



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

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**Title:** **TERROR IN WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**Chairperson:** Air Marshal **Vinod Patney** SYSM PVSM AVSM VrC (Retd),  
Director General, CAPS

**Speakers:**

### **Political Islam**

Lt Gen **Ata Hasnain** PVSM UYSM AVSM SM VSM\*\* (Retd), Visiting Fellow,  
Delhi Policy Group

### **Terror in Af-Pak and Central Asia Region**

Amb **RS Kalha**, Former Indian Ambassador to Iraq

### **Proliferation of Jihad in West Asia**

Amb **Talmiz Ahmad**, Former Indian Ambassador to S. Arabia, Oman and  
the UAE

**Rapporteur:** Dr **Temjenmeren Ao**, Associate Fellow, CAPS

**Date of Event:** 20 October 2015

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Islam, which primarily developed as a faith for the desert Bedouin tribes, spread to the other parts of the world. It witnessed a growth in militarism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leading to the birth of Political Islam. This was seen in the reform movements such as Wahabism and Salafism which were aimed to help cleanse Islam.

Some events particularly of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—the Balfour declaration of 1917 to create a Jewish homeland; the partition of India in 1947, which created an artificial Islamic state

of Pakistan; the creation of Israel in 1948; the emergence of Yasser Arafat in West Asia; the 1979 Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan–gave a militant face to Islam.

The end of the Cold War saw the rise of al-Qaeda which was funded through oil money. 9/11 cemented the conflict between the West and Islam with a strong rhetoric such as “Us vs Them”.

The Arab Spring uprising that took place in 2011 marked the birth of the Islamic State. ISIS emerged as a result of competition amongst the al-Qaeda factions that intended to create a Caliphate. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, declared himself the Caliph since unlike Osama bin Laden his outfit had the necessary pre-requisites such as territory, proximity to Mecca and Medina and held influence in regions of Iraq and Syria.

The current scenario marks a churning moment, which could help internal cleansing, and in the long run, would lead to a reformation of Islam–this development could take a century to be realised.

There has been a marked increase in Muslim consciousness in Central Asia post Soviet collapse. This could be as a consequence of the state’s autocratic policy, corruption and poor governance leading to the rise of radical Islam, though its nature has been moderate.

Af-Pak has emerged as the main ground for the growth of Islamist terrorism and the future conflict could be fought in Central Asia. China is concerned with this trend as it affects its province of Xinjiang–considered to be its gateway to Central Asia–and is in the process of enacting a new anti-terrorist law. Chapter seven of the law would provide, for the very first time, the authority to various Chinese agencies to conduct operations outside China’s territory that could include positioning of troops.

China sees the insurgency in the Western Xinjiang province as rooted in the spill over from the current situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan with which it shares its borders, and hence considers the Pakistani Army as best suited to fight terrorism. Therefore, today, fifty

percent of China's global arms exports go into Pakistan. China's realisation of Pakistan's inability to fight terrorism, at a later date, would be the tipping point which could lead to resurgence of China-India relations.

Post-Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Jihad was used as a construct for tactical purpose by the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Its global implications were not foreseen. 9/11 marked the adoption of the neo-con doctrine by President Bush Jr, which as a policy of robust intervention led to the creation of great religious insecurity and gave further impetus to Jihad.

A Saudi sense of insecurity towards Iran led them to work towards bringing about a change in leadership in Syria and Lebanon—to block Iran's access to the Mediterranean. The Saudis had hoped for US intervention in the uprising and despite the news on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Americans did not intervene; disappointing them. Russia's entry into the Syrian conflict is likely to bring about a change in America's stand on the removal of President Assad and to allow for a transitional period.

Today, West Asia is marked by a collapse of the states. The discontent amongst the people of the region has led to the rise of Jihadi movements—with instances of the proliferation of localised operations in various sections within the states where governance has failed. The rise of ISIS could well be attributed to the conflict in Iraq and Syria.

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