



Indian Council of World Affairs
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Press Release

Fifth Asian Relations Conference (ARC-V)

on

'Transitions and Interdependence: India and its Neighbours'

(20-21 February 2014)

A two days long fifth Asian Relations Conference (ARC-V) was organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) in collaboration with the Institute of Peace and Conflicts Studies (IPCS) on 20-21 February 2014 at Sapru House, New Delhi. The theme of this year's ARC was *Transitions and Interdependence: India and its Neighbours*. The panelists comprised scholars from all South Asian countries and Myanmar. Various

complex themes like foreign policy, economic and political cooperation, socio-political outlook, and regional security issues were discussed in the two days conference. During the inaugural session of the conference, an edited book titled *Indo-Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects* was released. This book is a compilation of papers presented by scholars in the ARC-IV which was held in 2013.



Ambassador Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary, MEA delivering the Keynote Address.

In his welcome remarks, DG ICWA, Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia stated that South Asian countries are going through a complex transformation process, and 2013-14 have been years of hope as a few states in the region have witnessed successful democratic elections while others would be going to polls in 2014. Amb. Rajiv K. Bhatia also talked about the on-going process of social churning in the neighbouring countries and its impact on the India's domestic and foreign policies. Former Foreign Secretary of India Ambassador Kanwal Sibal delivered keynote address. He highlighted the on-going transitions in South Asia and also the importance of regional cooperation among the member states. Professor S. D. Muni, in his

remarks, focused on the role India has to play to accentuate the process of regional cooperation in South Asia. In his remarks, Amb Sheel Kant Sharma also focused on the need for regional cooperation in South Asia.

In six thematic and one panel discussion sessions twenty one speakers presented their papers. Some of the papers were theoretical in nature while others were empirical studies carried out by the scholars. The participants, in their presentations, underlined the importance of cooperation in trade, commonality of interests, and the necessity of promoting shared responsibility in South Asia. They also highlighted the internal political dynamics, turmoil and emerging challenges in India's neighbouring countries.



Delegates of fifth Asian Relation Conference

In the last session, which was a panel discussion on the regional cooperation, the speakers came out with their vision about the region. The panelists discussed the role of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in creating an environment for cooperation among the member states. They focussed on the role India has to play in steering the SAARC and fostering cooperation with its neighbours. Discussing regional cooperation, the participants were divided on the role of China in the region. The economists, in their presentations, stressed on the necessity and advantages of regional cooperation. They statistically proved the trade related benefits and monetary gains, each country can reap, from the regional cooperation in South Asia.

In his concluding remarks, Amb Rajiv K. Bhatia expressed optimism about the future of regional cooperation in South Asia. Dr. Subachandran, Director IPCS, gave a vote of thanks and expressed that the discussions held in ARC -V would have its impact on the betterment of the region.
