

Restoring Afghanistan's Tribal Balance

An indigenous peace process for unifying a shattered nation

"Peace and Stability for Afghans, by Afghans"

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Restoring Afghanistan's Tribal Balance

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INTRODUCTION

After 30 years of war driven by foreign intervention Afghanistan is in desperate need of an indigenous peace process. However, the Afghans must first escape the war zone to neutral countries such as Ireland, Turkey and Kuwait to reinstitute their tribal structure and establish a sovereignty based on the people's will, empowering leaders with moral authority versus today's strongmen who derive their power from the barrel of a gun.

***You can take an Afghan to Hell
with Kindness,
but not to Heaven by force***

- Afghan Proverb

The last King of Afghanistan, Mohammad Zahir Shah, was toppled in a bloodless *coup d'état* in 1973, abruptly ending 40 years of peace and stability, which also marked the point in time when the country's relatively secular tribal structure began to disintegrate.

The King had fallen victim to an emerging confluence of outside forces when the United States and Soviet Union began using Afghanistan as a Cold War chessboard - a classic illustration of how the global elite is willing to destroy and undermine the self-determination of an indigenous society in order to satisfy geopolitical and economic interests.

The Afghan people are still suffering from the zeitgeist of the Cold War, caught in a violent nexus between the Taliban's Islamic extremism, Western neocolonialism and a predatory Afghan government.

Hence, a new and shocking departure from the existing narrative is needed to reorient both Afghan and Western thinking. However, reshaping this decades-long mindset will require more than just "thinking outside the box" – it will require throwing the entire box away.

This is why we recommend that the Afghans hold a planning session to determine their future at a 5500-year old structure north of Dublin, Ireland known as Newgrange, before conducting tribal meetings called *jirgas* in neutral countries such as Turkey and Kuwait. Many will wonder what Newgrange and Ireland have to do with restoring Afghanistan's true narrative, how it's relevant to reinstituting Afghanistan's tribal value system and how it will help the Afghans achieve long-term peace. That is exactly what the reader will come to understand by the end of this proposal.

This process will establish a government that truly reflects the will of the Afghan people and will enable the Afghans to construct a legitimate sovereignty that empowers leaders with moral authority, in contrast to the current corrupt powerbrokers who derive their mandates from the barrel of a gun.

Such a dream will never be realized unless the entire underlying foundation of today's society is extirpated - Afghanistan must be transformed into a *tabula rasa* for the Afghans to have any chance of building a sustainable future. Western policymakers either do not understand or refuse to understand this reality, because even the most well-intentioned proposals are based on the reuse of the same old profligate fixtures that have been the bane of Afghan society since King Zahir Shah was exiled in 1973.

Meanwhile, President Barack Obama currently lacks a viable exit strategy that will not leave Afghanistan in violently-fractured disarray and the U.S. is no closer to achieving its national security objectives than it was ten years ago.

The failure of the American war strategy can largely be attributed to the complete lack of input from native Afghans during the policy development process. This has resulted in alternatives bandied about that are, unfortunately, formulas for state collapse - including the continuance of a 10-year-old failed counterinsurgency strategy, the C.I.A. drone war and a power-sharing arrangement that would divvy up the country amongst corrupt Afghan government officials, violent Islamic extremists, mujahideen warlords and various other maligned actors. In addition, there are some in favor of a *de facto* partition of Afghanistan, an argument brought to the debate by Robert Blackwill, a former policy advisor to both presidents Bush, which would condemn the region to an endless ethnic conflict.

Due to the best laid plans of foreign powers, 30 years of incessant war has led to the annihilation of the country's traditional tribal structure, transforming it into one of the most corrupt, violent and poverty-stricken places on earth. President Obama and his advisors seem not to understand that a stable withdrawal is near impossible because of the damage wrought by the U.S.-led coalition. However, there is a ray of hope.

The aim of this white paper is to give Mr. Obama his exit strategy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the U.S. does not have to choose between the lesser of two evils - Karzai or the Taliban – because there is another path for achieving peace and true national reconciliation.

The difference being, the remedy found within this document actually represents the voice of the Afghan people. It is a grassroots, bottom-up solution for Afghans, by Afghans. The roadmap might seem paradoxical, but once the essence of the underlying problem is absorbed, which is, namely, tribal imbalance, it will be much easier to grasp why the Afghans must leave their homeland in order to rediscover it and why Afghanistan's future lies within its past.

Afghanistan is also a microcosm of a much larger issue – the Western way of thinking about tribal societies, which Marshall McLuhan eloquently summarized in a 1969 interview:

“The cultural aggression of white America against Negroes and Indians [Native Americans] is not based on skin color and belief in racial superiority, whatever ideological clothing may be used to rationalize it, but on the white man's inchoate awareness that the Negro and Indian [Native American] — as men with deep roots in the resonating echo chamber of the

discontinuous, interrelated tribal world — are actually psychically and socially superior to the fragmented, alienated and dissociated man of Western civilization. Such a recognition, which stabs at the heart of the white man's entire social value system, inevitably generates violence and genocide. It has been the sad fate of the Negro and the Indian [Native Americans] to be tribal men in a fragmented culture — men born ahead of rather than behind their time."

But the global elite's hegemonic shield is in jeopardy of being split asunder at a pace that has defied any prognostications based on the unrest that's erupted amongst native populations the world over. And there is no country in a more precarious position than the United States, which has the bulk of its resources and military mired in two Muslim countries overseas during a time of explosive upheaval in the Middle East and North Africa. The U.S. stands flatfooted while witnessing revolts, riots and uprisings against American-backed dictatorships and puppet monarchies. As the native peoples around the world begin to fulfill McLuhan's prophecy, modern imperialist nations reel from self-alienation and an assortment of collective dissociative neuroses.

It's time for Westerners to rediscover themselves by living according to the principles of liberty they so espouse and abandoning twisted theories of social evolution, which demand perpetual war. The West's future lies in a similar process of retribalization so they can address their own identity crisis.

The concepts contained herein are refreshingly new, positive in nature and one-of-a-kind because they reflect the thoughts and ideas of the Afghan people. This is important to note because the authors firmly believe the only way to end this war is with a complete indigenous Afghan approach – one with zero interference and participation from any foreign entities. Any remedy concocted must be designed by native Afghans and imbued with their tradition and custom.

This is the primary focus of the NWSC – a think tank founded by Afghan expatriates who possess deep tribal connections. The group focuses on developing political, economic and cultural solutions for Afghanistan, and unlike any other research institute around the globe, the NWSC - in partnership with other leading native Afghan scholars, experts and NGOs – produces truly indigenous scholarship and solutions.

The NWSC is in a class by itself because it gathers direct feedback and “ground truth” through a communication network of tribal elders and representatives from some of the most well-respected tribes and clans in Afghanistan that cut across both ethnic and sectarian lines, and is thus able to channel the collective voice and will of the Afghan people.

To illustrate the value of its indigenous intelligence, the NWSC has been asked to testify before Congress on a couple of occasions. During one session in the mid-1990s, the NWSC warned the

U.S. government about the rise of the Taliban. A senior congressman went so far as to say that if the U.S. had listened to the NWSC's recommendations, 9/11 could have been prevented.

Our purpose is not to actually specify a political solution but a process, because the crux of the approach is based on Afghan native self-determination. The NWSC's goal is to describe a tool that will restore the tribal balance, revive Afghan nationalism and empower the "silent majority" of the Afghan people, so they can, finally, choose their own destiny.

40 YEARS OF PEACE & STABILITY

A FORGOTTEN ERA

Afghanistan experienced a forty-year run of peace, stability and social progress during the reign of King Zahir Shah; an era that began in the early 1930s and ended only as a result of the violent Cold War turmoil of the 1970s. It is important to understand that despite its poverty during this period Afghanistan had been self-sufficient in food production,¹ a vivid illustration of what life was like when Afghans were in control of their own fate.

There is no pain so great as the memory of joy in present grief.

- Aeschylus

That type of society seems like ancient folklore in light of today's conditions, because after 30 years of incessant war Afghanistan is now one of the most violent, corrupt and poverty-stricken places on earth.

The before and after snapshots are mind-blowing, illustrating a near-incogitable contrast between an Afghanistan that was free from external interventions, versus an Afghanistan that is occupied and manipulated by foreign powers that have marginalized, weakened and corrupted centuries-old indigenous institutions and value systems.

Eyewitness accounts from the 60s and 70s document Afghan women wearing miniskirts at Kabul University. The sad truth is Afghan society had been in the midst of progressive reform and had been transforming itself into an enlightened, modern, and democratic society.

One is challenged to find another example of a society that has experienced such dramatic economic, political, technological and cultural regression in such a short time period. Afghanistan has been bombed, decimated and hurled back centuries, and is now just a shell of the nation it once was.

The challenge before the international community is to first accept and then figure out how to go back in time in order to go forward, while having the faith and moral courage to allow the Afghans to once again control and choose their own destiny.

TRIBAL STRUCTURE AND THE DYNASTIC PRINCIPLE

Replicating the exact form of government, laws, customs and rituals of this time period is not necessary, but there are certain aspects that could be reinstated, strengthened or at least drawn upon, including sacred tribal tools and traditions anthropologically ingrained within the Afghan people. Once understood, one realizes the society-in-a-box being imposed upon the Afghan people by Westerners is anathema to the core fabric of their collective being.

¹ Ahmad Masood, Wasiq Mahwash, *Water resource development in Northern Afghanistan and its implications for Amu Darya Basin* (Washington: World Bank Publications, 2004), p. 7.

The last time the Afghan nation saw anything that resembled stability was when its tribal structure was fully intact and a national unifying monarch sat on the throne - two essential factors that helped maintain what is referred to in this white paper as the “tribal balance”.

The point isn't to necessarily advocate for a return of this type government but to show how and why it worked. The key is that the solution must ultimately be decided by Afghans, and when Afghans were last in charge of their own fate, there was 40 years of peace.

Throughout this era the state had been erected upon lessons learned through centuries trying to maintain peace within an insular acephalous tribal society with a penchant for infighting.

Although weakened during the past few decades, tribal principles and national identity and values are still central to Afghan life, as the tribe continues to be the most integral political, economic, military and cultural unit for many in Afghan society.

The tribal belief system is also based on lineal and ancestral adoration and a near-religious belief in the royal bloodline. This kinship acted as a common thread that provided national solidarity and enabled the head of state to unify the tribes when necessary against external threats.

Afghanistan is still a hyper-fragmented and decentralized society. In the past, when the Afghan state was most functional, although it was technically a constitutional monarchy, the country resembled a “loose” confederation in which legislative and judicial powers were pushed down to the local level - a concept analogous to America's states' rights. The end product was an informal Afghan-style democracy, and one much more effective than what is nominally in place today.

So one can just imagine how Afghans view the Western-style uber-centralized government of President Hamid Karzai's administration. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher characterized how important a loose decentralized type of rule is for Afghans:

“Zahir Shah was the king of Afghanistan for 40 years and was successful because he didn't try to rule the entire country from Kabul. The King had a mandate from God- but he still let the people rule themselves locally.”

The tribal structure, moral code and kinship ensured not only intra-tribal cohesion but unified Afghans at the provincial and national levels as well. Common kinship and the respect for the King were critically important in stabilizing a country that could easily tip into chaos due to its fragmented nature.

The formal and informal power structures in Afghan society were relatively distributed and rarely abused. The tribes were vertically-structured and egalitarian in nature, in which

decisions were made based on consensus-building as opposed to orders handed down from a hierarchical command structure.

And although tribal elders and leaders typically had the final say, they were able to become leaders in the first place because they had earned the honor of their respective tribes and derived their power from moral authority, not threat of violence.

The inner-cohesion of the tribes was maintained by a moral tribal code that the Pashtuns referred to as *Pashtunwali*, which was based on tribal honor and pride, and also protected the rights of the individual.

Amongst the many tribes in Afghanistan, the Pashtuns represent the largest of all, and its structure and values have generally resisted modern institutional governments. The country overall exemplifies the typical “storm paths” based on ethnicity, Islamic sect, and so on, but in fact the active, viable political coalitions in the country are built upon grounds of fellowship, friendship and trust that governs their behavior - including those figures in government or other informal positions of power.

In general, tribesmen are intensely focused on their code, specifically their adherence to the value of “honor” which has been described as the “tribal center of gravity.” The *Pashtunwali* norms override religious norms, making appeal to Islamic identity less resonant to Pashtuns.

Pashtunwali also overrides modern legal norms, making a western-style justice system ineffective. Thus, if the center of gravity shifts in violation of the code towards either another tribe or an individual, the outcome will depend on the ruling of a *Loya Jirga*, which is a grand assembly of elders.

Afghans embrace this ancient traditional, spiritual, and communal identity tied to a set of moral codes. These tenets promote self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality, love, forgiveness, and tolerance toward all (especially to strangers or guests).

These indigenous unifying principles are critical to the national reconciliation movement which is focused on empowering the Afghan people. *Pashtunwali* has been outlined here as more of a symbolic illustration than a literal prescription, and gives insights into the reality that Afghan culture is not based on extreme religious ideology or cultural norms imposed from without, but rather by unique indigenous values that have flourished for millennia from within.

FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS

30 YEARS OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

If ever one needs a reminder as to the magnitude of the havoc wrought on the Afghan people, simply stroll through the countryside – but watch your step. Afghanistan is still the most heavily land mined country in the world with 60 Afghans per month still getting blown up, most of them children who don't know what to look for as they play.² As a result, Afghanistan now has the highest percentage of disabled people in the world.

The root cause of the turmoil seen today is that foreign intervention has weakened the tribal balance, the Afghan national character and unifying value systems. In order to properly analyze the symptoms that afflict Afghan society today it is important to understand the history and underlying causes of the country's current decrepit state, which will also shed light on the animus towards foreign occupiers, especially the United States.

In the next few years the struggle will not be between utopia and reality, but between different utopias, each trying to impose itself on reality ... we can no longer hope to save everything, but ... we can at least try to save lives, so that some kind of future, if perhaps not the ideal one, will remain possible.

- Albert Camus

A consistent pattern formed of foreign actors attempting to impose non-indigenous systems of government, social programs and/or religions on a people infamous for resistance to external threats and influences. A quick summary of this can be found in figure 2.0 below.

| Periods | Rulers/ Powerbrokers | Systems Imposed | Issues |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Soviet Occupation (1979 – 1989) | Soviet Union | Communism | Communists did bring some progressive social movements, yet Soviets tried to depopulate the countryside. |
| Afghan Civil Wars (1989 – 1994) | Mujahideen (Saudis / Pakistanis) | Warlordism | Warlordism result of Saudi and U.S.-funded and Pakistani-trained <i>mujahideen</i> |
| Taliban Reign (1994 – 2001) | Taliban (Saudis / Pakistanis) | Islamic extremism | Islamic reactionary religion the result of foreign pan-Islamic Deobandi Wahhabism of Saudis, Pakistanis |

² <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1051546.html>

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>NATO Occupation (2001 – 2010)</p> | <p>U.S. and NATO-sponsored Afghan government</p> | <p>Western-style Centralized Democracy</p> | <p>Blatant installment of a “puppet” regime by U.S. and an attempt to implement a corrupt democratic system</p> |
|---|--|--|---|

Figure 2.0 – History of Foreign Influence

The following brief synopsis of Afghan history is important because it tells the story of how the tribal structure, the dynastic principle and those indigenous values and institutions that bonded Afghan society together were systematically destroyed, and how purported foreign ideological and religious panacea were actually contraindicative. The following critique, at times stinging, is based on the perspective of most Afghan natives and is a stark reality Western policymakers must come to terms with and weigh heavily during the decision-making process.

U.S. involvement in the annihilation of Afghan society cannot be overlooked, because tribal elders certainly haven’t forgotten. Most Americans are not aware of the fact that the U.S. and British intelligence agencies had been working together since the end of WWII to destabilize Afghan society.

According to Elizabeth Gould and Paul Fitzgerald in *Invisible History: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*, a Manichaeian worldview and Cold War strategy retarded the expansion of anything that resembled communism or socialism – including movements such as nationalism, secularism and even, sadly, progressivism.³

Indisputable proof exists that the U.S. fanned the spread of pan-Islamic *jihadism* during the 1950s and 1960s, and helped facilitate the rise of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood primarily because the U.S. found common cause with extremist religious reactionaries who held similar levels of disdain for the communists. Through the Asia Foundation – a C.I.A. front – the U.S. funded Islamic extremist movements at Kabul University that eventually led to Afghanistan’s indigenous and moderate version of Islam being replaced by the sadistic fundamentalism that now dominates.

King Zahir Shah ended up the victim of historical circumstances, shackled to a century and a half legacy of colonial domination. Caught between the forces of communism, Islamic extremism and the geopolitics of the Cold War his grand plans for progressive democratic reform were crushed and his country destroyed.

Afghanistan played the role of geopolitical chessboard for U.S. Cold War strategy against the Soviets during the 1970s, a decade that ended with the U.S. and C.I.A. tricking the Soviets into invading Afghanistan to, as President Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski put it: “We now have the opportunity of giving the USSR its Vietnam War ”, as the U.S. went from Nixonian *détente* to Carterian confrontation.

³ <http://www.citylights.com/book/?GCOI=87286100741260>

It is now no secret that the C.I.A., via Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), funded and supported violent Islamic *jihadists* called the *mujahideen* in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, providing them billions to procure weapons and recruit and train more *jihadists*. After the Soviet retreat, these *mujahideen* “freedom fighters” became the very warlords that divided and terrified Afghanistan as it spiraled into civil war, moral decay and chaos, which led to conditions ripe for the rise of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

The Taliban’s ultra-orthodox Islamic movement was actually spawned in reaction to the political and moral chaos brought about by the fractious *mujahideen*’s inability to work together in controlling the Afghan state.

After the post-9/11 takedown of the Taliban the U.S. abandoned Afghanistan by taking a detour to Iraq and leaving the country – once again – in the hands of warlords. This time the C.I.A. and U.S. military paid these miscreants millions upon millions to “secure and keep the peace”, which further corrupted the country. Thus, the rise of warlordism was yet another non-indigenous phenomenon that would have never taken root were it not for foreign meddling.

And to think, the Afghans had once danced in the streets of Kabul ready and willing to embrace democracy with open arms and open hearts after the dismantling of the repressive Taliban regime. However, it seems as if, as Jean Jacques Rousseau said in 1755, “All ran to meet their chains thinking they secured their freedom”.

TRIBAL WEAKENING

Kabul has fought against restoring the tribal balance and traditional Afghan autonomy since Karzai took office. The Karzai regime has not supported inter-tribal solidarity, even ignoring the decisions of local *jirgas* and *shuras*. Reason being is that the Karzai clique is threatened by tribalism and sees it as much too egalitarian, instead preferring a form of patronage that is not inclusive but serves one side – their side.

The Taliban see the tribal code and custom as an affront to Islam, thus tribal conventions were further weakened during their reign as the chaos of the *mujahideen* warlords was replaced by religious extremism. The Taliban tried to establish Deobandi networks and replace tribal-centered villages with *ulema* and *madrassa*-centered structures.

Today, they are continuing to uproot the tribal foundation, evidenced by their assassination campaign against tribal elders. In addition, according to Afghan expert Selig Harrison, “[S]ince 1979, the role of the *hujrah* [local secular community center] has been deliberately undermined by Pakistan and other countries including the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia.”

Harrison finds the coexistence and the interaction of the ancient tribal code of *Pashtunwali* with Islamic religious traits to be indispensable for understanding Pashtun culture:

“On the one hand, it explains the inevitable and ritualistic religiosity of a Pashtun, and on the other hand it explains the futility of efforts to inject religious fundamentalism in Pashtun social and political culture as it stands in contradiction to Pashtunwali. In fact, the Islamic identity of the Pashtuns is only one thousand years old whereas Pashtunwali is reportedly five thousand years old.”

Societal fragmentation has been working in the Taliban’s favor. With the death of the dynastic principle and the absence of a well-respected national leader as head of state, Afghan society now lacks a common lineal thread that could unify the nation. Although the Taliban have pushed a faux-nationalistic movement that has failed, because of their previous brutal and bloody persecution of non-Pashtuns and non-Sunni Muslims in the north during their short power stay, the Taliban will never be able to unify the country.

The implosion and degradation of the tribal structure and true Afghan nationalism directly spawned a sad new world now dominated by corruption, violence and poverty. 30 years of conflict resulted in a chain reaction that continues to work against any restoration of a valid state.

Tribalism and dynastic loyalty were principles that cemented the shards of clans and ethnicities together, enabling Afghanistan’s distinctive “regulated anarchy”. But when these bonding agents were destroyed, Afghan society shattered and spiraled into an ever-darkening chaotic abyss, only to be exacerbated by U.S. policies similar to the ones that are arguably the root cause of the current state of affairs.

A CORRUPT & VIOLENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

CORRUPTION

Afghanistan is now caught in the throes of a seemingly never-ending descent into chaos, driven by a combination of tribal imbalance, the death of Afghan nationalism and America's incoherent military and political strategies.

General David Petraeus's COIN strategy is designed for failure because of the stratospheric odds against winning Afghan hearts and minds. Not to mention the fact that NATO's very presence is fueling the insurgency.

In today's violent atmosphere, between the anvil of the Karzai government and the hammer of the Taliban, there are no viable political alternatives for Pashtuns.

-Thomas Ruttig
Afghan Analysts Network

Also, Afghanistan, with its tribal society and weak tradition of loyalty to the state, is not a promising place for a classic counterinsurgency operation. Its twin goals of protecting the population and guiding the Afghan security forces toward self-sufficiency are inconsistent with Afghanistan's history, culture, and society.

General David Petraeus asserted in his most recent [counterinsurgency \(COIN\) guidance](#) that the U.S. cannot capture or kill its way to victory⁴. The General said the decisive terrain was the human terrain and the Afghan people are the "center of gravity". He also wrote:

The Taliban are not the only enemy of the people. The people are also threatened by inadequate governance, corruption, and abuse of power – recruiters for the Taliban.

However, U.S.-led forces can execute these COIN guidelines perfectly and would still fail to win over the local populace because Afghans perceive their sitting government in Kabul as illegitimate and corrupt.

Poverty-stricken Afghans watch as billions of dollars worth of foreign aid is poured into a corrupt patronage system and allocated to provincial leaders who act as mob bosses. This combination of economic desperation and wanton graft is a formula the Taliban have exploited time and again. Afghan society functioned much more effectively and equitably when it had a loose decentralized form, as opposed to centralization which breeds corruption on a daily basis.

A recent Pentagon study concluded only 24% of the most critical districts in Afghanistan support the Karzai government and the rest are sympathetic to the insurgency. Respondents cited rampant corruption and ineffective governance as reasons for their opposition, and many

⁴ <http://www.isaf.nato.int/the-afghan-hands-blog/commanders-blog/comisaf-guidance-01-aug-2010.html>

see Karzai as an illegitimate President because they believe the most recent elections were rife with fraud.

Government corruption is so pervasive that large percentages of Afghans in key districts are willing to suffer through another era of Taliban terror if the only other alternative is continuing to live under the Karzai regime's reprobate and mob-like rule.

The ultra-centralization that the Americans afforded to be written into the Afghan constitution has been almost as tragic a mistake as propping up Karzai as the leader. The consolidation of power and money among the Karzai family has been mind-numbing.

The President's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai (AWK), sits at the head of Kandahar's provincial council but runs the region like a kingpin – and is notorious for being involved with security extortion rings, illegal real estate deals and the drug trade.

The U.S. had previously stated that the Kandahar operation will determine the outcome of the war, but if Afghans see coalition forces tied to the President's brother, the U.S. chances of success are slim, if not nil. [Maj. Gen. Michael T. Flynn](#), the senior American military intelligence official in Afghanistan spelled it out succinctly in the New York Times last year⁵:

If we are going to conduct a population-centric strategy in Afghanistan, and we are perceived as backing thugs, then we are just undermining ourselves.

NWSC tribal connections in Kandahar have validated all of the aforementioned sentiments and claim AWK is single-handedly fueling the insurgency.

Meanwhile, President Karzai claims he will not remove his brother because AWK had been "elected by the people". However, the NWSC has first-hand knowledge from tribal leaders that AWK won the council position as the result of a local *jirga*, where representatives vote by raising their hands for all to see. They assert AWK used threats and intimidation beforehand to ensure he won the seat. The tribal leaders assert that AWK would be lucky to get one vote in an honest election, but anyone who valued their life would never dare to vote against him in an open *jirga*.

The bottom line is that the chief source of "inadequate governance, corruption, and abuse of power" is President Karzai, his family and his inner-circle. If it is true, as French army officer and counterinsurgency theorist Roger Trinquier put it, that "the *sine qua non* of victory in modern warfare is the unconditional support of a population", and if the U.S. wholeheartedly believes in the most basic precepts of COIN strategy – then Karzai's very existence as head of state is irreconcilable with capturing the hearts and minds of the Afghan population. Thus,

⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/28/world/asia/28intel.html>

unless something changes at the top, it would be reasonable to conclude that this war is now unwinnable.

Hence, it would seem, Afghanistan is stuck with Karzai at the helm for quite some time, as he wins terms indefinitely because of his organization's impressive electoral fraud operations. Not only that, but it appears the Karzai regime has consolidated even more power by rigging the recent parliamentary elections to ensure that the lower house is fully under the control of a soon to be unchecked executive branch, thus transforming Afghanistan into a *de facto* totalitarian state.

Although it may seem like an affront to our Jeffersonian sensibilities, tribal instruments such as the *jirga* and the Afghan predilection towards a constitutional monarchy have proven to be considerably more representative than the current Afghan government's idea of self-determination.

VIOLENCE & INSURGENCY

The issue of the Afghan insurgency is complex and subject to numerous interpretations. Despite initial claims that the Taliban were an indigenous force and wanted nothing more than to purge Afghanistan of hated warlords and criminals, a plethora of Western intelligence as well as public statements by Afghan and Pakistani officials indicates the Taliban are closely aligned to a fatal mix of transnational extremists backed by elements of Pakistan's military that are bent on a political and religious transformation of the region.

In a society in which people from different provinces view one another as "foreigners" one can only imagine the sentiments and mixed loyalties that have shaken the Afghan's historical sense of pride in their nationality. As distrust and unhappiness with the U.S.-led coalition's efforts grows, the need for a drawdown of Western forces becomes apparent. Yet, simply abandoning the field to the Taliban could create dire consequences that make the present military occupation look good by comparison.

What the Taliban could never have done for themselves, the coalition has provided by alienating the Pashtun tribes and virtually forcing them into the hands of Taliban "protectors" who have successfully cast themselves as a force for Pashtun nationalism. Plus, there is definitive proof that despite the increase in troops and funds, the Taliban insurgency has grown over the past nine years and overall conditions have deteriorated at great cost to the U.S. in terms of blood and treasure. A situation succinctly summarized by the Afghanistan Study Group in their recent report *A New Way Forward*⁶:

At almost nine years, the U.S. war in Afghanistan is the longest in our history, surpassing even the Vietnam War, and it will shortly surpass the Soviet Union's own extended military campaign there. With the surge, it will cost the U.S. taxpayers nearly \$100 billion per year, a sum roughly seven times larger than Afghanistan's annual gross national

⁶ <http://www.afghanistanstudygroup.org/>

product (GNP) of \$14 billion and greater than the total annual cost of the new U.S. health insurance program. Thousands of American and allied personnel have been killed or gravely wounded.

And if defeating the Taliban is not the objective, but “dismantling” Al Qaeda is, ASG’s director Matthew Hoh laid out in a recent Intelligence Squared debate why this rationale for war also defies commonsense:

“[Al Qaeda] is a collection of individuals. It's not a formal military organization that we can defeat with conventional forces. And think about it. Look back at the last 10 years of their attacks. Their most recent attack, a lady who took two parcel bombs and FedExed them from Yemen. Look at the attacks of the last three years in this country in the sense that they're done by individuals, small cells, it's a decentralized organization that will not be affected by the presence of brigade combat teams occupying Southern Afghanistan. So nine years ago 19 men hijacked four airplanes. We're now in Afghanistan 109 months later with 100,000 troops...”

And now, because of the decimation of the tribal structure, instead of respected and unifying tribal elders working with residents to build consensus and make decisions for the greater good, the chaos in a war zone has tilted the center of gravity towards “strongmen”, because in a Hobbesian world of “kill or be killed” might trumps tribal tradition and custom.

The chaos has caused a power vacuum in key leadership positions in tribes, districts and provinces that are being filled by warlords, drug traffickers, and corrupt politicians. The tribal code, weakened by the rise of the warlords, has been replaced with a code based on brute force. As Brigadier Justin Kelly put it⁷:

“Unless you are confident in the ability of your government to enforce its peace, then the man with a gun at your door at midnight is your master.”

Tribal leaders have been marginalized and the tribal structure weakened, which has smothered the voice of Afghanistan’s version of the “Silent Majority”, because most Afghans are moral and well-intentioned. But the war has empowered the maligned actors whose sources of power are money and guns.

⁷ <http://www.quadrant.org.au/magazine/issue/2009/4/how-to-win-in-afghanistan>

NO-WIN SOLUTIONS

Mr. Obama needs an exit strategy, but the options he's been provided and other supposed solutions that one reads in op eds across the blogosphere are no-win proposals that will fail to meet U.S. objectives and only make matters worse in Afghanistan.

If the root cause of the current dilemma is tribal imbalance and the destruction of the Afghan national identity, the obvious answer should be to reinstate this equilibrium and rebuild nationalistic character – one would think.

However, a number of Western foreign policy experts have posited interesting remedies that would do the exact opposite. The status quo counterinsurgency is obviously not the approach with its overreliance on building up Afghan security forces, but neither is simply handing the country back to the same set of warlords that caused this mess in the first place. The solution is not Karzai's misguided top-down reconciliation process, which lacks credibility and will never have the full support of the Afghans. Nor would dividing Afghanistan into partitions be the answer, because it would simply make the state inherently prone to civil war.

PROPPING UP AFGHAN NATIONAL DEFENSE FORCES

Bereft of a political solution, it is not speculation but a guarantee that if U.S. forces drawdown prematurely and leave Afghanistan in the hands of centralized security forces, the government in Kabul will collapse and a more divisive and destabilizing civil war shall erupt.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) are just one of the major problems - they are symbols of the central government and not trusted by a society built on localized security. Yet, the U.S. continues to stake their mission on developing these security forces. Without a unifier, after the U.S. withdraws all of this training will become academic when these forces collapse or reunite with the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras of the former Northern Alliance to fight the Pashtun uprising.

Besides not sufficiently reflecting the Pashtun population – the country's largest ethnic group – Afghan national security forces are loaded with drug addicts and criminals due to low pay and the fact that real warriors and fighters are either still defending their tribes or have joined the Taliban, typically for more money.

Once again, ignoring the norms of a decentralized and fragmented society, the U.S.-led coalition tried to force a top-down approach to build a national security force. Instead, they should have focused on strengthening and arming the villages and building a security structure from the ground-up.

Without a legitimate political solution the Afghan future will look worse than it is today because one has seen what happens in Afghanistan when there is a power vacuum at the top – violent “strongmen” like the Taliban and warlords seize power.

POWER-SHARING: A DELUSIONAL “QUICK FIX”

The Obama administration is reportedly attempting to negotiate a power-sharing arrangement with the likes of Mullah Omar’s Taliban, the Haqqani Network and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e-Islami, with dubious usual-suspect go-betweens involved such as the Saudis and Pakistanis.

The Afghan people have seen this movie before, and it doesn’t end very well. Read the tribal elders’ lips: the solution must be an Afghan solution – they do not want Pakistani or Saudi Arabian involvement whatsoever.

After the initial takedown of the Taliban after 9/11, the U.S. unabashedly handed the physical security of the country over to warlords, the consequences of which need not be belabored. And now U.S. officials are thinking of brokering a deal to share the Afghan nation with an even more malevolent cast?

As far as reconciliation with the Taliban-led insurgents go, care must be taken because, as Sima Wali, King Zahir Shah’s representative to the Bonn Conference once quipped:

“You show me a moderate Talib and I will show you a moderate Nazi.”

There is a difference between allowing disenfranchised Taliban fighters to rejoin Afghan society but an entirely different matter to allow the movement’s leaders to share power.

Some within DOD intelligence have suggested that Hekmatyar falls within the “reconcilable” category – which may or may not be true. However, it is likely irrelevant because our sources in Afghanistan have lent the impression that the tribes do not want to negotiate with Hekmatyar and would rather see him prosecuted, exiled to Pakistan forever – or worse.

Ultimately, the U.S. must leave it up to the Afghans. The Afghans should decide which Taliban will be reintegrated into the villages and the Afghan people will determine what role Taliban leaders will have in the new government.

KARZAI’S RECONCILIATION PROCESS

President Hamid Karzai established an Afghan “High Peace Council” aimed at negotiating peace with the insurgents, yet the individual appointed to lead the initiative, former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, is a Tajik warlord accused by U.S.-based Human Rights Watch of war crimes that killed thousands of Afghans during the civil wars. The Taliban have publicly denounced the selection and refuse to sit down with Rabbani because he has so much Pashtun blood on his hands.

Not to mention that the Karzai government, perceived as illegitimate by most Afghans, lacks credibility and the most basic trust of its own people - let alone a mandate to negotiate

anything on their behalf. Thus, the Afghan government is in no position to formalize a settlement.

[According to Martine Van Bijlert from the Afghanistan Analysts Network](#)⁸, the main issue is that no one can guarantee that Taliban members will be “protected from local army authorities or police looking to avenge past grievances or to aggrandize their own well-being.” Van Bijlert also stated:

"Time and time again what people will tell you is that the obstacles for fighters to return have to be removed first. And a big obstacle is how they've been treated by the government or powerful people linked to the government."

Van Bijlert believes the so-called reconciliation process has little to do with the needs of ordinary Afghans and is all about exit strategies for the West. The process is so fraught with uncertainty many Afghans have been forced to “hedge their bets” – once again stuck between “the anvil of the Karzai government and the hammer of the Taliban.”

Wali Muhammad, the *malik* of an outlying district of Kabul, acts as a local councilor, mediator and elder, inheriting the unpaid position from his father and grandfather. Wali is forced to do so because the Afghan government is benignly ineffective, routinely predatory and has little to no role in the daily lives of the local populace.

Wali is torn because when the Taliban were in charge the district had no school and no doctor, yet, unlike now, it was safe with little corruption. For him a good compromise would be to allow those Taliban to integrate back into society willing to respect the Afghan constitution.

But, just in case, he's hedging his bets by training his young son to take over as *malik*, realizing the traditional system needs to remain strong in order to provide for the people's basic needs and to secure a modicum of order. Based on the inherently flawed, top-down reconciliatory structure and lack of viable alternatives – his bet is very likely a wise one.

PARTITION

A few Western foreign policy experts have recklessly suggested partitioning Afghanistan, including former Bush administration official Robert Blackwill, based on the premise that since the US cannot win the current war in Afghanistan it should consider a *de facto* partition of the country and hand over the Pashtun south to the Taliban while propping up the north and west where Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras live.

However, countries such as Russia, Tajikistan, Iran and Pakistan have at one time or another over the past 20 years proposed similar plans - all to no avail. The Afghan response to such talk

⁸ <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/12/07/f-vp-mustafa-afghanistan-reconciliation.html>

- regardless of region, ethnicity or tribe - has been swift and at times even threatening. According to [Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid](#):⁹

Twenty years ago, Gen Dostum told me that the first Afghan who suggests partition would have his throat slit. Before the attacks of September 11 2001, Taliban leaders told me the same thing. The same holds true today.

Afghanistan's ethnic mix is much more complex than Westerners realize and such a partition could have worse consequences than India's ill-conceived division that gave birth to Pakistan in 1947, considering a number of Pashtuns live in the north as quite a few Uzbeks and Tajiks live in the south. It is a recipe for perpetual civil war.

⁹ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7caa5128-94f3-11df-af3b-00144feab49a.html>

AN AFGHAN SOLUTION

BROAD SUPPORT

HOWEVER, all is not lost. But the indigenous solution will require quite the paradigm shift for most Westerners who will struggle with the concept that Afghanistan's future lies within its past.

***Once a nation begins to think,
it is impossible to stop it.***

-Voltaire

It is a historical and undeniable truth that Afghanistan saw a 40-year epoch of peace when there was tribal balance, lineal rule, and society was based on a strong national identity and indigenous tradition and custom. And it is very clear what happened when this tribal balance and nationalism was decimated. Hence, a logical conclusion would be that a restoration of said balance and nationalism and a return to a truly indigenous form of government is required. The NWSC has designed a peace process that has garnered broad support to achieve such a solution.

What Americans and Westerners must trust is that the majority of Afghans are good people but have been victimized by history and their society devitalized under the repressive control of the minority of warlords and strongmen who have seized and consolidated power. An Afghan solution, however, will empower these people to come forward and take back their country from the oppressors.

At a recent gathering of the Afghan community in the Seattle area, the NWSC received unanimous support for its *Afghanistan National Reconciliation* process from a diverse subset that represented Afghan society, who all advocated for a series of "All-Afghan Jirgas" to solve the political dilemma in their homeland.

This idea has been discussed directly with contacts in Afghanistan along with members of the Afghan Diaspora, located in America, Canada and Europe – who all roundly support the concept. This includes influential tribal leaders from the most popular tribes in the South such as the Alokozai and Achakazi; some Ghelzai Pashtuns in the East; and non-Pashtun tribes across the country - including the Hazara, Uzbek, Tajik and Panjshirees in the North. It has even been approved by former Taliban commanders, former members of Hezb-e-Islami and retired Pakistani military and intelligence officials.

For anyone that knows anything about the nature of Afghan tribalism and custom - if the aforementioned types of people approve of this idea, then it is beyond all doubt that the entire Afghan nation will accept the plan.

THE ALL-AFGHAN JIRGAS

The *Loya Jirga* is a "grand assembly" of Afghan leaders and tribal elders typically convened to decide a major political matter such as selecting a new head of state or ratifying a constitution. It is a tool that has been used since the 1700s, especially in times of crisis, including the one

assembled in Kandahar in 1747 when Ahmad Shah Durrani was appointed the first Emir of the modern Afghan state.

The *jirga* is actually one of the oldest forms of democracy and will be an ideal tool for reconciling differences and selecting Afghanistan's next government that should meet Western standards of representative sovereignty. The *jirga* is a functioning decision-making body, mythic and sacred in nature, which is steeped in Afghan custom and can actually lead to a strengthening of the internal cohesion of the tribes as well as promote cross-tribal consensus building. The *jirga* will help ensure a unifying, legitimate and representative leader is selected.

But the external genesis of the decades-old Afghan war and the psychological impact Afghanistan has had on the West's attitudes towards Islam no longer make a resolution *just* an Islamic issue. What is needed now is a wholly different way of thinking. This can only be done by moving the issue of Islam off center stage initially where the current acrimony has been intentionally focused by the combatants and replace it with another model that incorporates ideas, histories and enduring beliefs that link Afghans together with the West in a common struggle and a better life for all.

DUBLIN PLANNING SESSION FOR THE ALL AFGHAN JIRGAS

Parallels have been drawn by numerous experts to the complexities of Afghanistan's sectarian/tribal dynamic with the ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland. Various tactics employed by peacekeepers in Northern Ireland have been tried in Afghanistan with limited success, but the circumstances surrounding the two countries are not dissimilar and for very good reasons.

Aside from sharing a long colonial heritage with Britain, Ireland and Afghanistan share an ancient legacy of tribal law and secular codes of moral conduct that long precede the Christian and Islamic eras. Ireland's pre-Christian Brehon Laws provided a sophisticated set of rules for every aspect of Irish society. Prior to hostile European invasions, *Pashtunwali* was a guide for a peaceful and hospitable Afghanistan that was known to accommodate Jews and Christians, considering them both to be religions of "the book."

A new and shocking departure from the existing narrative is needed to change the tone of the Afghan crisis and reorient people's thinking. As part of the indigenous solution to restore the true Afghanistan, Afghans should allow themselves to escape from the existing extremist narrative by reconnecting to an ancient shared past. This can be achieved by holding planning sessions leading up to the *All-Afghan Jirgas* at a fifty five hundred year old UNESCO World Heritage Site north of Dublin known today as Newgrange, attended by senior tribal elders, national leaders and members of Afghanistan's intelligentsia and a selection of indigenous leaders and organizations from around the world to share their knowledge as advisors and supporters.

Originally known as Bru na Boinne, (mansion on the river Boyne), the structure is central to pre-Christian Irish mythology having been built by the Dagda, the father of the Tuatha de Danaan, (people of the light) who was known as the Good Father, for his role as a benefactor to

all the people . Described as a "passage grave" by modern scholars, it was considered a "house" where the dead could live and pass in and out of supernatural reality into this world at will. It was also a place where the living could commune with the spirits of the Otherworld and see, hear and feel the bountiful Grail that awaited them in the spirit-world beyond.

According to the world-renowned scholar Joseph Campbell in his book *Occidental Mythology, The Masks of God*, "By various schools of modern scholarship, the Grail has been identified with the Dagda's caldron of plenty, the begging bowl of the Buddha in which four bowls, from four quarters were united, the Kaaba of the Great Mosque of Mecca, and the ultimate talismanic symbol of some sort of Gnostic-Manichaeic rite of spiritual initiation, practiced possibly by the Knights Templar."

According to Masonic lore, Newgrange's unique history and mythology is also central to the biblical Enoch, grandfather of Noah, who is found in all three Abrahamic religions. This ancient lore and mythology can provide a new narrative outside the framework of today's violent religious struggles. It also would reconnect Afghanistan's progressive heritage to the larger goals of nation-building, education and the path to enlightenment.

But most of all Newgrange stimulates something in the imagination; a deeper connection to the past and the evolution of human thought that has been lost in bitter squabbling and forgotten to both the East and the West. It should well be seen by desperate authorities as just the right vehicle to change a deadly dynamic that is currently not working for anyone.

The idea of holding a planning session in a region just outside of Dublin, Ireland requires more than just simply "thinking outside the box" – it requires throwing the entire box away. This concept is a game-changer that has depth and weight and can bring about a positive form of "shock and awe" as the Afghans symbolically tell friend and foe alike a new age is dawning. Afghanistan in its current state is unrecognizable to most Afghans anyway, and a major paradigm shift is in order for both Afghans and the West.

THE ALL AFGHAN JIRGAS

The *All-Afghan Jirgas* would be organized by the NWSC and its native Afghan partner organizations. A total of three rounds of *jirgas* would be held, the first two of which would be held in neutral countries before the finale in Afghanistan. Below is a breakdown of the objective and location of each *jirga* round:

- *Jirga #1* – Define the solution (Turkey)
- *Jirga #2* – Develop the implementation plan (Kuwait)
- *Jirga #3* – Announce Head of State (Kabul)

The reason for the foreign locales is due to the lack of security in Afghanistan, considering the country is in the middle of a war. A *jirga* outcome under foreign occupation would be unacceptable to the tribes; hence Afghanistan would still be stuck with a legitimacy issue. The decisions emanating from a *jirga* held in a neutral country would be accepted as more

legitimate because of the absence of coercive powers. If the first two *jirgas* are successful in other countries, it will actually enhance Afghan nationalism and win the trust and confidence of the people.

At the first *jirga* in Turkey the tribal elders will define the type of government they want, resolve their differences akin to tribal feuds or any other prior animosity towards one another, and begin the process of nominating candidates for head of state. Turkey was selected for the initial round primarily because it is a stable Muslim country and many Afghans have already shown a willingness to allow Turkish representatives to play the role of mediator in some of the current negotiations.

During the second *jirga* in Kuwait the participants will select a transition team and develop a roadmap for implementing the solution as well as nominate potential leaders. Not unlike Turkey, Kuwait is an ideal location because it is a stable, nonaligned moderate Muslim country.

The Afghans return to their homeland to announce the new government and leadership team. Kabul is to host the finale because it's the nation's capital and will meet the needs of all Afghans from every tribe, sub-tribe, clan and ethnicity from every corner of the country.

One indispensable requirement is that there is no foreign involvement in any phase of the process. U.S. involvement will be relegated to providing "a level playing field" which will be accomplished by simply providing security where and when needed.

The entire process could take anywhere from three to six months. The NWSC will work with other native Afghan NGOs and organizations to create an independent commission stationed in Kabul that would register those who want to attend the *jirgas*. A formula would need to be devised to ensure the decision-making body contained an accurate number of delegates that was a true reflection of the proportionality of Afghanistan's tribal and ethnic demographics.

Parties or groups will not be allowed representation – only individual Afghans. The Taliban, the Afghan government, drug barons or the warlords cannot attend. The likes of Mr. Karzai, Mullah Mohammad Omar, Hekmatyar, Rashid Dostum and other leaders may join the *jirga* as ordinary Afghan citizens without any affiliation – or bodyguards.

It must be emphasized that the NWSC is not promoting any specific type of government – there isn't one predetermined solution. The final form of governance will be left for the Afghan people to decide at the *All-Afghan Jirgas*, although beforehand a few models will be developed in order to provide some ideas and ignite the solution creation process.

BONN AGREEMENT: LESSONS LEARNED

The *All-Afghan Jirgas* concept does bear similarity to the process outlined in Bonn Germany as the post-9/11 war against the Taliban had been winding down, in which a transitional government with an interim leader had been established along with a roadmap to select a new leader and constitution.

The Bonn Agreement was aimed at, purportedly, establishing a permanent “broad-based, representative and democratically-elected government”.

The concept of the Bonn Agreement was not the problem but the manner in which it was actualized. The outcomes were already predetermined by U.S. officials, arguably driven by Western geopolitical and economic interests. Motives aside, U.S. manipulation of the *jirga*’s results is an underreported historical fact according to M. Chris Mason who served as a U.S. political officer on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Mr. Mason told the NWSC that the Bonn Process was rigged by the U.S. to “put our man Karzai in office”, and he wrote the following in the U.S. Army’s own think tank magazine, [The Military Review](#):

In 2002, three-quarters of the participants in the Emergency Loya Jirga signed a petition to make the late King, Zahir Shah, the interim head of state, an inconvenient show of reverence for the monarchy, which required an extraordinary level of covert shenanigans to subvert. Even a ceremonial monarchy would have provided the critically needed source of traditional legitimacy necessary to stabilize the new government and constitution.

It was a clear case of foreigners dictating Afghanistan’s future by blatantly ignoring the will of the Afghan people. The cast of characters that did attend were so entrenched with other foreign powers that China, Iran, Russia and other outsiders also were able to influence events. Figure 3.0 below compares the Bonn Agreement to the proposed *All-Afghan Jirgas*.

Figure 3.0: Comparing issues with the Bonn vs. All-Afghan Jirga Process

| Issues | Bonn Agreement 2001 | All-Afghan Jirgas |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Foreign Involvement | Bonn Agreement designed under UN auspices w/ heavy involvement from Westerners and Regional actors (Iran, China, Russia, etc.) | Entire process from concept to implementation will be done by Afghans, for Afghans with zero foreign intervention |
| Representation | Neglected to invite the opposition (i.e., members of the Taliban) | Thousands to represent all tribes and ethnicities including the opposition |
| Head of State | Head of state not selected based on the will of the Afghan people - U.S. inserted Hamid Karzai | The new Head of State will be selected based on the consent of the governed |
| Government | A Western-style, Jeffersonian, highly-centralized democratic form of government had been presupposed | Not predetermined – type of government and leader will be decided by Afghans among various models |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Empowerment | Empowered clique of corrupt officials and warlords while weakening the tribal structure | Will empower Afghan people by leveling the playing field and providing each Afghan equal voice while strengthening the tribal structure |
|--------------------|---|---|

U.S. ROLE

The U.S. should immediately cease “offensive” operations such as night raids and drone strikes and take a more defensive posture while announcing an acceleration of its withdrawal timeline which will diffuse the *jihadi cassus belli* and lead to reductions in violence levels.

SECURITY: UN PEACEKEEPERS

Once the plan is announced the delegates will be in grave jeopardy and will be threatened by elements from both the insurgency and the sitting government. The authors recommend that UN peacekeeping units from Muslim countries be assigned to protect delegates traveling to and from the offsite jirgas until the political solution is implemented.

TALIBAN REEMERGENCE & AL QAEDA

Some objections may be raised that the Taliban toppled Kabul in the past and will take over once again after NATO leaves, and Afghanistan will, once again, become a haven for groups like Al Qaeda. One must remember that the Taliban were able to run roughshod and takeover Afghanistan in the mid-90s because the tribal structure had been decimated and lacked cohesion, not to mention there was the absence of a unifying national leader.

Also, the Taliban had overwhelming and near explicit support from Pakistan’s army and intelligence group, led by General Beg and Hamid Gul. Pakistan provided the Taliban with funds, weapons, sanctuary, recruits, training and logistical support and even deployed Pakistani troops throughout the country. They also gave the Taliban enough cash to buy-off warlords and corrupt governors, as some provinces fell under their control without a shot being fired.

Not to mention, ironically, the Taliban carried snapshots of Zahir Shah and deceived the Afghan people by telling many of them once Kabul fell they would reinstall the King – but this never happened. This is yet another illustration of the type of respect the people held for Zahir Shah and the strength of Afghan nationalism.

Plus, the NWSC has received word from numerous Taliban contacts that support the concept of Afghan national reconciliation and like the idea of the Afghan people deciding their own fate via *jirgas* as opposed to having the country’s destiny dictated by Westerners.

AFGHANISTAN UNITED

The benefits of the *Afghanistan National Reconciliation* process far outweigh perceived risks and, although there are plenty of legitimate concerns, said risks seem diminutive compared to the costs of doing nothing and maintaining the status quo.

The *jirga* initiative will foster a deep, strong unifying feeling of Afghan nationalism the country has not experienced in ages. At the same time it will help prevent future civil wars guaranteed to break out in a post-NATO environment marked by a destabilizing power vacuum.

Plus, when the united will of the Afghan people is expressed, based on Afghanistan's history prior to foreign interference, securing women's rights will become a reality and is something that need not be sacrificed. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true, because this movement will only provide more opportunities for progressive social advancements.

Most importantly, at the end of the day a leadership team will be ratified and type of government established by Afghans, for Afghans and will reflect the will of the majority for the first time in over 30 years.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

This white paper was meant to propose a process design and requires a much more detailed project plan and entire other white papers could be written about critical issues and questions that must be considered and answered, including:

Pakistan / Saudi Arabia: Neutralizing Pakistan and Saudi Arabia during the *jirga* proceedings and keeping them from interfering in Afghan affairs going forward will be major issues the Afghans will need to resolve. Long-term, after the *jirgas*, when Afghanistan is a truly united nation with a leadership team and government in place that has been accepted by Afghanistan's formerly silent majority, developing and implementing solutions to prevent Pakistan from encroaching on the lives of Afghans will be made much easier.

Drug Trade: The drug trade is one of the more destabilizing factors and will require an entire white paper to outline any solutions. But much of this solution must come from the U.S. and its intelligence agencies.

Government Types: Ideally the form of government will be left up to the Afghans to decide at the *All-Afghan Jirgas*, however – that could also be a recipe for chaos if thousands of solutions are put on the table. A commission should come together of key Afghan leaders to determine three to five workable options for the group to choose from.

NEXT STEPS

The next step would be for Congress, the White House and the military to buy into the concept and then fund a deeper assessment that would be accompanied by a detailed project plan. However, in parallel the NWSC will be pitching proposals to international peace institutes and other NGO's to raise funds. Once funding is established, an independent commission of Afghan natives should be established, preferably led by the NWSC, which would handle things such as the logistics of the *jirga*; developing a delegate representation model; identifying, vetting and registering participants; coordinating the development of government options; and acting as a liaison between the delegates and the U.S. government.

FUTURE STATE: TRIBALISM AND IMPERIAL DECLINE

HEGELIAN DIALECTIC

The situation in Afghanistan is a microcosm of a much larger issue facing Western neocolonial powers, for the global elite's hegemonic shield has begun to fissure and is in jeopardy of being split asunder at a pace that has defied any prognostications based on the unrest that's erupted amongst native populations across the globe.

And there is no country in a more precarious position than the United States, which has the bulk of its resources and military mired in two Muslim countries overseas during a time of explosive upheaval in the Middle East and North Africa. The U.S. stands flatfooted while witnessing revolts, riots and uprisings against American-backed dictatorships and puppet monarchies in such countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Jordan and Algeria, among others.

The modern American empire was established in the post-WWII era during the dawn of the Cold War, as British mercantilists passed the imperial baton to the U.S., its corporate elites and associated concentrations of domestic private power. Along with it, the U.S. inherited a 19th century European worldview referred to as the Hegelian Dialectic, which is based on the belief that "conflict creates history."

The dialectic is derived from German philosopher Georg Hegel's critique of natural law, written in 1825, in which he posited a theory of social and historical evolution which served as the foundation for the communist economic theories of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Hegel in essence disputed the theory of universal natural rights espoused by other philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, as Hegel laid the foundation for the justification of totalitarianism.

According to Hegel, human society can only achieve its highest state and mankind its highest spiritual consciousness through endless self-perpetuating ideological struggles and conflicts between bipolar extremes which result in the eventual synthesizing of opposites. The continual merging of juxtaposing social, economic and cultural ideals as established by extreme right or left belief systems will, according to Hegel, inevitably lead mankind to final perfection.

The "formula" of this theory is based on the notion that each stage of human advance – and the course of history itself – is driven by an argument (thesis), a counterargument (anti-thesis) and a synthesis of the two extremes into a more advanced argument, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum.

[Niki Raapana and Nordica Friedrich](#)¹⁰ from the Anti-Communitarian League provide examples of some of the most common extremes that function to advance the "invisible dialectic":

¹⁰ <http://www.cabiz.net/vincent/helgeliandialectic.htm>

We can see it in environmentalists instigating conflicts against private property owners, in democrats against republicans, in greens against libertarians, in communists against socialists, in neo-cons against traditional conservatives, in community activists against individuals, in pro-choice versus pro-life, in Christians against Muslims, in isolationists versus interventionists, in peace activists against war hawks. No matter what the issue, the invisible dialectic aims to control both the conflict and the resolution of differences, and leads everyone involved into a new cycle of conflicts.

Dialecticians claim the long-term objective is for man to achieve a more egalitarian condition, yet, in practice, it simply arms those seeking power with the means to manipulate society – a path that has enabled the modern-day control of the many by the few. The ultimate goal is to allow for natural *social* evolution to run its course to form a utopian “New World Order”, i.e., a world government ruled by the global elite. It is a system of designed social conflict that is used to create a desired social change. Such a desired end state was spelled out by Hegel himself when he said:

"...the State 'has the supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the State... for the right of the world spirit is above all special privileges."

According to Antony Sutton¹¹, “Above all, the Hegelian doctrine is the divine right of States rather than the divine right of kings.” Sutton claimed that the State for Hegel and Hegelians is God on earth, quoting Hegel again:

"The march of God in history is the cause of the existence of states, their foundation is the power of Reason realizing itself as will. Every state, whatever it be, participates in the Divine essence. The State is not the work of human art, only Reason could produce it."

Looking back over the past 100 years or so it is almost impossible not to see how global elites have established both right and left elements to bring about a global society run by the few. Right-left situations have been deliberately created and placed into conflict to bring about such a synthesis.

The Hegelian dialectic is a powerful tool for influencing the dialogues of cultures and nations, especially if one already controls and/or owns much of the mainstream media – the arena wherein fabricated extremist arguments take place.

As George Orwell ominously put it, "He who controls the past controls the future". Hence, it is altogether possible, and likely, that those who control/own the media can manipulate and revise one's beliefs and perceptions about historical events in order to influence future behavior.

¹¹ Sutton, Antony, *America's Secret Establishment* (Trine Day reprint, 2002)

At a micro-level, this phenomenon has occurred in recent modern history in Afghanistan, where the same Western-backed warlords and fascist leaders have been continually recycled and enthroned with authority by the West, over the past three decades, who then suppress and dominate the population and weaken the tribal balance.

Every decade or so atrocious war crimes are erased from memory by foreign planners at the end of an occupation or civil war, who then, again and again, bestow their favorite strongmen with illegitimate power.

Even more illustrative of the struggle between forever changing dialectic extremes and revisionist history is how during the “*jihad*” against the Soviets, the Judeo-Christian West teamed up with violent Islamic radicals of the worst sort against the Soviets, because they shared a common hatred for the *godless* communists.

The same people American leaders once called “freedom fighters” throughout the 80’s are now violent extremist jihadist terrorists who commit immoral acts and heinous human rights violations that all Americans should find deplorable.

Of course, before 9/11 when these “terrorists” were fighting against the Soviets, they were “our terrorists” and such human rights violations and war crimes hardly ever made the press. Today, people aren’t really supposed to remember nor point out this interesting historical irony, especially within the media.

THWARTING A LOSING TRAJECTORY

But, based on our limited successes in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the tumult in the Greater Middle East, has the Hegelian dialectic run its course? Is the American empire at its turning point?

The only way to defeat the progression of Hegel’s hypothesis is to step outside the dialectic and release ourselves from the limitations of controlled and guided thought, by reaffirming our belief in the natural rights of all humans, a concept purportedly the bedrock of American government.

Sutton compares the Hegelian dialectic to the spirit and letter of the Constitution of the United States, stating how “We the people” grant the state some powers and reserve all others to the people and *not* self-appointed elite running the State.

If Americans truly believe the rights of the state are always subordinate and subject to the will of the people and consent of the governed, and truly believe that all people are endowed with inalienable rights and are created equal, then the dialectic must be abandoned.

The West should be willing extend this doctrine of natural rights to all humanity, not simply a select few – let alone support governments and special interests that actively undermine them.

Hence, Westerners must rediscover themselves by restoring those principles and traditions they claim to uphold.

It is time for Western leaders to understand the dialectic, which demands perpetual war, is a losing cause that has outlived whatever usefulness it ever had. As difficult as it may be for Westerners to grasp, not only does Afghanistan's future lie in reconnecting with its ancient tribal past, but the West's future lies in a similar process of retribalization so they can address their own identity crisis. To quote from McLuhan again:

"... we're standing on the threshold of a liberating and exhilarating world in which the human tribe can become truly one family and man's consciousness can be freed from the shackles of mechanical culture and enabled to roam the cosmos. I have a deep and abiding belief in man's potential to grow and learn, to plumb the depths of his own being and to learn the secret songs that orchestrate the universe. We live in a transitional era of profound pain and tragic identity quest, but the agony of our age is the labor pain of rebirth."

It is critical to establish a new narrative for the Afghan people that will promote the rights of all natives around the world as a new standard for the West.

This can be accomplished by enforcing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which was adopted by the UN in 2007. The UN describes it as setting "an important standard for the treatment of indigenous peoples that will undoubtedly be a significant tool towards eliminating human rights violations against the planet's 370 million indigenous people and assisting them in combating discrimination and marginalization."

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