



## Institute of Social Sciences

New Delhi

### ***Seminar on West Asia in Turmoil: The Paradox of Power***



From Left: Roman Babushkin, First Secretary (Foreign Policy), Embassy of the Russian Federation, Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary & former Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Ash Narain Roy, Director, ISS

**S**yría's de facto borders will never be the same, but having survived a critical phase this summer, President Assad is set to stay in place. Even a substantial section of Israeli policymakers would prefer him to an 'unknown devil.' Assad's continuance does not, however, spell peace. Control of pipelines that connect from the oil and gas fields to the southeast of Syria to the Mediterranean Sea, will continue to be a driving reason for global powers' involvement in 'multiple wars within a war' in that region. Biased media channels have distorted global perceptions of the situation in Syria with blatantly false reporting. To view the situation there in simplistic Shia vs Sunni, Muslim vs Christian, West vs Russia or Iran vs Saudi terms is inadequate.

These are among the insights that emerged during a daylong intensive discussion on Syria and the emergent situation in West Asia. The discussions were part of a seminar organized

by the Institute of Social Sciences on 1 December 2015 at the India International Centre. The strategic, geopolitical and sociological complexities ‘ in West Asia were discussed in detail.



From Left: Balveer Arora, S K Dey Chair Prof. & Chairman, CMF, ISS, Namrata Goswami, Research Fellow, IDSA, K.P. Nayar, Consulting Editor, The Telegraph, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, Former Ambassador to Egypt

In his keynote address, former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal revealed that his official discussions with leading US officials more than a decade earlier had made it obvious that they thought regime-change in West Asia would be as easy as reinventing the political and economic system in Germany had been after the Second World War.

In a succinct presentation of security implications, Brig. (retd.) Narinder Kumar of



From Left: Waiel Awwad, Senior Syrian journalist, A.K. Pasha, Director, Gulf Studies, Centre for West Asian Studies, JNU, Prashant Pradhan, Research Fellow, IDSA, S. Samuel C. Rajiv, Associate Fellow, IDSA

CLAWS warned that wars on more than one front and wars between state and non-state actors, such as the ones that were being fought in Syria, could have grave implications for Central and South Asia too.

Senior journalist KP Nayar gave anecdotal evidence from his recent visit to Syria to make his point that he had come away ashamed of being a journalist after witnessing misreporting.



From Left: Khalil Maleki Rae, Second Counsellor (Economic & International), Embassy of the I.R. of Iran and Wael Fathy, First Secretary, Embassy of Egypt

Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee said the Russians had done more to improve the situation in Syria in one month than the West had in a year. Roman Babushkin, First Secretary of the Russian Embassy, gave a detailed exposition, including details of how a Russian pilot was shot after having bailed out of his targeted aircraft.

Recent events had inadvertently allowed Russia to establish its own 'no-fly zone' over Syrian airspace, one of the participants pointed out. Officials of several embassies and academics from think-tanks and universities were among the participants.

Senior Syrian journalist Wael Awwad presented pictorial evidence of how events had unfolded over the past few decades. Among other pictures, he showed one of a gun-wielding Osama Bin Laden standing beside former US Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski.

*Talking of the emergence of the 'mobile terrorist' in the recent past, Awwad rued the fact that 100,000 people had come 'to liberate Syrians from other Syrians.'*



From Left: Brigadier Narendra Kumar, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, David Devadas, Senior journalist, Madhav Nalapat, Director, Department of Geopolitics, Manipal University, and Sandhya Jain, Senior journalist and author