Afghanistan: Alternative Futures and Their Implications

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The future is a combination of what "will be" and what "can be." What "will be" is brought about by factors and events outside the control and influence of strategic leaders. For instance, natural disasters and even many social trends are immune to external controls and management. Strategic leaders, however, have the ability to generate positive future outcomes by influencing what "can be."

Perhaps no single country exercises more influence over the factors that sway what "can be" than the actions of the United States. Its preeminent influence extends across every global domain (economic, social, political, military, and cultural), and into virtually every developed country of the world. As the sole superpower, its major foreign and domestic policy decisions affect the world. However, the world order consists of a complex, adaptive, and open system that complicates and often obviates US strategies designed to achieve positive outcomes. Cause-and-effect estimates of foreign policy activities fuel many unpredictable responses with second- and third-order effects that can literally overwhelm the anticipated first-order response. This is further complicated by time delays in reactions, counterreactions, and counter-counterreactions, that may camouflage or obscure the long-term negative consequences of an apparent short-term positive response to an implemented strategy. This is especially true during periods of armed conflict where uncertainty, volatility, and ambiguity are dramatically increased, and fear and friction obscure even transparent policy intentions. The development and analysis of alternative future scenarios is one way of providing a means for identifying and examining numerous factors relevant in formulating or modifying effective goals and strategies. This article examines the context of the current conflict in Afghanistan, assesses the interests and activities of major stakeholders in a regional and global context, and advances alternative scenarios for the future. These scenarios serve to highlight possible outcomes and the governing factors currently impacting the US Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak)

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strategy. By identifying possible alternative scenarios, policy makers can improve upon strategies designed to achieve the desired strategic outcome.

Existing Environment in Afghanistan

Immediately following the appalling 11 September 2001 attacks, the United States initiated a campaign in Afghanistan aimed at eliminating the al Qaeda extremists who planned and conducted the attack and replacing the Taliban government that provided a sanctuary for al Qaeda activities.[1] After almost 10 years, the Afghan War is becoming increasingly unpopular with the American public and is losing political support in the United States and the international community.[2] Responding to a deteriorating strategic environment in Afghanistan and a growing US public opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, President Obama announced a "surge" and "exit plan" for Afghanistan.[3] The new strategy creates conditions for an acceptable transition; implements a civilian surge that institutes positive civic reforms; and helps to shape an effective partnership with Pakistan in an effort to defeat insurgent forces operating in the Afghan-Pakistan border areas.[4]

Since the decision to increase the number of US military forces and to improve civil-support activities, there have been numerous accomplishments: an increase in the training and education of Afghan security forces, additional funding for internal development projects, and, most importantly, wresting major areas from Taliban control.[5] Still, many daunting challenges remain, including mollifying the competing interests of major external stakeholders.

Amplifying the competing and disparate interests between stakeholders is the fear of the abandonment of Afghanistan by the United States and the diminished prospect of transition to a capable Afghan government. Many of the players involved believe that the final American withdrawal is already well underway and will continue regardless of the strategic conditions in Afghanistan.[6] A major concern is the fact that the Afghans do not appear ready to assume security and governance responsibilities[7] with the central government rife with corruption and mismanagement.[8]

The Tragedy of Afghanistan

Intervention by the United States in Afghanistan is remarkably similar to previous military campaigns into this remote and inhospitable region.[9] Despite the substantial US involvement in supporting the Afghan insurgency against the Soviets, few American policy makers appreciated the geographic, social, and cultural complexities of Afghanistan. The policy makers had to relearn hard lessons, the most important of which was that building a central government and associated security structure in a splintered, tribal-centric society is substantially more difficult than overthrowing an existing government.[10] The ascent of the Taliban and revival of the insurgency following the initial American victory was cataclysmic. Even more tragic, however, is the fact that many military commanders and policy makers knew the scope of these strategic challenges but

failed to convince America's leadership of the gravity of the potential risks and the extent of resources required to ensure long-term success.[11]

Failure to establish an effective government following the removal of the Taliban established conditions for increased violence and insurgency. Governance at the local, provincial, and national levels was always weak and ineffectual. Resources were both inadequate and mismanaged with many rural areas experiencing no improvements in services such as electricity and water.[12] Additionally, there was a major absence of manpower capable of providing security and establishing conditions for effective decentralized governance capable of countering the growth of any insurgency. Notably, the ratio of international forces to the host nation population was below that of every nation-building intervention since World War II. By 2003, operations in Iraq consumed most of the international communities' financial priority and allowed the fragile internal stability of Afghanistan to continue to deteriorate. The overwhelming initial strategic success against the Taliban was squandered as growing corruption, ineffectual governance, and the absence of security forces permitted the Taliban to regain the initiative.[13]

Stakeholders and Their Interests

Afghanistan's six immediate neighbors (China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan) and its regional partners (Russia, India, and Saudi Arabia) all have a stake in Afghanistan's future when the United States withdraws. Of these bordering actors, Pakistan likely exercises the most influence over the strategic outcome primarily due to its role in combating extremists along the border and its influence with the Pashtuns[14] (the largest and most influential ethnic group in Afghanistan).[15] It is the United States and the West, however, that currently exercise the greatest influence over the finances, military power, and other governance and economic reform efforts that will eventually dictate strategic success or failure. It is increasingly apparent that America and its allies need to rely on Afghanistan's neighbors to avoid derailing the progress already made, and ideally, they will continue to support these programs when the United States withdraws. Such strategy requires a deliberate effort to resolve regional issues that may preclude effective cooperation between major players. As General David Petraeus noted, "It's not possible to resolve the challenges internal to Afghanistan without addressing the challenges, especially in terms of security, related to Afghanistan's neighbors."[16] The important question is: "Do these key states see their own interests with regards to counterterrorism, governance in Afghanistan, and longer term reconstruction and economic development in such a way that a working consensus among them could be forged?"[17] These external stakeholders' influences and possible interventions could be crucial in achieving long- term stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Competing and Converging Interests

There are coincident interests and substantial disparities among the parties with vested interest in Afghanistan.[18] To integrate Afghanistan's neighbors collectively or individually into a single regional strategy will require a major effort to assuage enmities and reinforce commonalities of interests.[19] Although many of the parties support the objectives of stability and prosperity for Afghanistan, they differ significantly on how best to achieve those objectives.[20] Clearly, not every stakeholder can be accommodated and its interests satisfied. A viable strategy needs to attract and incorporate those parties that have the means, opportunity, and strength of coincident interests to achieve strategic objectives for Afghanistan and the region while at the same time minimizing the influence of opposing parties. Some experts believe that substantial differences between the regional actors on internal Afghan issues actually preclude cooperation and obviate a regional strategy.[21] Notwithstanding this dichotomy, the United States and its allies will continue to pursue a strategy evoking positive and negative responses by regional actors and internal factions with regard to Afghanistan.

Internal Dynamics

Pivotal internal actors having a direct influence on the future of Afghanistan are: the present Afghan government, the Taliban,[22] the Northern Alliance,[23] and other insurgent factions and war lords. Factionalism, credible governance, Afghan social dynamics, and drug production and export, all influence these internal actors and their interrelationships.

Since the overthrow of the Taliban by the Northern Alliance, the Karzai government and the United States, together with their allies, have been engaged primarily in a civil war over the distribution of power. Actual combat is being conducted against a loose knit set of insurgent groups formed and fighting along ethnic lines, rural against urban factions, and over religious sectarian differences.[24] The increase in insurgent activity is occurring against the backdrop of a substantial increase in the number of coalition and American forces combating these elements throughout Afghanistan.[25] Statistically there has been a 40 percent increase in attacks by insurgents in each of the last four years.[26] Combat and noncombat casualties have increased and so has the intimidation of civilians and tribal elders associated with government and nongovernmental organizations.[27]

Correspondingly, most Afghanis do not support or sympathize with the Taliban as they see them as the cause of many of their problems and hardships. They also believe that the Taliban's presence attracts military operations that generate secondary destruction and casualties, as well as hindering needed development projects.[28]

Although the insurgents are not particularly popular, they are usually favored over what is viewed as a corrupt and ineffective Afghan government. The insurgent's motivation and source of limited popular support is largely due to the belief that the Afghan government is corrupt and abuses its power, the

perception of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by foreign forces, and a perceived threat to Afghan and Islamic values and culture. The social and economic deprivations experienced by major sectors of the populace also play an important role in support for the insurgents.[29] As with most insurgencies, the population is the center of gravity in this complex strategic environment and there is continued competition by all parties to secure support and confidence.[30]

Stabilizing the Mosaic

The strategic solution may be inextricably linked to the problem—Afghanistan is a mosaic of ethnic, religious, and tribal factions all with internal and external sources of support.[31] Together, the mosaic "pieces" compose an image of what we call Afghanistan. The mosaic, however, is only loosely bound by a weak central government. It is primarily held together by the fragile balance and interrelationships between each "piece" and the association of that piece to external regional stakeholders. Any effort to strengthen the role and influence of the central government or any one of the factions will create a bias threatening the entire mosaic. Significant disruption of the mosaic would be resisted by internal forces and likely provoke one or more external players to covertly or overtly intervene.[32] An effective regional strategy would be one that moves to stabilize the internal mosaic, not remake it or disrupt the precarious balance between each of the internal pieces and the external stakeholders.

Power sharing between the centralized government and the multitude of internal factions is not just an expedient, it is an imperative.[33] A viable regional strategy would recognize the legitimacy of each of the factions and would resource, stabilize, and moderate the corresponding local governance structures while preventing hegemonic imbalances. The strategy should empower the Afghan central government to enable a decentralized governance through the provision of resources to each of the internal entities in exchange for moderation and cooperation. This would require an impartial and relatively weak central government but one with "deep pockets" that is willing to govern indirectly. Once the mosaic is stabilized, the central government could gradually increase its credibility and evolve into a more effective and authoritative role.

How the resultant regional and internal dynamics unfold will depend upon the actions of the Afghan government, the United States and their allies, along with the other regional and internal powers. To this end, a scenario-based analysis can aid in surfacing factors that can inform strategic planning.

Scenarios

Scenarios are not predictions nor are they assured consequences of one or more potential strategies. The following scenarios are narratives of alternative future environments that manifest plausible developments by combining underlying influences and trends. The scenarios highlight the risks and opportunities of possible future events driven by alternative engagement activities and the likely responses of the relevant stakeholders within the postulated

environment.[34] Four scenarios, each framed by two fundamental and related conditions, are detailed. Each scenario contains a brief projection of the operational and strategic environment, identifies scenario goals, and describes a way forward. The scenarios combine factors and trends in a cohesive and holistic manner to illuminate the underlying assumptions and other dynamics impacting the development of effective strategies.[35] Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework for the four scenarios.

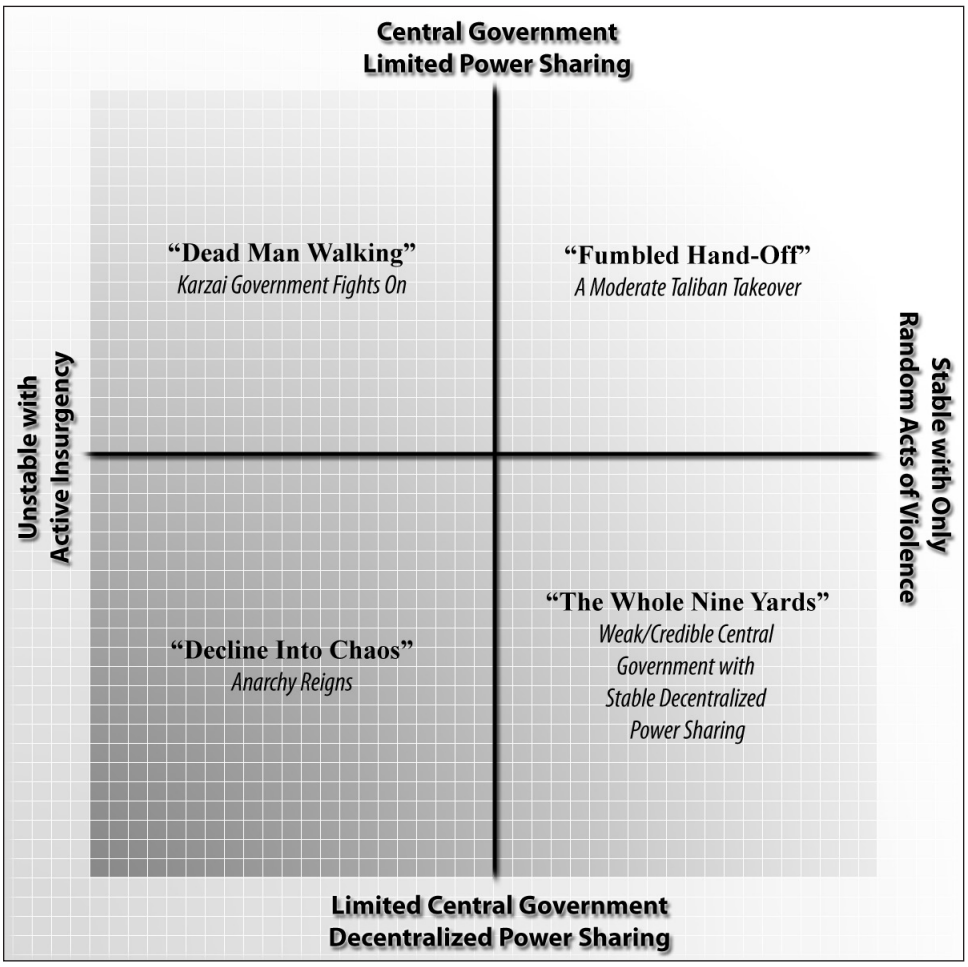

Figure 1. Scenario Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework portrays two major variables: the vertical axis depicts the level of governance (either strong central governance or a more traditional Afghan decentralized governance approach). The horizontal axis portrays the level of stability: a relatively stable social/political environment limited to individual random acts of violence and, at the other extreme, an unstable political and security environment with an active insurgency/civil war. Each

quadrant uses a pairing of those four states to frame a scenario, examine possible strategic intervention measures and explore potential strategic outcomes.

Fumbled Hand-Off

A Moderate Taliban Takeover. America and its allies continue training Afghan security forces and transition responsibilities to the Afghans. Apparent operational successes against extremist Taliban and eventual negotiated agreements with moderate insurgent groups allow for an orderly withdrawal of US and Allied forces. Following the US withdrawal, the Afghan government extends governance responsibilities to the Taliban at the local, district, and provincial levels in an effort to assuage possible resurgent threats. Renascent corruption and incompetence in the Karzai government erodes the central government's credibility and creates the conditions for a resurgent, though moderate, Taliban. Taliban influence grows from district to province and finally results in the Taliban's seizure of the central government. The moderate Taliban shape a coalition with major ethnic groups to form a strong and viable central government. The Taliban government expels remaining al Qaeda elements from the country and provides guarantees to the West that terrorism will not be exported. Sharia law is implemented from the central government and results in the elimination of drug production, infringes on the rights of women, and limits economic growth. The absence of the terrorist threat to the West and an overall lack of political will or popular support precludes the United States and its allies from reentering Afghanistan. Iran, India, and the Central Asian Republics are dissuaded from interfering in Afghan internal affairs by assurances from the Taliban government that it will not export terrorism nor tolerate al Qaeda within its borders. Regional actors begin to engage the moderate Taliban government and open diplomatic and economic ties. Afghanistan limps toward economic growth with external countries exploiting newly discovered mineral deposits and opening trade routes to Central Asia. Although Afghanistan is stable, there continues to be some internal resistance and limited acts of violence against the Taliban's harsh domestic policies and international criticism of the infringement on women and human rights.

Goals and Way Forward. From the US and international perspective, a moderate Taliban takeover is a marginally acceptable outcome. In this scenario, Afghanistan hovers on the brink of becoming a failed state with the real danger that it might once again become a source of terrorist activities. The primary US goal would be to ensure that al Qaeda does not return and that Afghanistan does not become a source of terrorist attacks outside its borders. The United States should engage the Taliban with the help of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to ensure that Afghanistan does not return to a pre-2001 state. At the same time, America should encourage the Afghan government to incorporate major ethnic and political groups into its central government. This will provide an effective counterbalance to a resurgent extremist Taliban rule. The United States should use a concerted carrot and stick approach with the Taliban to dissuade the

export of terrorism as well as threaten use of precision strikes should al Qaeda or other terrorists seek refuge or receive support from the Taliban government. The United States would continue to seek assistance from Afghanistan's neighbors to stop any meddling in Afghan internal affairs and to help deny cross border safe havens for insurgent or terrorist organizations.

The Whole Nine Yards

Central Government Agrees to Decentralize Power and Accommodate Moderate Taliban at District and Provincial Levels. As in the previous scenario, the United States and its allies make an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan. The US, NATO, and Afghan government make a deliberate effort to integrate moderate Taliban elements into selected local governments before departure, while overseeing the decentralization and power sharing by the central government. The United States assists the central government in establishing governing structures at the provincial, district, and local levels with adequate resources, funding for the construction of facilities, and effective security forces. The government in Kabul establishes and retains a military capability to eliminate any subversive threats to the central government. Sharia law is practiced and enforced at various local levels but is primarily limited to the remote areas of the country. These Sharia enclaves will eventually be pressured to moderate their control due to negative local sentiment and pressure from human rights groups. The present government, Taliban, Northern Alliance, and other major actors agree on power sharing, an equitable distribution of revenues, and on measures ensuring peace and stability. All these groups find common ground in opposing external regional influences or interference. Due to these positive developments, peace is restored in most of the country. This environment paves the way for heavy investment by donor countries, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The absence of a foreign presence, economic progress, and effective local governance defuse the underlying causes of the insurgency and Afghanistan muddles toward stability and economic prosperity, slowly overcoming the deleterious effect of political corruption and its fractured, decentralized governance.

Goals and Way Forward. The involvement of the Taliban in a decentralized government scenario will cause some uncertainty within the United States and with other interested parties. This scenario, however, provides a much greater chance for stability in Afghanistan because the transition and accommodation of the moderate Taliban occur while the United States is in a position to positively influence and shape the transition. The goal would be to remain closely involved and engaged in this critical and sensitive effort. America would also need to continue with financial aid and military assistance to enable the efficient establishment of local governance. Working with the Afghan government, the United States should engage Afghanistan's neighbors and encourage them to maintain positive relations, rather than interfering in Afghan internal affairs. America should assist the Afghan military in conducting limited operations

against any remaining al Qaeda elements within the country while enhancing military cooperation with an emphasis on training and military exchanges. The main focus for the United States, along with the government of Afghanistan, would be to ensure a credible though limited central government that shares power with the local, district, and regional entities.

Decline into Chaos

Anarchy Reigns. The United States and its allies conduct an abrupt departure, leaving behind a weak government facing latent insurgency that is simply waiting for the United States to withdraw.[36] The Afghanistan government fails to ensure security, stability, and the provision of services due to widespread corruption, infighting, and weak national security forces. There is no consensus government and the militias and warlords rapidly gain strength while assuming responsibility for the maintenance of order and exercise of governance. The Afghan government, the Taliban, and a regrouped Northern Alliance engage in combat for control of Kabul. Fighting spreads to most parts of Afghanistan as the insurgents strive to institute local governance against a corrupt and ineffectual central authority. The tribal, ethnic, and sectarian insurgents cause the division of Afghanistan into zones controlled by distinct groups, many affiliated with various regional actors. Neighboring countries exercise influence in areas inside Afghanistan to support proxy insurgents, secure their respective groups, and safeguard their interests. In addition, regional stakeholders buy influence by providing financial aid, weapons, and supplies to selected tribal chiefs or factions. These factions vie for power while seeking retribution for current and past transgressions. The Taliban renew their offensive and are able to establish control in Eastern and Southern parts of Afghanistan, to include Kabul. The remainder of the country (Western and Northern parts of Afghanistan) comes under the control of various Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara tribes. Tension grows and persists as regional antagonists react to provocative responses and assorted interventions from outside the country. Afghan security forces begin to collapse and desert as funding and training suffer due to continued conflict, the diversion of resources by corrupt officials, and the recruitment of security personnel by warring ethnic, tribal, and sectarian factions. Anarchy reins as refugees pour into the neighboring countries of Iran, the Central Asian Republics, and Pakistan. Western nations lack the political will to redeploy combat forces into Afghanistan although neighboring countries do conduct limited cross-border forays into Afghanistan to protect their respective ethnic and tribal groups or pursue criminals and combatants. The United Nations conducts humanitarian relief operations to help assuage suffering, but does not commit to peacekeeping or peacemaking operations. Afghanistan devolves into a failed and largely ungoverned state with established enclaves of tribal, ethnic, and sectarian governed areas. Al Qaeda reestablishes terrorist training camps within the country and the United States conducts periodic strike operations against selected terrorist targets using

global strike capabilities, violating Afghan sovereignty and further alienating many Muslim countries.

Goals and Way Forward. A "decline into chaos" is the most dangerous scenario. The US goals would be to engage all the major players, contain the conflict within the borders of Afghanistan, avoid an all-out regional war, and prevent any terrorist attacks from being coordinated or launched from Afghanistan. America would have to make aggressive diplomatic efforts to dissuade provocative action or intervention by regional players. Adverse public opinion would prevent a return of US ground forces into Afghanistan, although the public would likely tolerate American military supplies or financial support for a multinational or United Nations response. The regional actors and the United Sates would likely have to wait for the conflict to run its course before directly intervening in Afghanistan. The potential human suffering would be profound.

Dead Man Walking

The Karzai Government Fights On. The United States and its allies withdraw leaving an active but weakened insurgency and a viable but limited Afghan security force capability. In this scenario, the Karzai government maintains control of Kabul and several provinces but it is unable to establish decentralized governance structures at the local, district, and provincial levels in a number of contested areas due to a lack of resources and an active resistance. Consequently, the Karzai government continues to fight insurgent elements with available Afghan security forces and is able to maintain its power in Kabul and in other selected regions. The central government is unable to make substantial progress either in combating the insurgency or in extending its governance. Afghanistan settles into an active civil war with major areas of the country ungoverned, causing the nation to teeter on becoming a failed state. A general Afghan campaign against all Taliban serves to further radicalize even the moderate Taliban factions. Consequently, the rural areas come under the increasing control of radical Taliban which in turn threatens a return of an extremist Taliban takeover and a safe haven for al Qaeda. The absence of a clear and present terrorist threat to the United States coupled with a lack of political will prevents America from redeploying combat forces to Afghanistan. Additionally, the return of rampant corruption within the central government coupled with a poor security environment dissuades foreign investment and economic support from the international community. Drug production and the associated illicit trade continue to rise, while the social and security environments decline incrementally. Regional stakeholders and neighbors respond with covert and, in some instances, overt support to their respective factions within Afghanistan, while vieing for hegemony and influence in the deteriorating internal political environment.

Goals and Way Forward. The "dead man walking" scenario depicts a degraded strategic and operational environment. The US goal would be to isolate Afghan conflict and limit any negative impact on the region while

preventing al Qaeda from establishing safe havens and training camps within Afghanistan. Although the United States would unlikely send ground forces into the country, it could conduct covert global strikes against suspected al Qaeda camps. The fragile Afghan security environment would be closely monitored but the United States would probably limit its strategic liability and allow the Afghans to determine their own future, while letting regional actors take whatever measures are deemed necessary to arrest the deteriorating Afghan social, political, and security environments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Generally, developing cohesive and effective strategic concepts are "wicked problems" that are not amenable to simple cause-and-effect analyses. Developing illustrative scenarios that holistically describe possible events and the interactions of the major stakeholders helps to visualize alternative futures and, thereby, educate strategic leaders. The four scenarios described reflect both positive and negative futures for Afghanistan while illuminating some critical considerations. Five major themes or issues emerge from these scenarios:

1. The involvement and importance of external stakeholders.
2. The effectiveness of the Afghan government.
3. The capabilities of Afghani security forces.
4. The extent of ethnic divisions and the strength of the Taliban and other insurgent groups.
5. The will, interest, and influence of the United States.

A major characteristic of all the scenarios is the prevention of the return of al Qaeda to Afghanistan, while ensuring terrorism can no longer be exported outside of its borders.

Importantly, all four scenarios postulate that the US withdrawal will result in some negative consequences for Afghanistan. It is also increasingly evident that once the US and allied combat forces are withdrawn from Afghanistan, it will be difficult to support their return—under any circumstance short of another 9/11-like attack. The United States needs to be extremely cognizant of any decisions or actions required to position the Afghan government for success following the US departure.

Three major aspects of the scenarios govern the prospect for positive outcomes. First, viable decentralized governance structures at the local, district, and provincial levels need to be established. Second, moderate Taliban factions must be accommodated as part of that governance structure, especially in select areas where they have a strong influence. Third, the aforementioned aspects need to be accomplished before the United States' withdrawal is complete. Quite simply, decentralized governance is ingrained in the culture and traditions of the Afghan society,[37] as is the respect and referent authority of the Taliban in various parts of the country.[38] Neither can be replaced with a central authority from Kabul without risking the continuation of an insurgency with potentially disastrous consequences. To effect the transition to a decentralized, power-sharing structure with the moderate Taliban incorporated,

the United States needs to initiate and for the most part finish any such effort before withdrawal. To believe that a nascent Afghan security force could exercise the necessary degree of control to transition to local governance over radical Taliban insurgents in the regions where the insurgents are entrenched is nothing short of sheer folly. The challenge lies with overcoming what is likely to be a mediocre Afghan security force that is perceived to be supported by an illegitimate and corrupt central government.

Additionally, the United States needs to remain constructively engaged with all stakeholders, while adopting a firm approach that dissuades regional actors from taking provocative actions to intervene in Afghanistan's internal affairs during or after the US withdrawal. The cooperation of all major players should be solicited in an effort to work toward a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, an objective that is in the best interests of all parties. The United States should continue with financial and military assistance and encourage international institutions and donors to provide additional investments. At the same time, America needs to remain engaged with moderate Taliban leaders and encourage them to eschew any relationship with al Qaeda. Lastly, the United States policy makers need to think through the possible consequences of a precipitous withdrawal and its impact on both Afghanistan and the region, while preparing possible strategies that would include a plan to marshal and sustain the necessary public and political support to implement the various options.

Most strategies inherently assume a positive outcome and are generally based upon optimistic assumptions without regard to resourcing and the anticipated responses of various stakeholders. No strategist deliberately designs a strategy to fail. Although the scenarios articulated here are intended to be illustrative and not predictive, they do serve to highlight possible strategic actions with the potential for negative consequences. More importantly, they highlight significant challenges faced by the Afghanistan that is left behind. Those dangers dictate that the current strategy needs to focus on more than simply improving the current Afghanistan environment in an attempt to facilitate or hasten an American departure. Rather, there is a critical need for a strategy devoted to the long-term security and prosperity for Afghanistan and the region.[39] Establishing a viable context for Afghan stability and security involves key regional and global stakeholders. Towards that end, the United States needs to employ major diplomatic measures designed to ease regional tensions and prevent external players from derailing the strategy. Only through a resolute US commitment to long-term stability in Afghanistan and with the cooperation of key regional and global stakeholders, peace, prosperity, and stability can be nurtured in this volatile part of the world.

Notes

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25. Matt Waldman, "Dangerous Liaisons with the Afghan Taliban," 2.

26. See the quarterly reports of the Afghan NGO Safety Office, 2006-10, http://www.afgnso.org/index_files/page447.htm (accessed 26 November 2010).

27. Waldman, "Dangerous Liaisons with the Afghan Taliban," 2.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 4.

30. Ibid., 10.

31. Afghanistan Study Group, "A New Way Forward," 2-3; Tellis and Mukharji, "Is a Regional Strategy Viable," 115-124.

32. Tellis and Mukharji, "Is a Regional Strategy Viable," 116-121.

33. Frederick W. Kagen et al., "Defining Success in Afghanistan," A Report by the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (2011): Executive Summary and 27; Stephen Biddle et al., "Defining Success in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (July/August 2010): 49-51.

34. Due to the short nature of this paper, the process for the formulation of scenarios has not been included in the text.

35. Alan Schwartz, "Scenarios for the Insurgency in Iraq " (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 4. The methodology and framework of the referenced study on Iraq was adopted in the description of the future scenarios for Afghanistan.

36. In the context of this scenario, the term "abrupt" describes the withdrawal of Allied forces based on a preordained timeline vice achieving the necessary strategic preconditions to ensure adequate internal security and effective Afghan governance.

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