



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

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**Title:** CAPS - CAST Interaction Seminar on  
**RESURGENT RUSSIA'S LONG ROAD IN CURRENT  
INTERNATIONAL GEOPOLITICS:  
*INTERESTS, IMPLICATIONS AND PROSPECTS***

**Chairperson:** Amb Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary of India

**Speakers:** Capt Maxim Shepovalenko, Deputy Director, Centre for  
Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Moscow

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The Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), along with the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST) organised a joint seminar on “Resurgent Russia’s Long Road in Current International Geopolitics: Interests, Implications and Prospects.” The seminar highlighted the years of cooperation between India and Russia, and reflected on the changing dynamics of the relationship in the face of an evolving international political system.



**Opening Remarks**

*Amb Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary of India*

- India and Russia's relationship is based on shared commonalities and interests, such as:
  - Both the nations are more than a regional power, but they are not super powers yet;
  - Both the nations are caught up in similar political situation in their neighbourhoods. There is a strong influence of one emerging super power and super power in their immediate neighbourhood (China for India, and USA for Russia respectively);
  - Both the nations have a hostile relationship with an immediate neighbour, with whom they share a political, cultural, and social history (Pakistan for India, and Ukraine for Russia).
  - Both the nations enjoy a strategic geographical location, and neither of them is a part of a military alliance. Further, both the countries advocate multipolarity.
- India and Russia should be force multipliers for each other and not for other global powers. Attempts should be made to look beyond the military needs of the two nations. The two states should look at other areas of collaboration like that of dual use technologies. Russia is an energy surplus country, whereas, India is energy deficient. Through collaboration and policy initiatives, the growing energy demands can be addressed. Military exercises between the two nations should also be expanded to involve the para-military forces.
- India's attempt to scout for newer sources of equipment for the defence sector should not be interpreted as a dilution of India-Russia relationship. India is only seeking to obtain technologies and platforms that Russia cannot provide.

## Current State of the Russian Aerospace Force and the Syrian Campaign

*Capt Maxim Shepovalenko, Deputy Director, CAST, Moscow*

- The Russian Air Campaign in Syria began on September 30, 2015. This is the largest Soviet/Russian air campaign since the War in Afghanistan in 1979 to 1989. This is also the first time ever since the demise of the Soviet Union that Russia has intervened militarily abroad across the perimeter of the former USSR.
- The campaign has three aims:
  - The official goal of the campaign is stated to be an interdictory effort to neutralise the evolving barbaric and extremist Islamic State;
  - The campaign also aims to provide assistance to the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and consolidate his military and political position;
  - Through the aforementioned points, the campaign is also an attempt to initiate a dialogue with the US.
- Russian deployment in Syria comprises seven squadrons:
  - 12 Su-34 tactical bombers;
  - 12 Su-24M tactical bombers;
  - 16 Su-30SM + 4 Su-27SM3 multirole fighters;
  - 12 Su-25SM/UB ground attack aircraft;
  - 12 Mi-24P attack helicopters;
  - 12 M-8AMTSh assault and transport helicopters; and
  - Four Su-35S multirole fighters (deployed on January 30, 2016).
- Following the inauguration of truce from March 15, 2016, the Russian Aerospace Task Force has been downsized. The current deployment is as follows:
  - Four Su-34 tactical bombers;
  - 12 Su-24M tactical bombers;
  - Four Su-30SM multirole fighters;
  - Four Su-35S multirole fighters;
  - Four Mi-28N attack helicopters;
  - Four Ka-52 attack helicopters; and
  - Unspecified number of Mi-35M attack helicopters.

- The air campaign was staged in three phases:

Phase	Duration	Sorties per day, min/max	Sorties per aircraft	Targets destroyed per one sortie
Phase 1	30 Sep to 16 Nov 2015	20 / 90 (100)	1.65	1
Phase 2	17 Nov 2015 to 14 Mar 2016	30 / 80 (100)	2.07	3-3.3
Phase 3	15 Mar 2016 to date	20 / 40	0.75	n/a

- The Air Defence assets include the Buk-M2/SA-17 Grizzly Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems and the Pantsyr-S1/SA-22 Greyhound Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Gun and Missile (SPAAGM) systems.
- The airfield perimeter defence force includes a combination of Army and Naval Infantry units of more than 1,500 men (arguably, 3,000 by now), and it also features the Special Forces. The perimeter defence force is equipped with T-90S main battle tanks (MBTs), an array of armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs), and 152mm 2A65 Msta-B towed howitzers.
- In Syria, Russians employed Air Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCM) and Precision Guided Munitions (PGM); however, their use was limited, and the Russians primarily relied on unguided ordnance. Furthermore, the Russian Aerospace Force lacks targeting pods and HALE UAVs, and it did not send its newest combat helicopters, the Mi-28N and Ka-52, to Syria because they are still not operational.
- For the first time, Russia employed conventionally-tipped cruise missiles, including the air-launched Kh-101 and Kh-555, as well as the sea-launched Kalibr-NK/Kalibr-PL, both from surface combatants and submarines. This campaign also marked the first use of KAB-500S guided bomb units that feature satellite-guidance system.

- Syria served as a testing ground for new weapons and tactics, and the Aerospace Force gained invaluable operational experience in Syria. It combat tested the Su-30SM, the Su-34, the Su-35S, ALCMs, PGMs, and UAVs.
- The campaign demonstrates the operational readiness of the Russian Aerospace Force and its ability to sustain a high Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO), even when operating from remote bases within the Russian territory. However, the impact seems to be less than expected because of poor coordination between the Russian forces and the Syrian ground forces.

### **Shifting Trends in Russia-China Relations and its Impact on India**

*Ms Chandra Rekha, Associate Fellow, CAPS*

- The changing dynamics of global power politics has brought Russia and China closer. United States and its policies aimed at curtailing the rise and influence of both Russia and China in global affairs is one of the key factors for their robust partnership. The anti-Russia rhetoric, coupled with NATO's expansionist policies and encirclement of a resurgent Russia and the growing US presence in the Asia-Pacific region, is also a matter of concern for Beijing. Russia's announcement of its 'Pivot to Asia' strategy is seen as a response to the Ukraine crisis, irrational sanction policies, and isolation by the international community.
- Post the US drawdown from Afghanistan, the stability and security of the region has become a major cause of concern to many countries, including Russia and China, as the region is vulnerable to domestic unrest, intra-state rivalry, and Islamist extremism emanating from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, coupled with the exponential growth of drug trafficking.
- The new era of relations between Russia and China has the potential to change the architecture of global politics. It would be interesting to see what the growing proximity between China and Russia would mean for India; given the former is a nuclear power neighbour who has often posed a threat to India's interest, and the latter being India's most trusted and reliable partner.

- An important area of concern for India is that Russia has agreed to sell weapons to China, and also Pakistan, in order to keep its Defence Industrial Complex (DIC) operational.
  - The Central Asian Republics are actively involved in the geopolitics of the region. A key challenge that India faces is in strengthening its economic ties with the Central Asian Republics to gain access to their resources. Becoming a permanent member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2017 will allow India to overcome this challenge, and will also provide a platform for India, China, Pakistan, and Russia to accommodate each other's interests.
  - India along with Russia and China is an ardent advocate of a multi-polar world order that stands for non-monopolisation of power and decision making on key global issues.
  - Although India, Russia and China promote a multi-polar world, the countries involved are not equal in might and have different growth performance, which would lead to constant competition among them.
  - Counter-terrorism is another convergence point for India, Russia and China. All three countries share security concerns emanating from the Af-Pak region, as Afghanistan becomes a crucial transit point in order to access the energy rich Central Asian Region, and in secure execution of the TAPI pipeline project.
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