



Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

CAPS RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

Interactive Discussion: CAPS- Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command and Staff College

Chairperson: Air Marshall Vinod Patney (Retd), DG, CAPS

Speakers: Dr Shalini Chawla, Senior Fellow, CAPS

Dr Sitakanta Mishra, Research Fellow, CAPS

Wg Cdr M K Sharma , Research Fellow, CAPS

Ms Sana Hashmi, Associate Fellow, CAPS

Rapporteur: Dr Temjenmeren Ao, Research Associate, CAPS

Date: 11 May 2015

A 35-member delegation including Directing Staff of Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command and Staff visited CAPS between 1030-1200h on May 11, 2015. The delegation included course officers from Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, New Zealand, the US, the UK, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Oman, China, Indonesia and Thailand. Air Mshl Vinod Patney (Retd), Director General, CAPS, welcomed the delegates.

Dr Shalini Chawla, Senior Fellow, CAPS, gave a brief account of the current situation in Afghanistan focussing on the major issues, concerns and challenges. She opined that the political transition currently happening in Afghanistan is a matter of concern and poses many challenges. She



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spoke of the continued U.S. presence and underscored their military strikes despite the role being limited to just training and advising. Dr Chawla highlighted three transitions in Afghanistan: First, Political Transition – due to a unique democratic setup, political consensus is a major problem. Second, Economic Transition – from being an aid dependent to a self-sufficient economy. And third, Security Transition – wherein Afghans have to take responsibility for their own security. To achieve these transitions the Afghan government needs to control corruption within, have a well equipped army and tackle ethnic conflicts. She felt that the Taliban might take advantage of the transition and the ISIS may try expanding territorial control in Afghanistan as the drug trade continues to flourish. Pakistan is the most important player in the region but it needs to change its attitude to be able to bring about positive changes. China's vested interest is mainly wired down to its economic investments and to resolve its own problems in Xinjiang. India treats Afghanistan as a socio-economic priority which is further limited by Pakistan's ambition in the region.

Dr Sitakanta Mishra, Research Fellow, CAPS, discussed the current round of NPT Review Conference highlighting the impact of humanitarian efforts on nuclear disarmament negotiations. Article 6 stresses the need to pursue nuclear negotiations in good faith. There is slow movement towards NPT. The non-nuclear states draw attention to an existing legal gap. Humanitarian initiative groups have brought a paradigm shift in the NPT negotiations. They argue that no state has the capability to address the immediate or long term consequences, post a nuclear explosion. Despite this, no consensus has emerged within the NPT.

Dr Sitakanta discussed Pakistan's 'first use' policy of its nuclear weapons and its continued participation in the humanitarian initiative despite such a policy. India, on the other hand has been an advocate of nuclear disarmament and had sponsored it in the United Nations. India is committed to using nuclear technology for only peaceful purposes and clearly states that the use of WMD is the gravest threat to humanity. With its firm belief in a 'No first use' doctrine. India was prepared to convert its bi-lateral and multi-lateral "No first use" into "Global No First Use"; as proposed by our former PM Manmohan Singh. Dr Sitakanta, underscored the fact that it took the world 68 years since



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the Geneva conference to reach 'No first use' in the aftermath of the chemical and biological weapons used by countries like Japan, China, in World War II. He concluded that nuclear weapons are not usable weapons as they cannot be used to help win wars, and this needs to be realised.

Wg Cdr M K Sharma presented an Indian perspective on Cyber Security. He observed that today everything connected to the internet can be hacked and that everything is connected to the internet. There exist major dilemmas for nation states to counter cyber security risks of which the economic risk is considered the highest. Further, hacking into systems doesn't require sophistication; even non-experts can easily hack into systems. Wg Cdr Sharma also spoke on the current global debate on internet governance and highlighted the four tracks on internet governance mechanism: Technical, UN, Regional and Multilateral. He spoke of the growth of the internet in India and its major concerns mainly; legal, economic and military. He highlighted India's pragmatic approach in the midst of multilateralism vs multistakeholderism on the issue of internet governance.

Dr Chawla also responded to a question on the comparison of security situation before the arrival of the US on the scene in Afghanistan and now. She opined that it is much worse than it was before; it is uncontrollable now. She added that Pakistan cannot play a positive role in Afghanistan since it does not have the right objectives: it uses it as a base to train non-state actors against India. On the issue of women in Afghanistan – given the fact that it was mentioned by the Taliban in the recent Qatar peace process – whether they would have a political role to play, she said that the Taliban is trying to build credibility. What they do once they become a part of the political governance will be another matter.

On the question of the role of non-nuclear states on nuclear deterrence, Dr Mishra stated that it was essential to understand the existence of a legal gap and the need to outlaw nuclear weapons just like other WMD such as chemical, biological, and so on. The focus should be on humanitarian rather than nuclear deterrence.



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Ms Sana Hashmi, Associate Fellow, CAPS, gave a small presentation on the South China Sea. Ms Hashmi, brought out how today the scope has been shifted from Europe towards Asia and from land to maritime disputes; with China yet to settle all its maritime disputes. China's Defense White Paper, declares its interest in defending its disputed territories in the South China Sea and the Senkaku Island which belong to China historically, according to the paper. She highlighted the importance of the South China Sea for China: a busy sea route/ link, reserves of natural oil and gas, and so on. Brunei, which is also involved in this dispute, has, however, opted for multilateralism for resolution of dispute. She concluded that the South China Sea dispute needs to be resolved. She asserted that no war is likely to take place and that status-quo would be maintained; however, prevention should be taken in order to avoid the escalation of tension in the region.

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])

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