

## Headlines:

- **What Trump Team said about Islam**
- **Top US General Says Afghanistan War at Stalemate, More Troops Needed**
- **Trump, Changing Course on Taiwan, Gives China an Upper Hand**

## Details

### What Trump Team said about Islam

It was a straightforward question, asked of Sebastian Gorka, deputy assistant to the president, during a radio interview last week. His answer was anything but straightforward, however. "It's not a discussion about Islam as a religion or not a religion," he replied. "It's about radical Islamic terrorism. We are prepared to be honest about the threat. We're not going to white it out, delete it as the Obama administration did." But is it a religion? "I think you should ask him that question," Gorka continued. "But I would say that's really a misreading of everything he's said over the last 18 months." A closer look at Mr Trump's comments over the last year and a half only complicates the matter, however - as do the views of the advisers closest to the new president. Mr Trump has repeatedly warned of the dangers of "radical Islamic terrorism" - a line viewed as a direct rebuke of Barack Obama, who while president had pointedly refused to use the term. He slammed Mr Obama and Hillary Clinton for being "founders" of the so-called Islamic State. He publicly feuded with the parents of a Muslim US soldier killed in Iraq. He has, at times, advocated a temporary ban on Muslims entering the US and instituted a "watch list" for those already in the US. These policies and actions, critics say, reveal an anti-Islamic animus that lies at the heart of Mr Trump's politics. "From start to finish, the 2016 presidential election vividly revealed that Islamophobia is alive, and potent and politically resonant as ever," writes University of Detroit Professor Khaled Baydoun. "Scapegoating Islam and vilifying Muslims was far more than merely campaign messaging; for Donald Trump it was a winning strategy." At times Mr Trump did little to dispel this conclusion. "I think Islam hates us," he said during an interview in March 2016. At other moments, he struck a more measured tone, drawing a distinction between the more than 1.6 billion who follow the Islamic faith and the smaller subset of "bad and dangerous people" who happen to be Muslims. In one camp are the more outspoken of Mr Trump's advisers, who echo the president's most bellicose anti-Muslim rhetoric. They include National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, senior adviser Steve Bannon and attorney general nominee Jeff Sessions. Mr Flynn, for instance, called Islam a "political ideology" that "hides behind this notion of it being a religion" - the line that prompted the pointed questions for Gorka last week. Mr Bannon, who served as head of the nationalist media website Breitbart before taking a top position in Mr Trump's presidential campaign, called Islam "the most radical religion in the world" and warned that members of the faith had created "a fifth column here in the United States". A slightly narrower view has been advanced by Mr Sessions, considered the architect of Mr Trump's immigration policies. "We have a toxic ideology, hopefully very small within Islam; certainly most people, most Muslims don't agree with this violent, jihadist approach," he said. "And we need to figure out a better way to identify that." [Source: BBC News]

**The hatred towards Islam expressed by Trump's team is hardly surprising. However, the US media has created the impression that earlier administrations were comparatively milder in their treatment of Muslims and this is not true. Since September 11, 2001, the US has declared war on Islam and this continues unabated today.**

## **Top US General Says Afghanistan War at Stalemate, More Troops Needed**

In a stark admission, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan told Capitol Hill lawmakers Thursday that after 15 years of war, the conflict remains a “stalemate” – and said thousands more troops are needed to train Afghan forces. Army Gen. John W. Nicholson, Jr. offered lawmakers a grim assessment about the prospects for truly ending a war that so far has cost more than 2,000 American lives -- and billions of dollars -- since 2001. The challenge, he testified, is made even tougher by Russia and Iran’s aid to the Taliban, amid signs the militant group is making territorial gains. “I believe we’re in a stalemate,” Nicholson told Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., when asked directly if the U.S. and its allies are winning or losing. He said he has “adequate” resources for counterterrorism, but is facing a shortfall of a few-thousand troops to train Afghan forces. He made clear those additional troops could come from allies as well as the U.S., and said the subject would be on the table when Defense Secretary Jim Mattis attends a NATO defense meeting next week in Brussels. At the Senate hearing Thursday, Nicholson also told lawmakers a U.S. special forces soldier had been “severely wounded” that morning in Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan. Twelve Americans have been killed in Afghanistan since October. In further evidence that the war is far from over despite then-President Barack Obama declaring an end to the combat mission in 2014, the United Nations reported Monday a record number of Afghan civilians were killed in Afghanistan last year. The report said nearly 3,500 were killed and nearly 8,000 wounded. A government watchdog group also says the Afghan government only controls 60 percent of the country right now.

**America takes extreme pride in its military might, and yet it is unable to defeat a rag tag group called the Taliban. Likewise, the US has suffered in Iraq and elsewhere in the Muslim world. This is a wakeup call for those who claim that the Islamic Khilafah will struggle against the US. If the US is unable to defeat Islamic militants, than how can she defeat a powerful Islamic state?**

## **Trump, Changing Course on Taiwan, Gives China an Upper Hand**

By backing down in a telephone call with China’s president on his promise to review the status of Taiwan, President Trump may have averted a confrontation with America’s most powerful rival. But in doing so, he handed China a victory and sullied his reputation with its leader, Xi Jinping, as a tough negotiator who ought to be feared, analysts said. “Trump lost his first fight with Xi and he will be looked at as a paper tiger,” said Shi Yinong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University of China, in Beijing, and an adviser to China’s State Council. “This will be interpreted in China as a great success, achieved by Xi’s approach of dealing with him.” Mr. Trump’s reversal on Taiwan is likely to reinforce the views of those in China who see him as merely the latest American president to come into office talking tough on China, only to bend eventually to economic reality and adopt more cooperative policies. That could mean more difficult negotiations with Beijing on trade, North Korea and other issues. At the same time, the Chinese leadership will view statements by Mr. Trump with even greater skepticism. “Even though Trump has said he will support the ‘One China’ policy, China cannot fully trust him,” said Yan Xuetong, dean of the school of international relations at Tsinghua University, in Beijing. “Even his own people don’t trust him.” China’s official reaction to the telephone call, in which Mr. Trump affirmed that America would abide by the longstanding policy, was polite, even upbeat. “The conversation was very cordial,” Lu Kang, the spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said at a regular news briefing on Friday. “The One China principle is the political foundation of China-U.S. relations.” [Source: *New York Times*]

**It is still too early to conclude that the Trump administration has gone soft on China. There are several issues like North Korea, South China Sea, Tibet, Taiwan and territorial disputes with China’s neighbors that have made permanently America’s relations with China tense, and this is not about to change any time soon.**