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Editor
BABUDDIN KHAN

THIRD CONCEPT aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

INSIDE

Editorial	
Nuclear Deal with Iran <i>B.K</i>	5
India's Relations with Africa <i>Ms. Krishnasri Das</i>	7
Environmental Threats to Human Security <i>Sarita Bag</i>	11
Unsung Heroes of Manipur <i>Dr. Sheikho hao Kipgen</i>	21
Food Security in India <i>Sumeet Thakur & Khyal Chand</i>	29
National Higher Education Mission: An Appraisal <i>Dr. Gyanendra Kumar Rout</i>	33
Environment and Safe Health <i>Madhu Rathore & Manisha Choudhry</i>	38
Progress of Agriculture in India <i>Dr. M.Pexumal and T. Prakash</i>	41
Human Rights in Tibetan Society <i>Dr. A.Renuka</i>	45
Plight of Gulbarga Weavers <i>S. K. G. Kudri & Dr Jaikishan Thakur</i>	48
Impact of ICT on Education <i>S.Karthikeyan & Dr. B.Manickawasagam</i>	52
Indian Companies Act, 2013- A Case Study <i>Manoj Kumar Sahu</i>	55

Nuclear Deal with Iran

The historic nuclear agreement between Iran and the six Western powers that constitute the so-called P-5+1 Group, inclusive of the United States, signed on 24 November this year has evoked considerable euphoria of optimism on both sides. What was regarded as unthinkable for many people over many years has now happened.

The deal inaugurates the beginning of the curtailment of Iran's nuclear program while relaxing as much as \$6 billion in sanctions — basically those embargoes that do not require U.S. President to secure approval from Congress. The deal freezes or reverses progress at all of Iran's key nuclear facilities, barring it from adding new centrifuges and capping, or in some cases eliminating, stockpiles of uranium that Western officials fear could be turned into fuel for a nuclear weapon. It is a preliminary deal of an interim nature, and both sides face months of work to batten down domestic opposition, build convincing mechanisms to assure compliance and unthread complicated global sanctions. Iran has welcomed the deal as the onset of a new era for the Islamic republic, with President Hassan Rouhani asserting that language in the agreement affirmed Iran's right to enrich uranium, which he and other top Iranian officials had demanded as an element of any agreement.

The next negotiation, scheduled for six months from now depending on both sides' adherence to the current agreement, will seek a more permanent resolution. This agreement, which still has many missing parts, is clearly a work in progress. There will be disruptive events along the way, but the normalization process is unlikely to derail because both sides need it. Iran is far more concerned with enhancing its geopolitical prowess through conventional means. Meanwhile, the United States wants to leverage relations with Iran in order to better manage the region in an age of turmoil. The post-Arab Spring turmoil in the region has plunged U.S.-Arab relations into a state of uncertainty for two reasons: First, the autocratic regimes have become unreliable partners; second, the region is seeing the rise of radical Sunni Islamist forces.

Undoubtedly, the United States may be willing to accept an internationally rehabilitated Iran as a major stakeholder in the Greater Middle East region; nevertheless, it may not wish Tehran to exploit the opportunity in order to gain disproportionate power. The strategic focus now is likely to shift from nuclear politics to the imperative that the United States balance Iran with other regional powers, especially the Sunni Arab states. A rehabilitated Iran, with its improved relations with Washington, can be good asset for countering radicalism in the Middle East and provide leverage to the US to thwart attempts by some other nuclear-ambitious powers in the region. Concurrently, a geopolitically strong Iran can also challenge American influence in the region. The success of Iran nuclear deal can be a harbinger of good political and strategic dividends for India which has been 'front and center' in the process of American reconciliation with Iran. Undoubtedly, India has neither served as a direct or secret channel in this latest diplomatic coup but some interlocutors who worked on the US-Iran agreement have an India connection.

Puneet Talwar, an Indian-American, the White House national security council staffer and whose formal designation is special assistant to the president and national security council senior director for Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf states, worked hard in the back channel for this. India and Iran have maintained friendly ties for centuries. The post-reconciliation period may unfold ample opportunities for New Delhi and Teheran to provide fresh fillip to their bilateral ties in various fields without any hitch. Improved India-Iran relations may provide relief to India from suffocating pressure on the energy front as well. A rehabilitated Iran can play crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in South and South-West Asia in the aftermath of American draw down from Afghanistan. Besides, the fragile situation in Afghanistan calls for a peaceful and stable ambience, especially after the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghan soil. The task of national reconstruction in Afghanistan in the post-withdrawal period requires the active cooperation of neighbouring countries. India and Iran can jointly undertake endeavours to ensure peace, security and stability in Afghanistan under the aegis of the United Nations. Such a step will strengthen forces of peace.

—BK