



NATO Foundation
Defense College

AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

**LOOMING PRIORITIES
AND REGIONAL UN-BALANCES**

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Looming priorities and regional un-balances**
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AND REGIONAL UN-BALANCES

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NDCF Conference "Afghanistan and Central Asia: Looming priorities and regional un-balances"



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ALESSANDRO MINUTO-RIZZO
*President, NATO Defense College Foundation,
Rome*

FOREWORD

This is the second time that our Foundation devotes a book to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Many analysts used to think that the government in Kabul was short-lived and that, after the western armed forces had left the country, a comeback of the insurrection was a probability. In reality, the end of the NATO operation was accomplished in a successful way, as it was foreseen and scheduled.

The replacement by the Afghan national army and police was no easy matter but in the end, it took place better than foreseen. The insurgents, on their side, tried to derail the efforts and they were able to accomplish spectacular and bloody terrorist acts even in the centre of the capital attracting the attention of international media. We also have to recognize that the reporting of the international media on Afghanistan has been focused on violence rather than on the political process taking place in the country. Political negotiations remain a possibility, on some occasions it seemed also to be emerging as probable, but this possibility has not yet been transformed into reality. If we look ahead at the future of the country, there are mixed signals. We hope for the best but it is not for us to draw conclusions. International security is a difficult issue and it will remain so, Afghanistan represents an emblematic case that could be repeated elsewhere and it has justified over time the attention of the United Nations and the international community. NATO, for its part, is not leaving Afghanistan alone. After the conclusion of its operation that started in 2003, another mission is now underway with a different aim. It is now devoted to supporting the development of effective national security institutions, in other words, a robust presence to train, advise and assist. This is a long-term effort in order to ensure the future of the country and a stable government. We know by experience that ensuring good security institutions requires time. At the same time, this country cannot be seen in isolation because its future depends also on interactions taking place among different actors in its neighbourhood.

In conclusion, the NATO Defence College Foundation has compiled this book

aiming at a high-level discussion to ensure that such a strategic area continues to receive due attention. That it should not be forgotten by leading international analysts and by public opinion. We have tried to put together the best possible expertise to discuss these matters from different angles, in a spirit of freedom and respect, offering different views on the present situation and possible future developments.

I thank so many distinguished and informed contributors who have accepted our invitation coming from a large range of relevant countries; it is to be noted that the interest around this range of issues remains high and it has attracted a large audience that I would like to thank.

I also wish to thank all those who have contributed in various ways to our efforts, the NATO Defense College, the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, PMI international, Al Arabiya English and of course the staff of the Foundation.



ALESSANDRO POLITI

Director, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

POLITICAL SUMMARY

The situation in the region is affected by a recurring paradox in Afghanistan: on the one hand external powers, for their own strategic dynamics, decide that the country becomes an important bone of contention, heavily interfering in the country's politics or even invading it; on the other Kabul itself has neither the resources and means, nor the communication infrastructure, not the will, to be a regional lynchpin since centuries.

Since the Great Game, passing through the civil wars and the Soviet invasion in the Eighties and the Taliban capture of power, Afghanistan is an object and not a subject of competition whose geopolitical value derives essentially more from the intentions and fears of these external powers than from its intrinsic strategic characteristics. Next year the wars in the country will mark their disastrous fortieth anniversary and it is clear to everybody that military force cannot end this long cycle of conflict.

This NDCF high-level conference has shown again that internal Afghan politics and governance are crucial in the solution: both sides (Kabul and Talibans) cannot impose a central power, are fragmented and must accept a local way of decentralisation; both sides cannot conquer their respective power bases (cities vs. countryside) without winning the fight for legitimacy (corruption versus intolerant extremism). Looking at other guerrillas and insurgencies, corruption is the most dangerous vulnerability for legitimist forces and external assistance has to adequately address the problem to avoid a squandering of resources.

Another level where internal problems affect overall solutions is in Pakistan. On the one hand Islamist political developments condition heavily the policies of Islamabad, but on the other the existential rivalry with India makes the political leadership very sensitive on Afghan issues. It seemed that the new Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, could be able to end the stalemate, but apparently not even the new Pakistani premier, Imran Khan, is pressed to reach out before the 2019 political elections. In any case it is clear that a balanced presence of Islam-

abad and New Delhi in Kabul is a guarantee for stability.

Iran is in this respect an important regional actor, but with lesser stakes than others, simply because for the time being the pressure of US sanctions is a top priority together with the ongoing turmoil and internecine wars within the Arab countries and with the regional competition on the hegemony in the Gulf and the Levant.

This leaves the region with the three main external powers entangled to different extents in the Afghan conflict: China, Russia and USA. The important variable compared to half a decade ago is represented by the other Central Asiatic countries: before they were amplifying AFPAK fragilities through their own competitions and weaknesses, today they have started for their own individual and collective interest to reduce tensions among them. This positive development needs still to be consolidated and is still hostage to competing Russian-US interests, but it is a signal that local elites can increase their empowerment (as it might be the case also in the Korean peninsula) if they overcome long standing animosities.

Thinking that the leadership of a single external power will be able to extricate one or more actors from this imbroglio with a positive outcome is a long-standing illusion. Believing that this conflict is the continuation of the British-Russian competition since the Ninetieth century, ignores the importance of violent political Islam in this region as it was fostered precisely in organising the resistance against the Soviet invasion with the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. When the USA ignored Afghanistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union, al Qaeda was born and rising.

The alternatives may be two. The simplest is that around 2020 Washington decides to quit and NATO folds its RSM, leaving the region to an uneasy Chinese-Russian co-management that could prolong the war. The more interesting could be that the compromise around common interests would allow converging efforts in neutralising the conflict and hence one of the important drivers of Jihadism. It could be a limited cooperation area and effort among major powers or the beginning of a new wider political arrangement, but it could help Afghans achieving a still elusive peace.



FABIO INDEO

Analyst, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

POLICY BACKGROUND PAPER

NATO's Resolute Support Mission is currently engaged in training, advising and assisting the Afghan security forces and institutions, in order to strengthen the state-building process and to enhance military capabilities of the national army to react against destabilising threats. The RSM's presence is not limited to Kabul but is felt in different regions of the country (also in the Kandahar southern region and in the western region bordering Pakistan, where the activities of Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) militants are particularly relevant), in order to assure a close co-operation with national authorities and to support their efforts for political stability and security. In this respect, the new government in Islamabad could provide a more effective assistance across the border.

Following the NATO summit held in Brussels in July 2018, the North Atlantic Alliance reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring long-term security and stability in Afghanistan after the end of ISAF by the 31st of December 2014. The Alliance recognised in the final declaration that "regional actors have an important role to play in support of peace and stabilization in Afghanistan, and we call on them to cooperate more closely on fighting terrorism, to improve the conditions for economic development, to support the Afghan government's peace and reconciliation efforts".

Regional security and stability are indispensable to developing economic co-operation and trade corridors crossing the Eurasia region. The engagement of Central Asian presidents to increase regional cooperation through a progressive improvement of their bilateral relations is an ongoing process which is producing positive results, especially in the economic and trade fields with an impact also on regional security: Afghanistan's involvement in a regional framework of economic and trade cooperation would also enhance the potential role of the country as a geographic hub for railway links and other infrastructural projects.

The current attempts to foster a dialogue with the Taliban - promoted in dif-

ferent ways by Russia, Uzbekistan and China - intend to achieve the pacification of Afghanistan in order also to involve the Taliban in the containment of the IS-K infiltration into the region. However, the concrete and genuine engagement of the Taliban in the pacification process must be carefully evaluated and monitored, avoiding rising tensions with Kabul's government and with the colliding interests of Central Asian secular republics.

In this respect, the multifaceted role of UN in supporting the peace process, an effective rule of law and the coordination of the international community's in support of the country continues to be essential, also because the wider strategic backdrop is far from predictable.

Central Asian states, despite the continuing engagement of the United States and NATO with the Resolute Support Mission, still have serious concerns due to Afghanistan's lasting instability. Kabul is perceived as the main source of threats to regional security and the risk of spill-over appears very serious: growing cross-border armed incursions of terrorists could trigger dangerous political instabilities in Central Asia, while drug and weapons trafficking already has a devastating social impact. The aggravation of security in Northern Afghanistan has profoundly worried neighbouring Central Asian countries; in the last three years, the provinces of Balk (close to the Uzbek-Afghan border), Kunduz and Badakhshan (bordering Tajikistan) and Faryab (adjacent to Turkmenistan) have become targets of Taliban offensives.

Furthermore, the return of Takfiri Central Asian fighters from the Middle East contributes to a worsening regional security situation. According to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, nearly 3,000 Central Asians militants have been trained to fight in Syria and Iraq, either as affiliated of the Islamic State (mainly Tajik and Kazakh fighters) or of the Qaedist al-Nusra Front (mainly Uzbek and Kyrgyz fighters).

The recent clashes between the Taliban and the Islamic State-Khorasan fighters in some provinces of Northern Afghanistan further complicate the efforts to build regional security and stability: this rivalry expresses clearly the strong divergence between global and national aims followed by these two actors – between the global idea to create a transnational Islamic caliphate (IS-K is the local wilayet) and the national perspective backed by the Taliban, as occurred in the past between Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

However, Central Asian governments, as well as the international actors involved in the region, often downplay the fact that the main threats to the regional stability and security are linked to endogenous issues and unsolved internal problems insisting rather that deriving from Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, by analysing all events of violence in Central Asia after independence – the Tajik civil war in the mid-1990s, the Andijan's events in 2005, the two revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010, the Uzbek-Kyrgyz interethnic clashes in Osh in June 2010, the riots in western Kazakhstan in 2011 or the fighting in Tajikistan in the

Rasht Valley (2010) and Khorog (2012) – we can observe that the source of these troubles is evidently a combination of local factors.

In the meantime, Russia has tried hard to use bilateral cooperation and multi-lateral institutions such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in order to shape the Eurasian security environment. Within the CSTO framework, Moscow wants to play the role of regional security provider through joint military exercises, the delivery of modern military equipment at Russian domestic prices and the presence of CSTO military bases in two Central Asian republics (the Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan and the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan). However, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the explosive crisis with Ukraine have heavily damaged Moscow's image in Central Asia, spreading serious concerns about Russian integration projects in the security field.

Another potential important actor is China, due to its infrastructural projects within the Belt and Road Initiative, and in fact on the one hand the achievement of a long-term regional security and stability has become a main driver of Beijing's foreign policy. On the other hand, China cannot establish military bases because CSTO members have to be unanimous in accepting them or because national policy excludes the possibility (Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). So China tries to build a base along the Afghan-Tajik border and promotes the new security "Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism" (including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan).

That said, both multilateral organisations CSTO and SCO (Shanghai Co-operation Organisation) were inactive during the inter-ethnic clashes in Osh (Kyrgyzstan) in 2010, involving Uzbek and Kyrgyz, because they are able to respond to external threats but not internal conflicts or between member-states.

The coming year could offer some progress in Afghan domestic negotiations, provided that all regional and external actors achieve reasonable compromises on different political and strategic interests.



THIERRY TARDY

*Director, Research Division, NATO Defense College,
Rome*

OPENING REMARKS

It is an honour and a privilege for me to open this conference and to offer some insights on “*Afghanistan and Central Asia, looming priorities and regional un-balances*”.

After more than fifteen years of NATO’s presence in Afghanistan, the Alliance Summit in July provided a new impulse to NATO’s commitment to ensuring long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. This is to be achieved mainly through the Resolute Support Mission’s effort in providing training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces. Such efforts are crucial to NATO’s aspiration to effectively address the challenges coming from Afghanistan and beyond, i.e. Central Asia, a strategically important region which brings together not only NATO and its member states, but also Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and India. But will those efforts be enough? Has NATO’s presence in Afghanistan delivered anything that can be applied to other places in the region?

To start, the Western Alliance should probably stay engaged in Central Asia. After all, NATO allies share key security challenges with Central Asian states, be they terrorism, religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, failed states, organized crime or WMD proliferation. However, how to operationalize such a presence and adapt NATO’s strategies to accommodate local realities in the five Central Asian states is yet to be defined.

Over the last 25 years, i.e. since the NATO-Central Asia relationship started, the region has faced fundamental evolutions. The deterioration of NATO-Russia relations following the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 has spread uncertainty over the Central Asian partners, whose security remains vulnerable to terrorism and extremist threats, internal dissatisfaction over autocratic leaders, corruption, poverty and political violence. Moreover, while the region once served as a logistic hub for the Alliance operation in Afghanistan, it has become somewhat marginalized as the Alliance has gradually withdrawn from Afghanistan.

The relations between NATO and each Central Asian partner have also evolved

unevenly. The original goal of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) was to institutionalize the cooperation between NATO and PfP member states and subsequently facilitate PfP countries' accession to NATO. But this was not possible for Central Asian Partners for obvious reasons. In the meantime, cooperative security has provided the framework for NATO to stay engaged in the region, in terms of securitization and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic area. Yet, the question remains about the extent to which NATO can project stability in the Central Asian wider region. Through which instruments? With what kind of local buy-in? And with what level of differentiation among countries that offer different kinds of security profiles?

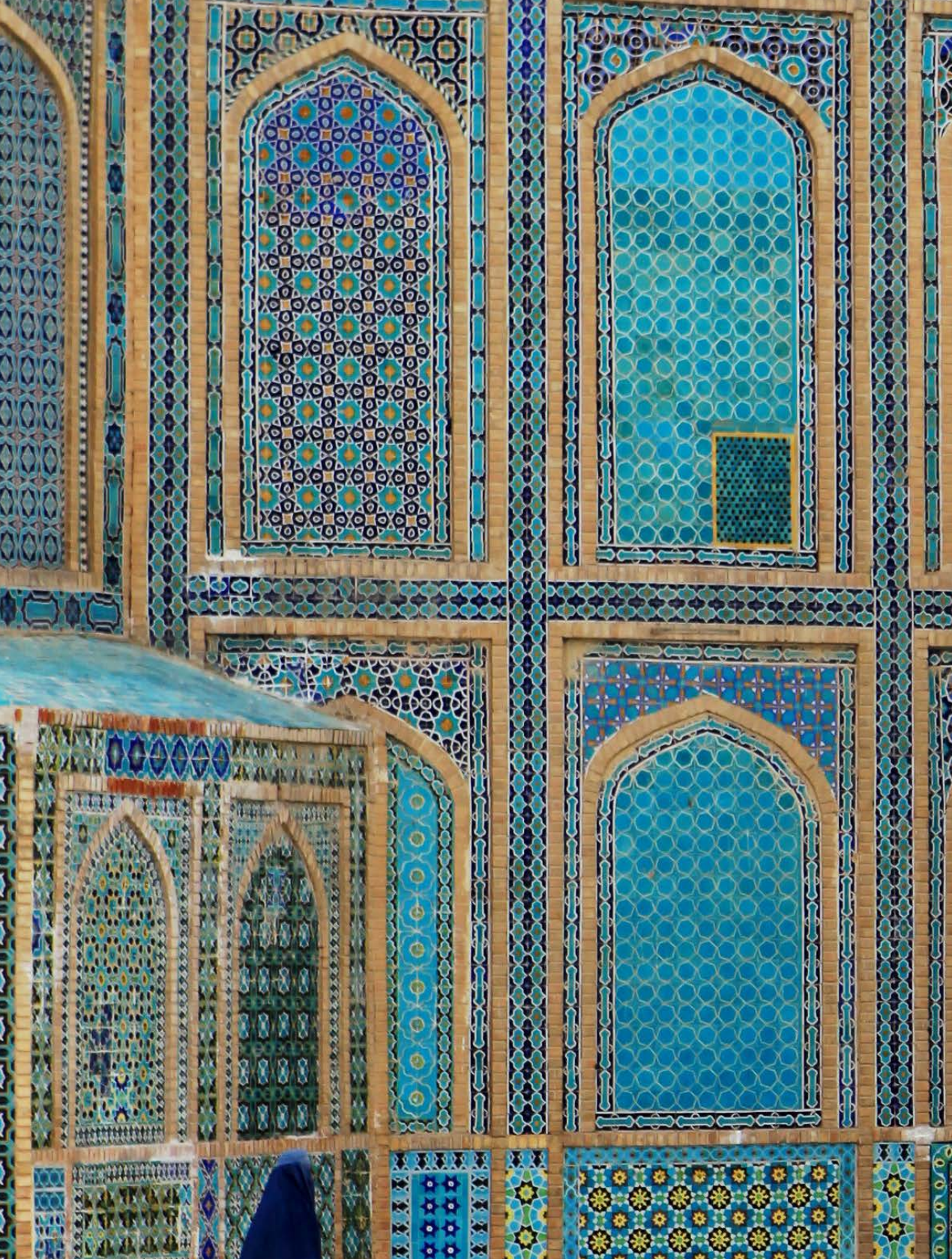
Second, the Chinese and Russian proximity to Central Asia shapes to a great extent the political situation of these countries. As the emerging regional power in Central Asia, China is taking advantage of its economic strength to increase its influence by offering long-term loans and security assistance. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also on top of Beijing's priorities to redraw the strategic landscape of the region. And for Russia, Central Asia simply belongs to its stated sphere of influence. Moscow challenges the US leadership in Afghanistan and in the region. By demonstrating the alleged Western failure in Afghanistan, Russia aspires to be an alternative to the US for Central Asian governments. What does this tell us about the role of NATO in countering Russian and Chinese influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia? How can cooperative security or projecting stability be tools to contain the Russian or Chinese influence in the region?

Third, NATO's strategic partnership with Kabul is supposed to act as a political signal sent by the Alliance to the regional powers, namely Iran and Pakistan. Officially, the Alliance acknowledges that "regional actors have an important role to play in support of peace and stabilization in Afghanistan", and calls them "to cooperate more closely on fighting terrorism, to improve the conditions for economic development, to support the Afghan government's peace and reconciliation efforts, and to prevent any form of support to the insurgency."

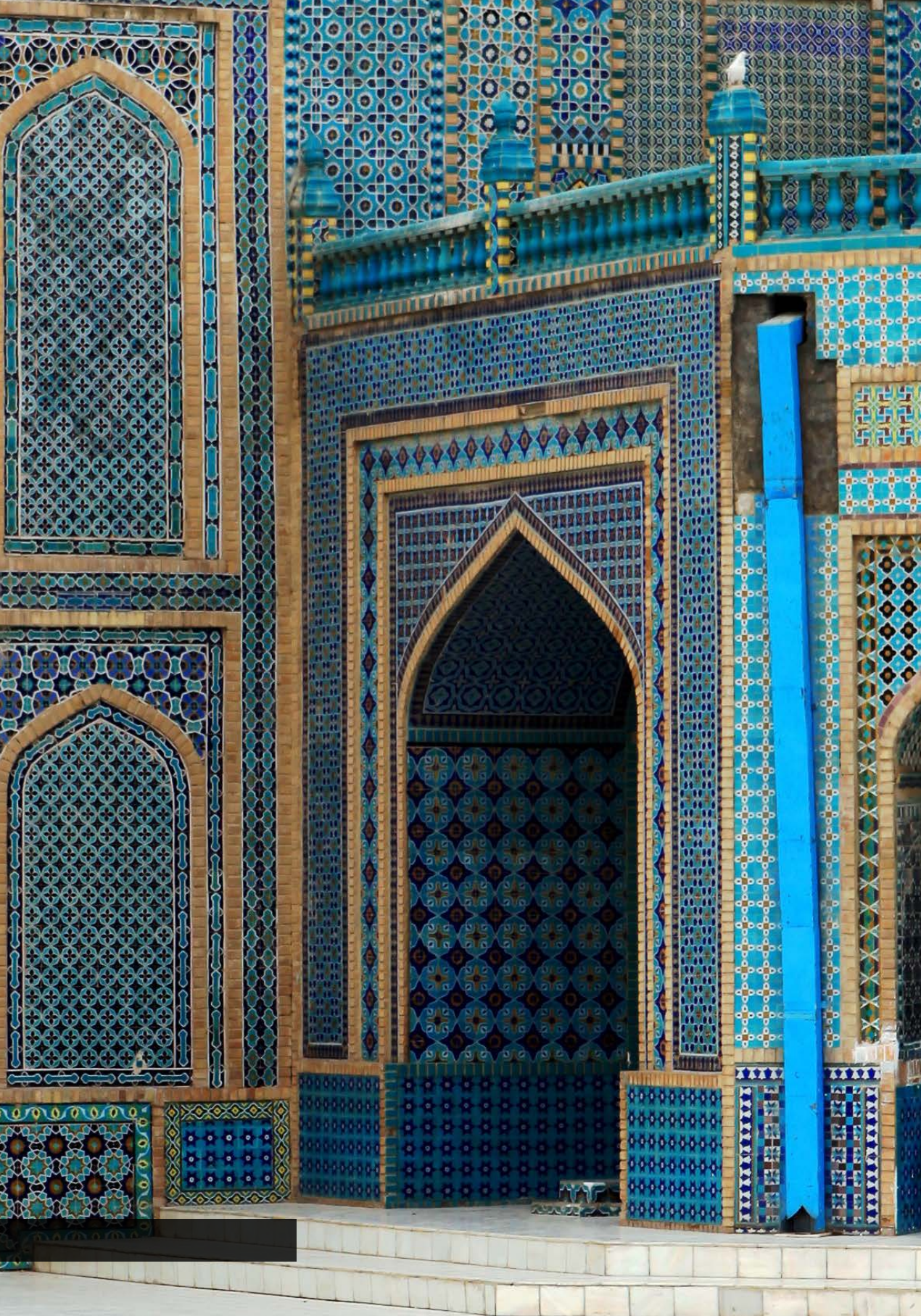
That said, can NATO play any role in deterring some of the regional powers to operate in what they consider to be their own spheres of influence? Is there a space for a military alliance in the geopolitical game that is being played out there? These are just a few questions that the West in general, the US and its allies, through NATO or not, are being faced with. And if not specifically on these issues, I am confident that the topics brought up here will also touch upon the broad political and security parameters that matter to the Atlantic Alliance, well beyond Afghanistan.

Session I

CENTRAL ASIA
AT THE INTERSECTION
OF MAJOR POWERS



The Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan.





RICHARD HOOKER

*Professor, National War College and Theodore Roosevelt
Chair in National Security Affairs, Washington D.C.*

THE EVOLUTION OF US NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE AREA

I have been asked to speak on “The Evolution of U.S. interests in the Region” and I think that we have to begin with the Soviet invasion in 1980, which fixed the American gaze on Afghanistan as an arena for competition with our only real rival at the time. In this sense, the United States may have inherited Great Britain’s traditional role in the so-called “Great Game” to limit Russian influence in the region. Later, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Pakistan and its history of tension and enmity with India made stability in the region an even more important policy objective for the United States. Pakistan’s acquisition of nuclear weapons strained and impacted what had formally been a very cordial relationship between the two states. Coincident with these developments, the emergence of independent states in Central Asia following the dissolution of the USSR and the rise of India ensured that Central and South Asia would remain fixed as important strategic interests for the United States. Above all, 9/11 and its aftermath compelled US military intervention in the region in force, an effort that continues today as America’s longest and perhaps most inconclusive war.

What are our important and enduring interests in the region at this point in time? I would say they comprise the following:

First, that we prevent the reestablishment of terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan that may be used as a springboard for future attacks on our homeland or against our treaty allies and partners. Next, that we work to prevent, if possible, any large-scale future clash between India and Pakistan that might end in the use of nuclear weapons. We also have a strategic interest in the non-alignment and in the stability of the Central Asian states (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, and Tajikistan), all of which remain subject to the influence of the Russian Federation and have important roles to play in the economy and stability of the region as well as in the great power competition which continues to this day. We should remember that up to seven million ethnic Russians – that is, Slavs – still reside in the Central Asian states, guaranteeing continued Russian interest

and influence. In all of these countries, the major states that surround Afghanistan – Iran, Pakistan, India, China and Russia – have key interests of their own and can play important roles. However, their own political objectives do not easily align and securing effective cooperation has proven to be elusive. We can also expect the United States to keep a wary eye on China as it seeks to expand its influence across the region. I think if we try to set the stage for where we are today, we have to note first that India and Pakistan remain at odds with no real prospect of reconciliation that we can see. Of course, the flashpoint is Kashmir but the roots of this tense relationship go much longer and deeper than that.

Iran is locked in an adversarial relationship with the United States with no end in sight. It has an interest in Afghanistan, seeking to protect the Hazara Shia minority and also interdicting or restraining narcotics flows. India looks warily at the rise of China and is courted by the United States as a potential counterweight to Chinese power in the region. One example of this is the recent renaming of the US Pacific Command to be US Indo-Pacific command. Russia looks to play a spoiling role in Afghanistan and is prevented from closer accommodation with the United States in the region because of serious friction points elsewhere. China has important economic interests in Afghanistan and in the region – above all in its “One Belt One Road” initiative – but so far does not seem to be interested in joining directly in the military struggles which have ensnared the United States and to a lesser extent Pakistan.

The United States itself, for all its economic and military power, is limited in what it can do due to competing high priority challenges elsewhere in the world. I think we can expect with some confidence that the Resolute Support mission will continue at least through 2020 at its current level of funding and troop strength. I think that is the position of the administration right now and I do not foresee any opposition from the Congress. What happens there in 2020 is something that will play a role in our coming presidential election. Unless there is some striking improvement on the ground, I personally would be surprised if the United States were to abandon the enterprise altogether.

There are, of course, common interests, which could, in theory, unite the major powers surrounding Afghanistan and the region. Some of them are: preventing international terrorism from taking root and posing a threat to these states; controlling narcotics flows; promoting economic prosperity through beneficial trade relationships and reducing the prospects of a military conflict that might prove disastrous to all concerned.

It would seem, therefore, that Afghanistan will remain at the centre of events in the region, where great civilizations and cultures meet and where historic interests, objectives and conflicts collide. All of the great powers can be expected to exert themselves to avoid military confrontation – while at the same time using assistance, advisers and proxies to pursue their interests and counter opponents in the next rounds of the Great Game.



ZHONGYING PANG

Distinguished Professor, Ocean University, and Macau University of Science and Technology, China

TOWARDS THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE TRANSFORMATION: OBSTACLES AND SCENARIOS

Two Summits took place this year on the same day and for this reason I would like to compare them: the Group of Seven (G7) Summit and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Qingdao Summit. These should not be considered only as regional summits but also as global ones.

Using a research observation angle, I will try and argue that the existing multilateralism may be fading. The G7 Summit in Canada was called by some the G6+1. Even the communiqué of the G7 was not signed by President Trump. In fact, this week, we have heard that the United States is storming further away from existing global institutions, including an optional protocol and dispute resolution to the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations (1969). So a very useful question to ask would be, *is the Western liberal order or the international liberal order further declining?* Even this last week, at a university in Shanghai, there was an international conference titled *The Normative Thesis of Existing Global Governance and the Future of Global Governance*. Several European, British, American, Australian, Singaporean and Chinese scholars discussed the normative thesis of global governance. All participants of the conference expressed deep worry for the decline of the Western liberal order, also called the post-Cold-War order. Being in Italy or Europe in general, you may be very familiar with this topic.

My second question is, *is there an alternative multilateral order?* Maybe China provides something as an alternative. This may be exemplified by the SCO Qingdao Summit. The latter issued a common declaration, a first of its kind with Pakistan becoming a full member of the SCO. It is also the first Summit since India and Pakistan joined the organization. The Chinese leader chaired the opening ceremony, a prestigious one, since it witnessed the participation of the United Nations and other international organizations. The group photo taken at the end of the conference was much different than the well-known one taken in Canada from the G7 Summit. Maybe it shows that there is solidarity or unity within the diverse group: Indian, Pakistani, Russian, Chinese ... etc. Below is an excerpt

from a media research titled “Shanghaied into cooperation”, by Emilian Kavalski, a scholar based in Australia:

China has updated its role as a co-leader of the SCO to play in Central Asia. In the past 5 years since 2013, China was so proactive by sponsoring and implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Three main points arise. Firstly, while the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) faces many challenges, China still pursues it. Secondly, China’s BRI has become a major force to mutually connect the SCO Region. Thirdly, Central Asia is essential for the BRI and India and Afghanistan are important state actors within the BRI-context. On one hand, India opposed the BRI because it increases the Chinese presence in Pakistan and the Indian Ocean. However, China began to invest in Sino-Indian relations in order to significantly improve them. The Indian Prime Minister Modi has visited China twice this year where he met the Chinese President and other Chinese leaders. He still openly refused to endorse or welcome the BRI. While India, together with Japan and Australia, is part of the Indo-Pacific command led by the United States, today’s India is concretely between the SCO and the Indo-Pacific. India, a rising power, became a “middle” power, as described by many Chinese commentators including myself. On the other hand, Afghanistan calls for closer China-Afghanistan cooperation as reported by the official Xinhua news agency.

To conclude, Chinese foreign policy is at a crossroads, not only in Central Asia but also in the world. Some Chinese old foreign policy doctrines continue. For example, this month in Beijing there was a China-Africa Summit where China repeated its Five-Nos. Among these are the points that: PRC seeks no hegemony or leadership in Africa; Beijing promises no interference in Africa’s domestic affairs and that China never will export Chinese political ideologies, values and beliefs.

While China has to let such old doctrines continue on, it is exploring new doctrines at the same time. From these new doctrines emerges a constructive intervention. This also coexists in Central Asia with strategic partnerships, for example. Now, it is becoming a community of a shared future. This constitutes a contradiction of Chinese foreign policies, a dilemma. SCO also stands at a crossroads. The Summit shows some progress after eighteen years, nearly two decades and the Belt Road at its second five years. Last year, I was a scholar delegate and I got an opportunity to observe the progress, problems and the prospects of the BRI. This year, just last month, President Xi Jinping chaired a session to summarize the last five years of the BRI in Beijing. As the initiative enters its second five years, observers in China largely consider that the BRI has to be reformed and to attend to the rapidly changing regional and global environments. The Belt road also has its risks in the future that nobody knows of. That is because it is facing challenges, particularly in Central Asia, but also elsewhere such as Africa and Latin America. The road initiative is a connectivity programme development cooperation and shows Chinese rising influence in Central Asia.



SAEED NAQVI
Senior Journalist, New Delhi

THE ALTERNATIVE ROLE OF INDIA IN THE REGIONAL POWER CONSTELLATION

I am a mere journalist and journalists, as you know, are “everything by starts and nothing long.” A journalist is, in the course of one revolving moon, a “Chemist, Fiddler, Statesman, and Buffoon.”¹ For this focused discussion, in which there are many well informed actors, ones who have taken part in the operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere (the Security Council for instance), I am at a huge disadvantage. So, I will confine myself to what I know best: I will talk about things I have seen as a journalist who visited Afghanistan and Pakistan several times.

Next door to my house in New Delhi’s Saket residential area happens to be one of the most prestigious hospitals in the region. Many such five star hospitals have opened in recent years. Now, if you walk into the lobby of that hospital (Max hospital is its name) and throw a stone in any direction, you will unerringly hit an Afghan. They go to that hospital for treatment. All of them are not victims of injury, nor are they suffering from war induced trauma. They go there because: 1) it is a facility for medical care and 2) they have the money. Therefore, with all the money being ploughed by war into Afghanistan, which one thought would utterly have destroyed the country’s population, there’s one section of people who can afford even seven star medical care.

These people who patronize fancy medical service and can afford it, do not go to five star hotels and restaurants for some reasons. The culinary culture of the Afghan is very different, it is very distinct. They are very comfortable in India with their incessant meat eating. This is ironical because rulers of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have banned beef eating in parts of India; in fact mobs have lynched people suspected of beef selling or eating. In this anti-meat atmosphere, Afghan meat eateries in front of the Max hospital are flourishing - it must be noted that what they eat is buffalo meat, similar to cow meat.

Anti-beef sentiment among the fanatical is a known fact but recently it has

¹ An extract from the poem “Zimri: The Duke of Buckingham” by John Dryden.

become a politicized issue. Even then, wonderful and friendly Afghans get along very well, especially for their generosity and hospitality. Across the street from the hospital, there is a colony called Hauz Rani where Afghan kebab shops can be found. They have settled in to cater to the continuous arrival of Afghans. Meanwhile Indian clients have grown too. They are comfortable in India. And despite this meat issue, their kebab kiosks are left untouched and people love them.

The hospital in this narrative is something of a metaphor. Stories of communalism are strange. Communalism appears much more threatening on front pages of newspapers. Even when I went to cover the Sino-Vietnamese war, people advised me not to go to Hanoi because I may get killed. In reality, I have never been to a more peaceful city. Because the war was happening far away in the battle of Lang Son. In the same manner, the communalism in India gets diffused in a vast country, where these people live and have built colonies.

Now comes a friend of mine from the American embassy. He is intrigued by these Afghan eateries. Can I take him to one of these kebab shops? We went. The point I am making is, Indians have been very comfortable with this. I am not speaking the vocabulary of the diplomats and I am surely steering clear of the vocabulary of the military. Indians have been very comfortable with the fact that their diplomacy, by default, is working. What do I mean by this? They're building roads, they are building schools; there is the Indira Gandhi hospital, they have a lot of soft power involvements, every now and again they participate in some literary events, some officers are coming to our Defence Academy and being trained. Above all, Afghans are crazy about Bollywood. Every Afghan family watches Indian cinema by way of escape from the horrors of war. These actions are very low-key unless they're amplified by people like myself. Indian involvement in Afghanistan is very gentle and genteel.

The end result is a very warm reciprocation from the Afghans. If I am staying at The Serena Hotel, which is about the safest hotel you could find you would be surprised that, if you are an Indian, and you stepped out, you are absolutely safe in Kabul or in Mazar e Sharif. But if you are unsafe and something untoward happens, a bomb goes off then, my intelligence agencies will tell your intelligence agencies that this is Pakistani action. If, for example, the Indian embassy is attacked, it can be attributed to Pakistan. It is an unfortunate imbalance: dangerous for a Pakistani to be on the streets of Kabul, but it is safe for Indians to be on the streets of Kabul. This is a statement of fact. Why? Because there has been no lethal involvement of India.

Why is Pakistan unpopular? This one fact created a piquant situation for the Americans, particularly after President Obama announced his intention to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2011. Since cutting and running would involve a huge loss of face, people like General Stanley McChrystal, Allied Force Commander in Afghanistan, began to draw emergency plans to calm the Afghan situation. The idea was to leave behind a relatively peaceful Afghanistan. Only then

would Americans be able to declare “Mission Accomplished”.

It was clear as daylight that “normalcy” would elude Afghanistan unless Pakistan cooperated by restraining Afghan militancy on its own side of the border. Gen. McChrystal gave vent to his lamentations: Pakistan would not give up its assets in Afghanistan unless Pak GHQ in Rawalpindi was convinced that India would not rush to fill up the vacuum. There was general anxiety in Pak circles that India’s soft power had earned Afghan goodwill in huge quantities. McChrystal’s outburst was against this backdrop. He spelt out his logic: to obtain Pakistani cooperation, Indians would have to be persuaded to cut out their good works.

When Americans went in to retaliate for 9/11, and in the month of September 2001 (as revealed in an interview of Musharraf the 21st), Mr Richard Armitage (the then assistant US Secretary of State in the Bush administration) told the Pakistani chief of intelligence (ISI) “We shall bomb your country into the stone age if you do not join the global war on terror”. Musharraf made remarks during a visit of State Secretary Powell to that effect in October of that year and made a remarkable U-turn vis-à-vis past support to Taliban and hesitations about the US attack in Afghanistan. They were forcefully confirmed in joint statement with President Bush in December 2001.

Remember the genesis: three entities had gotten involved in the 80s to create the Mujahideen, a hatchery of extremist Islam created by US, Saudi, Pak in Afghanistan with three distinct interests. The American interest was simple. They wanted to have the Russians out. Saudis, surely, wanted to help the Americans; they were willing to finance anything, provided there was a collateral advantage for them. The collateral was, that they were creating Mujahideen, an extremist Wahhabist kind of Islam, ostensibly to throw out the Soviets, but also leaving behind a legacy of Salafist Islam to menace Shia Iran on the other side. The Iranian revolution had taken place in 1979, an event which made the Saudis uneasy. Therefore, they thought that: being involved in Afghanistan was a wonderful idea; investing in the project was good so as to have a Wahhabist Afghanistan and, consequently, a good staging ground against the Iranians.

The Pakistani president got into the game for several reasons; but most of all, to address one of Pakistan’s greatest problems. One that people do not address, the problem of Pakistan from its very inception has been *who are we?* We, say Pakistanis, are a people who could not get along with the Indians. Indians and Pakistanis have the same or similar food, music, speech, language, interests, clothes ... etc. And so, Zia-Ul-Haq an Islamist to boot, thought that by injecting a sort of Arabized Islam into the composite subcontinental culture, he would wrench Pakistan away and ‘Arabize’ it, making it a West Asian power not a sub continental power. This was in his mind.

To sum up, three countries got into Afghanistan with three distinct interests. Americans, were the most straightforward and the most short-term oriented, because when the Soviets left in 1989, they forgot about it but this is precisely the

time when problems in Kashmir came to a boil. As it is visible also in current conflicts in Syria, the spare jihadi talent looking for work found it in the big and unfortunate situation in Kashmir, notwithstanding what was germinating in Afghanistan under the name of Al Qaeda. Then Washington turned its attention towards Cairo and successively Algiers. In both cases by different means it supported either the continuation of unfair elections in Egypt or the coup d'état that overturned the democratic elections in Algeria. It was another Western blunder, by choking democratic evolutions, it prepared on the one hand the fall of Mubarak 11 years after and on the other it spawned a horrible civil war that allowed and allows still today extremism to fester and plague North Africa and the Sahel, linking up with Al Qaeda. Afghanistan was a starting point, but there is a great deal to say about the diffusion of instability.

Session II

MORE OF THE SAME
OR EVOLUTION?



The marketplace in Kabul, Afghanistan.





MARIA SULTAN

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PAKISTAN: NEW GOVERNMENT, OLD POLICIES?

Our country is very unique in its position. We are, perhaps, the most targeted nation when it comes to talking about the Afghan security situation and finding solutions to it. Nonetheless, as the story goes, there are some people who are very good but are perceived differently. I think that is the story for Pakistan as well.

This presentation will endeavour to sum up three aspects:

How does Pakistan see the Afghan security situation and stability prospects?

What are Pakistan's priorities?

What is the way out and what are the conditions for that?

It is said that a loin must not be kept if it cannot be fed. This is the reality of the Afghanistan rush in 2014 and the economic-political-military cost of more than a four-decades-long war with no end in sight. Unfortunately, war is not an event but a process. It is a reality that Afghanistan has come to taste.

Once the war started, Pakistan was given multiple choices. One of the most reasoned and important factors which led to Pakistan's precarious position had been the fact that the entire Afghan narrative was built upon three assumptions. The first assumption was that we were going to come and fight for counterterrorism. That meant fighting Al-Qaida and its affiliates, but that effectively meant, in military terms, shifting the balance of power and moving from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency operations. Second assumption, which was paramount for Pakistan as well as for the region, was that all Pashtuns are not Taliban but all Taliban are Pashtuns and that a Pashtun buy-in will be equal to Pakistani influence; this would mean that new structures of power and a new ethnic mapping would be required, if Afghanistan had to be forced to seek a divorce from its recent past. The third assumption was that Afghanistan would have provided for that strategic depth that was lacking in all wars against India. Unfortunately, at that time, Afghanistan was not a stable country. It was a country which was coming out of war. The effects of this war have brought into its folds all those who have dared to enter

into the Afghan reality, including NATO, EU, US and Pakistan.

A stark reality, staring squarely back in their eyes, proclaimed that there are no winners in this war. Strategically, Afghanistan can never outlive its utility, despite the fact that it is militarily unsustainable and politically ungovernable (in its current manifestation). It has, and is likely to remain, an arena of great power politics, wherein regional and intra-Afghan rivalries are playing constructive or destructive roles. The war in Afghanistan is a case in point for military historians and strategists: every battle has been won but the war is lost.

The current Afghan war is not the first of its kind. Battles have been fought on the Afghan soil which has brought all entrusted to the region to stake their claims. Like in the past, all have achieved but relative success. Unfortunately, it is always the short-term gains which have regularly replaced the long-term engagement for Afghanistan. This time, however, it seems that the international community, alongside the United States, aims to correct this. They have declared their respective strategic priorities as long-term engagement, peace and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the structure for success, mechanisms and plans have not been clearly defined to achieve a logical conclusion. The current security situation confronted by the Afghan state presents a unique challenge as each stakeholder is at cross points for the end game. I am talking about four major stakeholders in almost four decades of war in Afghanistan, first under the label of the Afghani Jihad and then of the war against terrorism.

I am presenting a Pakistani point of view of the region. The vast majority of Pakistanis have accepted the reality that the stability of Afghanistan is a prerequisite to the stability of Pakistan. However, the question remains about how to create a buy-in that will allow for a peaceful transition in Afghanistan and for the stability by all stakeholders in the region; and if so, what are its major hurdles. The period that has followed the drawdown, has created a multitude of problems. As the conflict has become entrenched, all problems have been further complicated by transnational crime, terrorism, regional rivalry and the absence of Afghan structures for peace.

This holds significance as the war objectives and the end objectives in Afghanistan had varied from counterterrorism to counterinsurgency and now, once again, to a narrower framework of counterterrorism, with the underlined quest for peace hanging in balance. This has created uncertainty and regional and national crises for the states surrounding Afghanistan. One of the most hurt countries in this process has been Pakistan.

We have taken a lot of blame for what happened in Afghanistan, but perhaps, very few of you recognize the fact that Pakistan has suffered approximately 75,000 casualties or 2,000 terrorism-related events per year. It is only in recent years that the number has come down to less than 20 incidents per year.

Nonetheless, today we face the fatality of incidences, which has increased, as now all threats are supplemented by the rise of ISIS in Afghanistan. The approxi-

mate casualties and fatalities are above 2.000 because IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) has become a new factor and a regular reality. In addition to this, there is also an increase of 1,5 million refugees due to the influx from Afghanistan. Pakistan already hosts more than 3 million Afghan refugees. Hundred thousand Afghans enter Pakistan daily and not all of them may be termed as refugees because some are considered economic immigrants. Hence, the situation for Pakistan is as follows: we have people who arrive in Pakistan on a regular basis and 98% of them come without any legal documentation. So, the issue of migration and border security has become a fundamental and critical issue for Pakistan when it comes to defining its relationship with Afghanistan.

Furthermore, this has also resulted in very difficult precarious situations when it comes to border security such as the fencing of the border and more than 1.000 casualties due to border disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the decades.

These are just a few of the consequences of living next to a non-stable Afghanistan. The economic cost of this war for Pakistan is around 100 billion dollars. The idea of economic recovery has become almost impossible for any popularly elected government in Pakistan, remaining forever entrenched in the Afghan economics be it for a policy that considers the country under the influence of the Pakistani metropolis or for one aiming at stabilizing the crisis in Afghanistan at the cost of Pakistan.

We are also confronted by other issues. The dilution of Afghanistan's institutional capacity has further worsened the effects of the Afghan war and terrorism in Pakistan. It has attained a point where the rationale of Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy and its commitment to the international alliance is questioned, as peace remains elusive and the goals shifting. Without a serious appraisal of the ground realities in Afghanistan, no future peace efforts and application of power can translate into any sustainable feature of the Afghan political map or a political buy-in.

The goals of the international community to narrow focus on counterterrorism have changed without recognizing that the Afghan State has become the new centre of the global drug trade. The latter's estimated worth is around 450 billion dollars, out of which 200 billion dollars are the current revenue from Afghanistan and, in addition to this, only 89 billion dollars pass through Pakistan. Out of these, 44% is being routed through different routes from Afghanistan to Pakistan.

In addition, the counterterrorism strategy being followed in Afghanistan is further faced with enormous challenges. As at this time, there is neither the rationale nor the objective of the global war on terror nor any socioeconomic emphasis in this policy. The only objective is to create acceptable negotiating conditions for all partners. The deadlock exists as the priorities of the major actors do not converge on one single point; and even if they do, the process of this discovery is slow.

For the United States, the interests are clearly defined in counterterrorism focus,

honourable exit, a regional buy-in and sustainability of the Afghan unity government in addition to the lingering issue of Afghan-US nexus and regional stabilization efforts. For the Afghan Unity Government, the indefinite or desired prolongation of the Afghan government is constantly balanced against the future economic and security stability of the Afghan state. For the Afghan Taliban, an equitable share in the power equation in Kabul, a desire for declared victory in military domain and an exit of the US forces and maintaining a hold over its territory is a priority.

Even today, Kabul was rocked with two terrorist attacks. The emphasis on military means for the resolution of the deadlock has created a structural stress on the search for Afghan peace. This shifting focus in priorities has brought the four inside powers in Afghanistan at a deadlock; and for the Afghan people, a reversal of the security order to emphasize the socio-economic stability of the Afghan polity has been the cost of this deadlock. In terms of a societal buy-in, the 13,2 billion dollar economic aid programmes and the effectiveness of the Resolute Support mission have not sufficiently addressed the need for a sustained structural transformation for peace and security. This is because each one of them is representing different states in terms of power structures and end mechanisms, through which all of them can culminate.

The EU programmes are being run by donor agencies and by the European Union. Largely, the budgetary support function is not being delegated to the Afghan government. As so, the Afghan government is still balancing its power mechanisms vis-à-vis each other.

The security structures are being run by different actors, but nonetheless, the role of the central intelligence agencies and some of their partners has been significant, creating further divisions. This has put Pakistan into a very precarious position. Afghanistan's stability for Pakistan is of key interest for, firstly, Pakistan-US relations. In the absence of a strong bilateral framework, the single-issue focus in Afghan security through the prism of counterterrorism makes Pakistan a limited partner in this undertaking and limits its ability to be a complete partner in this conflict where an inter-Afghan balance would require a deep set of changes, not visible at the moment.

Equally, the stability of the Afghan peace process, which would allow stakeholders to own it, is also missing. What we see is that the failure to grasp all these situations is leading to multiple crises. Unfortunately, as these challenges increase, the fragility of the Afghan state has also created multiple paradoxes.

Consequently, what we see also is that Pakistan is moving away from its previous strategic priorities. Afghan security and Afghan-Pakistan's economic interests were inclined towards economic stability. Unfortunately, or fortunately, Pakistan has decided to move away towards new strategic alignments in the region as exemplified by the China-Pakistan economic corridor. 60 billion dollars were allocated to the construction of roads, railways, oil extraction and fibre optics. Out of which,

95% of the work has been completed in the last five years. This is the flagship project of China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI) and this will link Pakistan to the BRI framework in a very different context, making Pakistan one of the conduit states for a North-South corridor. This will also mean that economic priorities will be rebalanced through a purely economic paradigm and Pakistan will try to limit its strategic security concerns. To summarize, this will mean the following things:

Pakistan would need to question the fragility of the Afghan State. There is a widespread presence of not only the Taliban but also ISIS. This is a factor of key concern to Pakistan. Therefore, while we were talking about structure mechanisms for bringing peace and political stability to Afghanistan, the security map of Afghanistan is being further redrawn by ISIS. The Afghan ISIS factions are also being connected to various other organizations in the Middle East. Although conservative estimates reported by European journals indicate that there are less than 3,000 ISIS fighters in Afghanistan, if we look at the actual fighting on the ground, it indicates that the actual potential would be far bigger than anticipated. It is further compounded by the Narco-Environment as some of its routes are coming from Afghanistan to Pakistan and then ending up in Iran. These routes indicate that, while Afghanistan is facing its bigger questions for political stability and economic outreach, the question still remains about how to hope for peace in the region while balancing learnt lessons. The mistrust among all stakeholders is a stumbling block and there are no two opinions about it. No one trusts anyone. However, this begs the question to resolve the dilemma of power in Afghanistan. Is it the national unity government? Is it the EU? Or donor aid agencies? The Taliban and the warring faction? National-organized crime or ISIS? The US or the regional players? They all represent different goals and end objectives, all functioning outside the Afghan constitution. Who will broker the peace and who will be the guarantor, if the State itself is robbed of its faces of survivability and legality? This is what Pakistan sees and, unfortunately, Pakistan's only option at this moment is to secure its borders, maintain effective facilitation, if required, and, last but not least, move forward towards an economic progressive plan which would allow for Pakistan to re-emerge as a stable State.



CHRISTOPHER CORPORA

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THE AFPAK CONFLICT ENTRENCHMENT

It is fairly simple: if we do not start thinking more creatively and partnering in different ways with maybe-not-so-likely partners, there will be no movement ahead. I just came from six months of serving in Kabul on an anti-corruption project, after which I went back to teaching. In those six months, I observed new things, but I also saw the entrenchment of things that I had witnessed before in my time there (2010 – 2012) while working on the concerted effort for setting up and ger moving an anti-corruption activity by Task Force Shafafyat, involving many of the embassies, UNODC (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime) and UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan).

I tried to get a grip on the problem of corruption. Corruption is an endemic problem. It is not something that we can easily look at because we are so used to seeing things in stove pipes. Terrorism and drugs can be easy because you put them into nice containers and look down at them, but corruption cuts across the field. It presents a big challenge, especially to the western military imagination. We had our challenges, but it was not new. It is something that we saw in Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo, any post-Cold War conflict and that we continue to see in all of these places. Therefore, in some ways, what I am going to talk about is unique to Afghanistan but can also be generalised across other post-conflict and emerging conflict areas. It is something that we need to be concerned about and to spare it a little more thought. We may not be able to solve it, but we can at least understand it and manage it better. This is critical because it affects everything that we, as an international community, seek to address.

We are simply going to speak of the current situation. We are in stagnation: politically, economically and socially, in many ways. Politically, corruption and nepotism have entrenched themselves into the institutions in Kabul. Certainly, there are efforts within the Afghan government to address these issues. However, the core of the problem goes to the heart of that cooperative agreement in the current government. That entrenchment that is going on, out of the CEO's office

and the president's office, shapes this stagnation at the very highest levels. It also filters down through the ministries, as we see.

Economically, the informal economy is currently all but the formal economy. I call it illicit trade because it is a better reflection of what we are seeing happening on the border. We could say that the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan are not involved in this activity, but there are some that are involved. There are some that profit a great deal from this. The governments themselves certainly condemn the activities but there are enough government officials involved in it and gain from it that allows for this stagnation of the economy. It ultimately allows the moving into the sedimentation of the informal economy.

Lastly, the negotiation process and the politicisation of these institutions have almost forced us into a cycle of conversation that is not useful and did not work, up to this point in time. There are new thoughts around how to negotiate a settlement, to understand the variety of players in the field that are both within the government and within the resistance to government. Because there are many different disparate interests on both sides, understanding how to better negotiate the conversation and trying to push forward some sort of a settlement or stability is essential. This is really in the interest of everyone.

If there is anything that I have heard in common across conversations with anyone who cares about the Afghani situation, from the region or internationally, it is that stability is a principal goal. How do we get there, navigating all the different pieces? The sedimentation follows from the stagnation. What I mean by this is that it entrenches itself and becomes part of the political, economic and social foundation. It does so to the point that the people give up on trusting the government or any institution that may present an opportunity. The social situation, this morass that exists within a society and infects the ability to promote new ideas. It takes away the energy that is necessary at the grassroots level, within the citizenry, to actually lift and focus change. This then flows into a cynicism that is something that really struck me during the last six months, even with the staff that I had working with me. The Afghan staff were all fantastic patriots, but the overlay was "looking for an international diploma of some sort", "for a way to get out", "for a way to go somewhere where there may be more opportunity". It is not that people wish any harm to Afghanistan; they just did not believe that it was possible, despite the fact that these people spent the last eighteen years working with different international aid activities and other services to the international intervention.

That was a bleak story, nothing surprises most of us and it is a disheartening state of affairs, but I think there are some ways to move forward. This is only possible if we have the courage, the leadership and the imagination to rethink the various problems that are nested here and present themselves to us. The first piece of this is to refocus on local solutions. The international community as a whole has focused on what it really knows best and that is institutional building, state-level and country-level governance activities, all fine and important activities. However,

if you do not bring the rest of the country along with you, it is hollow. You do get a situation where the president of Afghanistan may be referred to as the mayor of Kabul, which is not the intent of all the efforts that we have given in the last seventeen years.

Following along with that refocus, there are a few initiatives in different places, even where there may be some enmity. There certainly are some initiatives coming out of Pakistan, regardless of how people may interpret their political intentions. I truly believe that the APTTA (Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement) and the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative) could be great frameworks for more local solutions. At least, when we look at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, what we are looking at is essentially their problems; and so, we should be enabling some sort of solution set within their own context.

Part of this problem too is money. We have put far too much money in the wrong solutions. It is almost a truism, at this point in time, in all the literature. Yet, we continue to do the same thing over and over again, which is sort of the definition of political-economic insanity in such a case. We have to start thinking about how to cut down and redistribute the money in order to get it into the hands of local communities. Building those communities and local institutions can hopefully lay the foundation for a 100 years or 50 years trend towards the positive direction. This is better than having some very senior person coming in for 12-18 months thinking that they are going to solve it all in that time. This is sort of what it has gotten to within the NATO circles. We call it "The Afghan year". We haven't been in Afghanistan for 17-18 years now, but we've been there for one year 17-18 times.

Try to come out of that. Start investing more in those local solutions. This is not to divest from the national level or from the larger institutions but to harmonise that with what is happening locally. As it has been pointed out, Afghanistan, before all of this began, was a fairly networked community. Strength was rarely found in the centre. Leadership was found there but not all the power concentration. That historical precedence and tendency must be recognized, and we have yet to do that in the way we plan.

Invigorating economic priorities is very important. Some of this is old conversations, but it has to be addressed. The narcotics problem is a problem, in large part, unfortunately, of our own making. Some of the policies and decisions that the international community as well as the regional actors, which are not part of the NATO endeavour or the donor endeavour through the UN system, have helped in pushing forward and institutionalising it. It has become a fabric of that informal economy, a prime driver. Now, if you are going to take it away, then you better have an idea what you are going to replace it with and how you are going to do that over time.

One of the big things we can move towards is thinking about how to invent a sustainable economy in the south and the west of the country and particularly

where the situation is the harshest. There are only certain types of agriculture that can be implemented and only certain types of industries that can be brought in because of infrastructure issues. I think that those baseline issues are the things that we should be looking at, trying to develop and invest in. Maybe, we should be finding some new interesting microfinancing capabilities, for example, to help build out the refrigeration capability, to expand the transport network that exists, not just in that part of Afghanistan but also within the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Area) and even within Pakistan. We should consider partnering in order to build the right kinds of cross-border communities that are healthy and that reinforce the national aspect. It must also recognize the fact that before anyone drew lines on a map, these are people had spent a lot of time together.

Finally, reinforce oversight and again. This is maybe another way to talk about decentring and moving away from the core toward the periphery. We really need to think about where we can put all amounts of money and effort into local communities so that, possibly, we can see the germination of organic oversight. At the end of the day, there will not be a solution because of any of us. There will only be one when the Afghan people make the decision, change and solution that they want. All we can do is to try and enable that, not just to fund it but to enable it through access to expertise. Not overpaid, bloated expertise, but people with a professional interest in supporting the activity. I think these people exist but they do not often get an opportunity. Such is because, sometimes, they say things that we do not want to hear and other times they are not part of the establishment and cannot access it. We must challenge ourselves to be much more creative in how we gain access and identify other people with good, creative ideas and help, especially in those local situations.

The last piece is this, move out from the bunkers. It costs \$85.000 to fly out people from the American embassy to the airport. It is embarrassing to me, first as a US taxpayer as well as from the perspective of wondering what we are doing there. I remember people walking to the airport. Why is this happening and why are we allowing ourselves to be brought into this siege mentality? Sure, security is an issue. Sure, there are risks. But if we are not willing to take some level of measured risk, certainly more so than what I saw, we are going to lose complete contact with the community and the already diminished respect we have.



SHUKRIA BARAKZAI

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ENDING CONFLICT: HOW TO ENGAGE REBELS AND WHAT RED LINES EXIST?

If you go beyond media, I am not as great as it seems because I am just an example of an ordinary Afghan myself. I grew up in my country and I am the result of war, violence and terrorism. Yet, I still am what I am today. I do not like to play with words and I just like being sincere and honest. This is how Afghans are.

When it comes to Afghanistan, I believe the only people who are dying for nothing are Afghans – no one else. We are the ones who paid the price during the Cold War, but it does not mean that we do not have an understanding of the situation. I do believe that the geopolitical position of Afghanistan has brought troubles upon us. But allow me to raise a few questions for your consideration: today, when Afghans are being actively attacked by the Islamic State of Khorasan, is it for the sake of Afghans? Or are they Pashtuns? When Islamic Jihadi unions are targeting Afghans, what is it for? Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Harakat Al Mojahedin, Jaish Mohammed, Al Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: who are they? Are they members of the Afghan state? Do they have supporters within Afghanistan? Where do they come from? They cannot be like snow coming down from the sky and settling on top of our mountains. They have might, training centres, suppliers, and terrorist state-sponsors just nearby, ones we sometimes call brothers and neighbours.

I do understand that the blaming game should come to an end; but in the meantime, respecting both countries as sovereign states should be the governing principle. Nobody should measure the tolerance of Afghans when speaking of a stable state. When there is a Pashtun movement and millions of Pashtuns are marching on the streets of Pakistan, they are seeking their civil rights. They are questioning why are their region is undeveloped and why they are not yet considered citizens of Pakistan. In a similar manner, the Baloch are claiming genocide and it is their domestic issue; only then, we do not interfere.

But when it comes to peace, the very genuine open peace message was only of-

fered for Afghan Taliban. I was attacked in 2014. However, in 2015, as soon as I had received an invitation from the Taliban for peace talks with a group of women, I accepted. Why? Firstly, because I believe that talking, negotiating and sharing our opinions is the only way to achieve peace. Secondly, I just want to show that I have the courage to face them. It was me saying “*Come, sit down in front of me, and raise your voice*”. It was not really easy. Imagine sitting with someone who wants to kill you and they are killing your people (Afghans) every single day. Why? Because the Afghan war has been a milking cow for our neighbouring countries.

See their infrastructure and compare how it was four to eight years ago and nowadays. In the same manner, look into Afghanistan and at the Afghans. It went down from a very prosperous, civilized, fairly modern and beautiful country to rubbles on the ground strewn by the hands of every single regional player.

Moreover, today, in 2018, every Afghan is asking a *single* question: when is the war getting to an end? The truth is, no one can provide an answer. When there was a peace effort underway, I remember attending the peace talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan: we arrived to a very good and fine-tuned declaration, yet, it is not implemented and is nearly irrelevant anymore. When it comes to the APTTA (Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement), it was signed in 2010, and also this was not put in effect, simply because Pakistan is unwilling. When the Afghan government and NATO sat together with Pakistan to discuss the border security issue, I believe negotiations were in vain.

All this happens because I think a value that is missing: trust. Even recently, some sources confirmed that Pakistan supports the Taliban for its own national security, benefit and motivations. If Taliban are terrorists and are killing Afghans, but they are good for Pakistan, how can these two states cooperate? I remember the Afghan governments in 2002-2005 were not letting people and journalists use harsh language against Pakistan. Although we had good people-to-people relationships, they have been now damaged for good.

There is around the notion that Pakistan does not want a prosperous Afghanistan. Fine, but in actual terms is Pakistan today essential for peace? I believe not. It changed. The Taliban are not anymore the Taliban that had been expelled out of Afghanistan. It took eight weeks for their regime to be destroyed by the United States after 9/11, but today after eighteen years, they are still existing and engaging combats. In fact, the Taliban are gaining more power. It is not through the support from the locals but from regional actors like Iran and Russia who are allies and bargaining to pressure the government of Afghanistan. I do not believe that Pakistan stands a chance in playing a key role for peace in Afghanistan.

It is worth noting that I still am a member of parliament; and so, this is the voice of Afghans and not necessarily that of the government. Maybe our government will have a different strategy or policy which we do take into account, but reality is reality. Put yourself in the Afghan situation. How long can you walk in the shoes we wear? Maybe not even two steps further because we are in a very tight and

very difficult situation. We are paying with our lives for the benefit of someone else. And who is that someone? Is our neighbour being or becoming stable? No. The whole region is unstable. Outwardly, it seems like it will eventually stabilize through construction, opening economic corridors, or connectivity. But for all that, I do not think so.

For me, the picture is not actually that optimistic as it was before. ISIS is not an Afghan phenomenon. Afghans are not that kind of fanatic Islamists as portrayed by some. Where is Pakistan? Is it still the Pakistan of 2004 that exercised influence over the Taliban? No. Do China and Iran have the same policy for Afghanistan as they did in 2003? No. Are they thinking the same about the United States as they did in early 2002? No. Are the Russians pushing more for NATO and the United States to get out of the region? It is impossible.

If we like or not, and if we want it or not, we have to rely on someone that can at least support us and understand us. For the time, it is the United States, Western countries and NATO. It is not because they are there solely for Afghans; they, too, have an opinion about the country. They recognize the price to be paid for leaving Afghanistan because they saw first-hand how Afghanistan can be a danger.

When 9/11 happened, the Taliban were ruling in Afghanistan. We did not have any rights as women; it was not a prosperous or well organised economy; we were not connected to the world, but what we had at that time was simple physical security. That's it. And that is what we are lacking today. Afghans are seeking security and nothing more, which per se should not be a big deal. Afghans want stability, prosperity and security. They are not asking for the moon or a far out star: is just a simple right for every citizen of the world to live in security, to have a peace of mind.

To reach these goals, it is important to not find any excuses. One of these is corruption. Give me an example of a country in an ongoing war without corruption. Corruption is a disease for countries, particularly third world countries, and particularly countries engaged in violence and war. When it comes to drug issues, would you believe that Afghans are using drugs? No. It is just our lands that are been used for this industry under the sway of international mafias. This cannot be called a state. If Afghan goods cannot cross legally to India or to other countries, then there is a demand but we cannot supply. But if it is a drug or opium? Then yes, it is able to cross and sell in European markets. I believe it is not Afghans.

And now allow me also to speak about casualties' numbers. Our population is estimated at under a hundred million. But in every single Afghan family, members have been missing, been killed or died by other scourges of war. I am mother and I lost my two children during the war. I am not the only mother, there are millions of mothers like myself. I do not like to count and measure the numbers because, for us, numbers do not make sense anymore. We are the nation that is ready to sacrifice itself in order to achieve peace, stability, and sovereignty of our country. We would like to be a stable state, not to be a trouble-making or problem-causing

country. Afghanistan wants to go for a second or third option. I believe there are lots of options on the table but since, naturally, Afghan like to be very patient and calm, they never use any of the options. Otherwise, every country has someone that they do not like. It may not be easy to understand and it may not be very polite to describe how Afghans feel, but this is the reality; and reality is always difficult to understand.

Session III

RESOLUTE SUPPORT:
MAINTENANCE AND
RELEVANCE



The Pakistan Monument in Islamabad, representing the four provinces of Pakistan.





ZALMAI RASSOUL
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kabul

THE DYNAMICS OF AFGHAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE ROLE OF RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION

Many of Afghanistan's challenges are regional in nature. These challenges require the cooperation and assistance of neighbouring countries in order to enhance stabilization and development efforts in Afghanistan. It also permits for strategic outcomes for the surrounding region. This comprehensive approach is needed, whether the focus is counterterrorism, economic activities, energy resources, transport, water resources, or custom cooperation at the regional level to more effectively combat drugs, arms trafficking and maybe tactical nuclear weapons proliferation. It is an honour to be able to share some of my thoughts and observations with you regarding the relevance of the resolute support mission in my country. The other distinguished partners have covered the wide legion of issues today. So I will keep my opening remarks brief.

During the last four decades, Afghanistan has been no stranger to grabbing headlines. Sometimes for all the right reasons and sometimes for all the wrong reasons. We have all witnessed or were informed about many cycles of instability that have affected a large number of Afghans, the region and, indeed, the world. We have also witnessed and are aware of cycles of optimism in Afghanistan and endeavour for stability, peace and prosperity. Certainly, the current environment is no exception to this dichotomy. As a description for this panel suggests, the conflict this year has been intense but there is also renewed momentum for peace effort, no doubt. The number of casualties for the Afghan security forces is high but the number of casualties for the enemy is far higher. Thus, there is no shortage of courage on the part of Afghans in defending their nation. Well, there is a positive progress that still remains an important step to take in order to set the foundation for the outcome we all desire. For instance, we need to improve the logistical lines for resupply of our troops, and medics of our wounded soldiers, a better coordination among senior officers and de-politicization of the Afghan national security forces. Thus, the recent intensified effort of rebuilding the new Afghan air force by NATO countries should continue in order to overcome these threats, especially

for countries with challenging terror. Moreover, the security challenging phase in Afghanistan and the region requires the continuous support of our international partners. The scope of the challenges the region faces on the security front goes beyond just the Taliban. In February 2017, an interview with General Nicholson articulated some of the most sensible reasons for the continuous support and presence in Afghanistan. He stated:

“The reason Afghanistan remains important is the concentration of terrorist groups in the Afghanistan/Pakistan (AF/PAK) region. Of the 98 U.S. designated terrorist groups globally, 20 are in the AF/PAK region. This is the highest concentration anywhere in the world. [...] U.S. policy in the region is to maintain a regional counterterrorism platform. I believe the policy is very, very sound and very important because having a regional counterterrorism platform – we call that CASA CT (Central Asia South Asia Counterterrorism) – keeps the pressure on these groups.”

As we look forward to the immediate future, we currently see an overwhelming desire by the Afghans for continuing on the path of building a striking system that encourages democratic norms, moderation, pluralism and partnership with the international community. I am not stating this path has been perfect so far. Controversy has certainly erupted concerning the past election. And I do not dwell on this issue because I've been a candidate on the election 2014. Instead, we must look ahead for the future as we implement current plans and create new plans we should be mindful that we must take every possible step to uphold and not erode the public trust in our nation's institutions and the norms that have been distinctly led by the Afghan and their international partners since the new political dispensation has emerged in 2001 on accord. To this end, I welcome the Resolute Support announcement to provide comprehensive support to the Afghan National Security forces for the implementation of an election security plan. I also believe that the deeply important task of providing backup for the national Afghan security forces can also positively impact the distrust. During the recent cease-fire, we all witnessed the various press accounts, the picture of Taliban soldier emerging with Afghans posing for selfies and engaging with their fellow citizens. We need to seize such an opportunity for building a bridge when they arise for further intensifying our effort towards the enduring solution to end the quad of conflict in Afghanistan. I am certain that you are welcome in increased dialogue in engagement by all partners to the conflict in Afghanistan that have taken place in recent months. I remain hopeful that the peace process has regained some momentum although I am mindful that any lasting peace process will be challenging and require a long-term outlook. So, simultaneously, if you all do not pay sufficient attention to crucial short-term objectives such as transparent and free elections that are supported by the international community, there will be no long-term to which we can look ahead. Ensuring that a legitimate government emerges from the upcoming round of Afghan election as a parallel short-term

objective again has a significant impact on the long-term effort on the top down peace accord between the parties and the conflict. Only a legitimately established constitutional order will have the much-needed mandate for a national consensus for the peace process. Even further, the legitimacy will also place the Afghan government in a very strong position at the negotiation table. I will now conclude my remark with one last statement. Our future is part of your future. And to this end, we are grateful for your steadfast commitment and the infusion of hope. In partnership with you, we endeavour distinct peace and stability in Afghanistan and the surrounding region.



IAN HOPE

Researcher NATO Defense College, Rome

WHY IS NATO STILL IN AFGHANISTAN?

My purpose is to talk less about what is Resolute Support but to answer the question: why is NATO still in Afghanistan? The answer is actually rather simple: Afghanistan is breathtakingly strategic. It is the “middle ground” between the Iranian plateau, the Central Asian steppes, and the Indian Subcontinent. It is a land of ancient trade and migration routes, a key waypoint on the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean; the land of converging paths that connect the Middle East, Central Asia and the Indus Valley through the passes of the Hindu Kush.

For its geo-strategic importance, the land of the Afghan has been subject to imperial design since the Achaemenid Empire 25 hundred years ago, through the Macedonian, Greco-Bactrian, Kushan, Hindu Shahi, Samanid, Ghaznavid, Timurid, Mughal and Durrani Empires, to become in modern times the ‘buffer state’ between the British and Russian Empires, and now it is the strategic space between regional and global powers, four of whom – Russia, China, Pakistan and India – possess nuclear weapons, with Iran possibly moving in that direction.

It is a key to unlocking the coveted One Belt One Road initiative. Indeed, the land of the Afghan is the convergence point in Mackinder’s famed Heartland, the intersection or hub for Russian/Central Asian, Chinese, Persian and Indian trade corridors that link their domestic economies. It is estimated that an Indian-Central Asian land trade route linking European and Middle Eastern markets to India could spur 100 billion dollars annual growth. It is only because Afghanistan remains insecure that trucks, trains, and trans-Caspian ships do not link New Delhi (or even Beijing) to Tbilisi and Istanbul; or Tashkent by road or rail to Almaty.

It has also been, and to some extent remains, a sanctuary to a virulent form of radical Islam and to the world’s most productive agricultural drug economy.

Yes, Afghanistan is breathtakingly strategic.

It is this context that we need to understand the importance of the NATO Resolute Support Mission. It is this context that we cannot trivialize the efforts of

NATO in the land of the Afghan since 2003. I first travelled to that land in 2002, part of the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition, determined to find and destroy the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. I returned in 2004 to Kabul as the lead planner for Commander ISAF. It was then that I was seconded to the Afghan Ministry of Finance, then under Ashraf Ghani, to assist in staff capacity building. In 2006 I deployed to Kandahar in command of a Canadian Infantry Battalion and, over the course of eight months, experienced sustained combat against surging Taliban forces. I returned again in 2012 to spend a year commanding the combined NATO-Afghan Consolidated Fielding Centre dedicated to forming, equipping, training and deploying Afghan battalions (Khandaks) and specialist companies. During that 12 months we 'fielded' over 30,000 Afghan soldiers, many of whom left our nine-week period of formation to go straight into combat.

It is through these experiences and considerable time of studying Afghans that I have come to my perspective on our Resolute Support Mission. My observations are as follows:

The Resolute Support Mission must not be mistaken as symbolic of NATO's retreat from combat. It must not be considered as a deliberate attempt by the Alliance to stay clear of high-end 'crisis management' operations.

Now, in truth, many member nations did capitalize upon President Obama's 2009 announcement of an end to ISAF's 'combat' mission in 2014. They quickly began the withdrawal of their contingents, extracting themselves from what some considered an impossible task – the defeat of the Taliban. Canada was certainly representative, declaring in 2010 its intent to end its combat mission in 2011.

Now it is also true that NATO nations capitalized on contemporary efforts to shift focus from combat to training and advising, as these were more politically acceptable. The Heads of States and Governments formally launched the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) in April 2009, centralising all the force generation, equipping, training, professionalization and mentoring of the Afghan National Security Forces. Canada led the effort amongst non-US members, moving the preponderance of combat troops out of Kandahar and into thousands of training and mentoring billets throughout the growing number of Afghan security sector institutions.

It is easy to read backwards that this marked an end to the willingness of Allied nations to endure combat. It is equally easy to see the forced rush in NTM-A to reach force generation goals before the end of 2014 as motivated by desperation to leave. Through stellar efforts, the command helped to eventually field a total of 352,000 troops and police (195,000 ANA/157,000 ANP – Afghan National Army/Afghan National Police). To achieve these goals NTM-A put fielding quantity – a critical mass – above quality. Despite the precarious security situation and lack of evidence of ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) preparedness to assume ownership of security operations in December 2014, no opposition came from the Alliance to thwart the US President's timeline. Shortcuts to training

came to be amplified as the deadline drew closer. Soldier and leader qualifications, problems of retention, heavy dependence on Allied and US logistical support and the vast quantities of vehicles and weapons delivered without a sustainment plan created the clear impression that NATO was cutting and running from Afghanistan.

The reality of the decision to end the ISAF combat mission (and with it NTM-A) was more complex than simple war weariness on the part of NATO governments or the US President. The reality is that, by its very nature, the ISAF mission was fundamentally flawed. This was because it had been conceived incrementally first as an official UN-mandated 'stabilisation' operation assumed by NATO in 2003, which was subsequently morphed into a lethal counter-insurgency operation for which nations were ill-prepared. Plagued by mandate confusion and resulting caveats, the continued existence of a parallel Operation Enduring Freedom and special operation missions, and a convoluted command structure that was not responsive to the NAC, ISAF never achieved military effectiveness. This was not for lack of means, there were over 120.000 soldiers in ISAF by 2011. The problem was lack of unity about the strategic ends and inappropriate strategic ways.

A real cause for the stagnation of the conflict was the adoption of the so-called population-centric counter-insurgency methodology (doctrine) which proved to be a very poor substitute for an actual military strategy. The result was that wherever there were local successes, as we witnessed in the districts around Kandahar city by 2010, it was because of the presence of very large numbers of ISAF soldiers carrying out the concept of 'clear, hold, build.' These successes depended entirely upon the sustained presence of such large ISAF forces, which over time would achieve ever more marginal gains, and even backslide, as the presence of foreign soldiers naturally started to increase resentment amongst the local.

Population-centric counter-insurgency was a flawed operational concept because it is not the role or purpose of ISAF soldiers to protect the Afghan civilian population against Afghan insurgents. That role must be shouldered by Afghan's themselves.

Therefore, the period 2003-2009 was one of the misguided efforts and the absence of strategy from which ISAF only began to recover with the establishment of NTM-A. The strategic ends then became to steadily 'Afghanize' combat throughout the country, the strategic ways became the rapid development of the ASF to such an extent that they themselves could provide the means of strategy and assume responsibility for combat and the clear-hold-build tasks. NTM-A, therefore, used an industrial model to recruit, train, equip, and deploy forces before 2015. This effort was largely successful. How can I declare this, well because during the period of limited Western presence 2015-2017 the Taliban failed to achieve anything significant against the ASF.

The Resolute Support, with its 16.000 NATO troops, the mission is a continuance of the strategy to make the Afghan own their security problem, with more

emphasis now on creating sustainability in their forces. As such, Resolute Support is NATO's best bet in Afghanistan. It is not so large as to draw anger from civilian populations but is large enough to help sustain the ASF. It is not considerably expensive in terms of personnel deployed or even money donated. But its impacts are strategic.

The Resolute Support mission is sustaining a military establishment which will be very difficult for the Taliban (and associates) to defeat militarily. Yes, the ASF can break apart easily enough should the Government of Afghanistan fall apart, but short of this they will not be defeated by their enemy.

The Resolute Support mission achieves a tremendous strategic effect merely by its presence in Afghanistan. It sustains the confidence of the Afghan people and their leadership.

It keeps the United States engaged.

It provides a caution to the Pakistanis, the Indians, the Iranians, the Chinese and the Russians.

It assists in keeping the internal insurgency in Afghanistan from escalating into a regional effort.

Given the breathtakingly geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan, and given the pressures currently felt by the Alliance to meet challenges from the eastern and southern peripheries, the Resolute Support mission must not be considered as squandered resources better employed on the eastern or southern flanks. It should be considered for what it is - an excellent strategic economy of force effort which assists in preventing the fall of the constituted Afghan authorities and the renewal of civil war in that breathtakingly strategic country.



MARTIN O'DONNELL

Public Affairs Officer and Spokesman, Resolute Support Mission Headquarters, Kabul

WHY STILL RESOLUTE SUPPORT?

I would like to start in Verona where, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet asks Romeo, "What's in a name?" The context, for those who are unfamiliar with the story is that Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet meet and fall in love, doomed from the start as members of two warring families. It is here where Juliet tells Romeo that a name is an artificial and meaningless convention and that she loves the person who is called "Montague", not the Montague name, and not the Montague family. This one short line encapsulates the central struggle and tragedy of the play. What does this have to do with Resolute Support, the NATO-led, non-combat mission? Quite frankly nothing and also everything.

Since taking command of NATO and US forces in Afghanistan, Gen. Austin "Scott" Miller has travelled all over the country. He asks two questions to those he meets from the 41 contributing nations. The first is, "What does 'resolute' mean to you?" *Determinato, inflessibile, costante*, or in English, determined, unyielding, steadfast are some of the responses he has received thus far. Meaningful words, although they do not address the "why," to go back to Col. Ian Hope's thesis [from his remarks] – the heart of NATO's 17-year effort in Afghanistan. And if you would, I will talk a little bit more in practical terms versus the strategic context Col. Hope provided. Which brings me to the second question Gen. Miller asks, and that is, "Why are we here?" To answer that question, we need to go back more than a decade to September 11, 2001.

A little over a week ago, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General, visited the reflecting pools where the twin towers once stood and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York. In fact, it was his third visit to this site. In his remarks, he said, "*Coming here to Ground Zero is a time for solemn reflection, a time to pay tribute to the innocent victims of 9/11, a time to remember the suffering, the sorrow and the staggering loss on that terrible day.*" But America is not the only country to suffer. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, Turkey, the United

Kingdom, Pakistan, India; I could go on. And while, as a country, Italy has been spared, some of its citizens travelling abroad were not.

While reflecting on this tragedy, let us also recall the sense of community and common purpose that emerged from the wreckage. As the Secretary-General said, *"The goal of terrorism is always to spread fear and to sow discord and division and disunity"*. But the terrorists have failed. The response to terrorism on September 11, was to unite in a sense of community and common purpose and to stand up for the Alliance's free and open societies.

For the first and only time in NATO's history, it invoked Article 5, NATO's collective defence clause of its Founding Treaty, which states that an attack on one is an attack on all. In the days that followed the 9/11 attack, NATO planes helped to patrol American skies. Soon after, troops from NATO Allies deployed to Afghanistan, to prevent that country from ever again becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. Since then, hundreds of thousands of troops from NATO Allies and its partners have served in Afghanistan. More than 3.000 have paid the ultimate price, including one American soldier who died today.

We have many different tools, including military might, in the fight against terrorism and we need to use all of them. Yet, as Stoltenberg said, *"Training local forces is one of the best weapons we have in the fight against terrorism because prevention is better than intervention"*. Gen. Riccardo Marchiò, Joint Force Command Headquarters Brunssum commander, Gen. Joseph Votel, US Central Command commander, Gen. Scott Miller, Resolute Support and US Forces-Afghanistan commander, and his predecessor, Gen. John Nicholson were the men in charge of that military mission. They are responsible for training Afghanistan's forces. They are responsible for executing NATO's military strategy. A strategy that allies and operational partners reaffirmed their commitment towards during the NATO Summit in Brussels in July.

Below is an excerpt of their joint statement issued at the Summit. Italicized are some keywords.

Our shared aim remains a stable and secure Afghanistan that will never again serve as a safe haven for terrorists who threaten our shared security. Allies and Operational Partners reaffirm their commitment to the Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists the Afghan forces at the invitation of the Afghan government and with the support of the International Community as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 2189. Effective, professional, and self-sustaining Afghan forces will be better able to provide security for the country, create the conditions for a negotiated resolution of the conflict through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, and demonstrate to the Taliban that it cannot prevail through force.

Let's talk a little bit about those professional and self-sustaining Afghan forces.

One of the true signs of progress in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces is Afghanistan elite forces, which include women. And while the Afghan Special Security Forces represent only a fraction of the overall Afghan security

forces and the women that serve in them only a small fraction of that fraction, it speaks to the progress that has been made.

Another area of great progress is the Afghan Air Force. The MD-530 Cayuse Warrior light-attack helicopter is one of two main light-attack aircraft used by Afghan forces. It was in August, on the first day of Eid al-Fitr, when an ISIS-claimed mortar attack launched more than 30 mortar rounds from a position inside Kabul. And it was in less than 30 minutes that an elite unit and a MD-530 light-attack helicopter responded. And there is a [video](#) of the response online, which I encourage you to seek out. To see this helicopter swoop down into the city and with precision fire take out the insurgents who were lobbing mortar rounds at the palace where the Afghan president was speaking, was quite impressive.

One of the other platforms is the A-29 Super Tucano light-attack aircraft. It was in March that this aircraft conducted its first employment of a laser-guided munition, which again speaks to the prowess of the Afghan Air Force and the progress it has achieved. It was in May when Taliban forces attacked the city of Farah that the A-29 conducted its first simultaneous back and forth mission where the aircraft would arm and refuel, and fly from both Kandahar and Kabul to Farah, where it eliminated the Taliban who were attacking the city. And then these aircraft would turn around and fly back to Kandahar and Kabul, rearm and refuel, and then return to attack again. They did this for approximately 20 hours. Those that were piloting the aircraft were Afghans. Those that were refuelling the aircraft were Afghans. Those that were rearming the aircraft were Afghans, which again speaks to the progress of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

A few days ago, the NATO Military Committee met in Warsaw, where the Chairman of the Military Committee stressed that our commitment to Afghanistan is unwavering. Therefore, what's in a name? Nothing and everything.



A village elder in Kandahar.



SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

OPENING REMARKS

Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo

President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

A strong focus on the strategic outlook in complex issues. High-level contacts and negotiations. Special attention to countries of strategic relevance i.e. the Gulf region. Frequent Public Diplomacy activities to discuss policies and open issues. He held the position of Deputy Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance, between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic-political-industrial area, in relations with sensitive countries such as those in the Gulf and the Southern Mediterranean. He is the author of the books: "The road to Kabul" (Il Mulino-Arel, 2009); "A political journey without maps, diversity and future in the Greater Middle East" (Rubbettino, 2013); "NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership" (New Academia Publishing, 2018).

Alessandro Politi

Director, NATO Defense College Foundation

Alessandro Politi is the director of the NATO Defense College Foundation, the only NATO-affiliated NGO think tank. A political and strategic analyst with 30 years of experience, he was political advisor of two KFOR Commanders. He was senior researcher for the Italian MoD (CeMiSS-Centre for Military and Strategic Studies) responsible for the strategic monitoring of Latin America. He also created and has led the Global Outlook project within CeMiSS, published in Italian and English (third edition, 2015). He has contributed to the Italian Defence White. He has directed the CEMRES research on CBMs in the framework of the 5+5 Defence Initiative, presenting the conclusions to the Ministers in Granada. He teaches geopolitics and intelligence at the SIOI. He teaches conflict management, crisis, peace-making and analysis at different governmental centres. He has been acting director of the School of Intelligence Analysis at a private establishment in Rome. He has been advisor in Italy and abroad to four Defence ministers (among which the actual President of the Italian Republic, Hon. Mattarella), one National Armaments Director, one Intelligence Co-ordinator, one Chairman of the Oversight Intelligence Committee, one Head of the Italian delegation to

the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (actually EU HR, on. Federica Mogherini). Born in Germany, lives in Rome. He has published as author or co-author 25 books on strategic and security matters. His most recent publications will be on the Belt and Road Initiative.

Fabio Indeo

Analyst, NATO Defense College Foundation

Dr Indeo holds a PhD in Geopolitics. His dissertation was focused on the geopolitical competition in Central Asia and the role of the EU. Currently, he is a non-resident researcher at Center for Energy Governance and Security (EGS) of Hanyang University (South Korea) and analyst on Central Asia Security at the NATO Defense College Foundation. Research field: Geopolitics of Central Asia: the external influences of Russia, European Union, United States and China; Afghanistan and regional security; geopolitics of pipelines. Dr Indeo has been invited to attend several international conferences and lectures presenting his research.

Thierry Tardy

Director, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome

Starting from May 2018, Dr Thierry Tardy is the new Director of Research Division at NATO Defense College. From 2013 to 2018, he served as Senior Analyst to the European Union Institute for Security Studies and, before that, he was Senior Fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. He has researched and published extensively on military and civilian crisis management with a particular focus on the United Nations, the European Union and inter-institutional cooperation in security governance. His latest research has also focused on crisis management in Africa, the financing of CSDP operations and the EU maritime operation in the southern Mediterranean Sea. Dr Tardy teaches on European Security and Crisis Management at Sciences Po, La Sorbonne and European Security and Defense College, among other universities.

SESSION I

Vincenzo Camporini

Vice President, Institute for International Affairs, Rome

Enlisted in the Air Force Academy in 1965, General Camporini rose through the ranks to eventually take up the highest office of Chief of Staff of the Italian Air Force (2006-08) and Chief of Defence General Staff (2008-11). A graduate in Aeronautical Sciences at the University of Naples Federico II and in International and Diplomatic Sciences at the University of Trieste, General Camporini has also dealt with the most topical issues of international politics as a scholar and academic, focusing on the political-military dimension of the European Union and the development of its ability to use the military instrument in the framework of its

external relations. Among other things, he was President of the Centre for High Defence Studies, Rome (2004-06).

Richard Hooker

Professor, National War College, and Theodore Roosevelt Chair in National Security Affairs, Washington

National Defense University Director for Research and Strategic Support and Director at the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) from September 2013, he worked also as a member of the Senior Executive Service and served as Deputy Commandant and Dean of the NATO Defense College in Rome from September 2010 to August 2013. He holds The Theodore Roosevelt Chair in National Security Affairs at NDU and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the International Institute of Strategic Studies, and the Foreign Policy Research Institute. A former White House Fellow, Dr Hooker previously taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point and held the Chief of Staff of the Army Chair at the National War College in Washington, D.C. He also served with the Office of National Service, The White House under President George H.W. Bush, with the Arms Control and Defense Directorate, National Security Council during the Clinton Administration, with the NSC Office for Iraq and Afghanistan in the administration of George W. Bush and recently as a Senior Director for NATO/Europe, Russia and Europe Directorate at the National Security Council, Washington D. C.

Zhongying Pang

Distinguished Professor, Ocean University, and Macau University of Science and Technology, China

Zhongying Pang is a distinguished Professor of International Relations. He was the executive chair of the Academic Committee at the Grandview Institution in Beijing. His area of expertise includes comparative world order, global governance and Chinese foreign policy. He also served in both the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) and the Chinese Embassy in Indonesia. Dr Pang obtained two master degrees in Economics and a doctoral degree in International Politics. He is a lecturer at many universities within China and abroad. Pang participated in discussions about China at the world's leading think tanks and academic institutions.

Saeed Naqvi

Senior Journalist, New Delhi

Saeed Naqvi has been a quintessential reporter and foreign correspondent for over four decades. He has travelled the length and breadth of India and visited over a hundred countries in pursuit of stories. He has covered most wars since the 1971 war with Pakistan which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh. Other wars covered include the Sri Lanka Civil War, 1971, Sino-Vietnam war, 1979, US bomb-

ing of Libya, 1986, the first coup in Fiji, 1987, Nicaragua war, 1989, Operation Desert Storm, 1991, US occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq, 2003, Syrian civil war, 2011. Saeed has interviewed world statesmen, like Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro, Muammar Qaddafi, Henry Kissinger, Benazir Bhutto, President Hamid Karzai, Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, J.R. Jayawardene, President Hashemi Rafsanjani and scores of others. His writings, lecture tours and short films on India's composite culture have been path-breaking efforts, as have been his documentaries on Indian Peace Keeping Forces and the Indian diaspora in unexpected lands.

SESSION II

Kai Eide

Former United Nations Special Representative to Afghanistan, Oslo

Kai Eide is a Norwegian diplomat and writer. He was Norway's Ambassador to the OSCE (1998-2002), NATO (2002-2006) and Sweden (2014-2017), UN Representative to the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (1993-95), Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Bosnia-Herzegovina (1997-98) and to Afghanistan (2008-2010), UN Envoy to Kosovo (2005) and author of «Power Struggle over Afghanistan» (2011). Ambassador Eide was State Secretary responsible for foreign and security policies in the Office of the Norwegian Prime Minister during 1989 and 1990. He also served as Special Adviser to the CEO of the Norwegian oil company now Equinor before reentering the Norwegian Foreign Service. During his career, Ambassador Eide has written extensively on foreign policy issues, primarily on Balkan affairs.

Maria Sultan

Chairperson and President, South Asia Strategic Stability Institute, Islamabad

Maria Sultan, Director of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI), is a Pakistani Political Scientist and defence analyst. A renowned television personality and an ex-anchor, Maria Sultan is enlisted as a guest lecturer at multiple academic institutions in Pakistan. She also worked for the government of Pakistan as a civilian war analyst at the Ministry of Defense. Sultan's research interests include nuclear disarmament, weapon systems development and arms control. Her work is widely published in Pakistani journals and media.

Christopher A. Corpora

Professor, Mercyhurst University, Erie (USA)

Professor Corpora is an intelligence and international security expert with over 25 years of experience in the field and over a decade of teaching. He served as a senior advisor and consultant with multiple U.S. government agencies and private companies, focused on countering transnational threats, global illicit trafficking, transnational organised crime, corruption and violent extremism. Previously, he

served as the Team Lead/Chief of Party for support to the Syrian Opposition with the U.S. Department of State's (DOS) Bureau for Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO). Prior to joining CSO, he served as a Senior Advisor to the Federal Bureau of Investigations – helping redesign the Directorate of Intelligence and establish the FBI's first, focused program to work with state and local law enforcement investigative fusion centres. He has published and presented dozens of scholarly essays, articles and book chapters and is an active senior fellow and scholar in several research and policy institutes.

Shukria Barakzai

Ambassador, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Oslo

Her school and university years corresponded with major political and social developments in the country which left their marks on her: she was forced to seek a life in exile. However, she continued her activism by becoming a member of the Founding Committee of the Female Journalists Union of Afghanistan established by the United Nations Women's Fund (UNIFEM). Ambassador Barakzai was appointed a member of the Constitutional Review Commission. Her efforts resulted in the draft of the current constitution, which was adopted by the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2004. From March 2011 until early 2016, she chaired the Defense Committee of the Parliament. In July 2010, she became a delegate to the Consultative Peace Jirga of Afghanistan. In December 2008, she co-founded the Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM) as an independent and impartial human rights organisation. In 2004 she has been conferred the Medal of National Honour. Ambassador Barakzai is also a prolific writer and a firm commentator.

SESSION III

Benoît d'Aboville

Vice-Président, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris

Benoît d'Aboville, a former career diplomat, has been posted in Washington, Moscow, Geneva, Madrid (CSCE) and New York. He was also Former Deputy Political Director in the French Minister of FA. French Ambassador in Prague, Warsaw and Permanent Representative in Brussels to NATO (2000-2005). Senior Auditor at the National Audit Office (*Cour des Comptes*)(2005-2011). Since 2014, he is Vice President of the "*Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique*" in Paris and member of the Executive Board as well as Vice President of the "*Institute of International Humanitarian Law*" in San Remo and Geneva. He has been appointed the chairman of the editorial board of "*Revue de la Défense Nationale*". Currently, he is Associate Professor at Sciences-Po/Paris School of International Affairs and member of the Senior External Advisory Board of NATO.

Zalmai Rassoul

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kabul

Zalmai Rassoul is a Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and a politician. He was also a candidate for the 2014 presidential elections. He devoted his career to facilitate the political transition in Afghanistan. His contributions include serving as a national security advisor and accompanying former President Hamid Karzai for the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga. Dr Rassoul is of great significance to the international community given that he founded the monthly publication *Afghan Reality*, one of the few sources of information from inside Afghanistan.

Ian Hope

Researcher, NATO Defense College, Rome

Colonel Hope has 36 years of service in uniform, involving 18 years in leadership roles with airborne and mechanised infantry battalions. His operational experiences include the first Gulf War, multiple tours in the Balkans, Africa, and Afghanistan, and domestic operations. He also has a Bachelor of History (Honours) from Acadia University, a Masters of Military Arts and Science, a Masters of Strategic Studies, and a PhD in History from Queen's University. He is the author of *A Scientific Way of War* (2015), *Dancing with the Dushman* (2008), *Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle of War* (2007), three monographs and a dozen articles and chapters on military history and strategic studies. Colonel Hope is now serving as a faculty advisor at the NATO Defense College in Rome.

Martin L. O'Donnell

Public Affairs Officer and Spokesman, Resolute Support Mission Headquarters, Kabul

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Martin L. has extensive experience in NATO operations, serving once in Bosnia-Herzegovina and six times in Afghanistan as part of both the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support missions. While assigned at various times to ISAF, Lt. Col. O'Donnell served as a Media Operations Officer, a Media Plans Officer, the Chief of Media Operations, the Deputy Chief Public Affairs and the personal Public Affairs Advisor to both the ISAF and NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan commanders. Past assignments include a four-year tour with NATO's Joint Force Command Headquarters Brunssum, the Netherlands, where he served as a Media Relations Officer in the ISAF Cell of the Public Affairs Office and a Strategic Communication Officer in the Operations Directorate. Lt. Col. O'Donnell's military education and training highlights include the Infantry Officer Basic Course, the NATO Staff Officer's Course, the U.S. Department of Defense Public Affairs Officer Qualification Course, the NATO Public Affairs Course and the Swiss/Partnership for Peace Advanced Crisis Communication Course.

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

Abdul Hai Rauf

Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Defense for Policy and Strategy, Kabul

Abdul Hai Rauf is a National Security expert based in Kabul. Besides being the Deputy Minister of National Defense, he has been the Director of Analysis and Assessment at the Office of the National Security Council for over five years. He also has a long history working for not-for-profit organizations such as The Open Society Foundation and Integrity Watch Afghanistan. He is an advocate for good governance and tolerant democracies. Rauf holds a Master's degree in International Policy Studies as well as a Bachelor's in applied sciences, law and political science. of National Defense for Policy and Strategy, Kabul



AFGHANISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA: LOOMING PRIORITIES AND REGIONAL UN-BALANCES

CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY
the NATO Defense College Foundation
in co-operation with
the NATO Public Diplomacy Division
and the NATO Defense College

ROME, THE 4TH OCTOBER 2018
Venue: Auditorium Via Veneto, Via Veneto, 89, Rome

THURSDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2018

- 13,30-14,30 Arrival of participants - Registration
- 14,30-14,45 **Welcome remarks**
- Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
 - Thierry Tardy, Director, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome

Session I

CENTRAL ASIA AT THE INTERSECTION OF MAJOR POWERS

Central and South Asia were traditionally influenced by the conflict in Afghanistan and along the Pakistani border. Since five years the New Silk Road by China is changing regional equations also within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. How are major powers (USA, China, India and Russia) redrawing the strategic landscape of the region? Is co-operative security possible or not?

- 14,45-16,00 Chair: Vincenzo Camporini, Vice President, Institute for International Affairs, Rome
- Richard Hooker, Professor, National War College and, Theodore Roosevelt Chair in National Security Affairs, Washington D.C.
 - Zhongying Pang, Distinguished Professor, Ocean University, and Macau University of Science and Technology, China Institute, Ocean University of China (OUC), Qingdao
 - Saeed Naqvi, Senior Journalist, New Delhi

Q&A

THURSDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2018

Session II

MORE OF THE SAME OR EVOLUTION?

Can Islamabad and Kabul really co-operate and finalise a political dialogue on the end of a decade long civil war and war by proxy in Afghanistan? Decades of foreign interventions in Afghanistan have created an area of shared instability that affects also Pakistan, not only in terms of conflict management along the border, but also due to the explosion of illegal trafficking concerning first opium and then other legal goods on either side of a porous border.

16,30 -17, 45 Chair: Kai Eide, former Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations to Afghanistan, Oslo

- Zalmay Rassoul, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kabul
- Ian Hope, Researcher, NATO Defense College, Rome
- Martin L. O'Donnell, Public Affairs Officer and Spokesman, Resolute Support Mission Headquarters, Kabul

Q&A

THURSDAY, 4TH OCTOBER 2018

Session III

**RESOLUTE SUPPORT: MAINTENANCE AND
RELEVANCE**

Afghanistan is probably experiencing its worst security crisis in perhaps more than a decade and at the same time showing some unprecedented good political signal. Resolute Support is the current NATO operation in support of the country. Its importance both for the local population and the international community needs a constant reassessment.

17,45-19,00 Chair: Benoît d'Aboville, Vice-President, Fondation pour la
Recherche Stratégique, Paris

- Maria Sultan, Chairperson and President, South Asia Strategic Stability Institute, Islamabad
- Christopher A. Corpora, Professor, Mercyhurst University, Erie (USA)
- Shukria Barakzai, Ambassador, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Oslo

Q&A

Special Intervention

- Abdul Hai Rauf, Deputy Minister of National Defence for Policy and Strategy, Kabul



An Afghan National Army Special Forces Soldier talks with a possible Afghan Local Police candidate in Helmand province, Afghanistan (source US DoD, USMC).






Young peasant girl on the Jalalabad Road, Afghanistan.







The region of Afghanistan and Central Asia is one of great importance for its implications on the world order. It is a land situated between major powers with concrete political and economic interests in the region, namely, China, India, Iran and Russia. All discussions about Afghanistan confirm that its stability constitutes a common interest for all involved internal and external actors. However, the problem lies in the means by which this interest is achieved. Each stakeholder holds fast to a certain vision of Afghanistan's future. The lack of compromise is continuing the deadlock for the country. While Central Asian States (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are starting to dampen traditional rivalries in the quest for a more effective regional cooperation, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India relations remain tense.

After the ISAF mission, NATO is reiterating its commitment to ensure long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. Some of these efforts include training of local Afghan National Security Forces, institution-building, provision of expertise and mediation between regional actors. Specifically, NATO is keen to affirm the locals' support of its mission and the milestones it has accomplished to this date. The rationale for this involvement can be clearly seen through the consequences that a previous disengagement after 1989 brought: another cycle of civil war, increased and more dangerous tensions between two nuclear powers like India and Pakistan, the increase of opium and other illegal trafficking fuelling organised crime worldwide and the rise of transnational terrorism culminating in the horrendous attacks of 9/11.

A continued support of the mission from the international community and especially main NATO members (e.g. Italy) is paramount to the mission's success that aims at achieving goals that are inevitably long term.

Part of these objectives include the establishment of a legitimate constitutional government, the control of corruption, the curtailing of the drug trade and eventually, a smooth power transition; all things that are complex to achieve in the midst of a civil war.

Regional collaboration is clearly indispensable because aspirations like Afghanistan's security, the balance between India and Pakistan's, the stability of South and West Asia and China's Belt and Road Initiative can be synergic or mutually inter-blocking.

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