General

1. A Nordic group visited NDU on 16 November 2012 to participate in the roundtable talk on transition of ISAF’s military presence in Afghanistan. In addition to ISSRA faculty, the event was also attended by Distinguished Visiting Members, Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (Retd), Lt Gen Sardar Mahmood Khan (Retd), Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Dean FCS, Maj Gen Shahid Hashmat, Dy QMG, Vice Adm Iftikhar Ahmad Rao (Retd) and DG SSASI, Ms. Maria Sultan, and faculty members of the National Defence University.

Inaugural Session

2. After recitation from the Holy Quran, Major General Ziauddin Najam, DG ISSRA welcomed the guests. In his welcome address, DG ISSRA highlighted the importance of the topic and said that transition in Afghanistan is a very critical issue. Since Pakistan’s stakes are very high therefore, its full time participation in transition process is important that will help in achieving long time sustainable stability in Afghanistan.

3. Since 1979, when Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been involved in Afghanistan. Perhaps, Pakistan is the only country, which has paid the highest price for peace in Afghanistan, not only in terms of human and economic losses but also in terms of societal loss. Pakistan is looking critically at the present ISAF transition plan from Afghanistan which has direct bearing on the overall stability in the region. The overall peace and stability in Afghanistan is also linked with the results of the upcoming elections in Afghanistan.

4. The transition involved both cost and risk which needs to be cut down. On the economic side, the size of Afghan economy is around $30 billion which is primarily
dependent on foreign aid. Around $15.7 billion alone comes through foreign military aid dedicated to improve Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). What about the training of ANSF, is the force credible enough to maintain peace and provide security? These are serious questions which need to be addressed.

**Salient Features**

5. After the introductory remarks by DG, Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (Retd) made a brief presentation on "Afghan Transition- Implications for Pakistan". The gist of his talk includes:-

   a. He began his talk by highlighting the importance of the topic especially in the backdrop of Obama’s second term and opined that Obama’s administration is going to be more decisive this time. He argued that the US would leave sufficiently strong forces with regards to counter-insurgency operation inside Afghanistan and across Pak-Afghan border in the form of drone attacks thus, more backlash and more difficulties for the people living across the Pak-Afghan border. He viewed that the US would wish to eliminate ‘Al-Qaeda’ and ‘Taliban’ to halt future attacks on the West. With regards to the terrorists network like ‘Al Qaeda’, ‘Afghan Taliban’, ‘Punjabi Taliban’ and ‘Pakistani Taliban’, he said, we are not clear about their mission and, truly speaking, Pakistan has been put into a Catch-22 situation. While Pakistan continues to support ISAF efforts however, these operations have tended to make things difficult for Pakistan.

   b. During the course of his talk, Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (Retd) highlighted that the Counter Terrorism strategies of Nordic and West countries which involve both Kinetic and non-Kinetic means, focusing on winning hearts and minds of Afghans. It gives a message that ideology cannot be destroyed; it might be contained for some time. When it comes to Pakistan, the emphasis is put on the use of only kinetic force which only helps the extremists to gain more ground and puts the government in a
difficult situation. Like the ISAF in Afghanistan, Pakistan too needs to win this war. Thus, it is looking for a balanced Counter Terrorism Strategy. He made a point that if Pakistan fails, others may also not succeed.

c. He emphasized that the success of the ISAF’s roadmap is linked with number of factors including the result of the ongoing negotiations, transparency in election process in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s ambitions, fears/expectations, the role of international community especially in the context of their sustainable economic support and the interests of other regional stakeholders.

d. He brought out three rationale on the basis of which Pakistan owe this war, one, it threatens Pakistani-Pakistan identity, second, it threatens its National Purpose that is Democracy, Freedom, Equality, Tolerance and Social Justice (DFETS) and finally, it threatens its six suggested Vital National Interests (VNIs) i.e. national integration and harmony, defence and security, economic well-being, favorable regional and global order, peoples’ security vis a vis state-security and promotion/affirmation of our national values. On the other hand, VNIs of all Western nations in Afghanistan are to expand the defence and security parameters, benefit from the potential wealth of Afghanistan, containing China and promotion of national values.

e. While suggesting the way forward, he opined that Pakistanis must be identified with the same strategic ideals at the grand strategic level and both ISAF and Pakistan should follow the same strategy. He said that like the ‘Swedish National Security Policy on Preventing Terrorism’, Pakistan also wished to incorporate the factors like openness, strengthening democratic values and an open/ tolerant society in its Counter Terrorism Strategy in line with the rule of law. He suggested that international community should trust Pakistan and quoted General Kayani’s statement, “Pakistan should be trusted and enabled”.
f. The suggested Counter-Insurgency Strategy (diagrammatic layout at Annexure A) which is based on policy strategy and aspiration is about ends, ways and means. It aims to reconcile all groups into one homogenous group. Counter-Insurgency strategy is to ‘SHAPE’ the environment that means Stop all Jehadi, Halt all Jehadi organizations, Amnesty, Pursue single minded operations and Enlist all who are ready to listen in security forces.

g. He pointed out the difference between Western and Pakistani strategies and highlighted that Western strategy is more exclusive and Pakistani more inclusive. Pakistan is fighting a war while the West is pre-empting the threats. Challenges for Pakistan are both internal and external however, with regards to West, they have to deal with only external. He suggested that the role of international community in future of Afghanistan should be inclusive not exclusive of the Afghan government. The solution should not be imposed from outside. The future scenario should look into the interests of all nations particularly the interest of Pakistan which not only shares the common border but also common heritage with Afghanistan. A destabilized Pakistan will not serve the purpose of anyone.

h. At the end, Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (Retd) concluded that the West must not make us fight to protect their national interests and policies. Moreover, in Pakistan’s War against Terrorism, Pakistan should be enabled and trusted.

Interactive Session

6. A representative from Nordic countries initiated the interactive session and acknowledged that Pakistan is a true victim of war against terrorism. During the course of interactive session, there were number of questions related to Pak-Afghanistan relations were raised including Pakistan’s role in transition process as well as in rebuilding Afghanistan. A Pakistani perspective of a possible role of China in Afghanistan also came up. The most critical question was related to Pakistan’s
apprehensions about India’s presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan considers India’s presence in Afghanistan detrimental to its national security interest.

7. During the session, it was pointed out that Pakistan is not supporting anti-American elements, as Pakistan is more concerned with putting its own house in order. There was a consensus that both West as well as Pakistan should identify common ground/values in their grand strategies. In terms of Pak-Afghan relations, Pakistan needs to be more open and frank and take Afghanistan's interests in consideration while protecting its national interests. The cooperation extended by Pakistan on Afghan government’s request to release some high profile Taliban militants is a positive sign. Pakistan’s offer to train Afghan National Army is another positive gesture that can help improve trust level between the two countries.

8. It was pointed out that Pakistan’s internal problems needs to be countered with different strategy. With regards to Afghanistan, Pakistan not only supports High Peace Council but also encourages other encompassing approaches such as negotiations with various Taliban factions. Pakistan believes that intra-Afghan dialogue should be the top priority, involving credible negotiators led by Afghans. The symbolic release of prisoners from Pakistan is the evidence of credibility of Council in facilitating the negotiations.

9. Economic transparency is also one of the issues. There is a need to design a mechanism to ensure accountability and transparency. Pakistan is still hosting more than 1.649 million Afghan refugees. While Pakistan has provided scholarships to the Afghan youth but it is not sufficient. The educated Afghan refugees should also be considered in the future development of Afghanistan.

10. With regards to the security of Pak-Afghan border, there is a disparity in the availability and deployment pattern of the forces of the two sides. As compared to Pakistan, ISAF is manning just few posts along the border. We need to understand the reality, Taliban have not been defeated so they want to be treated as winners in the negotiations process. Pakistan can play a decisive role in the peace process provided, it is considered as part of solution.
11. Nordic participants pointed out that their countries are committed in the development efforts in Afghanistan. Moreover, there are no ulterior motives of Nordic countries other than welfare and development of Afghanistan. However, it was pointed out that the possibility of a negotiated settlement of Afghanistan seems unlikely, instead decision is being imposed from outside. Moreover, the mistrust also exists among the various Pakhtun ethnic groups.

12. The point was also registered that the West should facilitate and encourage Pakistan and India to reach on some kind of understanding so that they could also jointly facilitate peace in Afghanistan instead of playing zero sum games. While Pakistan would encourage the regional countries’ role however, it does have apprehensions about the expanded role of India in its backyard.

13. At the end, it was highlighted that because of the conspiracy theories which continue to emerge frequently from different corner of the world, resultantly, there is an ambiguity about the role of different players in the post-2014 Afghanistan scenario. The West is also taking a narrow vision about the future of Afghanistan as historically, Afghanistan had rebuffed any unilateral effort by any state. Thus, in future engagements, the three countries namely Iran, China and Pakistan should be included in the Afghan peace process.

**Concluding Remarks**

14. DG ISSRA in his concluding remarks said that in Afghanistan, there is a history of mistrust and short-term dealings. In 2001, Pakistan put across number suggestions to the US side. It was told not to go for war and instead find a diplomatic solution to get Osama bin Laden. Pakistan was prepared to help the US. The US side was also told that they must make a distinction between ‘Al-Qaeda’ and ‘Taliban’ and do not bind them together. It was also suggested to the US side that she should not become an occupation force. If an operation was required, it should be short, swift and surgical.
15. After, more than a decade, the US has come to the same conclusions. Nevertheless, in the process, they have diverted their entire energies to demonize Pakistan. While the US had been the longest and most popular ally of Pakistan but these feelings are waning, American should find the reason why this happened. The decision of NATO/US to attack Afghanistan was a hasty decision, thus, the war was initiated on the wrong footing.

16. Nevertheless, we need to look forward to make the transition process a success story. At the end, he thanked Nordic delegation for visiting NDU and exchanging views about Pakistan. He also thanked participants of the roundtable talk for their extremely enlightened discourse with the distinguished guests.
Proposed Counter-Insurgency Strategy of Pakistan

Policy Obj: Wean/ reconcile ONE MODERATE NATION

CI Strategy: SHAPE the Environment

CI Policy: Reconcile All

CHALLENGES
- Internal: NSAs
- External: Attacks (Drones+)

Inst Of Statecraft
- Media, Education, Eco, Mil, Foreign, Interior, MOD

National Ends
- Pakistani-Pakistan
- N Purpose: DFETS
- N Interests: 6 VNIs

Elements of NP
- Population, Water, Minerals, Land, Location

ENDS – WAYS – MEANS EQUATION
Counter Insurgency Operations

VALUES/ BELIEFS/ ATTITUDES
Pluralism, Dynamic Religion, Modernity, Rationale, Equality Liberty Fraternity