

Foreign Policy Association  
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## Terrorism, the West and the ISIS Threat

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James Q. Roberts, Office of Secretary of Defense Chair and assistant professor of strategic leadership at the Eisenhower School, National Defense University, in Washington, DC, addressed the Foreign Policy Association on September 24.

Roberts prefaced his remarks by saying that they were his personal views and meant to stimulate conversation.

He said that while military force may tend to suppress terrorism groups in the Middle East, it does not ultimately defeat them. In fact, it often results in the groups fighting back all the harder, further intensifying the region's animosity toward the West.

Roberts cited the Napoleonic invasion of 1798 as the starting point of present-day hostilities with the Muslim world. Over the years, the situation has been exacerbated by Western colonization, interference in local affairs and the draining of natural resources, namely oil.

Many people in the Middle East resent what they consider the West's attempt to alter their way of life by introducing Western culture, values, ethics and religion, Roberts said.

He said there are two enemies in the eyes of terrorist organizations: the "near enemy" (corrupt Muslim regimes) and the "far enemy" (the West). This difference in types of enemy is what mostly differentiates terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS. Al Qaeda wants to fight the far enemy while ISIS wants to fight the near enemy.

Since 9/11, American and allied military forces have prevented al Qaeda from growing much, but have been unable to destroy it. While al Qaeda wanted to expel Western influence from the Middle East, it was never interested in governing. In recent years, many of al Qaeda's regional affiliates have abandoned that organization in favor of ISIS.

"The Islamic State (ISIS) is a far greater threat to regional stability than al Qaeda ever was," Roberts said.

The ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is surrounded by supporters who have extensive military experience, having fought for the past 12 years. The main goal of ISIS is to reclaim the Middle East and create one Arab state, Roberts said.

He concluded by saying that it may be time for the United States to reassess the strategic importance of the Middle East as it moves closer to energy independence.

### 2015-2016 Program Topics / Schedule

October 22	39th Annual International Fellows Reception at the US Army War College
November 23	US Foreign Policy in the 21st Century with former Deputy Secretary of State Ambassador William J. Burns SPECIAL EVENT - ADVANCED RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
December 10	Middle East History and Solutions
January 28	Europe's Perception of US Foreign Policy
February 25	Turkey as a Pivotal State Between East and West
March 24	Latin America and Its Emergence on the World Stage
April 28	Africa and the World
May 19	Hot Topic Issue - to be determined
May 2016	Embassy Trip to Washington, DC Date and country to be determined

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