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MEI Event: China and the Middle East

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In collaboration with India International Center, on 3 September 2012 the MEI@ND organized a round table on *China and the Middle East*. Dr. Jon Alterman, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geo-strategy and Director of Middle East Programme at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, DC), initiated the discussion.

Outlining three parallel relationships, namely, China-Middle East, US-Middle East and China-the US, Dr. Alterman argued that China does not see the US as its rival in the Middle East. This is largely because China's primary concerns continue to be economic ties and energy interests while the US plays a larger politico-strategic role in the region. For political and economic reasons the Middle East is beginning to look to Asian countries, especially China and India, for greater partnership. Aware of the complexities of the region, China has adopted a non-emotional approach towards the Middle East and stayed away from non-economic ties. At the same time, Dr. Alterman argued that, recent events in the Middle East, especially the Arab Spring, might force China to play a much larger role vis-à-vis its trading partners.

Mr. Mohan Guruswamy, a distinguished fellow of Observer Research Foundation and Chairman and Founder of Centre for Policy Alternatives, was the discussant. He agreed that China and India have an interest in maintaining the status quo in the Middle East mainly due to their energy security calculations. He felt that that in comparison, India has a higher stakes in the regional stability because of the presence on large number of Indian expatriates and their remittances.

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These two presentations were followed by an hour-long lively interaction between Dr. Alterman and the audience, which included former members of the Indian Foreign Service, academia, policy analysts and young researchers.

The Round Table was chaired by Commodore (retd.) C. Uday Bhaskar, Chairperson of the Academic Council of the MEI@ND and former Director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). In the end, Dipanwita Chakravorty gave the vote of thanks on behalf of the MEI@ND.

Pictures taken by Alvite N during the occasions can be accessed from here: <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.322501617846758.72798.288759447887642&type=3>

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