A New Great Game: Factors affecting Afghanistan’s stability
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Outline

- Legacy of persistent instability
- Internal factors
- External factors
- Assessments
- Pathway to Afghanistan’s stability
A New Great Game: Factors affecting Afghanistan’s stability

Legacy of persistent instability
- Arena for foreign power competition
- Safe haven to extremist organizations
- Absence of “state culture” and lack of national unity and identity

Perception of war as “normal”


Internal factors

“Power Brokers”
- Self interest
- Decentralization of power
- Challenge to implementation of capital’s decisions

Government
- Challenged Legitimacy and perception of “absence”
- Wide-spread corruption
- Delaying elections

Who has the power?

Economics
- Revenues
- Resources
- Transit

Taliban
- Fragmented
- Yet still capable
- Ready to reconcile and reintegrate?
External factors - Neighbors

**CAS**
- Spillover of VEOs
- Drug and human trafficking

**China**
- Economic expansion
- Access to resources
- Risk of VEOs

**Iran**
- Unwanted VEOs
- Protector of Shia minority
- Refugees

**Pakistan**
- Perception of “threat” from India
- Legacy - Durand Line
- Refugees

**Exploitable Afghanistan**

**Counter VEOs & Trafficking**

**Economic connectivity**
External dynamics – Other powers

- **Russia**
  - Risk of VEOs
  - Drug trafficking
  - Undercut US

- **Turkey**
  - History - Turkic minority
  - Counter VEOs
  - Islam Leadership

- **KSA**
  - Counter Iran
  - Undercut Qatar

- **USA & “The West”**
  - Deny VEO safe haven
  - Stabilize
  - Build capacity

- **China**
  - “Chinese Dream”
  - Security and economy

- **India**
  - IND-PAK relations
  - Economy
Who cares about Afghanistan?
Forces in competition for AFG Stability

- Warlords rule for personal, property and prosperity protection
- Resource competition by conflict or bribes
- Ungoverned spaces facilitate VEOs, Narco-trade, and human trafficking
- No overall AFG development

Self Interest

- Legitimacy with representative elections, predictable legal norms.
- Resource access, secure revenue, and legal opportunities
- Security guarantees as citizens through representation

Rule of Man vs. Rule of Law

- NUG is first among peers in Strongman competition
- Nationalism is code for strong central tribe
- Urban versus rural competition persists in insurgent attacks
- External states back NUG, Taliban, Warlords for discreet interests not regional or AFG interests

AFG History of Conflict

- INT’L Exploit vs. Support
- Corrupt, Crime, Conflict

National Interest

- Pakistan
- Iran
- Russia
- US, NATO
- China
- Pakistan
- Central Asian States
- India
- Taliban
- Warlords
- AFG NUG
- NUG
- US, NATO
- Turkey
- KSA
- Russia
- US, NATO
- India
- Pakistan
- Central Asian States
- Iran
- China
- Pakistan
- Russia
- US, NATO
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Pathway to Afghanistan’s stability?

- Keep pressure on malign external actors
- Deny external support to insurgency in Afghanistan
- Convince Taliban that they cannot win
- Reconcile with Taliban factions willing to participate in the peace process and governing
- Ensure GIRoA has a monopoly on instruments of violence
- Disempower malign warlords
- Support development of a platform / format involving all key actors in Afghanistan peace process
- Support creation of security space for economic activity
Pathway to Afghanistan’s stability?

1. How can we pursue a reduced overt Indian govt presence in Afgh in order to signal to Pak that their fears of encirclement are not legitimate? Example - can we convince India to publicly announce the closing of consulates and reduced Indian govt presence in overt locations in Afg?

2. What incentives can we find to convince Indian govt and mil leaders to signal a reduction in presence and influence in Afg?

3. Barring a reduced Indain govt presence in Afg, what indicators would exist that Pak seeks a closer relationship with China to offset strategic encirclement by India in Afg?

4. How can we dissuade/prevent a stronger/deeper relationship between Pak and China?

5. If we are able to convince India to reduce presence in Afg, what quid pro quos should we try to negotiate from Pak to reduce their support for TB and HQN and eliminate safe havens, particularly in Waziristan?
Pathway to Afghanistan’s stability?

1. We have numerous sources and studies of the cultural, ethnic, religious, political networks. What is less forthcoming from Afghanistan is a mapping of the economic and business links and relationships?