of the spread of radicalism in the home countries of foreign fighters.

India's policy in the region remains guided by our traditional long-standing ties with the region and is non-prescriptive and non-judgmental. So far, despite the challenges, our bilateral relations with virtually all countries of the region have been progressing structurally and we have managed to insulate our core interests from the negative fall-out of regional developments. India acknowledges that the political future discourse taking into account popular aspirations in the countries has to be determined from within and without any external interference or influence. While India is not in the business of exporting democracy, promotion of democratic ideals may be in alignment with India's belief in these principles.

As far as policy options for India are concerned, we fully acknowledge that the complex challenges of the region require a multi- thronged approach and hence our efforts to outreach to a whole cross-section of society, including think tanks like ORF, universities, academics and media towards a consolidated policy formulation. I will now delve into some key elements of our policy options:

(i) It needs to be understood that "old order neutrality" is not absence of decision-making or political passivity. India has been asked to play more active role in the Middle East but we need to assess this based on our strategic leverages and realistic consideration of our strengths and limitations. We would not wish to create parallel mechanisms that will affect our bilateral relations.

(ii) India remains cautious that our approach towards the region should not be misconstrued as being partisan or sectarian, as India has stayed out of any regional alliances based on sectarian or other similar considerations. We need to be sensitive to the perceptions of our own religious and ethnic mix in the population. At the same time, given the sectarian volatility in the region, we should remain prepared for any fundamental/sectarian backlash coming from the region.

(iii) India needs to strengthen high-level G2G contacts with all the countries in West Asia keeping in view our larger diaspora, energy and security interests in the region. There have been high-level state/official visits from some key regional countries over the last two years, including that of President of Egypt (March 2013); Prime Ministers of Iraq (August 2013) and Kuwait (November 2013); King of Bahrain (February 2014), Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia (February 2014) and Emir of Qatar (March 2015). Our External Affairs Ministers have visited some key countries in the region, including Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan. Foreign Ministers of Oman, Bahrain, UAE and Egypt have visited India. This regular exchange of high-level visits has further cemented our bilateral relationships.

(iv) The Government is committed to protect the interests of Indian expatriates in the Gulf

countries. These steps include, inter alia, working closely with the local authorities and employers, putting in place requisite institutional bilateral mechanisms, community outreach, initiation of Indian Community Welfare Funds and rendering regular consular assistance. We have made concerted efforts to enter into bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with all the major destination countries to enlist the commitment of the host governments to ensure better protection and welfare of Indian emigrants. There are MoUs with UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. An agreement on labour cooperation for domestic workers recruitment was signed with Saudi Arabia in January 2014.

(v) On Yemen, India has urged all concerned parties in the conflict to resolve their differences amicably and abide by the relevant UN resolution, the terms of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. India remains strongly committed to a stable, peaceful and democratic Yemen, which is in the interest of global and regional peace and security. India has successfully carried out the evacuation exercise for 4,741 Indian nationals as well as 1,947 foreign nationals from 48 countries through 'Operation Rahat' which I was personally associated with over two weeks.

(vi) On Egypt, we have noted that the situation is slowly stabilizing. We are encouraged at the progress in the implementation of political transitional roadmap with the adoption of new Constitution and conduct of Presidential elections. The holding up of Parliamentary elections at an early date will be important.

(vii) On Syria, India supports a UN-backed, Syrian-led comprehensive political settlement taking into account the aspirations of the Syrian people. We firmly believe that there can be no military solution to the crisis. India participated in Geneva-II and has contributed financially towards humanitarian assistance and destruction of chemical weapons.

(viii) On Israel-Palestine, there is no change in India's policy of extending strong support to the Palestinian cause, while maintaining good relations with Israel. India supports a comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue, leading to a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet Roadmap and relevant UNSC Resolutions. We have called on both sides to resume the stalled peace process. On Israel-Gaza conflict of last summer, India expressed deep concern at the loss of large number of civilian lives in Gaza. India pledged US$ 4 million at the Cairo International Conference on Gaza Reconstruction in October 2014. Apart from strong political support to the Palestinian cause at international, regional and bilateral levels, India has been contributing budgetary, economic and developmental assistance to Palestine.

(ix) On Iraq, the ISIS take-over of large swathes of northern Iraq and creation of territorial contiguity with north-eastern Syria has serious ramifications for the region, with heightened extremist and sectarian overtones. We have expressed our firm support to Iraq in its fight against international terrorism and efforts to preserve its unity and territorial integrity. We are hopeful that an inclusive political arrangement will help easing the conflict. In view of the security situation, the government has assisted over 7,000 Indians in returning from Iraq. However, the safety of the 39 Indian nationals in captivity in Mosul

remains a matter of foremost concern, and the government is making all efforts for their release.

(x) Libya, in post-revolution period, is witnessing extreme divisive tendencies shrouded in tribalism, religious fanaticism, regionalism and more recently, extreme forms of militia violence. The intensified militia warfare and in-fighting in Libya ongoing since July 2014 is of grave concern to us. The government initiated a detailed assistance plan for the safe exit of the Indian nationals trapped in the conflict. So far, of the 6,500 Indians at the time of the commencement of the conflict, around 3,500 have been evacuated. The remaining Indians, despite persistent Embassy Advisories, have refused to leave for economic reasons.

(xi) As for the external players, India believes that US, despite its pivot towards Asia-Pacific region, remains an important player for regional stability (i.e. fight against IS, security of Israel, Iran nuclear talks). Other countries have attempted to re-engage and may have gained in appeal as a counterweight to the West in the region. However, there is question on their economic capability and sustainability. Some of these countries may be making a strong economic and military thrust in the region, including for consolidation of oil interests. But their readiness for a strong political role in the region remains to be seen.

(xii) On the Iran nuclear talks, India has welcomed the understanding announced in Lausanne between Iran and E3+3 on the nuclear issue. India has always maintained that the Iranian nuclear issue should be resolved peacefully by respecting Iran's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as also the international community's strong interest in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

(xiii) On IS, India believes that the only solution to this threat can be through a larger political approach requiring a consolidated, rather than fragmented perspective, including intelligence sharing; counter-terrorism; cyber-space cooperation for containment of outbound flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria; developing a legal framework for fighting terrorism at national and international level (including early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism); tracking of financial flows; and humanitarian assistance. So far, the efforts of IS to gain recruits from India has met with limited success largely owing to our own pluralist society and inclusive democratic experience. There are reported to be a small number of Indian jihadi fighters in Iraqi-Syrian war zones, but the Government is taking measures to control this through immigration controls, intelligence sharing, and liaison with state Governments.

(xiv) In view of the situation in the region, new areas of defence and security cooperation have emerged which includes counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, piracy, money laundering, small arms smuggling, financing terror activities, etc. Specific measures for strengthening institutional security mechanisms can include: greater naval presence in the region; regular participation in Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) meetings; stronger regional cooperation through naval assets in the Strait of Hormuz for protection of maritime trade.

(xv) India believes that political instability can be offset through greater economic engagement with the region. While India's regional trade volumes have increased, considerable untapped potential remains.

(xvi) The Indian diaspora in the region has become the most preferred work force due to their hard working nature and sense of dedication and commitment. Their contribution in the development of their host countries has earned tremendous goodwill for India. It has also helped in furthering our bilateral relations with these countries.

(xvii) We will continue our efforts to further our mutually beneficial political, economic and security ties with North African countries including Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Sudan. New economic cooperation areas are pharmaceuticals, automobiles, infrastructure, power and renewable energy.

(xviii) We shall continue our cooperation with Somalia on anti-piracy and hostage issue. Importantly, the last of the remaining 7 Indian seafarers in captivity in Somalia were released in October 2014, after four years in captivity.

(xix) We have laid out a strong foundation for our relationship collectively with the Arab League, through the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation and an Executive Programme in December 2013, covering the fields of political consultations, trade and investments, media and culture.

7. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that India attaches high priority to its political, economic, and security relations with the countries of the West Asia region. I remain optimistic that our bilateral relations with the countries in West Asia are poised to grow, given the enormous potential on both sides. However, the broader context in which we seek to pursue our vital interests in West Asia is fraught and unpredictable making our task so much more challenging and daunting.

8. I look forward to hearing from the learned speakers on this pertinent topic and gain new insights on regional perspective.

Source: *Ministry of External Affairs*, 27, April, 2015

MEDIA WATCH

India may engage with US for pursuing port deal with Iran; Gadkari to visit Iran shortly

The long-drawn India-Iran deal on the Chabahar port could soon take shape through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two nations.

Source:*Business Standard*, 25 April, 2015

Indian Embassy in Yemen shifted to Djibouti

In view of the worsening situation in Yemen's capital Sana'a, India has shifted its embassy to Djibouti, after the successful conclusion of the process to evacuate its nationals.

Source:*The Hindu*, 20 April, 2015

60,000 Indians could benefit from Oman's amnesty

Around 60,000 Indians may benefit from an amnesty scheme announced in Oman, under which people without valid documents could either return to their country without being penalized or can rectify their papers, said a diaspora expert.

Source:*The Times of India*, 29 April, 2015

US official warns against rushing into agreements with Iran

India has offered to help get the Bashar al-Assad regime and rebels in the Syrian civil war to the talking table, a senior US diplomat suggested, as an example of the growing coordination between Delhi and Washington in troubled West Asia.

Source:*The Telegraph*, 29 April, 2015

Egypt's Morsi sentenced to 20 years in jail

A Cairo court has sentenced former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and 12 other defendants to 20 years in prison.

Source: *Aljazeera*, 21 April, 2015

Yemen to request membership of Gulf Cooperation Council

Yemen's government is to request membership of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) the powerful grouping of Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies, a spokesman for the country's president, has said.

Source: *Aljazeera*, 29 April, 2015

Young Saudi royals rise as Kingdom tries to assert regional leadership

The Saudi monarchy's overhaul of its aging leadership moves a younger generation of royals into position to reinvigorate the country at a time when it is trying to assert political and military leadership in the Middle East and reshape ties with the West.

Source:*The Wall Street Journal*, 29 April, 2015

Yemen evacuation operation was a 'resounding success': Sushma Swaraj

The operation to evacuate people from war-torn Yemen was a "resounding success" which was acknowledged by the world community. 1,947 nationals of 48 countries besides 4,741 Indians were rescued safely.

Source:*DNA*, 27 April, 2015

ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi dead: Radio Iran

The enigmatic chief of Islamic State jihadist group Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is dead, Radio Iran has reported.

Source:*The Times of India*, 27 April, 2015

Iraqi parliament rejects US bill to "split Iraq"

Iraq's parliament has rejected a proposal by the US Congress to bypass the Baghdad government and directly arm Sunni and Kurdish groups in the fight against the ISIS, with Iraq's Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi labeling the initiative a bid to "split Iraq."

Source:*Asharq al-Awsat*, 3 May, 2015

Afghan President blames ISIS for bombing

The Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, blamed the Islamic State for a suicide bombing that killed 35 civilians. If responsibility is confirmed, it will suggest a major escalation of the group's activities in Afghanistan.

Source:*The New York Times*, 18 April, 2015

China to build pipeline from Iran to Pakistan

China will build a pipeline to bring natural gas from Iran to Pakistan to help address Pakistan's acute energy shortage, Pakistani officials said.

Source:*The Wall Street Journal*, 9 April, 2015

U.S. allies in Middle East ramping up support for rebel forces in Syria

U.S. allies in the Middle East have ramped up their support for rebels fighting against Syrian forces in recent months, potentially widening a gulf over strategy between the Obama administration and its regional partners.

Source:*The Washington Post*, 29 April, 2015

Senior Iran cmdr. rules out military sites inspection under nuclear deal

A high-ranking Iranian military commander says Tehran will never allow the inspection of its military sites as part of a possible nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries.

Source*: Press TV*, 10 April, 2015

Iran, Pakistan discuss Saudi war on Yemen, terrorism

Iran and Pakistan have exchanged views about the latest regional developments, particularly Saudi Arabia's ongoing brutal military aggression against Yemen and the threat of the ISIL terrorists to regional countries.

Source:*Press TV*, 10 April, 2015

Saudi Arabia rejects Iran's call to end Yemen raids

Saudi Arabia has rejected calls by Iran to halt air strikes on neighbouring Yemen, saying Tehran should not interfere in the conflict.

Source: *Aljazeera*, 12 April, 2015

Tensions flare between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in U.S. coalition

A remarkable clash between two key American allies in the Middle East burst into the open as the Iraqi prime minister publicly criticized the Saudi air campaign in Yemen and a top Saudi official retorted that there was "no logic to those remarks."

Source:*The New York Times*, 15 April, 2015

War in Yemen is allowing al-Qaeda group to expand

Al Qaeda's branch in Yemen took control of a major airport and an oil export terminal in the southern part of the country, expanding its reach just two weeks after it seized the nearby city of Al Mukalla and emptied its bank and prison.

Source: *The New York Times*, 16 April, 2015

Egypt destroys 69 entry points to Sinai tunnels

The Egyptian army said that it had destroyed 69 entry points to underground tunnels in the Sinai Peninsula on the border with the Gaza Strip.

Source: *Al-Bawaba News*, 19 April, 2015

Obama downplays Russia weapons system sale to Iran

President Barack Obama downplayed the significance of Russia's recent announcement that it would sell a missile-defense system to Iran.

Source: *CNN*, 17 April, 2015

Egypt's Sisi affirms no ground troops in Yemen

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi on Friday implied that Egypt has not sent ground troops to fight in an ongoing Saudi-led military offensive against Yemen's Houthi militant group.

Source:*Middle East Eye*, 17 April, 2015

Arab military chiefs discuss joint force

Military leaders of Arab States met in the Egyptian capital to discuss the creation of a joint force to deal with regional crises and combat terrorism.

Source: *Arab News*, 22 April, 2015

Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian Deputy FMs meet in Tehran

Deputy foreign ministers of Iran, Iraq and Syria held a trilateral meeting in Tehran to discuss the latest developments Yemen and called for the resumption of national dialogue among all sides in Yemen.

Source: *Tasnim News Agency*, 22 April, 2015

IS kills five journalists working for Libyan TV station

IS militants have slit the throats of five journalists working for a Libyan TV station in the eastern part of the country, an army commander said.

Source: *Reuters*, 27 April, 2015

Islamist fighters seize Syria's Jisr al-Shughour

Islamist insurgents including al-Qaeda's wing in Syria, Nusra Front, captured the north-western Syrian town of Jisr al-Shughour.

Source:*Reuters*, 25 April, 2015

IDF foils attempted terror attack in Golan, near Syria border

An IAF aircraft struck a militant cell that was trying to place an explosive device on Israel's border with Syria.

Source:*Haaretz*, 27 April, 2015

Iran leads call for Israel to give up nuclear weapons

Iran led calls by non-aligned nations for Israel to give up its nuclear weapons as a major conference got underway on advancing prospects for a nuclear-free world.

Source:*Outlook*, 27 April, 2015

Iran summons Saudi diplomat over plane interception

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the Saudi charge d'affaires to protest Riyadh's interception of two Iranian planes carrying humanitarian aid to Yemen.

Source:*Tehran Times*, 26 April, 2015

UN invites Syrian parties to peace talks in Geneva in May

United Nations Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura has invited Syria's government and opposition groups for separate talks in Geneva next month in the latest bid to end the four-year-old civil war, a U.N. spokesman said.

Source: *The Daily Star*, 24 April, 2015

Biden, seeking to ease U.S.-Israel strains, pledges delivery of new warplanes

Seeking to ease U.S.-Israeli tensions, Vice President Biden promised Israel delivery of top-flight fighter jets next year to maintain its military edge and vowed that any final nuclear deal with Iran would ensure Israel's security.

Source: *Reuters*, 23 April, 2015

Iran flexible on sanctions timing in order to seal nuclear deal, Zarif suggests

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif says nuclear deal is 'once-in-a-decade'

opportunity but concedes Iran would be willing to accept 'a few weeks' before sanctions relief ends.

Source: *The Guardian*, 29 April, 2015

Iran to play 'major' role in Syria talks, says EU chief

Iran can play a major role in persuading Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to cooperate in peace talks, EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini said.

Source:*Middle East Eye*, 29 April, 2015

Iraqi Kurds arrest: alleged IS cell behind US mission attack

Kurdish authorities announced the arrest of an alleged Islamic State group cell that they said was responsible for the deadly bomb attack two weeks ago next to the U.S. consulate in northern Iraq.

Source:*The Indian Express*, 29 April, 2015

Syrian insurgents capture military base in northwest

Islamic insurgents overran a military base at a former factory in north-western Syria, carting off tanks and other weapons in the latest blow to President Bashar Assad's forces in the region, activists said.

Source:*The Indian Express*, 29 April, 2015

Yemen crisis spills into new Iran-US nuclear talks

US top diplomat John Kerry met his Iranian counterpart hoping to push forward tough nuclear negotiations as they reach the final phase, but also aiming to ease unrest in Yemen.

Source: *The Economic Times*, 28 April, 2015

Egypt President says parliament elections to be held in 2015

Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi said that the country's delayed parliamentary elections will take place before the end of 2015.

Source: *ABC News*, 29 April, 2015

Cyprus, Egypt, Greece to boost ties on combating Terrorism

The leaders of Cyprus, Egypt and Greece agreed to step up cooperation on combatting terrorism amid fears that worsening security conditions in neighboring countries such as Libya could threaten the region.

Source: *ABC News*, 29 April, 2015

Green Brigade of ISIS claims Yemen attack

A newly announced division of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group calling itself the "Green Brigade" claimed a bombing in Yemen that it said had killed five Shiite rebels.

Source:*Al-Arabiya*, 23 April, 2015

Yemen rebels and allies advance in southern city of Aden

Yemen's Shiite rebels and their allies made major advances in the southern city of Aden, capturing parts of an upscale neighborhood in fierce combat and seizing men they accused of fighting them.

Source:*ABC News*, 29 April, 2015

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mohammed Fahad al-Harthi, Critical fortnight for Gulf Cooperation Council, *Arab News*, 29 April, 2015

Khaled Ahmaed, Yemen's long shadow, *The Indian Express*, 24 April, 2015

Saeed Kamali Dehghan, Iran's first woman envoy since the Revolution, *The Hindu*, 16 April, 2015

C Raja Mohan, Chinese Takeaway: Yemen evacuation, *The Indian Express*, 7 April, 2015

Bruce Riedel, Al-Qaeda gains ground in Yemen war, *Al-Monitor*, 3 April, 2015

Gamal Gasim, Boots on the ground in Yemen? Think again, *Aljazeera*, 9 April, 2015

Michael Stephens, Change in the name of stability for Saudi Arabia, Aljazeera, 29 April, 2015

Jayant Prasad, Iran deal spells good tidings for India, *The Hindu*, 10 April, 2015

Ben Simpfendorfer, China's historic return to the gulf, *Foreign Policy*, 2 April, 2015

Ilan Goldenberg and Ely Ratner, China's Middle East Tightrope, *Foreign Policy*, 20 April, 2015

Diana Moukalled, Don't forget about Assad, *Arab News*, 22 April, 2015

Mohammed Fahad Alharthi, High hopes for GCC-US summit, *Arab News*, 22 April, 2015

Joschka Fischer, Iran versus Saudi Arabia, *Project Syndicate*, 6 April, 2015

April Longley Alley, Nobody will win the war in Yemen, *Aljazeera*, 8 April, 2015

Arka Biswas, Nuclear Developments in Iran: Comprehending the Indian View, Observer Research Foundation, 22 April, 2015

Andrew Bowen, Operation 'Restoring Hope' and securing Yemen's future, Al-Arabiya, 22 April, 2015

Salman Aldossary, Russia is making a regional comeback, *Asharq al-Awsat*, 17 April, 2015

Bader al-Rashed, Saudi elites divided on Yemen war, *Al-Monitor*, 21-April, 2015

Omar Ashour, What Good Is an Arab Military Alliance?, *Project Syndicate*, 13 April, 2015

Editorial, A Promising Nuclear Deal With Iran, The New York Times, 2 April, 2015

Editorial, Obama's Iran deal falls far short of his own goals, *The Washington Post*, 2 April, 2015

Fareed Zakaria, A nuclear deal with Iran is the best option, *The Washington Post*, 2 April, 2015

Editorial, Nuclear agreement a crucial test of Iran's, *The Straits Times*, 6 April, 2015

Abdulrahman Al-Rashed, Iran, the Beast Unchained? *Asharq al-Awsat*, 5 April, 2015

Ayah Aman, Will Iran nuclear deal lead to rapprochement with Cairo?, *Al-Monitor*, 28 April, 2015

Bruce Riedel, Is Pakistan pivoting away from Saudi Arabia? *Al-Monitor*, 28 April, 2015

Maysaa Shuja al-Deen, The human cost of Yemen's war, *Al-Monitor*, 22 April, 2015

Zulfikar Dogan, Turkey's foreign policy blunders hit home, *Al-Monitor*, 22 April, 2015

George Perkovich, Sinan Ulgen, Why Turkey Won't Go Nuclear, Carnegie, 10 April, 2015

George S. Hishmeh, Why not tell the other side of the story, *Gulf News*, 29 April, 2015

Bruce Riedel, Why Pakistan said no to King Salman, *Al-Monitor*, 13 April, 2015

Robin Wright, Why military Intervention won't end Yemen's crisis, *Washington Wire*, 27 March, 2015

Ben Caspit, Russian missile deal sets off alarm bells in Israel, Al-Monitor, 14 April, 2015

Mohammad Ali Shabani, Is Iran out manoeuvring Saudi Arabia in Yemen?, *Al-Monitor*, 13 April, 2015

Suhasini Haidar, India hails Iran nuclear agreement, *The Hindu*, 8 April, 2015

Vikram Sood, The ISIS phenomenon, *Observer Research Foundation*, 13 April, 2015

Praveen Swami, From Maldives, road to Islamic State goes via drugs, gangs and jail, *The Indian Express*, 15 April, 2015

Gamal Gasim, The man who could save Yemen, *Aljazeera*, 13 April, 2015

Vali R. Nasr, Saudi Should Welcome the Iran deal, *The New York Times*, 14 April, 2015

James Stavridis, The Arab NATO, *Foreign Policy*, 9 April, 2015

Paul Mcleary, Why Are the U.S. and Iran Sending Warships to the Yemeni Coast?, *Foreign Policy*, 20 April, 2015

Ravi Joshi, Iran's nuclear deal stands hostage to the vagaries of the US Congress, *Observer Research Foundation*, 22 April, 2015

Mustafa Salama, Is Iraq gone forever? *Middle East Eye*, 30 April, 2015

Frederic Wehrey, The Iran Deal Sharpens the Persian Gulf Region's Sectarian Divide, *The Washington Post*, 17 April, 2015

John M. Owen IV, From Calvin to the Caliphate, *Foreign Affair*, 20 April, 2015

Bruce Riedel , Yemen's War Shakes Up the Saudi Palace, *Brookings*, 29 April, 2015

Prashanth Parameswaran, Is Hamas Training Operatives in Malaysia?, The Diplomat, 30 April, 2015

Steve Forbes, Will Iran Attempt To Seize Control Of Saudi Oilfields? *Forbes*, 27 April, 2015

Quentin Sommerville, Libya: The world's 'smuggler state', BBC, 29 April, 2015

EDITORS

Kanchi Gupta

SikandarAzam