



**Afghanistan and Central Asia:  
Looming priorities and regional un-balances**

**Rome - October 4, 2018**







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

*High-level Conference*

*Organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation in cooperation with the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the NATO Defense College*

**Rome, October 4, 2018**

Venue: *Auditorium Via Veneto, Via Veneto, 89, Rome*

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

14,45 - 16,00

### SESSION 1 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 the major powers (the USA, China, India and Russia) redrawing the strategic landscape of the region? Is co-operative security possible or not?*

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**, Executive Chair of the Academic Committee, the Grandview Institution, Beijing
- ❑ **Saeed Naqvi**, Senior Journalist, New Delhi

**General discussion**

16,00 - 16,30

Coffee break

16,30 - 17, 45

## SESSION 2 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.*

Chair: **Kai Eide**, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Afghanistan, Oslo

- ❑ **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

### General discussion

17,45-19,00

## SESSION 3 RESOLUTE SUPPORT: MAINTENANCE AND RELEVANCE

*Afghanistan is probably experiencing its worst security crisis in 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.*

Chair: **Benoît d'Aboville**, Vice-President, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris

- ❑ **Zalmai 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

### General discussion

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



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

### **SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **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).

#### **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.

#### **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**

*Executive Chair of the Academic Committee, the Grandview Institution, Beijing*

Zhongying Pang is a distinguished Professor of International Relations. He is 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 bombing 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.

**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 STATOIL before reentering the Norwegian Foreign Service. During his carrier, 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.

### **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 Defense 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.

**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.



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### **BACKGROUND POLICY 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 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 militants are particularly relevant) in order to assure a close co-operation with national authorities and support to 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 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014. The Alliance recognised that 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 develop economic cooperation 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 this country as a geographic hub for railway links and other infrastructural projects.

The current attempts to foster a dialogue with the Taliban - promoted in different ways by Russia, Uzbekistan, 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 Resolute Support Mission, still have serious concerns due to Afghanistan's permanent 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 has already a devastating social impact. The degradation 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 worsening the 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 (IS-K) 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) 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 they derive 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.

Russia has in the meantime tried hard to use bilateral cooperation and multilateral 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 internal 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 Russia'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, the achievement of a long-term regional security and stability has become one of the main drivers of the 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.

### **Fabio Indeo - NDCF Central Asia Analyst**

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.

The NATO Defense College Foundation was established in 2011. It grew out from a common institution of the President Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo and the NATO Defense College top decision makers who understood the value of a non-profit NGO that could work beyond usual institutional outreach, training, communication and scientific research activities.

While the tradition of stability and well-being is embodied by the principles of the Washington charter, the triple upheavals of the fall of the Soviet Union, the global economic crisis and the Arab Revolutions required a more focused, agile and innovative approach.

Therefore the NDCF strives at considering relevant issues not just in a descriptive or prescriptive way but catching the sense of events and the essential vectors of future developments. In a word: Charting ahead.

### **Contacts**

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## NOTES

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