

RAPORTEURS REPORT

Combating Terrorism: Evolving  
an Asian Response  
March 6-8, 2017



## Panel I – Norms and the Global War on Terror: Challenges for Asia



Chairperson : Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta

Maj. Gen. Mahmud  
Ali Durrani

Mr. Abdel Bari Atwan

Mr. Praveen Swami

Mr. Ehsan Monawar

The first session titled ‘*Norms and the Global War on Terror: Challenges for Asia*’ was chaired by Dr. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. The panel had Maj. Gen. Mahmud Ali Durrani, Former National Security Advisor, Pakistan; Mr. Abdel Bari Atwan, Editor-in-chief, Rai al-Youm, an Arab world digital news and opinion website; Mr. Praveen Swami, National Editor (Strategic and International Affairs), The Indian Express; and Mr. Ehsan Monawar, Counter Terrorism Expert, Afghanistan as speakers. The session primarily focused on the consequences of and the challenges posed by the Global War on Terror on Asia. The panelists also highlighted the different aspects of a possible collective response and strategy for countering international terrorism.

Speaking on *Developing a Common Denominator to Fight Terrorism in Asia* **Gen. Mahmud Ali Durrani** underlined the lack of a consensus on the definition of terrorism in the international community. However, he said, that there are different operational definitions of ‘what constitutes terror’ in certain quarters. For reference, he highlighted two definitions of ‘terror acts’ – definition used by Federal Investigation Agency in Pakistan, and the definition given in the US Army Manual. He pointed towards the failure of the United Nations (UN) to arrive at a common definition of terrorism. Terrorists use unlawful violence to strike fear essentially in civilian population, and terrorism in the name of religion is the most vicious form of terror. He also admitted to the fact that the 26/11 attack in Mumbai was conducted by some terrorists based in Pakistan. However, he said that Pakistan itself has been a victim of terrorism. Data indicate that thousands of people died in Pakistan due to terrorism; and 60 per cent of them were civilians. He acknowledged that Pakistan is often blamed for terrorism and there is serious mistrust between Pakistan and India, and Pakistan and Afghanistan. He blamed strong religious parties with a very superficial understanding of Islam for religious terrorism in Pakistan and underlined



the need for a counter narrative against their interpretations. The role of media in both the countries has also been negative in addressing the issue of mistrust and terrorism. However, he pointed towards some common denominators that may be considered for evolving a counterstrategy towards terrorism: religious extremism should be discouraged; states should legislate for the protection of religious minorities; no entity other than state should be allowed to declare war on any other state, they should be banned; no nation should allow its soil to be used for terror activities; intelligence agencies should play a positive role; territorial issues between states should be resolved; and each nation should announce a National Action Plan against terrorism. He identified high illiteracy and lack of education, misguided nationalism, poverty, inequality, and lack of justice as some of the factors supporting and contributing to terrorism. According to him, the international community should agree on the common denominators to formulate one counterstrategy.

**Mr. Abdel Bari Atwan** spoke on *Geopolitics of Islamic Jihad*. He lamented that the region which he comes



from is fighting at least five wars against terrorism, but he did not elaborate on it. According to him, the Arabs are unfortunately exporting terrorism to the world. He emphasised on the importance of some key words and phrases without which it is impossible to understand what is happening in the West Asian region. These are: humiliation, frustration, unemployment, underestimation, marginalisation/exclusion, lack of good governance, and foreign military intervention. Corruption is also one of the exacerbating factors to the activities related to terrorism. He identified the American military intervention and adventures as the primary reason for the current terror conundrum in the region. The demobilisation of the Iraqi Army was the first step towards the formation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

(ISIS). It is the Americans who flamed sectarian division in the Arab world. In his opinion, Al-Qaeda is emerging again in Yemen, and that too strongly. The Plan-B for the ISIS, if it sees defeat for it, is to go underground like the Al-Qaeda. However, it is Al-Qaeda which has unified all other terrorist groups in the Sahel region. This is to be noted that if Yemen is the best place for Al-Qaeda, ISIS is also building its base there. Interestingly, for the first time, Iran and Saudi Arabia on one hand, and the United States (US) and Russia on the other, have started seeing a common enemy in the ISIS. It is ironical that though the Americans are supposed to be secular, they abet sectarianism. He emphasised that the US should leave the region alone; they cannot solve the problems simply because they created them.

**Mr. Praveen Swami** talked on *Invisible Jihad: Challenges for India and Asia*. He emphasised that the

phenomenon of 'Jihadi' terrorism is not new. There have been lone wolf attacks of 'Jihadi' nature in India and other parts of the world even centuries ago. He gave the example of the attack on the Dharmapattanam Church in Kerala, India, in 1764. This history is still alive and terrorist minds are often motivated by it. According to him, the popular contemporary 'Jihadi' literature is similar to the 'Jihadi' Ghazi literature of the 16th century. In this light, the 'Jihadi' tradition in India comes from the old Portuguese-Malabari (in Kerala) clashes to dominate the old spice trade from India. In his opinion, the current 'Jihadi' phase in India started after 1992, when the Babri Mosque was demolished; or to say in mid 1980s, with the emergence of the Ram Mandir movement. He also described the series of events that led to the formation of



organisations like the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), and Indian Mujahideen (IM); and individuals like Abdul Karim Tunda and Sana ul Haq becoming dreaded terrorists. He recognised that the number of Indians suspected or confirmed of joining the ISIS is miniscule but warned against complacency, as he noticed a higher degree of support in the youth than we would like to imagine. There is a higher degree of certain alienation in Muslim youth as the political system has lost the ability to reach out to young people who form such groups. Finally, to a disappointment, not much has been done for security after 26/11. To deal with the problem of terrorism we need much more granular level of knowledge and understanding.

**Mr. Ehsan Monawar**, speaking on *Countering Terrorism in the AfPak: Past, Present and the Road Ahead*, said



that we are at war with the most dangerous enemy to the mankind. He reminded the audience of the Soviet withdrawal; and Afghanistan becoming a safe haven for terrorism. Without taking any names, he also said that some think of his country as the backyard for their strategic depth, which is quite harmful for it. Terrorism has brought a huge drug problem to Afghanistan as the illegal drug money is used to finance terror activities. It has become a huge social catastrophe as there are more than 3 million drug addicts in Afghanistan. Taliban wants to attack and weaken state capacities and institutions; and is not serious about any meaningful talk or negotiation. He asserted that it is Islamabad that had been spreading lies about the former Taliban chief Mullah Omar. According to him, Afghans maintain peace with

strength, as weakness invites aggression. Peace is not just an absence of conflict, and therefore the states should come forward in friendly cooperation to create peace.

#### **Observations made and Questions raised during audience interaction:**

- What is being done to stop counterfeit currency?
- If political communities have failed to reach out to the radical groups, what does that mean? What can be done to improve?
- American policies in Afghanistan were flawed.
- Definitions do not produce clarity, diagnosis does.

#### **Key Takeaways from the Session:**

- The international community should agree on the common denominators to formulate one counterstrategy.
- Political communities should try to reach out to the communities and sections that are potentially prone to radicalisation.
- Al-Qaeda is emerging in Yemen again; and the ISIS has a plan-B to go underground. Therefore we should be prepared to deal with such situations.
- Religious extremism should be systematically discouraged by states.
- Problems like, lack of education, poverty, injustice and misguided nationalism should be handled carefully, efficiently and timely.

Report prepared by Dr Saurabh Mishra, Research Assistant, Africa, Latin America, Caribbean & UN Centre, IDSA

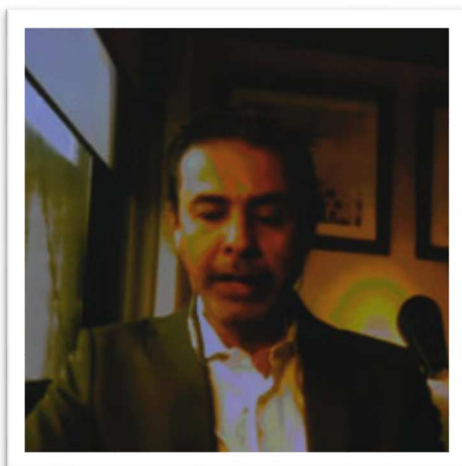
## Panel II – The New Wave of Global Terror: Ideas, Resources and Trends



Chairperson Shri G.K Pillai,

Mr. Baker Atyani	Dr. Waiel Awwad	Ms. Lamyahaji Bashar Taha	Mr. P.K. Dash	Mr. Atul Goel	Dr. Christine Fair
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**Shri. G. K. Pillai** chaired the second session, titled “The New Wave of Global Terror: Ideas, Resources and Trends”, where he brought to attention the predominance of national interests of some countries such as the United States, Iran, Pakistan and China over small arms convention. He alluded to the fact that terrorism is increasingly being networked in organised crime and human trafficking.



The discussion was carried forward by the first speaker, **Mr. Baker Atyani**, on “Hostage Taking as a Tool of Terrorism and Methodology of Negotiations”. He brought his own experiences as a hostage and asked few questions regarding hostage taking. He argues the fundamental question before governments is whether to negotiate with terrorists and whether to pay the terrorists to release the hostages. In his view, kidnapping, though is a traditional criminal act, is increasingly being used by terrorists for both political and financial gains. At times, hostage taking becomes the only source of income, especially after the implementation of counter-terror strategies by countries, which have been drained financially by this plague. Though most of the

kidnapping is motivated by criminal purposes, there are some that are motivated by Islam. The militant groups involved in hostage taking use these monetary gains for either future activities or release of their members from prison. Not only that communities are involved in the business of hostage taking, there is an intricate process and layers, consisting of individuals, civilians, poor communities, corrupt government and law enforcement agencies are used. The speaker concludes that despite states express their unwillingness to negotiate with terrorists, in many cases, they do. Governments and individuals do pay ransom to the militants. The speaker called for a holistic approach to counter-terror, where the

motivations of the group is also understood and the conditions that enable them, such as poverty and weak governance and human rights are being studied in the context of counter-terror tools.

The next speaker, **Mr. Waiel Awwad**, spoke on the “Terrorism Industry and its Global Expansion”, where he argued that countries use terrorism for the sake of political, economic and ideological motivations. Awwad agreed with the previous speaker that conditions such as weak infrastructure, inefficient redistribution of wealth, social inequality in the countries has contributed to the rise of terrorism. He preferred the term “Arab World”, which includes all the relevant countries of that region compared to ‘West Asia’, or ‘Middle East’. Mr Awwad argued that the Arab world has suffered under the Turkish occupation under the Ottoman empire, which had led to these above-mentioned conditions. Moreover, the suppression of the Arab leaders because of the Ottoman empire, and the subsequent introduction of Political Islam, including Wahhabism, has further complicated the political environment. In addition, the role of the US through its strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia, and its support to the Islamic education to counter the spread of communism during the Cold War had introduced the context of Islamisation in the society. Despite the end of the Cold War, these efforts continued and allowed radical clerks to preach Islam, which were intolerant towards other forms of Islam. Further, the abundant natural resources of the region, has fuelled sectarian and tribal violence, which makes it difficult to repair as long as the resources are present in the region. The speaker concluded that to create a terrorist, one only has to create a stateless society with sectarian divide and security vacuum, where there are foreign and local recruits, who are alienated, dejected and brainwashed to take revenge against actions of other countries against muslims. For instance, the speaker shows the example of the human rights violations in Abu Ghraib, where young muslims are recruited on the basis of revenge against actions conducted in the prison. The speaker concludes that the terrorism is an industry, which benefits various groups and individuals, especially the arms industry, and needs specific measures and countermeasures.



The succeeding speaker **Ms. Lamya Haji Bashar Taha**, spoke on “Women and Da’esh”. Lamya is from the Yazidi community in Iraq and she narrated her personal account of being a prisoner in the Da’esh. She brought to attention the excruciating pain and suffering that she had experienced under the rule of Da’esh. She spoke of her imprisonment, where she was considered as a slave, sold repeatedly among the fighters. She brought to attention the state of minorities among the Da’esh, where they consider communities like hers as *infidels* and not of true Islam. She pointed out that though Da’esh were fighting in Iraq, its supporters were from all over the world and due to their dangerous ideology, they are a threat to their entire world. The suffering of the

Yazidi community under the Da’esh has not yet concluded because of the presence of many others still in captivity. The speaker concluded by saying that the world has the responsibility to fight Da’esh and fight against their ideology.



The next speaker, **Mr. P K Dash**, spoke on the “Economics of Terror: the Indian experience”. He brought to attention the role of liquid cash in the criminal networks and how they are being used to fund terrorist activities. According to him, cash is considered as the life blood and is critical to the criminal networks. Therefore, the control and tracking of cash crucial to control organised crimes. This has become relevant especially in the globalisation of trade and crime. Here, the organised crimes are driven by syndicates. Dash argued that instead of ideology, business become the most important driver for terror. For funding of the terror, the rogue economics plays an important role. With respect to rogue economics, the speaker considered drug trafficking, illicit trade, financial crime, human trafficking, organised

crime and fake currency as avenues of business. The business of terror has mutated into an industry, as it represents a business of low investment and high returns. The speaker brought the example of India, where rogue money moves through physical movement, hawala, banking channels, layered proxies, trade based money laundering, commodity based money laundering such as diamond, gold, drugs and foreign donations and charity. The author concludes that terrorism has mutated to a business of power and money, cloaked in fundamentalism and funded by rogue economics, which requires little capital. The only way to counter this is to cut the financial cord of the terrorists.

The next speaker, **Mr. Atul Goel** spoke on Terror Finance in Kashmir, especially on how funds are raised, transferred and distributed to reach terror commanders. The speaker took the examples of groups including Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, who are involved in the terror funding in Kashmir. These groups in general raise funds through big charities that are associated with these organisations. They also raise funds by collection outside mosques, and other forms of funding such as street collection, special campaigns such as natural disasters, Ramadan and Kashmir causes in Pakistan. The speaker also brought to other forms of funding collecting by these organisations including online collections, private donations, collection and sale of animal hides, profit generating business such as schools, universities, hospital and real estate. Other type of funding include bank rolling by state institutions and fake currency. These funds are then transferred through terrorists, who then infiltrate across the boundary from Pakistan to India. Other ways of transferring funds according to Mr Goel include hawala operations, banking channels, and cross-border trade. These funds are then distributed to the terrorist commanders through long chain of overground workers, who collect the funds from the hawala distributors. Since hawala operations have very little paper trails, it becomes difficult to prosecute and find evidence against these operators.



The last speaker, **Dr. Christine Fair**, spoke on the topic, “Women and Support for Terrorism in Pakistan - An Empirical Study”. She criticised the practice of ethnographic methodology to study radicalisation and terrorism in countries as it ignores the quantitative data over in depth interviews, which leads to a detailed study but lacks the generalisation to apply in other cases. On the other, studies which rely on data sets available from PEW and other organisations ignore specificities about the given area and is generalised to an extent that it does not give any insight to the area concerned. For example, she argued



that in Pakistan, Sharia law meant cleaner government with less corruption. Therefore, support for Sharia meant that support for cleaner government not radical Islam. This shows a different understanding of Sharia compared to other countries. She also spoke on other misperceptions by bringing in the example of US Aid, which targets programmes for countering violent extremism. According to the speaker, these programmes target 'men of military age', as they are more dominant in these areas. However, they ignore a key gender, such as women. They ignore how gender affect the support of these terror groups. In her view, the studies conducted in Pakistan show a support of women towards sectarian extremists groups in Pakistan. She concludes by saying that there is a lack of understanding

towards the involvement of families in support of these groups and in particular, the role of women in supporting these groups. They do not pay attention to why women support some groups such as sectarian groups but not certain groups such as Afghan Taliban. She urges that the study of terrorism should also include the role of women and their support.

The question and answer session saw a fruitful discussion over the effect of demonetisation on terrorism and the subsequent reduction of crime. The discussion was also entered upon whether the militant groups involved in hostage taking in Philippines have political ambitions. It was argued that since these groups are not well trained and mostly isolated in islands, they are mainly involved in these activities for income. The discussion then moved on to the type of recruits in terrorism such as educational factor. It was argued that the type of recruitment would be based on the different kinds of jobs and responsibilities. Questions were also raised on terror funding in Northeast, and the investigation of National Intelligence Agency in these matters.

Report prepared by M. S. Prathibha, PhD, Associate Fellow, East Asia Centre, IDSA



## Panel III – The Age of ‘Instant Terror’: Technology, the Game Changer



Chairperson : Dr. Arvind Gupta

Dr. Anne Speckhard

Mr. Madan Oberoi  
(IPS)

Mr. Saikat Datta

Mr. Sanjeev Singh

Ms. Manjula  
Sridhar

**Dr. Arvind Gupta** began the session by noting that technology has become a force multiplier for terrorists. The situation is not going to ease up in the future for law enforcement agencies due to ‘internet of things’ and the potential for terrorists to take advantage of the possibilities it can offer. The challenge gets further compounded by the fact that the advantage is with the attacker as terrorists perhaps seem more motivated. The major issue is how to build effective capabilities for law enforcement agencies within the resources available.



**Dr. Anne Speckhard** began by noting that terrorist organizations like ISIS are winning in the social media space by taking advantage of social feedback mechanism. She noted that these organizations feed on three to four critical factors to tap potential recruits. These relate to ideology, social support and individual vulnerabilities among others. These vulnerabilities in conflict zones include revenge, trauma, empowerment among others while in non-conflict zones include the possibility of being part of an adventure, feelings of marginalization, frustrated aspirations, financial motives, among others. She then showed some powerful videos of young ISIS recruits narrating their story to the ISIS Defectors Interview Project run by ICSVE. Some of the sickening details that were contained in those interviews included the very

young age profile of the recruits (some as low as six years and between 13-16 years), the fact that they about 5-6 people were imprisoned in cages, the brutal manner in which ISIS was treating women prisoners, among others.

**Dr. Madan Oberoi** pointed to the potential misuse of technologies like Dark Net and crypto-currencies. Dark Net refers to locations that are not indexed in any search engines. The technology has both positive (academic for example) and negative uses. The potential negative uses of such technology relates to communication (one-to-one or one-to-many), illegal trade (arms and ammunition, drugs, identity thefts, child sexual abuse material), expertise (assassinations for instance), and money laundering. Incidents involving such technologies however have been minimal. Meanwhile, different nations treat crypto-currencies like bit coins differently, leading to lack of a common regulatory framework. Ransom demands and money laundering are some of the illegal uses of crypto-currencies. A further pertinent point Dr. Oberoi made was that even if these issues are regulated, difficulties will arise in enforcing the regulations, given the very nature of such technologies. Dr. Arvind Gupta pointed out that underlying technologies like block-chain technology have positive uses as well and therefore, there was need for proper evaluation before any action is taken.



**Mr. Saikat Datta** noted that the terrorist use the internet for publicity and propaganda, for fund-raising, networking, sharing of information, planning and coordination, data mining, among other uses. Their use of technology is conditioned by the need to shape public opinion domestically and internationally, as well as to keep current/potential stakeholders happy. He gave pertinent instances of use of technology on Indian soil by terrorists. These included Yasin Bhatkal using fake emails and encrypted chat, GPS used in a big way in 26/11, the Indian Mujahideen using fake e-mails, secure chats, and hopping IP addresses. Mr. Datta pointed to some critical gaps in response mechanisms by India, including cyber crime not recognized a threat in the IT Act of 2000, and organizations

mandated as part of the Act's revision in 2008 to tackle cyber crime (National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre – NCIIPC) coming to fruition only in 2014. Mr. Datta pointed to useful innovations like internal wiki developed by US law enforcement in the aftermath of 9/11 as an example worthy of emulation in the Indian context as well. He also recommended a multi-disciplinary approach where-in law enforcement agencies pool their resources for optimum results instead of following an insular approach.

**Mr. Sanjeev Singh** made the critical point that the terrorists use the most appropriate technology rather than the most advanced/sophisticated technology to carry out their nefarious activities. The terrorists however are becoming adept at adopting new technologies. He gave the example of an ISIS module in Hyderabad using advanced communication networks like Tor, operating systems like TAILS, and instant messaging services like *chatsecure* and Open Whisper System. In 2015 however, another ISIS module was not using any additional encryption over that which was provided by the service provider and was using



Google Play Store to download applications. Mr. Singh also brought to the attention of the audience the case of the mastermind behind the July 2013 bomb blasts at the Bodh Gaya, Haider, who was self-radicalised and became an expert bomb maker by reading magazines like Inspire. The Pathankot attackers also used the GPS system to navigate their way, which was another instance of terrorists using publicly available information to carry out their tasks.



**Ms. Manjula Sridhar** noted that fake accounts have a huge potential to cause harm as they confer anonymity to the attacker, According to Face Book, in 2014, there were 137.76 million fake accounts. These can potentially be used to launch ‘Sybil’ attacks wherein the reputation system of the target is subverted by forging identities. One possible solution to tackle the menace was through machine-learning, where in machines can be programmed to look for similarities in large data sets. This was based on the premise that while anonymity can be available in case of a single data set, it can be broken if two or three data sets are combined, leading to the outing of the persons/groups behind fake accounts. LinkedIn identified more than 99 per cent of fake accounts on its rolls recently by using such technology. She

pointed out to the potential for exploring such technologies in the Indian context to design better response mechanisms by law enforcement agencies. For instance, by using publicly available cyber crime data, Ms. Sridhar noted that while Chhattisgarh had lowest number of computers, it accounted for disproportionate percentage of cyber crime. Further analysis could lead to pin pointing of the exact cluster of village/villages/towns wherein this was a major problem and appropriate strategies undertaken to tackle the problem.

Dr. Arvind Gupta in his closing remarks stressed on the need to develop multi-disciplinary approaches, capacity-building of law enforcement agencies, and the important need to strengthen public-private partnership.

*Report prepared by Mr S. Samuel C. Rajiv, Associate Fellow, IDSA*

## Panel IV – The West Asia Conundrum: Unravelling Geopolitics and Global Response



Chairperson Shri Sanjay Singh,

Ambassador Hossein Sheikholeslam	Dr. Vladimir I. Sotnikov	Mr. Mustafa El Sagezli	Ms Prabha Rao	Dr. Frank Ledwidge (UK)	Dr. Eitan Shamir
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The chairperson, **Ambassador Sanjay Singh**, in his opening remarks underlined the problems facing West Asia that has put it under global spotlight due to raging issue of terrorism and failing states. He reiterated the points made by Abdel Bari Atwan on Day One, that extremism is a product of problems faced by the people of the region: humiliation at the hands of outsiders, frustration about exiting situation, external interventions, lack of good governance and a flawed justification of violence based in Islam.



**Dr. Vladimir Sotnikov** spoke on Russian view on radical Islam emphasizing that the Daesh/ISIS poses a greater threat to Afghanistan and Central Asia, especially as it is defeated in Iraq and Syria and its fighters spread to other parts of the world. He said there is a real threat of penetration of these fighters into post-Soviet Central Asian states through Afghanistan that can pose a major security and strategic threat to Russia and its neighbouring states. Underlining that a significant number of fighters in the ISIS have been drawn from the Central Asian countries and Russia and hence, Russia has direct interests in the conflict in Syria.

Sotnikov argued that Da'esh is becoming a major threat in Afghanistan and hence Russia is trying to build a building a coordinated regional response by bringing in China, Pakistan and Central Asian republics to neutralize the strategic threat it poses to the whole region. He argued that through monetary lure Da'esh is recruiting fighters that formerly fought with Taliban and

other militant groups. He also pointed out that the radical Islamist groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are now coordinating with Da'esh and pose a major strategic threat.

For Russia, according to him, it is important to build a collective response through regional forums such as SCO and CSTO, cooperation with countries like China and Pakistan and is open to even evolve a collective response with the US and Europe.

**Mr. Mustafa El Sagezli**, who had participated in the Libyan revolution against Colonel Gaddafi argued that the Arab Maghreb faces similar threats from radical Islam and extremist group as other parts of the Middle East. He explained that Maghreb region including Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Algeria are a largely homogenous society with a predominant Arab-Sunni-Maliki population with small and scattered population of ethnic, tribal and linguistic minorities. For him the causes of terrorism in Maghreb include:



- Political exclusion and injustice
- Lack of political institutions and democratization
- Lack of professional security apparatus as the existing security apparatus serves the regimes rather than providing security to the people
- Socio-economic problems
- Inequitable distribution of wealth

In his opinion, the extremist organizations prey on vulnerable youth striking chord with their experience and feeling of injustice and lack of options and political participation. Further he underlined that it is easy to attract the youth to Jihad as the historical notion of glorious jihad waged by leaders against colonial powers is fresh in their minds and leaders like Omar al-Mokhtar who waged Jihad against colonial forces are considered a hero.

Further he was of the view that there are ideological and cultural reasons for spread of jihadism and extremism as the despot leaders closed the avenues for the people to seek solution through local religious schools and institutions.

Sagezli argued that to resolve the issue it is important to address the root causes of the problem:

- Need to enter into dialogue with all types of groups to come on the negotiation table and address their grievances
- Morocco was able to address the issue after the Arab Spring through dialogue with radical preachers and address their grievances thus bringing them to the mainstream.
- Need for DDR—Disarming, Demobilization and Reintegration

He concluded by saying that without addressing the root cause of terrorism and radicalism, one cannot expect to resolve the issue.



**Ms. Prabha Rao** in her remarks underlined the problem of AQAP and how the conflict in Yemen is being used by the AQAP to revive its fortunes. She argued that the regional nature of the conflict has further aggravated the situation. She argued that Awlaki and his associates were successful in recruiting a large number of youth in the West and created a strong support base for AQAP in Yemen. She said that the problem in Yemen has security and strategic implications for India as there are reports that some Indians were involved in financial network of AQAP. Further, she pointed out that India has a Yemeni diaspora in Hyderabad and a Zaidi Shia diaspora in Mumbai that maintains commercial and social links with their native place and though there are no reports of any radical activities among

these networks, there are risks and hence possible threat to India. She concluded by reiterating the need for finding a permanent solution to the Yemeni problem through addressing the genuine concerns of both local and regional actors.

**Dr. Frank Ledwidge** spoke on the strategic failure of NATO in West Asia by saying that since 2001 NATO countries have spent almost US\$5 trillion in its operations and activities in Western Asia and has not been able to find any solution. He argued that apart from the failure of political leadership, there is clear case of military failure and that is where the problem lies:



He argued that many top military leaders who have served in Iraq such as General Daniel Bolger and David Petraeus have written in their books about a total lack of clarity in terms of strategic objectives the militaries wished to achieve in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya leading to a major problem. He said that it is due to this lack of clearly defined and understood strategic objectives that the US and NATO have lost the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Hence, after the expenditure of trillions of dollars and tens of thousands death the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan not only remains the same but has rather deteriorated.



The final speaker of the session was **Dr. Eitam Shamir** who articulated the significance of adopting a different military strategy when faced with situations of strategic threats emanating from foreign territory. Shamir argued that there can be two methods of strategic interventions, that is, long term strategic intervention that requires boots on the ground and where armies can be sucked such as the US intervention in Veitnam and the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The other strategy that he defines as “Raiding” is short-term strategic operation where foreign military can carry out effective short and precise operations to neutralize security and strategic threats. He gave example of Israel that is surrounded by adverse strategic situations from all sides and has been able to neutralize

threats from Gaza and other neighboring territories through effective raiding. He argued that Raiding is

cost-effective and low-risk but requires excellent operational planning and intelligence inputs to be precise and minimize collateral damage.

**Observations made and Questions raised during audience interaction:**

- Decline of strategic culture in the West
- Dilemmas of fighting a war for soldiers as well as the changed metrics of victory that creates confusion about strategic objectives
- Russia's plan in Syria and policy decision to divide Syria
- Sino-centricisms in US and NATO's strategic thinking
- The problems of continuing occupation of West Bank by Israel
- Overall criticism of General Petraeus for inability to find a solution in Iraq rather aggravating the situation by arming and mobilizing Sunni extremist forces
- On the continuing problems in Libya and the lack of any visible solution to the crisis in Libya
- Legality and legitimacy of use of Raids as a means to achieve strategic objectives

Ledwidge in his response pointed that there is a need for serious pondering over strategic culture and military-political nexus in the UK and US and concurred that Sino-centrism is real.

Sotnikov said that Russia has no plans to divide Syria and it is looking at finding a solution that is acceptable to all parties and wishes to neutralize security and strategic threats emanating from West Asia for Russia and Central Asia.

Shamir argued that legality of raids should not be an issue because countries like the US, Russia, UK, France have not intervened in other countries based on any international law. However, Sotnikov pointed that Russian intervention in Syria is legitimate because it intervened on the invitation of a legitimate government that falls under a UN charter.

Sagezli reiterated his views that it is the socio-political and economic reforms and revamp and reform of in the security sector that can resolve the problem in Libya.

**Key Takeaways from the Session:**

- ISIS remains a threat despite its imminent military defeat in Iraq and Syria as its fighters drawn from various parts of the world are fast spreading and creating terrorist networks posing a strategic and security threat to the whole world including India.
- The problem of extremism and radicalism cannot be resolved only through military interventions as they can neutralize only the symptoms and not the root cause that are rooted in social, political and economic grievances.
- The Western military interventions failed in Iraq and Afghanistan due to a lack of clearly defined strategic objectives both among the military leadership and the soldiers fighting on the ground.
- The conflict in Yemen is a major challenge for regional players and needs to be resolved through negotiations to neutralize the fast recovery of AQAP that poses a strategic threat to Persian Gulf and beyond.
- Effective military strategies need to be adopted to counter strategic threats without risking major financial and human cost.

Report prepared by Md. Muddassir Quamar, Ph.D., Associate Fellow, West Asia Centre, IDSA.

## Panel V – Regional Perspectives - South and Southeast Asia: The Growing Spectre of Terror



Chairperson : Dr. Sanjay Baru

Lt. Gen.  
Chowdhury Hasan  
Sarwardy

Dr. Ayesha Siddiq

Dr. Ma Xiangwu

Gen. Daya  
Ratnayake

Dr. Kumar  
Ramakrishna

South and South East Asia has grappled with the challenge of radicalism leading to terrorism much before ISIS emerged in this regional theatre. This session attempted to critically analyse the government, military and policing strategies in South and South East Asian responses to extremist movements, radicalism, growing terrorist threats and the impact of homegrown terrorist networks. The session was chaired by **Dr. Sanjaya Baru**, Distinguished Fellow at the USI, who argued that for long Southeast Asia has been ignored in the Indian discourse on Islamic radicalism. It was only with the emergence of ISIS phenomenon that this region attracted global attention. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian has drawn lessons from the sea-based Mumbai terror attack. Sea based terror attacks are a threat to Southeast Asian cities in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Dr. Baru underscored the regional concerns about intensifying radicalism. Radicalism creates the enabling environment in which terrorism takes root and therefore there is a need to trace the domestic sources of terror based on growing radicalisation.



**Lt. Gen. Chowdhury Hasan Sarwardy** from the National Defence College at Mirpur shared the Bangladeshi perspective on countering terrorism. He argued that terrorism in Bangladesh is a new phenomenon compared other South Asian neighbours. Rise of terrorism in South Asia is a spillover effect of the Middle East Crisis, Afghan War, Iraq War and other extra regional factors. Terrorism in Asia is an evolving phenomenon and it continues to adapt in order to meet the challenges emerging from governmental responses and technological developments. Terrorists have increasingly demonstrated their ability to deal with counter-terrorism measures and take advantage of the political failures. Lt. Gen. Sarwardy outlined that Bangladesh has dealt with three kinds of terrorism since independence including politically motivated left wing terrorism following the war of liberation;

independence including politically motivated left wing terrorism following the war of liberation;



insurgency by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti; and militancy by JMD and HujiB. It was emphasised that while poverty and ignorance enable recruitment in the rural areas, corruption, and injustice trigger emotions among the urban youths. ISIS influence is lacking in Bangladesh as of now. The law enforcement agencies following the July 2016 Dhaka café attack made considerable success with local support. Multidimensional counter-terrorism policy, robust law enforcement strategies, attempts at designing counter-narratives and deradicalisation were discussed. It was pointed out that while Bangladesh has banned Hizb ut-Tahrir, others countries have not banned it which enabled them to operate from outside against the Bangladeshi interests. It was argued that Bangladesh aims to practice a holistic approach involving all the national and regional stakeholders to eradicate terrorism. The devised strategy encompasses the conceptual, physical and moral components.

**Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa**, former bureaucrat and political commentator from Pakistan argued that radicalism and terrorism are expanding in South Asia primarily because this region does not have its moment of reckoning that could be equated with the 9/11 in the US. There is no unified moment for South Asia where we have a clear vision about how we should fight this threat. Da'esh is knocking at our doors and the threat is there. We continue to treat it as an externality rather than something that evolved due to factors that are at play inside. She stressed on the significance of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi calling upon his followers to strike at non-Arab players. Given this, South Asia needs to develop a response. However, this will be a difficult exercise. Moreover, jihadi infrastructure in South and Southeast Asia has become more localised over the years. There are franchises. She argued that organisation like Da'esh and Al-Qaeda have poached on local issues, man power, local sources and local organisations. While there are talks about externalities, it is happening right in our midst. Dr. Siddiqa stressed on the factor of political disconnectedness that feeds into the crisis. Besides, all religion is going towards extreme options. There is disconnectedness among the state actors as well. In her analyses, appeasement is unlikely in the next five years among the countries of the region. States continuing treatment of militancy or violent extremism as a tactical strategic option will strengthen these groups as it has done in the past. She argued that this pattern will not change because there is a geopolitical tension between power groups. Dr. Siddiqa suspects that Russia may have interests in turning Afghanistan into America's Vietnam as Americans have done to the former Soviet Union in the 1980s. Chinese and Russian are not hesitant to talk to the Taliban on the assumption that Taliban will be the bulwark against the Da'esh. This argument needs to be contested. In addition, she articulated that radicalism of all forms and religion have proliferated in South Asia. It may not necessarily erupt in violence every time it expand, but it is a source of violence which groups will benefit from. States lack policies on radicalism and unless we address this issue, violent extremism cannot be tackled.

**Dr. Ma Xiangwu** from the Communist Party of China shared his thoughts on *Chinese Experience in Countering Terrorism/Violent Extremism: Policy, Achievements and Challenges*. He argued the case of China being a victim of terrorism in Xinjiang and Tibet. He stressed that as Tibet has better governance compared to Xinjiang and there are effective checks on the traffic in and out of Tibet, China has achieved success in terms of anti-terrorism measures. He shared the effective practices China employed to tackle terrorism including strict identity checks on individuals entering Tibet and Xinjiang and frequent police check points. He highlighted that China's zero tolerance towards explosives, guns and weapons and the policy of killing terrorists in possession of such items have helped China to tackle terrorism. But the terrorists have resorted to knives and suicide bombing. Dr. Ma stressed that terrorism is a long term issue and identified the double standards in international politics about labelling



terrorism. There is no common definition of terrorism and this makes it difficult to evolve a regional response as countries have different interpretations of terrorism. In addition, he drew attention towards the strength of Chinese economy and military capabilities in combating terrorism. However, China lacks effective information sharing and needs to strengthen intelligence gathering. Beijing's greatest worry includes suicide bombing, securing gas pipelines, and cyber terrorism. Moreover, he shared Chinese concerns regarding terrorists from Yunnan, Tibet and Xinjiang who travelled to join terrorist groups beyond borders will one day return home will high degree of training and ideological indoctrination.



**Gen. Daya Ratnayake** shared the Sri Lankan experience on combating Terrorism. He argued that Sri Lanka is the only nation which successfully defeated terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century under a strong political leadership.

This success was achieved in a short time span and since 2009 no terrorist incidents are recorded. Sri Lankan case underlines that terrorism can be defeated by adaptive and innovative militaries and a synchronised application of political, social, diplomatic and economic means. It was stressed that terrorism can be best managed by a comprehensive approach. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was the first terrorist organisation to reinvent suicide terrorism by employing women as suicide bombs. He articulated that defeating terrorism by employing the

instruments of national power by the Sri Lankan government is an example to nations dealing with terrorism. It was pointed out that the theory of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism practiced by the West in recent conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan seem lacking and yet to produce results. Gen. Ratnayake reflected on the total security concept of Sri Lanka and effectiveness of force multiplying with intelligence. Roots of an effective counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency strategy lies in political leadership. Denying external support to terrorist organisation and safe heaven and sanctuaries helped the Sri Lankan fight against terrorism. He underscored that Sri Lankan experience owes its success to a strong political leadership, national will and support of the people, economic stability and innovative military. Peace was achieved by the President and his team while keeping regional actors out of the conflict. Sri Lankan experience is that nations in case of counter-terrorism cooperation prefer bilateral rather than multilateral approach. A common understanding based on broadly agreed objectives may shape policies but cooperation would reduce to bilateral level. However, a common stand on issues of contention is required. He recommended that regional cooperation should not just confine to combating terrorism but also include a preventive approach based on capacity building of vulnerable nations.

**Dr. Kumar Ramakrishna** from RSIS in Singapore shared his perspectives on the *Evolving ISIS Threat to Southeast Asia*. He situated the ISIS phenomenon in wider perspective as part of the evolving global Al Qaeda movement and further focused on the emerging trend of “DIY Extremists” or Lone Wolves and its implications. The date 29 June, 2014 is important in Southeast Asia when ISIS declared a Caliphate. It has a huge symbolic and psychological impact on some Muslim communities globally. Dr. Ramakrishna calls ISIS as an Al Qaeda “Mutation”. The current configuration of the globalised Al Qaeda movement comprises ‘four distinct, but not mutually exclusive, dimensions’ in ‘descending order of sophistication.’ This includes Al Qaeda Central, Al



Qaeda Affiliates and Associates, Al Qaeda Network and Al Qaeda Galaxy. Drawing from Bruce Hoffman, it was stressed that what holds this global Al Qaeda movement (which includes ISIS) together is an ideological narrative of 'a shared sense of enmity and grievance towards the United States and the West in general, and their host nations in particular'. He reflected on the ISIS penetration into Southeast Asia. ISIS has strong ideological reach and support within the region, especially in Indonesia for eg. Aman Abdurrahman, Bahasa websites and publications like Dabiq, al Fatihin. ISIS appears to have transformed the operational transnational terrorist threat picture. Future attacks could come from local groups on behalf of ISIS for eg. Jakarta attacks, returning foreign fighters and self-radicalised lone wolves. The centre of gravity of the ISIS threat is its Ideology and hence the counter-ISIS messaging is crucial. Effective use of social media platforms has been recommended. He articulated the need for immunising our multicultural societies against the attempts of ISIS to split them, helping young people build mental and theological firewalls against ISIS narratives and promoting theological baseline by religious leaders.

### **Key Takeaways from the Session:**

- Bangladesh's serious concerns over Rohingya refugee crisis and the possibility of these refugees getting exploited by the extremist groups emerged during the session. They are vulnerable to traffickers, smugglers and other vested groups. The failure of regional focus on this issue may turn the Bangladesh-Myanmar border a new theatre of jihad. The implications will not be limited to Bangladesh but it will affect regional peace and stability considerably. Threats from radicalised Rohingyas are a huge concern and India should take the lead in addressing the regional concerns.
- China perceives terrorism as a long term issue. The double standards in international politics about labelling terrorism was identified by the Chinese speaker. There is no common definition of terrorism and this makes it difficult to evolve a regional response as countries have different interpretations of terrorism. Chinese definition of terrorism contains three elements- (a) organisation (b) terrorists themselves and (c) the activities they perform. Chinese definition is still evolving. International community can get further clarity on Chinese definition later this month when China unveils the anti-terrorism law. Broadly, terrorism to China is any terrorist organisation or activities that intent to cause destruction to the government or society.
- China is investigating the issue of designating Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. This issue should be cautiously handled given the complexity of relations involving India, China and Pakistan.
- Chinese and Russian are not hesitant to talk to the Taliban on the assumption that Taliban will be the bulwark against the Da'esh. This argument needs to be contested.
- There is no unified moment for South Asia where we have a clear vision about how we should fight this threat. Political disconnectedness feeds into the crisis. Appeasement is unlikely in the next five years among the countries of the region.
- The effectiveness of operation Zarb-e-Azb is open to debate. The narrative of good Taliban and Bad Taliban will probably continue.
- Radicalism is a middle class project. New modernity is much more radical. Unless there are interventions by liberal forces across the region, this issue will not be resolved.
- Lone wolf phenomenon will increase. Lone operators or lone wolves can become significant players because the internet gives indiscriminate access to information about targets and types of weapons. The Lone wolf may potentially employ IEDs, or downstream CBRN weapons/material and escalate the number of civilian casualties. One manifestation of the Lone Wolf is the insider threat as ISIS has radicalised sensitive appointments.
- The perception that Sri Lankan military is overriding is incorrect. Sri Lankan solution was not a

military solution. Military just helped in stabilising and strengthening democracy. The solution has been led by political leaders. Sri Lankan victory has two parts. First is the physical elimination of the threat which was achieved in May 2009 and second is the psychological elimination of the threat which is an ongoing process. Social, political, and economic stability alone could lead to reconciliation. Sri Lanka tackled rehabilitation process effectively.

Report prepared by Dr Titli Basu, Associate Fellow, East Asia Centre, IDSA

## Panel VI – Constructing Effective Counter Narratives: The Need for a Global Response



Chairperson Mr. Syed Asif Ibrahim,

Lt. General S A Hasnain	H.E. Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun	Dr. Adil Rasheed	Mr. SM Sahai,	Dr. A.R. Anjaria	Dr. Kalbe Sadiq
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The sixth session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Security Conference was on the theme “Constructing Effective Counter-narratives: The Need for A Global Response”. The session was chaired by **Shri. Syed Asif Ibrahim**, Indian Prime Minister’s Special Envoy on “Countering Terrorism and Extremism. The chair began the session by commenting on the need to have international cooperation to counter international terrorism. He briefly mentioned the various facets to countering terrorism that include cyber, technology, ideological domains, among others. Finally, the chair said, it all comes down to a clash of ideas. Stressing on the importance of ideas, he opined that while the Islamic State (IS) may be on retreat today, but as long as its ideology remains it will mutate into something new and find presence in new areas. Therefore, it is important to have a narrative (to counter this).



The first speaker in the session was **Lt. General S.A. Hasnain**, Former GOC 15 Corps, Srinagar, who spoke on the subject “Crafting a narrative for Kashmir”. He elucidated on the nature of the conflict in Kashmir, calling it “hybrid”, and said that one cannot wait to create a counter-narrative in a hybrid context. Therefore, it is important to emphasize on strategic culture. Agreeing with the chair, the speaker opined that ideology is a key element and gave the example of how General Zia's conception of jihad in Kashmir was centred on ideology. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley in the early 1990s was not entirely political, as is commonly believed, but had an ideological angle to it. General Hasnain then spoke about Kashmiri Islam noting that it was more Sufi in character,

which has changed considerably. Local clergy and ideas have been replaced so much that character of Islam in valley has changed. The Valley is now seeing a return to suicide terrorism and fidayeen phases – this is combined with street turbulence to cause more problems. The Islamic flag is seen widely and used

to inspire the *ummah*; Friday sermons have become radical and call for resistance to the security forces. There is also a change to the faces of the movement: initially led by those in their 20s, this has come down to 14-16 year olds. Such things can intimidate security forces and let terrorists escape. The Pakistani strategy is to enhance this problem and provoke popular dissatisfaction.

The speaker also opined that the Indian security approach in Kashmir appears to be aimless and this is where the Indian establishment has gone wrong. There is no long-term strategy to tackle the problem. A “whole-of-government” approach is required to combat this hybrid form of warfare. Change in the mindset is important and counter-terrorism narratives are very important in this context. There is a need to depoliticise the mosque system in the Valley in order to connect to the youth. Sports, music festivals are great diversions in a highly securitised situation, but such things not happening in the valley. Madrasa integration is very important and this is not occurring. There is a need for direct outreach and involvement in grassroots politics. The gender equation is also important as the role of women has recently been extremely negative. There are few local Kashmiri idols the young can look forward to. There is a need to connect to local Jamat-e-Islami and such organisations as well as reach out to the youth on social media. It is very important to listen to criticism – it functions as an outlet for grievances and the same criticism could then be turned into an advantage. An avenue that can be explored is to see if enlightened ulema from rest of India can be accepted in Kashmir? The disconnect between Muslims in the rest of India Kashmir should be encouraged to be removed.

There is an urgent need to restore/re-develop the self-esteem of the public. Counter-narratives and public perception needs to account for the psyche of a child growing up in that securitised environment. Anything positive done there will add to the counter-narrative. A comprehensive government approach is required to handle this issue.

The second speaker was **Dr Adil Rasheed** who elucidated on the topic “The Deconstruction of the Jihadist Narrative”. He began by saying that there is a need to look at the jihadi narrative itself before developing counter-narratives to it. There is paucity of literature that critically analyses contemporary jihadi narratives. What is often not apparent is that there are competing jihadisms in play at the same time, for example, of the Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. Also, it must be understood that jihadis are very well aware of the counter-narrative efforts. From their perspective, ours is the narrative and theirs are the counter-narratives, an alternate view. Thus, it is important to reinvigorate modern liberal counter narratives that are under attack from even non-jihadi sources in such a context.



While devising counter narratives, it is important to understand the typical mindset of a religious devout. Liberalism espouses ideas of humanism, religious idealism places God above Man. Liberalism has its own set of values, religious ideals have a different set of 'truths' such as belief in God, man's moral weakness, and need for divine and absolute laws to protect and regulate society. What has occurred in the context of jihadism is that purveyors of the faith have sold the concept of “God” to believers. Jihadism might have traditional trappings but it is a modern construct that derives both from within Islam and without. The introduction of terrorism into jihad is a modern innovation by Al Qaeda that ostensibly opposes any innovation in Islam as a cardinal sin except by those who practice it.

Dr Rasheed advocated that the efforts to develop counter-narratives should go beyond Islamic counter-narratives and also look at finding political, historical, psychological, and tactical counter-narratives, for example. It has to be a much wider effort than looking at religion alone, as many of the root causes of the

spread of a jihadi ideology are political, economic, social and not just ideological. There is also a need to evolve institutions – be they national or regional nodal agencies – that can generate a counter-narrative database as part of a comprehensive and meticulously calculated strategic communication against all forms of radicalization, in particular jihadist radicalisation. Also, there should be both overt and covert counter-narratives for localized radicalisation as well as that caused by regional and global events. Finally, the government should avoid getting into the “good/bad” sect approach while crafting these counter-narratives – that is, do not promote one Islamic sect over another.



The next speaker was **Dr Kalbe Sadiq**, who spoke on the topic “Narratives for Countering Jihad”. Dr Sadiq began by saying that it is incorrect to say that Islam has no space for non-Islamic people. He clarified that human life is sanctified above even the *namaz and roza* in Islam. Faith cannot become higher or be considered as being higher than human life. This, according to him, is a misconception that needs to end. He stated that organisations and ideologies such as the Al Qaeda and Islamic State do not represent Islam, and that the ideologies and actions of these groups are akin to “cutting the neck” of the faith. Dr Sadiq further clarified that the concept of jihad in Islam is a last resort and *not* the first. Also, there are significant restrictions before jihad is allowed and also once it is undertaken: for example, one

cannot kill a wounded man, someone who has laid down arms, or desecrate a corpse. The jihadis seem to be unaware of the right definition or conception of jihad.

Dr Sadiq opined that each religion has a focal point as does Islam. In Islam this is the establishment of a “just system”. Injustice causes resistance but Islam does not permit the Muslim to cause another injustice. Islam seeks a just system for all. He suggested that the government should not use pellet guns in Kashmir as this would have long-term implications. He also said that Kashmiris must integrate with this country and vice versa. Dr Sadiq suggested that there is a need to pursue the Jamat-e-Islami and other organisations in Kashmir, explain the concept of jihad to them and inform them about its problems, as this would then become a counter-narrative. He also discussed how the Sharia is haphazard construct but has an in-built logic. Its key pillar is that there should be nothing in Sharia that goes against

- logic;
- justice; and
- it places human needs and sanctity above all else.

The next speaker, **Mr. S.M. Sahai**, spoke on the topic “Understanding Sufism to influence extremism in Kashmir”. He discussed how the roots of jihad in Kashmir lie in the diversion of terror groups in the post-Soviet Afghan war. Orthodox Muslim groups rode on the back of terror movements that came into the Valley to promote their radicalisation. The disturbances led to an administrative and political vacuum and even the concept of “Kashmiriyat” was diluted. He mentioned how in the 1990s and later, Kashmiri/Shia shrines were burnt. Mr Sahai then elucidated on how there is a tendency to



selectively interpret the Quran. He spoke of the Hadith-e-Jibril in the Quran that talks of Islam, Iman and I'hsan. Islam speaks of the five key practices of Islam; Iman is a belief in Allah, books, angels and the prophets; and I'hsan is the worship of Allah as he is in front of you – while you can't see him, he can see you. Therefore, your conduct has to be good as Allah is seeing you. The concept of Sufism comes out of I'hsan, that is, the devotion to god. This comes from Al Ghazali. Sufism came to Kashmir as elsewhere – a Sufi preacher would travel, create a seminary to preach devotion, love and assimilation. When he died the seminary became a tomb, a syncretic space. According to Sahai, there is a need to bring back that syncretic seminary space in Kashmir while also de-emphasising the polytheistic aspect of shrines.

Then Mr Sahai spoke of how political parties need to engage with the youth; how empowerment is needed at grassroots level; how education needs to be improved; and many more outlets other than sports need to be created. Kashmiri youth have global aspirations as their counterparts in the rest of the country, and these aspirations need to be recognised. He then spoke of how social media reinforces identities. There needs to be a realisation that culture and religion are deeply connected, and that culture is also deeply connected to a sense of belonging. One shouldn't thus be promoted at the cost of another. He spoke of the need to encourage a Sufi revival in Kashmir. In this regard, a chair could be established at Kashmir University on the promotion of I'hsan.



The final speaker was **Dr A.R. Anjaria** who spoke on the topic “Use of Quran and Fatwas to enable change”. He stated how the Quran elaborates on itself – in that it guides the way to those who believe, promises reward to those who do good work. Terrorist organisations like the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, Taliban, and Boko Haram all claim that they are the “real followers” of Islam (although that is not the case). Dr Anjaria mentioned how the Quran has aspects that can be used for social justice and change. Fatwas can have a creative use with a negative connotation. India has issued the largest fatwa in the world against the Islamic State ISIS that included signatures of 1,000 clerics and scholars from various sects such as Bohras, Salafias, Bareilvis, Deobandis, etc. This fatwa terms the ISIS as “un-Islamic”.

Such initiatives are getting good traction with Muslims. He also discussed how zakat, one of the pillars of Islam, can be put to positive use as well. In 2015, the global zakat collection amounted to \$206 billion. Yet, 1/4th of the total Muslim population in the world lives on less than \$1.5 per day. Where is the money going? It appears to be going into the funding of jihadis and for proselytizing. There can be better uses for this money. Finally, Dr Anjaria stressed on how an assertive (and positive) aspect of Islam needs to be highlighted and propagated.

Report prepared by Ms Neha Kohli, Associate Editor, Journal of Defence Studies, IDSA.



## *Panel VII – The Asian Response to Combatting Terror: The Way Forward*



Chairperson: Commodore C. Uday Bhaskar

Round up comments - DG, IDSA, Shri Jayant Prasad

The Valedictory session began with a recap of the fundamental themes discussed over the previous two days of the conference. The main aim of the presentation was to recapitulate the key questions that had been raised at the beginning of the conference and to examine the extent to which they had been answered. The session was chaired by **Cmde. Uday Bhaskar**, and a panellist was chosen from each of the previous sessions to articulate his/her views on the way forward from here on. The session was set up by a brief overview of the key takeaways analysed by **Ms Shruti Pandalai**, Co-ordinator of the 19th ASC and Associate Fellow at IDSA.

**Cmde. Uday Bhaskar** began the session by laying the framework within which the rest of the discussants could air their views. Some of the main issues he asked the speakers to address were

- Whether an Asian response could be formulated?
- What were the key takeaways/policy issues that could be flagged?
- The need to extend the extremist narrative beyond religion.
- The need to examine issues related to ideology, and the frameworks that helped shape ideology such as family/education, etc.

**Ms Shruti Pandalai**, then drew up a succinct summary of how the panellists and conference discussions had attempted to address some of the questions posed on the conceptual, normative, global and regional challenges framed in the concept note she had prepared on Combating Terrorism. The analysis of all the key take away from the sessions provided the foundation for discussion points in the valedictory panel.

**Shri Jayant Prasad, Director General, IDSA** further explained that the conference was aimed at seeking greater comprehension regarding the geographic spread that surrounds terrorism. He stated that despite being regional, Terrorism does not exist in silos and affects the entire world. The heterogeneity of Asia makes framing a cohesive response difficult. Furthermore, the rise of social media and easily accessible public tools and platforms have enabled terrorists to evolve new forms of proselytisation. Terrorist threats have become more hybrid and transnational and responses to address these threats need

to be amended accordingly. The abdication of control by legitimised social authorities has led to the vacation of an ideational space by States which is being filled by extremist outfits. There is a tremendous similarity with the past despite the emergent innovations and mutations that have taken place since then. He demonstrated this point by explaining that while Da'esh is more sectarian and brutal than the Taliban, there is still a continuum between their ideological leanings. He concluded by saying that there is a need to capture the essence of the discussion/deliberation surrounding this issue and convert it into a framework of action.

The first panellist, **Dr. Sotnikov**, provided a Russian perspective on the formulation of an Asian response. He talked about how a strong response could be crafted through discussions at the SCO with the help of Russia and China. He stated that there was a need to setup a special fora/arrangement to discuss the 'hot questions of terrorism'. These deliberations could be used to elicit practical recommendations that would aid in the fight against international/homegrown terrorism. He recommended that governments work with a tripartite structure in CT operations by laying out short term, medium terms and long term plans for the same.

The next speaker, **Maj. Gen. Durrani**, re-articulated a few key points that had emerged from his panel. He spoke about the need to develop an Asian response by setting up mechanisms to discuss these issues at a governmental level. He reiterated the fact that while India and Pakistan have problematic histories together, it is essential that these be set aside to counter the larger issue of terrorism. Gen. Durrani stated that there is a need to progress and not regress. Pakistan has been fighting terrorism since 2004, and two-third of its Army is still employed in Counter Terrorism operations. He emphasised that regional insecurities and blame games were the main reason why terrorism was flourishing. Since the strength of a terrorist is their ideology, it is this root cause that needs to be attacked. He claimed that the lawnmower strategy of cutting down the limbs of terrorism was no longer enough to counter such a continually transformative threat. He concluded by reiterating the need for a counter narrative and emphasising the fact that nations like Pakistan, Afghanistan and India need to communicate with each other since the cooperation between these countries needs to be ideational as well as physical.

**Dr. Anne Speckhard** spoke about the sociological and psychological aspects of dealing with terrorism. She mentioned that Terrorist groups and their ideologies are spread across global platforms but that the threat is very much a local phenomenon. She stated that the Military cannot defeat an idea and currently the terrorist ideology is resonating very strongly with the youth globally. Since migration and homegrown terrorism are major issues, Dr Speckhard said that there was a need to engage with the question of why this ideology is resonating with the youth so deeply. She spoke about the need to listen to and understand the sentiments of the youth and deal with the marginalisation and economic disenfranchisement that is driving them towards radicalism. She concluded by saying that while Terrorist groups are agile and creative, their own methodologies need to be used against them successfully.

**Dr. Frank Ledwidge** examined issues of military psychology in dealing with extremist violence. He spoke about the fact that the term narrative is often misused and needs to be accorded due impetus at all levels. Furthermore he reinstated the fact that breaking the brand would require deep removal and not mere superficial containment. He stated that the need of the hour is to develop a brand that can compete actively aggressively and successfully against extremist ideology. Furthermore he spoke about how these operations cannot be conducted on a transnational basis if aimed at national threats.

**Dr. Ramakrishna** spoke about the need to deconstruct the term ‘Radical Islamic Terrorism’. He elicited the fact that each word of that phrase is heavily loaded with symbolic misconceptions and needs to be deconstructed. He stated that a difference needs to be established between radical and extremist. Radicals are those who want fundamental change but not through the use of violence. They can be rehabilitated and successfully brought back into the mainstream. Furthermore they can also be used to propagate the counter-narrative against radicalism itself. Extremists on the other hand are more close minded with black and white thinking. Secondly Dr. Ramakrishna spoke about the need to make a distinction between Islamic and Islamist both of which propagate very different symbolic messages. Finally he spoke about the need to replace the term Terrorism with ecosystem since these are fundamentally networks of power that need to be addressed and countered at social, economic and organisational levels.

The next speaker, **Dr. Adil Rasheed** highlighted the fact that the ideology of extremism stems from the narrative of Salafi jihadism. He spoke about the need to name the tradition that was acting as a driver towards radicalisation and extremism. He spoke about the fact that since we have a huge Salafi/Wahhabi population in India, there is a need to engage with them in order to separate them from the Jihadi discourse. He further stated that engaging in dialogue/bringing on board the Shia/Sunni people does not serve the purpose, as the target audience remains alienated. He concluded by saying that there is a need for a global re-conceptualisation of the ideological extremist narrative that currently exists. Such an engagement and reconceptualisation of the narrative should seek to provide clarity against Salafi Jihadism. In order to bring down the monolithic ideological structure, it is necessary to engage with its individual constituents and thereby create a more holistic counter narrative.

**Dr. Waiel Awwad** continued this idea regarding the deconstruction of the narrative by providing a critique of the political response to terrorism. He spoke about how every nation has the right to follow its own path as long as it adheres to the International law. Historically religion has constantly been used/misused to further proliferate violence. He spoke about countering the narrative of the ‘select few’ and the fact that our deeds and coexistence should be the practice to show people good citizenship. He added a fundamental point regarding the fact that it is dangerous to reduce terrorism to religion. The two must be separated before an effective counter-narrative can be structured. Furthermore he spoke about the need to aid troubled nation states instead of trying to contain them through sanctions. He spoke about the fact that ‘War has no winners’, and that social/political/economic discourses should benefit the Global citizen and not individual human beings.

The next speaker **Mr. Saikat Datta** spoke about the fact that there was a need to reassess the means with which we approach such counter-narratives. He spoke about technology as a force multiplier but once again fundamentally reiterated the fact that most attacks stemmed from the efficient use of available technology as opposed to the use of advanced technology. He reiterated the idea that unless you have the right people in the room, you cannot create a successful counter narrative since the parameters of engagement would be fundamentally flawed. In order to engage with the target audience successfully. Technology should not be used to define political ends but as a means to create an ethically viable counter narrative. He concluded by saying that an efficient counter-narrative requires a fundamental level of engagement and understanding and that the right to a Cyberspace free from governmental intervention should not be sacrificed under the label of the greater good.

The final speaker **Ambassador Sanjay Singh** spoke about the fact that the focus of the conference was on West Asia where most of the Extremist movements are emerging. But he also reminded the audience that the larger global picture also needs to be kept in mind while formulating regional responses. Since

70 percent of India/China/Japan's oil comes from West Asia, instability in that region would be deleterious to global dynamics. A holistic Asian response would require various countries to come together, and address their root causes and differences through capacity building measures. He also spoke about how such efforts should further be extended towards developing rules, norms and frameworks to combat terrorism.

The chair concluded the discussion by focusing the various points that had emerged and bringing them together. He spoke about the fact that after 9/11, terrorism and the need to combat it has become a global issue. He used frameworks of critical theory to talk about the idea/manifestation of terrorism and its root cause terror in itself. He reiterated the need to engage with a cognitive discourse surrounding the spectre of global terrorism today. He further iterated the fact that for policy makers and people extrapolating to the region, there is a need to arrive at a common semantic consensus for the term terrorism itself. He spoke about the fact that mutuality is not an acceptance but a degree to which you can cooperate despite recognising problematic/contradictory compulsions. Cmde. Bhaskar used a Foucauldian model of analysis to examine how narratives and the power of discourses work. He spoke about how they could be utilised, manipulate, and exploited. Power as a conceptual framework can be inclusive and exclusive and in order to create a successful counter narrative the politics of inclusion and exclusion need to be addressed. He spoke about the fundamental truth that the victim of terrorism is not the scholar or the policy maker but the common man and that there was a need to harmonise narratives and introduce empathy.

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