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**SUCCEED OR FAIL: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
AFGHANISTAN FOLLOWING U.S. PHASED TROOP WITHDRAWAL**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beautiful wife, Jacque. Without her unending love, support, and encouragement, this program of study would not have been a reality for me.

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**SUCCEED OR FAIL: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF
AFGHANISTAN FOLLOWING U.S. PLANNED TROOP WITHDRAWAL**

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Within the confines of the research, the author attempts to systematically forecast the future of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) following planned U.S. troop withdrawal from the country. The author sheds light on a difficult policy issue currently being debated within the United States: Is the current timetable for withdrawal adequate to assure stability within the fragile GoA? Or should the timetable be quickened? The research suggests that quickening the timetable for withdrawal of troops will spiral the country into instability and the GoA will ultimately collapse. The author uses the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) to show that the *only* way the GoA has a chance at legitimacy and stability is through the currently planned phased troop withdrawal culminating with the total withdrawal of all U.S. troops in 2014.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	2
1. QUANTIFYING THE ISSUE, AND SUBSEQUENT PREDICTIVE STUDY	4
2. IDENTIFYING NATIONAL ACTORS	5
3. NATIONAL ACTORS' PERCEPTIONS.....	8
PAKISTAN	8
AFGHANISTAN	12
TALIBAN	18
4. POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION FOR EACH NATIONAL ACTOR.....	23
PAKISTAN COURSES OF ACTION:.....	23
AFGHANISTAN COURSES OF ACTION:	24
TALIBAN COURSES OF ACTION:	24
5. COMPARING ALTERNATE FUTURES BY DETERMINING LIKELY SCENARIOS	25
POSSIBLE SCENARIOS:.....	25
<input type="checkbox"/> Scenario #1 (status quo):	25
<input type="checkbox"/> Scenario #2 (expedited withdrawal):	25
6. CALCULATING POSSIBLE PERMUTATIONS FOR EACH SCENARIO.....	26
7. PAIRWISE COMPARISON OF ALTERNATE FUTURES TO DETERMINE RELATIVE PROBABILITY	27
8. RANKING ALTERNATE FUTURES BY HIGHEST PROBABILITY, BASED ON VOTES RECEIVED	30
9. ALTERNATE FUTURE ANALYSIS AND CONSEQUENCES	32
SCENARIO #1 (STATUS QUO):	32
SCENARIO #2 (EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL):	35
10. PRESENT FOCAL EVENTS WHICH MUST OCCUR TO BRING ABOUT ALTERNATE FUTURES	37
SCENARIO #1 (STATUS QUO):	37
SCENARIO #2 (EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL):	39
11. INDICATORS OF THE FOCAL EVENTS	40
12. RELATIVE PROBABILITY OF ALTERNATE FUTURES TRANSPOSING	42
SCENARIO #1 (STATUS QUO):	42
SCENARIO #2 (EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL):	42
CONCLUSION	43
REFERENCES	44

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. (1.1) Alternate Futures	26-27
2. (1.2) Permutations of Alternate Futures Scenario #1 (Status Quo)	28
3. (1.3) Permutations of Alternate Futures Scenario #2 (Expedited Withdrawal)	29
4. (1.4) Permutations of Alternate Futures (probability ranked) Scenario #1	30
5. (1.5) Permutations of Alternate Futures (probability ranked) Scenario #2	31

Introduction

President Barack Obama's June 22, 2011 address to the nation made clear the intentions of his administration in Afghanistan--a quick and respectable drawdown of U.S. troops by the end of 2014. However, there are many possible implications that need to be considered when drawing down forces from a country where the U.S. has had a significant amount of combat presence for almost a decade; factors such as emboldening the Taliban, intertribal fighting, and a weakened, corrupt Afghan government. Though troop withdrawal is politically popular in the U.S., it is unclear whether the weak Afghani political and governmental structures will be able to support their society once the U.S. troops are fully removed under this new proposed plan.

Operation Enduring Freedom has been a long and controversial conflict that has involved countless NATO partners and a global cooperation to eliminate foreign terrorist threats throughout the Middle East. Thousands of American troops have risked their lives and many have paid the ultimate price in the pursuit of these strategic goals. The country has been under a U.S. led occupation since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, with progress being slow, at points even difficult to calculate. The Obama administration has been under increased scrutiny over the last year as public opinion of the war in Afghanistan has plummeted. In fact, according to a recent Pew Research Center poll, 56 percent of the U.S. population now favors a quick withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan (Knickerbocker 2011); this number up dramatically over the last 12 months.

Due to its geographical location, Afghanistan has been a central point of conflict for thousands of years, and has continued to hold at bay many of the greatest conquerors to include Alexander the Great, Great Britain and Russia. Despite the cyclical history of conquest for control in Afghanistan, repeated mistakes continue to be made by politicians that undermine the

complexity and history of this country. The United States has reached a critical point with regards to Afghanistan: either pull out, or continue to spend billions of dollars on a war that is arguably unwinnable while further risking American lives. Pulling out troops from such a tenuous, controversial, and global conflict needs to be done in a way which supports U.S. interests, without losing hard earned ground in the process. These avenues for withdrawal will be evaluated within the below research in an attempt to find the best course of action for the United States in the coming years with consideration to the stability of the GoA.

Literature Review

Kutchins (2011) in his article “A truly regional economic strategy for Afghanistan,” provides a plethora of information on the current counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan. The main emphasis and hypothesis of his article is that a lack of fundamental policy prioritization by the current administration is not setting up the Afghanistan economy and government for a smooth transition when the U.S. eventually leaves the country (he posits 2014, as levied by both Afghan and U.S. policymakers). The author makes valid arguments as to why the current strategy will eventually fail and leave Afghan governance at a place of discord and uncertainty. His main argument is that the U.S. and NATO partners must put a stronger emphasis on strategic infrastructure and development versus “pop up” projects throughout the country. The author posits that sound economics and governance must have the same emphasis that the current security initiatives are getting. The article points to ways in which the U.S. can improve on economics, however, does not elaborate on the consequences if the U.S. does not take these “needed steps” prior to the proposed 2014 exodus of all troops. This research will be able to fill this gap and provide needed predictive information to what the GoA could look like post U.S. withdrawal.

Cole (2009), in his impressive discussion of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Taliban, makes important insights into how the United States and NATO partners could be successful in Afghanistan. He points to several problems with the current U.S. strategy: First and most notably, the strong reliance on military intervention and funding over aiding the people of the country with infrastructure development and critical services. He argues that the United States' focus on military operations has left an enraged Afghan populace, who is increasingly turning towards the Taliban and radical groups to both fight against the United States, and the NATO forces within the country. Moreover, the author posits that many Afghan families have been negatively affected economically by the occupancy of foreign troops. His arguments make important insights into historical and current events within Pakistan and Afghanistan, but they do not give a purported outcome or forecast for Afghanistan. Moreover, he does not weigh the idea of U.S. forces or NATO forces leaving the country, which seems to be the most important conclusion to his argument. Within this research, the author will forecast the state of Afghanistan, weighed against the success or failure of the Afghan government, following the total withdrawal of combat troops in the country.

Hess (2010) articulates the type of governance that has pushed through both the Soviet and American occupations of Afghanistan. He labels this type of governance as *neopatrimonial*; a type of governance that the Soviets did not understand (at least until the conclusion of their occupation) and the United States still does not understand. He posits that a formal democracy does not work in a region that has relied on patrimonial ties and bribery to obtain alliances for generations. He proposes that if the United States were to pull out and still provide aid in the form of weapons, money, and food the Afghan government would be able to be more effective and secure the patronage of more of the country. This study is very detailed and provides a

broad range of information pertaining to the way in which the government of Afghanistan (GoA) has functioned throughout the last 50 years. However, the study lacks the predictive aspect of how the current government would change if the U.S. troops were to be withdrawn as charted in 2014. Furthermore, the author erroneously subscribes to the idea that the United States would essentially support a tyrant or dictator and stand idly by whilst providing him the funding and weapons he needed to secure support and patronage.

1. Quantifying the issue, and subsequent predictive study

Given the problematic issues that will likely arise when the United States begins its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the research has focused on consequences of the U.S. troop withdrawal on the Government of Afghanistan (GoA); more specifically, will the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) be able to maintain a legitimate government as the United States begins its withdrawal from Afghanistan and promises a total pull out of combat troops by 2014? Currently, there is not a steadfast plan to remove *all* soldiers from Afghanistan, just the promised “surge” troops that number roughly 33,000 and a 2014 deadline for all combat troops to leave the country. The details of this plan are still quite nebulous, but the implications for total withdrawal will be a valuable gauge in understanding how to best work with the Afghani Government in the near term and the most realistic way in which to transition the United States’ role in the region (if any).

This issue is a very sensitive subject to many leaders within Afghanistan as reports have regularly circulated about the incompetence of Afghan military and security forces. Moreover, propaganda reports by the Taliban and U.S. both have pointed towards a resurgence of heavy Taliban activity following the U.S. exodus. This issue is time sensitive and important to the interests of the United States, as well as NATO partners who also contribute significantly to

Operation Enduring Freedom; both with troops and aid. Furthermore, conflicting views on the issue are rampant in Washington, as policymakers have polarized themselves along two different ideological lines: Should the U.S. pull out troops quickly, or, the idea that pulling out quickly would cause a total relapse in security for Afghanistan.

The importance of this study merited the choice of a reputable methodology that would allow complete examination of the problem set through strict and defined parameters. Dr. Lockwood's Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (LAMP) was selected as the primary tool for this analysis and evaluation (Lockwood 2010). The LAMP method uses a rigorous twelve step process to evaluate the determined problem against multiple scenarios and calculations. The method evaluates "possible outcomes" via a voting system and examines each of them through different possible scenarios in order to obtain a relative likelihood of each of the alternative futures transpiring.

2. Identifying national actors

Following the LAMP method, the national actors must be defined. The national actors are those countries or entities that will play the largest role in the problem in question. Below the most influential actors for this study have been identified.

The actors most likely to affect the outcomes of Afghanistan as the United States prepares to withdraw troops are Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban. Though the Taliban is not a formal "national actor," they play a strong role due to their interactions within the international community, their global influence, and past repressive rule in Afghanistan. Their ability to influence what happens in Afghanistan post-U.S. occupation should not be devalued or overlooked, and for these reasons they will be included as an actor within this analysis.

Pakistan has had a tumultuous past with Afghanistan and is consistently influencing what happens on the eastern border of Afghanistan. Moreover, their deteriorating relationship with the United States is of grave concern. Since the famed killing of Osama Bin Laden earlier this year, Pakistani authorities have increasingly been more distant with U.S. diplomats and less willing to work with the U.S. in any capacity (Martin 2011). The Government of Pakistan has also knowingly and willfully supported the Taliban and off-shoot terrorist groups in an effort to control parts of the illustrious Afghani terrain, in order to promote their own agenda in the region. Afghanistan is positioned within a strategic trade route running between east and west Asia and whoever controls it could potentially control lines of communication between major trading partners and nations. Pakistan understands the strategic value in obtaining control of Afghanistan and will likely be a major player in any post-U.S. occupation dealings, possibly even during the purported transition period.

Afghanistan, the second actor in this study, has in many cases shown itself to be its own worst enemy. Throughout the decade long U.S. occupation, the Afghani military, police, and security forces have shown lacking aptitude in most military and diplomatic tasks; leaving an ominous feeling residing in top U.S. military Commanders. Corruption within the ranks, lack of discipline, and cowardly behavior when in combat has all been significant contributors to this problem. General David Petraeus, the previously acting Commander of Afghanistan and now Director of the CIA, made this quote about the longevity of the U.S. effort in Afghanistan: “We need to take a substantially long view to ensure progress is sustained” (UPI). This sentiment is shared by many other high level officials as they feel the progress sustained in Afghanistan could be easily lost if troops begin to pull out too quickly. A common problematic mindset among policymakers arises with the use of mirror imaging when comparing the U.S. government and

security forces with that of the Afghani counterparts. Corruption, however, one of a handful of major problems facing the stability of the Afghani Government, is rampant and ever-present throughout all levels of government; a factor which is often overlooked when comparing the two. A recent investigative report penned by Katzman (2010), a specialist in Middle Eastern affairs quite alarmingly found that:

The limited capacity and widespread corruption of all levels of Afghan governance are growing factors in debate over the effectiveness of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, as expressed in an Administration assessment of policy released December 16, 2010. A competent, respected, and effective Afghan government is considered a major prerequisite for a transition to Afghan lead that is to take place by 2014, a timeframe agreed by the United States, its international partners, and the Afghan government. Afghan governing capacity has increased significantly since the Taliban regime fell in late 2001, but there is a broad view the Afghan government is ineffective, with many positions unfilled or filled by weak leaders, and that President Hamid Karzai has not moved decisively to reduce corruption (Katzman 2010, 2).

The Taliban, the third and final actor in this study, has been a continuous problem for both the United States and the fragile GoA since its inception. One of the major problems with the Taliban is that the leadership will not compromise with the United States on any grounds until the U.S. withdraws all troops from the country. Given this, it is fairly unlikely that any compromise will be reached in the near term. Also problematic is the support network the Taliban have established in Pakistan. It is widely known through the region that Pakistanis have infiltrated into Afghanistan to teach the Taliban and other dissident groups advanced guerilla tactics and other highly specialized methods for defeating U.S. and Afghan forces in the area. With the Taliban, the problem is not only with the organization, but with those who illicitly support them. Much more detail will be seen in the following discussion on the organization.

3. National actors' perceptions

The LAMP methodology requires in-depth studies on each of the national actors involved. This helps the researcher gain a deep knowledge and understanding of the ways in which each of the national actors perceives the issue in question. Moreover, it helps guide the analysis. In the case of this study, I have also included background information on each of the national actors, as it seemed extremely relevant to understand the past history of each and how that history will likely play a part in the coming U.S. troop withdrawal.

Pakistan

In order to effectively understand the relationship Pakistan will play in influencing Afghanistan as the U.S. prepares to withdraw combat forces, the reader first must understand the history of Pakistan and how that relates to Afghanistan and the surrounding area.

Pakistan was a nation founded on the idea of religious and cultural unity. Prior to the independence of the country from British India (1947), the country was largely dominated by the majority Hindu elite. The groups of Muslims living throughout the large British-controlled India were underprivileged and often times marginalized based upon their Muslim culture and religious practices. This tension between the two groups continued to rise throughout the late 19th century until they were eventually granted autonomy from India with the Mountbatten Plan of June 3, 1947. With this plan, Pakistan was divided geographically into two distinct regions: East and West Pakistan; separated centrally by India. This was done to ensure Muslims from throughout India had adequate space and means to be able to live within a majority Muslim state. Simultaneous to Pakistan's independence, India was also granted independence from Great Britain, forming a majority Hindu state. With the separation of the two countries and the end of

British control came the affluence of the two-nation theory, first posited by Muslim poet Muhammad Iqbal, then leader of the Muslim league:

Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history (Shah 2011).

The two countries were now separated geographically, along physical boundaries, not tribal and religious boundaries as many would have preferred. Many scholars hold this problematic issue responsible for various problems in current day Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although the problems between India and Pakistan were with each other, they inevitably spilled over into Afghanistan. The lines of demarcation between Afghanistan and Pakistan were drawn over 40 years prior to Pakistan's and India's independence from Britain. The official title of this problematic line of division was the Durand Line, named after the man who first came up with the idea. Originally, the line was not devised for the welfare of the people, but as a "buffer" zone between the British Empire and the advancing Russian Empire. Thus, the line, as stated above, cut through villages, cultural centers, and tribal areas, without much thought of the repercussions. Louis Dupree, an Afghan scholar of the day noted that the Durand Line was "a classic example of an artificial political boundary cutting through a culture area" (Omrani 2009, 186). Indeed Dupree was correct, the line cut many tribal groups in half and erroneously subscribed to the idea that this artificial line would be the best option for British interests in the area. However, this line fueled ethnic and religious polarization and some even will go as far as to say influenced four Afghan wars during that time. Although many of the polarizing characteristics between Pakistan and India started over a hundred years ago, they continue in broad form today, and will likely continue far into the future of Afghanistan

The tumultuous past between the two countries has continued throughout the 20th and 21st century. Post independent Pakistan has struggled enormously in the last 20 years economically and politically. The twenty years between 1970 and 1990 the country saw better economic growth, GDP, and per capita income than its rivalry neighbor India; however, since, it has been in a divergent downward spiral. Pakistan's problems in many ways go back to the drawing of the Durand Line and even the conception of Pakistan as a "one religion" country. Moreover, the integration of formal republics into countries that historically have used tribal, familial, and ancestral rule is further challenging.

Weak and ineffective government institutions with a propensity towards violence are one of the primary issues which have marred the country since independence. Shah (2011), a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute found that:

...almost every ruling government in Pakistan's history has been marred by violence or political tumult—from General Mohammad Ayub Khan's coup d'état in 1958 to the hanging of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979 to the ouster of President Pervez Musharraf in 2008 (Shah 2011, 79).

Further problems have arisen as the intelligence services and security forces within Pakistan have yielded disproportionate amounts of power. Their power base arose in response to the fear that India was continuously attempting to subvert their national interests, but has developed into intimidation methods frequently used against their own citizens.

During the 1980's and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan was using the tribal areas to train Taliban militias and launch them into Afghanistan to fight the Russian armies. This offensive strategy was in no part a tactic to defend their weaker neighbor, it was to defend their own national interests in lieu of the Soviet advancement into Afghanistan. During this same time the U.S. was training and heavily funding the Mujahedeen fighters (local Afghani militants fighting the Russian invaders). Many articles, books, and even a movie have been

produced about this secret funding to the militants. However, the combined efforts between the three countries held the Russians at bay and forced them to retreat back to Russia in the late 80's, ending their occupation of the country.

Radical Islam has also found solid roots within Pakistan. How better to train covert subversives than to indoctrinate them with radical ideas? With this in mind, thousands of madrasas (schools for young men) were set up throughout Pakistan, many being in the uncontrolled tribal areas. These madrasas were, and still are used to train and condition young men into fulfilling the agendas of the Pakistani authorities in the name of Allah; whether by covert attacks in India or within Afghanistan. The strange manifestation of this dichotomous agenda is seen in the state-funded support and training for homegrown terrorist groups that operate outside Pakistani borders (Afghanistan, India), while simultaneously “cracking down” on other terrorist groups or factions that conduct attacks within Pakistan. The bi-polar tendencies in which the Pakistani authorities deal with terrorism has caused great disdain amongst a wary populace which is increasingly tired of an ineffective, heavy handed government which promotes terrorism, but then partners with countries like the United States to eliminate terrorists in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The reluctant partnership with the United States following the attacks of 9/11 was a partnership of necessity. If Pakistan had not joined the alliance against terrorism, they would have been essentially joining the ranks of the Taliban and with that bringing the wrath of the international community on themselves. Akhtar (2008) sums up the situation well for Pakistan:

The government, understanding the gravity of the situation, the intensity of the international revulsion against terrorism, and the global sympathy and support for the United States, could easily understand the grave danger that wavering, holding out, or riding on the public's emotions could pose to national security interests...Pakistan's decision to fight a common war against terrorism brought it back to center stage, and, for the second time in twenty years, it became a

frontline state, this time in the war against international terrorism (Akhtar 2008, 62).

Pakistan has an incredibly large interest in the welfare and happenings of Afghanistan. Their long history of both supporting and attempting to undermine leadership within the country makes them a prime player in the drawdown of American forces. Pakistan is ready for the United States to leave the region, which has seen U.S. presence for over a decade. The recent strain in the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the U.S. will likely also play a role in how Pakistan deals with the drawdown of American forces from the region. Following the killing of Osama Bin Laden in early May of this year, President Obama made it clear that he was not opposed to encroaching on Pakistani soil to find terrorists, if need be. The Pakistanis, not surprisingly, did not agree. They promptly excused all American forces from Pakistani soil-- soldiers that were training their military in counter-terrorism tactics.

Pakistan largely views the United States as an international bully who routinely encroaches on their nationality and sovereignty. Though bi-lateral “counterterrorism” relationships have been manageable over the last 10 years, they have deteriorated noticeably in the last six months. It seems apparent that the Pakistanis are ready for the United States to leave the area and will likely do nothing to stand in the way of a total U.S. troop withdrawal.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been labeled by many as the “graveyard of nations”, and understandably so. Many nations have attempted to conquer or control the Afghani landscape and populace with bleak successes; the most notable being Great Britain, the USSR, and of course, the United States. The driving forces behind these campaigns in the region range in complexity from empire building to resource interests.

The potential problems that could arise with the proposed U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in many ways could hinge on the Afghani people; notably, those in positions of influence, affluence, and power. It is unwise to assume that with enough international intervention and support (governments, countries, or groups) Afghanistan's actions and way of doing business will change. In fact, looking back through history it seems apparent that in many ways the people of Afghanistan do not favor a centralized government infrastructure. It goes against the very way in which they have operated for decades. The Soviets tried this approach at the end of their decade long campaign with a power sharing government; the United States is trying it with a centralized democratic government today. Biddle, Christia and Their (2004) explain the historic and feasible ways in which Afghani politics have worked in the past; surprisingly dissimilar from the tactics being employed today:

Although war, migration, and the emergence of regional strongmen have destabilized the Afghan countryside, local communities remain a fundamental source of Afghan identity and a critical base of governance and accountability. This is especially clear in the case of the local jirga or shura (community council). Traditionally, the community council was a place to solve problems and negotiate over common goods and burdens, with its more prominent members serving as liaisons to the central government. These bodies may differ in their power and representation, but they are still found today in virtually every community. This traditional and local base of legitimacy offers a potential foundation for stable governance in the future (Biddle, Christia, and Their 2004, 2).

Though the United States will continue to push for a more "centralized" approach to governance, it seems evident that this is far from what the Afghan people desire and are willing to work towards. Why continue to push a strategy that has failed so many times in the past?

Recently the United States has begun to adopt a more adaptive policy; empowering the local leaders and communities. However, even this is far from a decentralized democratic style of governance. The government in Kabul remains the primary vehicle for most government functions, which is extremely difficult given its lack of reach toward the periphery of the

country. Moreover, the government is highly ineffective and has little acceptance by the people anywhere outside Kabul. For many, this lack of influence will be highly problematic when considering a drawdown of U.S. forces. The history of centralizing government institutions, as shown, has not been favorable for the people of Afghanistan. Furthermore, powerbrokers and local leaders have not bonded well with the idea of losing their local bases of power and hence have rejected centralized government and have even fought U.S. and Afghani National Security Forces (ANSF) in an attempt to weaken and destabilize the government.

Though the United States has begun to concentrate more heavily on building government institutions, many think that these efforts are too late. Miller (2011) argues that though many think the Taliban are the greatest threat to the country, in fact, it is the weak government institutions:

The greatest threat to long-term success in Afghanistan is not the Taliban, who are fairly weak compared to other insurgent movements around the world. It is the Afghan government's endemic weakness and the international community's failure to address it. Although the international community helped rebuild economic institutions and infrastructure and facilitated elections, it did not invest significantly in government ministries, the justice system, the army and the police, or local governance for the first five years of the intervention, which permitted the Taliban to regroup and challenge the nascent Afghan government (Miller 2011, 3).

Not recognizing the need to invest more capital and investment into the government could be one of the biggest mistakes the United States and NATO partners have made in the decade-old war. Following the invasion of U.S. troops in 2001 and the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan was rated as the “world’s most failed state.” This title is not an easy one to come by given the multitude of other countries in dire distress throughout the world during this same time period. Moreover, “the World Bank estimates that in 2000 the Afghan state was in the lowest percentile in all six areas of governance that the bank tracks: voice and accountability, the rule of law, control of corruption, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and political stability”

(Miller 2011). These seemingly dismal numbers represent a state that had little government infrastructure or political stability within it.

The first four years of the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan were especially difficult because of the “light footprint” strategy that was being implemented. It is difficult to make sound progress in a failed country (especially in the proportions of Afghanistan) without a sizable effort. Miller (2011) also discusses the impacts of this mentality on the U.S. progress during the early years of the war: “The net effect of the international community's light involvement in the security sector, combined with the lack of progress on governance, became evident with the rise of the Taliban insurgency, beginning in 2005.” Starting in 2005, the United States and NATO partners decided the severity of the situation in Afghanistan warranted a much more robust approach. This meant the deployment of upwards of 100,000 U.S. troops (not including the “surge” troops), and the deployment of other NATO partner nations. However, the emphasis shifted to the security sector and “building the Afghan National Security Forces” from its previous focus on “nation building.” The consequence was that the international community was caught up in fighting the Taliban, Al Qaida, and other offshoot terrorist organizations staging war against the United States in Afghanistan. The abilities to “nation build” were put to the side. In fact, a 2007 USAID review of capacity-development efforts in Afghanistan found that “capacity building has not been a primary objective of USAID projects” and that “what has occurred has been more ad hoc and 'spotty' rather than systematic and strategic” (Miller 2011).

This author spent fifteen months in Konar Province, on the eastern border of Afghanistan; one of the most volatile and hostile areas within the country. Though involved in much more than “nation building,” he spent much of his time with a naval Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) that was charged with many of these types of projects. As noted above, the projects that

the PRT was given and came up with were ‘spotty’ and never seemed to mirror any real strategic plan. The interaction with the local level of governance was observed as distant and difficult at best. The problems did not lie with the people that were “in charge,” but rather in the lack of infrastructure in the rural regions of the eastern border. The majority of the villages in the region do not have access to lines of communication (roads) and consequently are cut off from the rest of the world. A village could be located five miles from a major “district center”, yet have no idea any type of formal government was established in the surrounding area. The PRT tried to avert these problems with road construction, shuras (local meetings), and countless school building projects throughout their tenure in the area, but the seemingly endless and relentless insurgent groups made progress difficult. The local people of the area were also heavily polarized based on their ethnic background, tribal affiliations, as well as geographical locations. After the author spent time talking with many of them, it became apparent that they blamed the United States for many of their problems. The Taliban shooting rockets at the American bases and hitting Afghan houses; improvised explosive devices targeting American vehicles that incidentally hit Afghan vehicles; it was all the United States’ fault. These factors combined, in this author and Soldier’s opinion, to make building governance in the local area a tiresome project. Little headway was made by his unit and others during the 14 month tenure in the area.

Eventually, the U.S. combat units were pulled out of the area.

Many have asked the question of how the United States ended up in a situation where drawing down U.S. forces was such a tedious and unpredictable idea. The Soviets had a similar predicament a little more than a decade prior to the U.S. invasion which may aid in comprehension of the current problem and why the majority of Afghani people are likely extremely excited to see the United States start to withdraw from the country.

Beginning in 1985, the Soviets were equally looking for a respectable exit strategy from Afghanistan. After years of “nation building” efforts, Moscow was under increasing international scrutiny, coupled with a government in Kabul that was largely ineffective and difficult to work with. Though they had strived to “build” a functional government infrastructure and train the locals, their efforts seemed in vain. The troops were worn out, the strategy and goals seemed unclear, and the “coalition government” was simply a verbal commitment by the ruling party without clear action. However, the Soviets did not want to embarrass themselves and withdraw too quickly and have their puppet regime in Kabul crumble under a U.S. supported opposition force. The purported idea was that the Soviets would pull out troops when the United States stopped supporting the opposition fighters (Mujahedeen). In the Soviets stratagem this would improve relations with the United States while preserving their interests in Afghanistan. However, the United States was not interested in this proposal knowing that Moscow had backed themselves into an inevitable drawdown timeline regardless of their next move. Therefore, the U.S. continued to support the Mujahedeen through the Soviet withdrawal, much to the dismay of the Soviets who watched their fragile government crumble. However viewed, this outcome did not pay dividends for any of the national actors involved as Afghanistan was hurled into a civil war that lasted close to a decade.

History points to problems when countries leave Afghanistan in haste, which may be a good benchmark for Washington as they prepare to set further guidelines for troop withdrawal extending into 2014.

President Karzai and his Government of Afghanistan are supportive of the timeline for U.S. troop withdrawal from the country. It is unclear if their administration fully understands the implications for this withdrawal or not. The future of Afghanistan will in large part rest on the

actions of those appointed to positions of authority, but also to the people themselves.

Afghanistan is a country of perilous history, yet it is that history that defines the resiliency of its people. The consequences of the U.S. troop withdrawal on the Afghani Government will again, in large part, be determined by the Afghani citizens and those holding onto power within the centralized government framework that the U.S. has setup over the last decade

Taliban

The Taliban is a strong force in Afghanistan that has been a troubling entity for the United States since its occupation in 2001. The group has a long and curious past which will be made clearer in the pages that follow; however, the most important thing to note is the group's mentality on the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan, or the plans for withdrawal.

Following President Barack Obama's announcement of his plans for drawing down the U.S. forces in Afghanistan in May 2011, the Taliban also announced that the President's message was simply a "symbolic step" for the administration and nothing could be seriously considered until all troops had left the country. Moreover, inside a *Politico* news article, Taliban spokesmen Zabihullah Mujahid, went on to lay the foundation for what the Taliban wanted before any steps of peace could be negotiated:

The United States must take serious steps to stop this pointless bloodshed in Afghanistan. But until that happens, the Taliban will keep fighting with increasing intensity. Without a full withdrawal of all international troops our armed struggle will increase from day to day...Obama and his war mongers want to deceive their nation and with this announcement, while in reality, they have no respect for their nation's demands or wanting to bring this war and occupation to an end nor do they want to fulfill their promise...U.S. leaders are repeatedly giving false hopes about ending this war and claiming baselessly about victory and in this way want to extend this war as long as possible...American taxpayers must realize that, like the previous ten years, their money is still being wasted on this pointless and meaningless war or is still going to the pockets of the officials in the corrupt Kabul regime...If they do not react now, they will definitely be forced to do so in the future in order to release themselves from this crisis (Mujahid 2011).

The Taliban regime, however fragmented and decentralized, seems to share a common perception of the United States' occupation within the country. In fact, many articles have been written that examine the structure and ideology of the Taliban and what makes it such a formidable foe to the stronger occupying nations; namely the United States. It seems that in the case of the current quagmire of the U.S. withdrawal from the country that the Taliban does not feel that the Obama administration is serious about its promise and may not follow through with the 'planned' withdrawal. Given the current timeline of the 2012 elections, the plummeting U.S. economy, dismal reelection ratings, it seems that any promises the president makes at this point in his tenure could be questionable. Given this information, it seems unlikely that the Taliban will be willing to work with the current administration in bringing about any sort of peace deal in the near term.

Another aspect to consider is that the Taliban, unlike many other groups, does not in many cases have a recognizable divide between the hardliners and moderates. In fact, many scholars have accredited this as a fundamental problem with U.S. policy towards the Taliban. Groups like the Taliban do not always operate in a way familiar to policymakers in the West, but operate according to a deep seeded religious system that is extremely complex. Aziz Hakimi, editor of the *Afghan Monitor* explains the Taliban from this perspective:

The Taliban in Afghanistan is a rural religious group and their fight against the international forces stems from their interpretation of Jihad, one of the pillars of their worldview. They strongly believe they are fighting infidel forces which have occupied their land. For them, anyone who is not with them is with the infidels. It is therefore extremely difficult, if not almost impossible, to bribe the Taliban (Yadav 2010).

Understanding the mentality of many of the Taliban fighters, hopes of coming to any sort of 'compromise' seems a very optimistic goal. The reality is that the United States will not immediately pull out all troops from the country. This is a seemingly unrealistic expectation,

because even if the United States wanted to pull out all combat troops from the country, it would likely take 6-12 months due to logistical and political considerations. The Taliban understand that this is unrealistic, but will continue to purport that this is the only way that peace can be achieved in the country. Moreover, some of the more radical ideals such as a re-creation of the Caliphate in Afghanistan, or the globalization of Islam (more prominent in Al Qaida), do not leave much room for negotiation. With such unrealistic expectations, the opportunity for political stability seems unlikely. The United States, as well as the Karzai regime, have historically had problematic episodes in trying to deal with the Taliban. Throughout the 10 year U.S. occupation, amnesty deals and reintegration efforts that have been unrealistic and confusing have promulgated throughout Kabul. One great example of this was seen in the creation of the Afghanistan National Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission (PTS), which was started in 2005 and charged with the reintegration of former fighters into society. However, the group was given close to no resources to carry out this ambitious assignment. Christia and Semple (2009) report on the lack of prudence in this program in the Taliban's stronghold of Kandahar:

The PTS office in Kandahar, where the Taliban have their base and which is thus the most crucial part of the country for reconciliation, is a parody of the program. Its monthly budget, barely \$600, is supposed to both cover its operating costs and support all the former fighters who choose to defect. The office's efforts have been minimal-- it disseminates fliers and provides meager housing subsidies--and its record is dismal. Of the roughly 7,000 people whom the Kandahar office has certified during its four years in operation, fewer than a dozen were bona fide midlevel Taliban officials. The rest were foot soldiers or had no real links to the Taliban. The commission has no program for systematically following up with those it has processed. In the absence of any effective measures by the PTS, former fighters genuinely eager to put down their arms have found themselves caught between Scylla and Charybdis: harassment by either government security officials or insurgents (Christia and Semple 2009).

This is just one example of a program that was aimed at reintegrating Taliban fighters, however, a poignant example of the lack of forethought going into these extremely important initiatives by both the Karzai regime and the United States.

The dichotomy between the western ideals and that of the Taliban may be too much to overcome in negotiations, if they were to transpire. Fundamentally, two very separate entities exist; that of the United States, which is extremely capitalistic, secular, and forward in its perspective of foreign affairs, versus that of the Taliban which is Islamic, fundamentalist, and regressive in its mentality of the world. Many nations, as mentioned in previous sections, have encountered this dichotomy when fighting inside Afghanistan, yet none have figured out a fundamental way to address it.

Another major problem is present with possible negotiations with the Taliban, and that is the extreme factions within the group. For example groups such as Hezb-islami -Gulbiddin (HiG), the Haqqani Tribal Network, and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) may at times all fall under the umbrella characterization as “Taliban” fighters; however, they all have very different reasons for fighting, whether they be ideological, financial, or the like. Moreover, these groups all fall under different rings of leadership making it difficult to distinguish the many different factions within each sub-group. Maloney (2010) explains that the many groups operating within Afghanistan should not be thought of simply as “the Taliban” because that is overly simplistic. He uses the characterization dubbed by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, as ‘syndicates’ to describe the groups and their relation to Pakistan. He goes on to explain that the syndicate groups by nature have no single leader making negotiations difficult as each group wants its own concessions. He explains that understanding the Taliban is extremely difficult given the many factions and different reasons for fighting (405). Returning to previous discussion, the inability

to negotiate with multiple groups that may or may not be classified as “terrorists”, combined with the various groups’ impossible demands on the United States create a negative forecast for negotiations and a dismal outlook during the transitional period of U.S. presence in the country.

Currently, the Taliban leaders see little hope for reconciliation with the Government of Afghanistan. Unrealistic expectations, coupled with fruitless efforts over the last decade to make amends between the groups have failed. Transitional programs have been underfunded and not well thought out. The United States and the Karzai government have focused heavily on security and ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the local population, but that has not been a successful campaign and has forced many in Washington to start to rethink the mission in Afghanistan.

The projected withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan seems like a step in the right direction for the Obama administration, as many metrics have shown that the foregoing mentality of the ‘more the better’ in relation to the amount of troops on the ground was not working. In fact, according to a report from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO), the troop surge, as ordered by President Obama early in his administration, had little to no affect on the insurgency. According to statistics, Taliban attacks went up almost 59 percent between July and September 2010, when measuring similar data from 2009 (Cohen 2011). This all to say that a drawdown of troops may entice the Taliban into concessions, whereas sending more troops into the country garnered the opposite intended reaction.

The Taliban factions understand the quandary the United States now finds itself in; a war that is arguably unwinnable and a U.S. population that is largely unsupportive comparatively to 2001 when the war began. The Taliban leadership wants little to do with the Obama administration which is currently being perceived as doing whatever necessary to secure reelection in 2012. It is unknown how the Taliban will react when physical signs of withdrawal

come to fruition and troops start physically leaving the country. However, as of now, the Taliban has little faith in Washington to fulfill any promises in the region and they will be unlikely to comply or negotiate with any Obama or Karzai initiatives.

4. Possible courses of action for each national actor

Within the LAMP methodology, it is imperative to identify all possible courses of action (COA) for each of the actors involved in the study. In the case of this study, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban will all have three courses of action that are reasonable and plausible courses of action open to each of them based on the research question. Below all possible courses of action for each of the actors is highlighted.

Pakistan Courses of Action:

- ***Pakistan COA #1 (increased support to anti-GoA groups):*** Increase material support to dissident groups within Afghanistan (Taliban, LeT, HiG) in an effort to achieve own political goals following U.S. withdrawal.
- ***Pakistan COA #2 (status quo) :*** Not a noticeable change in behavior with the drawdown of troops; Pakistan still complicit in support of foreign dissident groups while attempting to convince the United States of its continued partnership against terrorism.
- ***Pakistan COA #3 (increased support to GoA):*** Foreign relations with the United States improve increasing Pakistan's support for the Coalition backed government and lessening external support to dissident groups operating inside Afghanistan.

Afghanistan Courses of Action:

- ***Afghanistan COA #1 (self preservation/nationalism):*** Government of Afghanistan steps up fight against corruption and focuses heavily on maintaining training of security forces to facilitate smooth transition from International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF).
- ***Afghanistan COA #2 (exploitation):*** Less oversight and scrutiny allow the Karzai administration to become more corrupt and less productive; weakening the fragile government infrastructure and deepening factions within and outside the government.
- ***Afghanistan COA #3 (total collapse):*** Government of Afghanistan collapses, increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries, and sending the country spiraling into another destructive civil war.

Taliban Courses of Action:

- ***Taliban COA #1 (reconciliation):*** Taliban forces decide to reconcile in large part with the Government of Afghanistan and attacks decrease dramatically as a partnership begins to form following the beginning of the exodus of foreign troops.
- ***Taliban COA #2 (increased violence):*** Taliban forces increase attacks on ISAF and local Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as the U.S. presence dwindles and Taliban forces exploit an opportunity to capitalize on a weakening security apparatus within the security sector.
- ***Taliban COA #3 (strategic stall):*** Taliban forces consolidate forces but hold off on major offensive until the U.S. combat presence in the country is waning.

Given the possible courses of action for each of our three actors (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban), it becomes possible to determine what scenarios must be weighed in looking at the different courses of action. The scenarios will help focus and guide the research and mold the results more closely to what is being focused on within the study.

5. Comparing alternate futures by determining likely scenarios

In order to obtain the most accurate results within the research, the LAMP methodology specifies the creation of specific scenarios. With scenarios, the analyst is more apt to accurately predict a given future given different alternatives and possible courses of action open to each actor involved. The scenarios which have been chosen for this study highlight two major themes for possible U.S. courses of action within the planned drawdown of troops. Below the two scenarios are outlined and explained in further detail.

Possible Scenarios:

- ***Scenario #1 (status quo):*** This scenario assumes the United States pulls out promised “surge” troops by summer of 2012 and all combat troops by 2014. This is the current administrations promise.
- ***Scenario #2 (expedited withdrawal):*** This scenario assumes a new U.S. president is elected in 2012 and supports a rapid exodus of all troops from Afghanistan. Given this change in administrative policy, troops begin leaving the country ahead of the 2014 timeline specified by the previous administration.

Given the information available, it is evident that these are the most likely scenarios that could occur within the immediate future for the United States. As listed above, each scenario is quite different based on the upcoming 2012 presidential elections, as well as public support of

the war. Each of these scenarios could have quite different consequences on each of the three actors involved in the study, further delineating the study.

6. Calculating possible permutations for each scenario

The LAMP method specifies an explicit formula that computes the total number of alternate futures available for the scenario; based both on number of actors and the number of courses of action open to each. The formula is $X^Y=Z$. The letter X represents the total number of courses of action open to each of the actors (this assumes all actors have the same number of courses of action open to them, which for this study is true). For this study X will be equal to 3, as each of the three actors has three specified courses of action open to them. Y represents the total number of actors involved in the study; in this case it will also be three as the specified actors remain Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Taliban. After computing the equation the letter Z will equal the total number of alternate futures available for the specified scenario and actors involved. For this study the equation will be $3^3=27$. In other words, given the number of national actors and possible courses of action for each, 27 different alternate futures become available. Below, figure 1.1 graphically depicts the above formula:

Alternate Future	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Taliban
1	COA #1	COA #1	COA #1
2	COA #2	COA #1	COA #1
3	COA #3	COA #1	COA #1
4	COA #1	COA #2	COA #1
5	COA #2	COA #2	COA #1
6	COA #3	COA #2	COA #1
7	COA #1	COA #3	COA #1
8	COA #2	COA #3	COA #1
9	COA #3	COA #3	COA #1
10	COA #1	COA #1	COA #2
11	COA #2	COA #1	COA #2

12	COA #3	COA #1	COA #2
13	COA #1	COA #2	COA #2
14	COA #2	COA #2	COA #2
15	COA #3	COA #2	COA #2
16	COA #1	COA #3	COA #2
17	COA #2	COA #3	COA #2
18	COA #3	COA #3	COA #2
19	COA #1	COA #1	COA #3
20	COA #2	COA #1	COA #3
21	COA #3	COA #1	COA #3
22	COA #1	COA #2	COA #3
23	COA #2	COA #2	COA #3
24	COA #3	COA #2	COA #3
25	COA #1	COA #3	COA #3
26	COA #2	COA #3	COA #3
27	COA #3	COA #3	COA #3

FIGURE 1.1

7. Pairwise comparison of alternate futures to determine relative probability

According to LAMP, the pairwise comparison evaluates each of the possible outcomes (27), two at a time, assuming that they are the only possible outcomes available during that evaluation. During this process, one alternate future will be compared individually with the other 26 possible futures. They analyst will decide which possible outcome of the two is more likely to occur, and that alternate future will receive a vote. The total number of votes is calculated based on the number of alternate futures to be analyzed in the study, which also is dependent on the number of actors and courses of action which are within the scope of the study. The formula for the pairwise comparison is $x = n(n-1) / 2$. N is equal to the number of alternate futures to be analyzed, and X is the total number of pairwise comparisons. For this study, the calculation is as follows: $X = 27(27-1) / 2$. Computing this equation gives us x being equal to 351. 351 is the total number of votes that will take place within each of our two scenarios. Below, in future 1.2

and 1.3, scenario 1 (status quo) and scenario 2 (expedited withdrawal) were voted on based upon the above formula with the three highest ranking alternate futures highlighted for clarification:

SCENARIO #1: STATUS QUO

Alternate Future	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Taliban	Votes
1	COA #1	COA #1	COA #1	3
2	COA #2	COA #1	COA #1	7
3	COA #3	COA #1	COA #1	6
4	COA #1	COA #2	COA #1	4
5	COA #2	COA #2	COA #1	6
6	COA #3	COA #2	COA #1	6
7	COA #1	COA #3	COA #1	0
8	COA #2	COA #3	COA #1	2
9	COA #3	COA #3	COA #1	1
10	COA #1	COA #1	COA #2	20
11	COA #2	COA #1	COA #2	25
12	COA #3	COA #1	COA #2	24
13	COA #1	COA #2	COA #2	17
14	COA #2	COA #2	COA #2	18
15	COA #3	COA #2	COA #2	14
16	COA #1	COA #3	COA #2	15
17	COA #2	COA #3	COA #2	13
18	COA #3	COA #3	COA #2	12
19	COA #1	COA #1	COA #3	20
20	COA #2	COA #1	COA #3	25
21	COA #3	COA #1	COA #3	23
22	COA #1	COA #2	COA #3	18
23	COA #2	COA #2	COA #3	23
24	COA #3	COA #2	COA #3	19
25	COA #1	COA #3	COA #3	9
26	COA #2	COA #3	COA #3	11
27	COA #3	COA #3	COA #3	10

FIGURE 1.2

SCENARIO #2: EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL

Alternate Future	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Taliban	Votes
1	COA #1	COA #1	COA #1	10
2	COA #2	COA #1	COA #1	15
3	COA #3	COA #1	COA #1	8
4	COA #1	COA #2	COA #1	17
5	COA #2	COA #2	COA #1	19
6	COA #3	COA #2	COA #1	17
7	COA #1	COA #3	COA #1	5
8	COA #2	COA #3	COA #1	13
9	COA #3	COA #3	COA #1	5
10	COA #1	COA #1	COA #2	3
11	COA #2	COA #1	COA #2	5
12	COA #3	COA #1	COA #2	7
13	COA #1	COA #2	COA #2	10
14	COA #2	COA #2	COA #2	16
15	COA #3	COA #2	COA #2	11
16	COA #1	COA #3	COA #2	12
17	COA #2	COA #3	COA #2	23
18	COA #3	COA #3	COA #2	14
19	COA #1	COA #1	COA #3	1
20	COA #2	COA #1	COA #3	6
21	COA #3	COA #1	COA #3	9
22	COA #4	COA #2	COA #3	16
23	COA #5	COA #2	COA #3	21
24	COA #6	COA #2	COA #3	21
25	COA #7	COA #3	COA #3	21
26	COA #8	COA #3	COA #3	24
27	COA #9	COA #3	COA #3	22

FIGURE 1.3

8. Ranking alternate futures by highest probability, based on votes received

Below, within figures 1.4 and 1.5, the respective tables have been reformatted in descending order, showing the most likely alternate futures to the least likely based on votes received:

SCENARIO #1: STATUS QUO

Alternate Future	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Taliban	Votes
11	COA #2	COA #1	COA #2	25
20	COA #2	COA #1	COA #3	25
12	COA #3	COA #1	COA #2	24
21	COA #3	COA #1	COA #3	23
23	COA #2	COA #2	COA #3	23
19	COA #1	COA #1	COA #3	20
10	COA #1	COA #1	COA #2	20
24	COA #3	COA #2	COA #3	19
22	COA #1	COA #2	COA #3	18
14	COA #2	COA #2	COA #2	18
13	COA #1	COA #2	COA #2	17
16	COA #1	COA #3	COA #2	15
15	COA #3	COA #2	COA #2	14
17	COA #2	COA #3	COA #2	13
18	COA #3	COA #3	COA #2	12
26	COA #2	COA #3	COA #3	11
27	COA #3	COA #3	COA #3	10
25	COA #1	COA #3	COA #3	9
2	COA #2	COA #1	COA #1	7
5	COA #2	COA #2	COA #1	6
6	COA #3	COA #2	COA #1	6
3	COA #3	COA #1	COA #1	6
4	COA #1	COA #2	COA #1	4
1	COA #1	COA #1	COA #1	3
8	COA #2	COA #3	COA #1	2
9	COA #3	COA #3	COA #1	1
7	COA #1	COA #3	COA #1	0

FIGURE 1.4

SCENARIO #2: EXPEDITED WITHDRAWAL

Alternate Future	Pakistan	Afghanistan	Taliban	Votes
26	COA #2	COA #3	COA #3	24
17	COA #2	COA #3	COA #2	23
27	COA #3	COA #3	COA #3	22
23	COA #2	COA #2	COA #3	21
24	COA #3	COA #2	COA #3	21
25	COA #1	COA #3	COA #3	21
5	COA #2	COA #2	COA #1	19
4	COA #1	COA #2	COA #1	17
6	COA #3	COA #2	COA #1	17
14	COA #2	COA #2	COA #2	16
22	COA #1	COA #2	COA #3	16
2	COA #2	COA #1	COA #1	15
18	COA #3	COA #3	COA #2	14
8	COA #2	COA #3	COA #1	13
16	COA #1	COA #3	COA #2	12
15	COA #3	COA #2	COA #2	11
13	COA #1	COA #2	COA #2	10
1	COA #1	COA #1	COA #1	10
21	COA #3	COA #1	COA #3	9
3	COA #3	COA #1	COA #1	8
12	COA #3	COA #1	COA #2	7
20	COA #2	COA #1	COA #3	6
7	COA #1	COA #3	COA #1	5
9	COA #3	COA #3	COA #1	5
11	COA #2	COA #1	COA #2	5
10	COA #1	COA #1	COA #2	3
19	COA #1	COA #1	COA #3	1

FIGURE 1.5

It is important to note that the votes were extremely different and varied based on the two separate scenarios used. With all other factors the same, the difference in scenarios drastically altered the outcome of the most likely alternate future for each scenario.

9. Alternate future analysis and consequences

The LAMP method assumes that the end user of such a study or decision maker will only be interested in the top voted on alternate futures, as they are the most likely to occur based on the analysis. Thus, for each of the two scenarios, I will analyze the top three voted on alternate futures based upon the possible outcomes for the Government of Afghanistan.

Scenario #1 (Status Quo): *United States pulls out promised “surge” troops by summer of 2012 and all combat troops by 2014.*

Alternate Future 11 (25 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan’s behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling presence weakens security.*

This was tied as the top voted on alternate future for scenario one and thus is one of the two most likely of the 27 possible alternate futures to occur. If this future were to occur the Government of Afghanistan would have its best chance at becoming a legitimate government not dependent on a foreign nation, and it would put Afghanistan in a more stable spot post U.S. occupation. This change in mindset of top Afghanistan government officials toward sincere efforts to fix the endemic problems of corruption within the ranks would pay dividends towards both the people’s perception of the government and the influence the government would have throughout the country. Seeing this change would make other countries more apt to continue supporting the GoA in both government building and aid projects.

The Taliban would step up attacks against ISAF in this scenario, hoping to destabilize the government as the United States began its staged withdrawal, however, the earnest leaders in Kabul, with the help of foreign nations and the well trained ANSF would be able to thwart any major attacks from the group. The increase in attacks would continue for a few months until the Taliban realized that the GoA was able to maintain security. Following this, attacks, assassinations, and other events would occur on a more sporadic basis, less impacting the security sector.

Pakistan would continue funding the Taliban and other dissident groups within Afghanistan. The dichotic relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan would continue straining the ability of the United States to effectively help build the GoA; however, this would not be a total blockade to progress, just another problem that the United States and the GoA would have to continually mitigate.

Alternate Future 20 (25 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

Tied with Alternate Future 11, this alternate future also received 25 votes and is therefore also one of the two most likely futures to occur. In fact, the only differing outcome in this future versus future 11 is that of the Taliban's course of action. Within alternate future 11, the Taliban stepped up attacks against ISAF forces during the staged withdrawal of U.S. forces. However,

within alternate future 20, Taliban forces consolidate, but are holding off attacks until the U.S. presence in the country is less noticeable (likely closer to 2014).

The effects of this change in Taliban behavior would be more devastating on the U.S. and ISAF goal of governance building in Afghanistan and would also have a very negative effect on the legitimacy of the GoA following the total withdrawal of troops from the country.

If the Taliban forces were to hold off attacks, consolidating forces until 2014 (projected), it would put a huge strain on the GoA. In this model, the majority of U.S. forces would have left Afghanistan and the GoA would likely be operating without the impression that the Taliban forces were staging for a large scale attack. Without a strong foreign troop presence this scenario could be fatal for the Afghani government, unless over the next few years they are able to bolster their ANSF capabilities.

However, given the GoA's commitment to building the ANSF and cutting corruption, it is more likely in this alternate future that the Taliban forces, though consolidated, would be unable to overthrow the government, or even destabilize it to a point that would be detrimental to the structure of the GoA.

Alternate Future 12 (24 votes): *Pakistan starts to support the GoA and the United States in Afghanistan and cuts clandestine support to dissident groups and the Taliban; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling international presence weakens security.*

This alternate future is the third most likely to occur within scenario 1. The only difference between this and alternate future 11, is that of Pakistan's course of action. Within this alternate future, Pakistan starts supporting the GoA and cuts its well-known clandestine support

to dissident groups within Afghanistan who are continually trying to destabilize the government. Though Taliban forces are still assumed to be increasing attacks against the GoA within this model, they would be much less effective in their attacks, and their command and control (C2) would be deeply cut without the help of the Pakistanis.

Within this alternative future, the GoA would have a much easier time of becoming legitimate within Afghanistan. Pakistani support to dissident groups within the country has been a major source of problems for the GoA. Without this support, attacks would be much more sporadic and less effective allowing the GoA to progress and mature more quickly.

Scenario #2 (Expedited Withdrawal): *New U.S. president elected in 2012 who supports a rapid exodus of all troops from Afghanistan. Given this change in administration policy, troops begin leaving the country ahead of the 2014 timeline specified by the previous administration.*

Alternate Future 26 (24 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

Under the auspices of the new scenario, and the quickened exodus of U.S. troops, the Government of Afghanistan quickly collapses; not at the hands of the Taliban or dissident groups necessarily, but due to widespread corruption and the inability of the government offices, tribes, and leaders of government to effectually collaborate without corrupt practices interfering.

Under this alternate future, the hole left by a rapid exodus of U.S. troops is too much for the government to handle and the lessening supervision within the government by both Non

Government Organizations (NGOs), and the State Department allows politicians to become more corrupt and less effective. The Taliban do not need to step up attacks, as the GoA is already spiraling out of control with ethnic divisions and corruption. The collapse of the government effectively triggers the start of another civil war, at which time the Taliban who have consolidated under this alternate future, can easily sweep into Kabul and take over the reins of the country.

This alternate future would be absolutely devastating for the stability and legitimacy of the country and would mark the end of the current GoA and another failed attempt by a foreign nation at establishing a central government within Afghanistan.

Alternate Future 17 (23 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling presence weakens security.*

This future is quite similar to that of its predecessor, alternate future 26. However, the key difference here is that Taliban forces are actively stepping up attacks against ISAF, albeit the exodus has been expedited.

This future is equally dismal for the prospects of stability in the GoA. Moreover, in this specific case, the cause for the dismantling of the GoA is triggered not only by corruption, malice, tribal/ethnic rivalries within the government, but also by an increase in the amount of violence and attacks by dissident groups and the Taliban. These coupled with the lack of ISAF presence in the area, and a less than adequate ANSF, prove to be a fatal blow to the GoA.

Within this future, the GoA again fails and the international community is left at an impasse on the future courses of action for Afghanistan and the regional stability within the area.

Alternate Future 27 (22 votes): *Pakistan starts to support the GoA and the United States in Afghanistan and cuts clandestine support to dissident groups and the Taliban; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

Again, this alternate future follows similar lines as the last two alternate futures within the scenario. However, in this model, the Pakistani government begins to assist the GoA. Unfortunately, given the scenario and the collapse of the GoA, the assistance is of little value to the overall degradation of the security situation within Afghanistan and the failing GoA.

Moreover, even in this comparatively optimistic model, the GoA ultimately fails and the again the international community is at a loss for the best course of action within Afghanistan. Ultimately, it seems likely that none of the ISAF countries would want to reengage forces following this type this devastating outcome.

10. Present focal events which must occur to bring about alternate futures

A *focal event* within the LAMP methodology is an event that alters the possibility of the alternate future occurring. The most likely alternate futures will have the least number of focal events, as they are the most likely to occur based on the current analysis and trend in events. However, below is a listing of possible focal events for each of our six most likely alternate futures (based on scenarios #1 and #2).

Scenario #1 (Status Quo): *United States pulls out promised “surge” troops by summer of 2012 and all combat troops by 2014*

Alternate Future 11 (25 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling presence weakens security.*

- ❖ **Focal Event #1:** Relations back to status quo with Pakistan (non-trusting, but partnering)
- ❖ **Focal Event #2:** U.S. policy shifts emphasizing capacity building within the GoA and ANSF
- ❖ **Focal Event #3:** ANSF not capable of policing and defending country

Alternate Future 20 (25 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

- ❖ **Focal Event #1:** Relations back to status quo with Pakistan (non-trusting, but partnering)
- ❖ **Focal Event #2:** U.S. policy shifts emphasizing capacity building within the GoA and ANSF
- ❖ **Focal Event #3:** Taliban attacks dramatically decrease in number

Alternate Future 12 (24 votes): *Pakistan starts to support the GoA and the United States in Afghanistan and cuts clandestine support to dissident groups and the Taliban; Government of Afghanistan steps up its efforts against corruption and focuses heavily on fixing corruption*

within its ranks and preparing for a projected turnover with U.S. forces; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling international presence weakens security.

- ❖ **Focal Event #1:** Relations improve between United States and Pakistan
- ❖ **Focal Event #2:** U.S. policy shifts emphasizing capacity building within the GoA and ANSF
- ❖ **Focal Event #3:** ANSF not capable of policing and defending country

Scenario #2 (Expedited Withdrawal): *New U.S. president elected in 2012 who supports a rapid exodus of all troops from Afghanistan. Given this change in administration policy, troops begin leaving the country ahead of the 2014 timeline specified by the previous administration.*

Alternate Future 26 (24 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

- ❖ **Focal Event #1:** Relations back to status quo with Pakistan (non-trusting, but partnering)
- ❖ **Focal Event #2:** U.S. policy focuses heavily on security sector; less on capacity building
- ❖ **Focal Event #3:** Taliban attacks dramatically decrease in number

Alternate Future 17 (23 votes): *No noticeable change in Pakistan's behavior, the country continues to clandestinely support dissident groups in Afghanistan while half-heartedly supporting U.S. policies; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces step up attacks against ISAF as the dwindling presence weakens security.*

- ❖ *Focal Event #1:* Relations back to status quo with Pakistan (non-trusting, but partnering)
- ❖ *Focal Event #2:* U.S. policy focuses heavily on security sector; less on capacity building
- ❖ *Focal Event #3:* ANSF not capable of policing and defending country

Alternate Future 27 (22 votes): *Pakistan starts to support the GoA and the United States in Afghanistan and cuts clandestine support to dissident groups and the Taliban; Government of Afghanistan collapses increasing fractionalization between ethnic rivalries and the country spirals into another destructive civil war; Taliban forces consolidate, but hold off on attacks until the United States security presence is waning within the country.*

- ❖ *Focal Event #1:* Relations improve between United States and Pakistan.
- ❖ *Focal Event #2:* U.S. policy focuses heavily on security sector; less on capacity building.
- ❖ *Focal Event #3:* Taliban attacks dramatically decrease in number.

11. Indicators of the focal events

The process of developing indicators is the second to last step within the LAMP process. For this step, indicators for each of the focal events will be created. These indicators are things that would precede the focal event, or would cue the analyst into the possibility of the focal event occurring. Below, I have listed the focal events from my above alternate futures and the subsequent indicators that could warn the analyst that the focal event is imminent.

Focal Event: *Relations back to status quo with Pakistan (non-trusting, but partnering)*

- **Indicator #1:** Pakistan allows U.S. trainers back into the country
- **Indicator #2:** Diplomatic talks relating to counterinsurgency continue
- **Indicator #3:** U.S. lessens the propensity towards drone attacks in Tribal Areas of Pakistan

Focal Event: *Relations improve between United States and Pakistan*

- **Indicator #1:** New bilateral security agreements between Pakistan and United States
- **Indicator #2:** Pakistani population starts to view the United States in a positive light
- **Indicator #3:** United States begins to respect the sovereignty of Pakistan

Focal Event: *U.S. policy shifts emphasizing capacity building within the GoA and ANSF*

- **Indicator #1:** U.S. troops begin coming home
- **Indicator #2:** NGOs and State Department assert they will remain in country after troops leave



Focal Event: *U.S. policy focuses heavily on security sector; less on capacity building*

- **Indicator #1:** U.S. president announces delays in troop withdrawal
- **Indicator #2:** Taliban forces launch major offensive; drastically destabilizing the country
- **Indicator #3:** Washington begins to believe that security is more important than capacity building

Focal Event: *ANSF not capable of policing and defending country*

- **Indicator #1:** ANSF, though trained, lack motivation and the will to fight
- **Indicator #2:** ANSF unable to obtain funding and weapons needed to fight Taliban
- **Indicator #3:** GoA and field commanders not paying their security personnel; corruption rampant within the higher ranks of ANSF

Focal Event: *Taliban attacks dramatically decrease in number*

- **Indicator #1:** Less ANSF and ISAF casualties across the country
- **Indicator #2:** Intelligence points to reorganization and planning period prior to attacks
- **Indicator #3:** Pakistani support to Taliban diminishes

12. Relative probability of alternate futures transposing

Within each of the alternate futures, three different courses of action are considered; one for each actor involved. It is always possible that one actor could change their course of action and the alternate future could transpose into something totally different or similar to another alternate future. The LAMP model explores this possibility within step 12. Below each of the two scenarios will be evaluated with the top alternate futures evaluated for possibilities for transposition.

Scenario #1 (Status Quo): *United States pulls out promised “surge” troops by summer of 2012 and all combat troops by 2014*

Alternate future #11 is one COA away from transposing into either of the next highest possible alternate futures in scenario #1: alternate #20 or #12. If the Taliban do not increase attacks in alternate future #11, but instead consolidate forces, alternate future #11 transposes into future #20. Likewise, if Pakistan suddenly decides that they are going to start to support the GoA, versus a status quo relationship, alternate future #11 would transpose into future #12.

Scenario #2 (Expedited Withdrawal): *New U.S. president elected in 2012 who supports a rapid exodus of all troops from Afghanistan. Given this change in administration policy, troops begin leaving the country ahead of the 2014 timeline specified by the previous administration.*

In scenario #2, much like scenario #1, the highest probability alternate future 26 is one COA away from transposing into both of the next highest probability futures; alternate #17 or #27. In this scenario, if the Taliban decide to not consolidate, but increase attacks, alternate future #26 transposes into future #17. Likewise, if Pakistani government begins to actively support the GoA, versus the “status quo” relationship of deceptive behavior, alternate future #26 easily transposes into future #27.

Conclusion

The future and stability of the Afghan government is tenuous, depending largely upon the aid and presence of U.S. troops to help provide stability. The United States' decisions regarding troop withdrawal over the next three years – whether a deliberate three year plan or an expedited withdrawal driven by political motives – will have lasting effects on the GoA and Afghanistan as a whole.

The United States can no longer afford to keep a bolstered presence of soldiers within Afghanistan. However, as shown throughout the research, a calculated withdrawal in the next three years proves a much better option than a sudden pull-out of all troops. Within the expedited scenario, the GoA collapsed in every predictive outcome. A dramatic pull-out would not only negate the progress made over the last decade but it would also result in lasting negative feelings of contempt from those who have sacrificed greatly for the cause in Afghanistan.

President Barrack Obama recently made this note in reference to the war, epitomizing the general sentiment felt by many in the United States in regard to the longevity of engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan:

Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and the war on terrorism have reduced the pace of military transformation and have revealed our lack of preparation for defensive and stability operations. This Administration has overextended our military (Capitol Hill Blue 2009).

If the United States remains on the current projected timetable for withdrawal, the GoA will likely succeed in the long run, and the United States will be able to gracefully leave a country and conflict that has been so divisive in recent years. However, as stated previously, if the timetable is expedited, the government will most likely collapse and the United States and the

international community will again be in a position of uncertainty regarding the future of Afghanistan; the graveyard of nations.

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