Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) of Stability Pathways in Afghanistan

Phase I Insights
20 July 2018

SMA Speaker Series Event

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Directive: Reorient to South Asia

"CENTCOM's objective in Afghanistan is to **get all parties focused on reconciliation** and the cessation of violence...

Key to reconciliation is **getting Pakistan aligned** and supporting the approach...

The end goal in Afghanistan is a **government that is representative of all parties** with security handled competently by Afghan security forces."

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TRADOC G-27 Modeling & Simulation Branch

ATHENA SIMULATION

POC: James Krakar, james.n.krakar.ctr@mail.mil

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Athena Stability Modeling

TRADOC G-27 Modeling & Simulations

Objective: TRADOC G27 used the Athena Simulation to model the three potential Afghan governmental constructs –Centralized, Enhanced Local Governance and Decentralized (Regional)—in order to assess the political and social outcomes of each.

Methods : We used the Athena Simulation: a decision support tool designed to increase decision-makers' understanding of the effects of PMESII-PT variables on operations in a given area over time. It was developed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in conjunction with the US Army TRADOC G-27 Models and Simulations Branch.

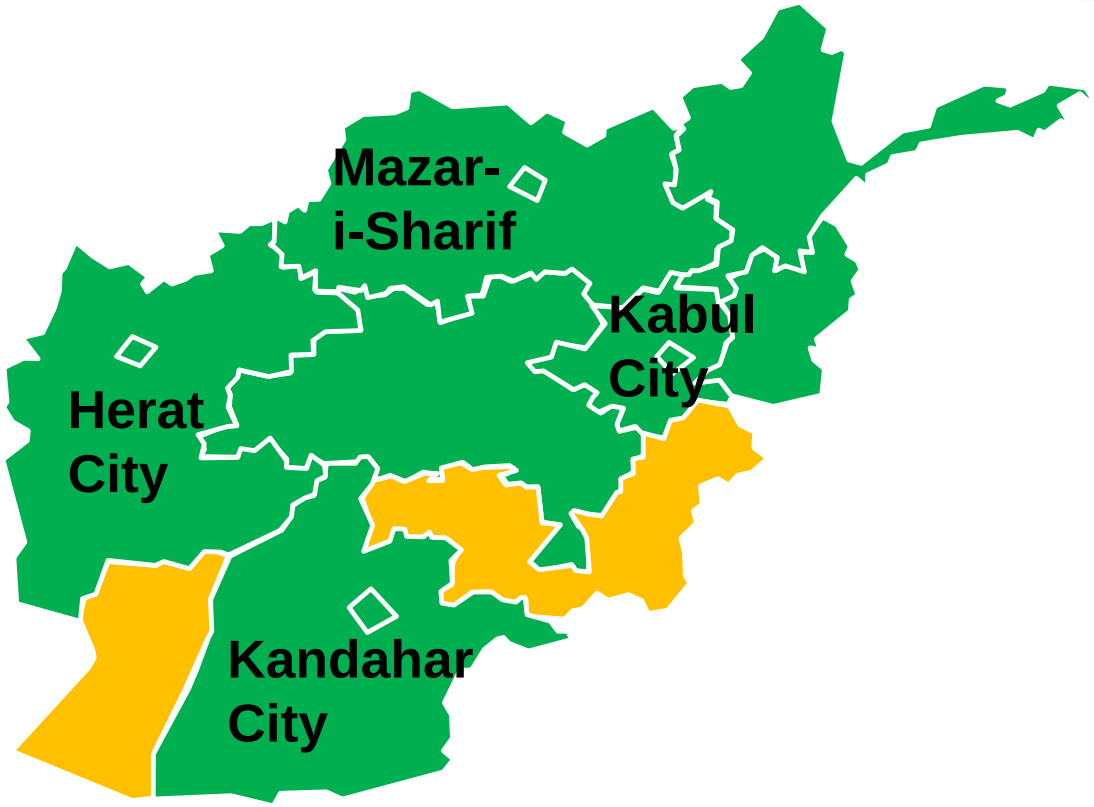
Findings:

1. **A shift to enhanced local governance did not result in any increase in the geographic area that GIRoA controlled.**
2. **A decentralized (regional centric) form of government improved GIRoA control in some areas but opens these areas to regional leader and QST control if the regional leaders withdraw their support from GIRoA.**
3. **While much of Afghanistan's territory is not controlled by GIRoA, the QST can only control large amounts of territory under very specific conditions.**
4. **A truce may be a necessary step towards any negotiated settlement between GIRoA and QST but by itself a truce did not result in any increased GIRoA control.**

Way Ahead: We are postured to modify the Athena build that we used for the initial phase of this project to 1) model the pathways that the SMA identified during Phase I and 2) respond to CENTCOM guidance.

Athena Stability Modeling

TRADOC G-27 Modeling & Simulations



Legend

- GIRoA Control
- QST Control
- Uncontrolled

A truce may be a necessary step towards any negotiated settlement between GIRoA and QST but by itself a truce did not result in any increased GIRoA control from either baseline or Enhanced Local Governance (left). But combining a truce with a partial (2/3) QST demobilization facilitated substantial improvements in GIRoA control (right).

Implementing Regional Governance

GIRoA Control
Regional Contr
Uncontrolled
QST Control

A decentralized (regional centric) form of government improved GIRoA control in some areas (left) but opens these areas to regional leader and QST control if the regional leaders withdraw their support from GIRoA (right).

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PATHWAYS ANALYSIS

POC: Dr. Sabrina Pagano, spagano@nsiteam.com

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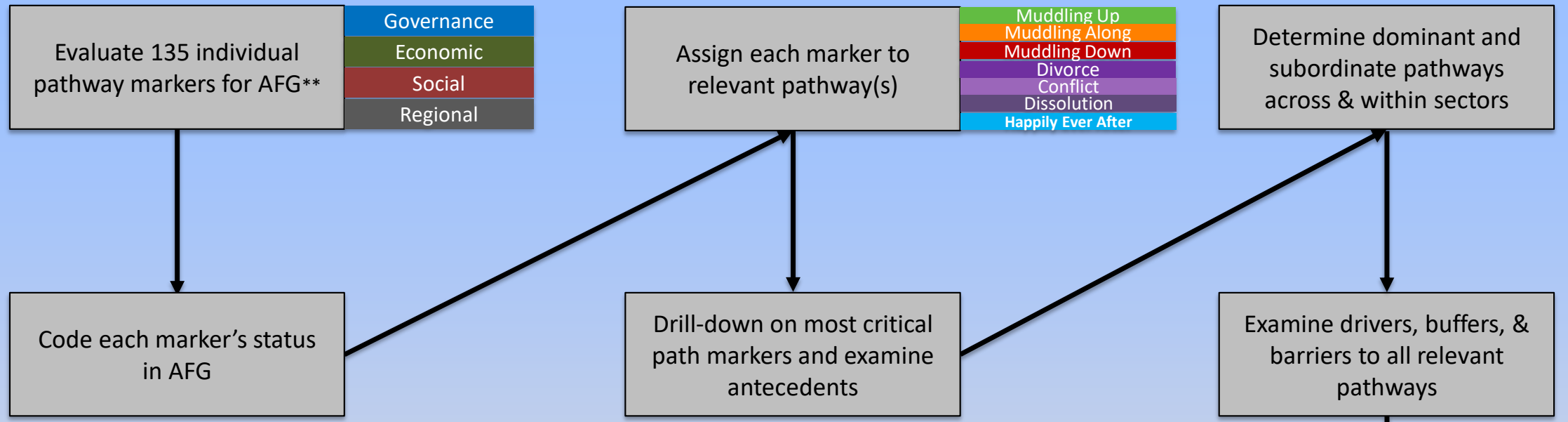
Pathways Model and Process

Model assessment enables determination of trajectory for AFG and identification of I&W for improvement or decline



Pathways Examined

Fragmentation: break-up into separate, independent political units

- **Divorce**—intentional and mutually-negotiated division of territory
- **Conflict**—limited violence to all-out war
- **Dissolution**—central gov't authority increasingly devolves to the provinces until they are functionally independent

Muddling: chronic weakness of the state, without major deviation

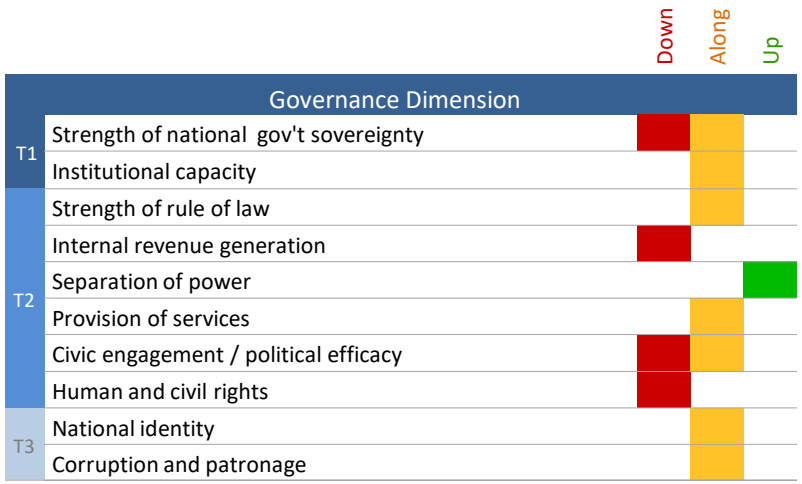
- **Muddling Up**—slow improvement, acknowledge importance of markers
- **Muddling Along**—neither decline nor positive growth, so not necessarily "good"
- **Muddling Down**—slow decline, do not acknowledge importance of markers

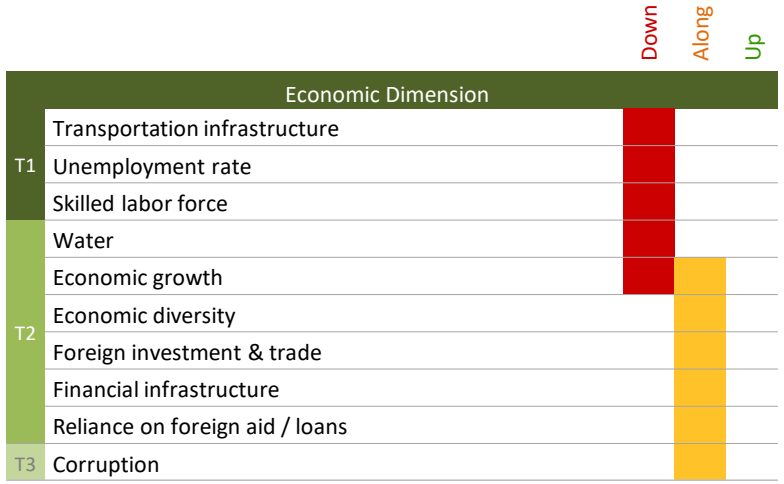
Happily Ever After: strong unified state and economy

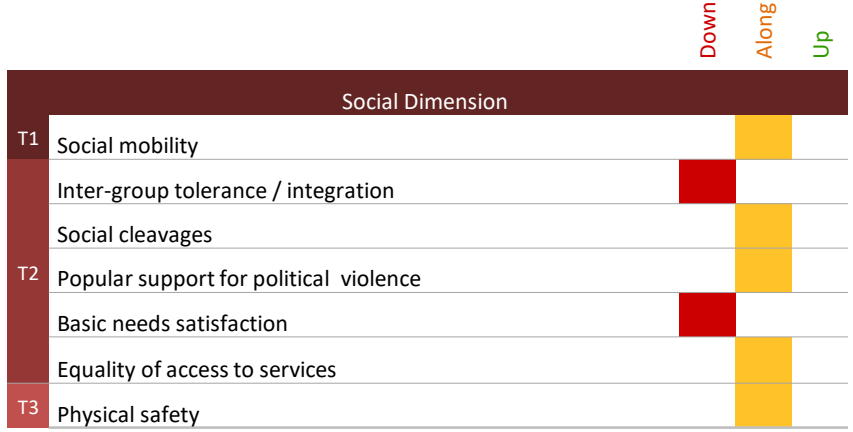
** General Fragmentation & Muddling pathways derived from empirical analyses and theoretical work and tested against historical case studies as part of prior Pathways effort

Which pathway is Afghanistan currently on?

- Primarily *Muddling Along*, with downward pressure due to slow economic decline
- Near-absence of drivers and numerous barriers to Muddling Up suggest that transition to that path would be difficult
- Only major buffers to a Muddling Down path are:
  - informal (gray) economy
  - perceived external threat (US and Pakistan)







T1: Significant in all cases T2: Appears in majority of cases T3: Indicated by some cases

Where is Afghanistan headed?

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What are I&Ws for improvement or decline?

Muddling Path

Buffers to MD

- Gray Economy
- Some alternative sources of public services
- Perceived external threat

Muddling Down

- Events or conditions that weaken or destabilize the government
- Well-established patronage networks continue
- Long-standing racial/ethnic/social disputes increase in salience
- Gov't perceived as ineffective and/or unrepresentative
- Destabilizing economic conditions and events
- Incompetent / ineffective economic management
- Events/conditions perpetuate social conflict, intolerance, & violence
- Continued perception of inequality between groups
- Some institutionalized discrimination continues
- Presence of strong, charismatic, divisive leader

Muddling Up

- Some government willingness to address grievances
- Some movement toward political liberalization
- Some attempts to address institutionalized discrimination
- Strengthening governing legitimacy
- Economic success & competent management
- Government ability to address grievances equitably

Fragmentation Path

Antecedent Conditions

- Disputes among geo-associated social, ethnic, or economic groups
- Call for autonomy

Catalyzing Events

- Sudden onset of social identity crisis (Divorce)
- Major event or condition exacerbating nature of dispute (Conflict)
- Major event/condition catalyzing expression of conflict w/in elites or public (Dissolution)

Common & Subpath Frag Markers

- Perceived inequitable redistribution of wealth
- Publicly expressed conflict among elites
- Public protest
- Gov't failure to address dispute sincerely and equitably
- Contested national sovereignty
- Gov't opposition to and/or repression of discontents
- Violence and expansion of adherence to the cause
- International intervention to maintain stability (Divorce)
- Nat'l sovereignty contested thru institutional means (Divorce)
- National sovereignty contested violently (Conflict)
- Int'l intervention/ sponsorship in support of pro-autonomy group (Conflict)
- Devolution of nat'l govt authority thru institutional means (Dissolution)
- Elite support for dissolution (Dissolution)

Buffers

- Perceived external threat incr nat'l identity
- Strong, charismatic nationalist leader
- Population feels treated equitably
- Decreasing salience of social cleavages
- Gov't willing to address grievances while able to maintain central decision authority
- Perceived legitimate governing body
- Self-sufficient economic success and competent management

**Gray text = not yet observed

Oklahoma State University

STRATEGIC MEDIA MONITORING

POC: Dr. Skye Cooley, skye.c.cooley@gmail.com

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Oklahoma State University- Strategic Media Monitoring

- **Methodology**
  - Examined Chinese and Russian news media coverage related to security and stability in Afghanistan from May 2018 to June 2018. Analyzed for the following:
    - Frequency of coverage
    - Strategic narratives and narrative themes
    - Mentions of stability, indications toward grand bargain, potential actions.
  - Cross-reference of Afghanistan coverage to other items in Russian and Chinese news media. In order to detail the following:
    - Presented national interest and urgency related to Afghanistan.
    - Links to other items on the news agenda.
    - Consistency of narrative use.

- **Main Findings**
  - Lack of firmly established strategic narratives and the infrequency of coverage.
  - Notion of a grand bargain between the United States and either Russia or China appears a difficult proposition.

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Russian news media portrayals of Afghanistan

- Concerns over the continued instability and terrorist infighting within Afghanistan allowing for a springboard of terrorists proliferating into other areas (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) leading to destabilization and further regional conflicts.
- Stability in Afghanistan involving dialogue with the Taliban, peaceful process of cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization through investment, and the protection of Collective Security Treaty Organization controlled areas.
- The instability of Afghanistan a result of actions by the United States and its heavy military presence in the region, as well as ambiguous and uncooperative operations undertaken by NATO forces

Chinese news media portrayals of Afghanistan

- Afghanistan suffers from constant instability at the hands of the Taliban.
- Military engagement in Afghanistan serves a cautionary tale for any country attempting military involvement there.
- Afghanistan has significant historical and cultural value as part of the historical Silk Road trade routes, both of which can be important for Chinese interests today.
- China's primary engagement with Afghanistan is through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization whereby its members are engaging in discussions to support and or include Afghan security and stability as part of the SCO's regional multilateral architecture.

Points of Possible Cooperation-

Appeals to Chinese interests in One-Belt, One-Road initiatives, US regional support of SCO initiatives in Afghanistan, US support of cooperative dialogue with Taliban toward stability, US supporting cooperative efforts rather than attempting to lead them.

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Directions for Phase II

- Expand data harvesting to include regional actors (ISIS, Pakistan, India, Taliban, etc.…) mentioned in relation to Afghanistan in Russian and Chinese news media.
- Evaluate Chinese conversations related to trade war and potential impacts on desire for US cooperation/support of Belt and Road Initiatives and similar ventures.
- Include summaries of Indian and Iranian news media conversations on Afghanistan.
- Include narrative tracing analysis within Chinese and Russian news media data related to Afghanistan.

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VIRTUAL THINK TANK (VITTA®)

POC: Sarah Canna, scanna@nsiteam.com

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Afghanistan Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa®)

Objective

Implement Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) methodology to reach out to a global network of subject matter experts (SMEs) from across academia, industry, and government to elicit responses to the project's key research questions.

SME Outreach

33 written submissions received

Status

Coded and used the material from the responses in the Pathways & IRC analysis

Wrapped up the *outreach phase* and transitioning to *analysis phase* of ViTTa process

Responses will be complete by mid-August

Expected Deliverables

Robust corpus of expert insights and responses

Individual ViTTa reports (1 report for each question) containing summary response to the question and all SME responses for the question

ViTTa® Expert Contributors

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2. John Arquilla, Naval Postgraduate School
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5. Mark Baucom, J5
6. Sarah Chayes, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
7. Dean Cheng, Heritage Foundation
8. Claudio Cioffi, GMU
9. Patricia DeGennaro, TRADOC G2
10. James Farwell, Independent
11. Vanda Felbab-Brown, Brookings Institution
12. Shaun Gregory, Durham University
13. Nicole Laster, Army TRADOC Global Cultural Knowledge Network
14. Vern Liebl, USMC Univ., Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning
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17. Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron & Case Western Reserve University
18. Eero Keravuori, J5 Combined Strategic Analysis Group
19. Feroz Khan, Naval Postgraduate School
20. Barnett Koven, University of Maryland
21. Gina Ligon, University of Nebraska, Omaha
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28. Raffaello Pantucci, Royal United Services Institute
29. Timothy Riesen, Madison Springfield International
30. Linda Robinson, RAND
31. Leif Rosenberger, former CENTCOM Economic Advisor and CSAG member
32. Hy Rothstein, Naval Postgraduate School
33. Aslan Sayyar, J5 Security Cooperation – Afghanistan
34. Ron Storer, J5
35. Christopher Twomey, Naval Postgraduate School
36. Johnny Walsh, US Institute of Peace
37. Fazel Rabi Wardak, Asia Foundation
38. Craig Whiteside, Naval Postgraduate School
39. Alec Worsnop, University of Maryland
40. David Young, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

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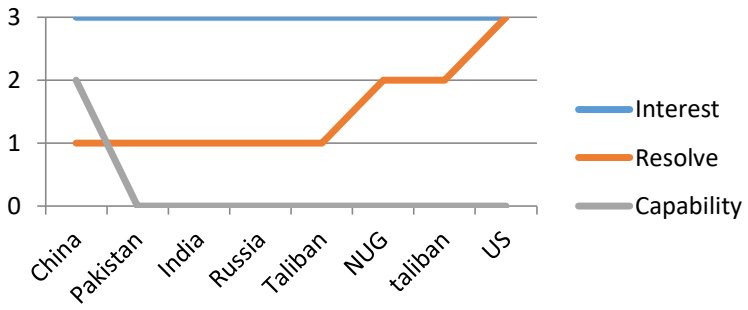
INTEREST, RESOLVE, CAPABILITY ANALYSIS

POC: Sarah Canna, scanna@nsiteam.com

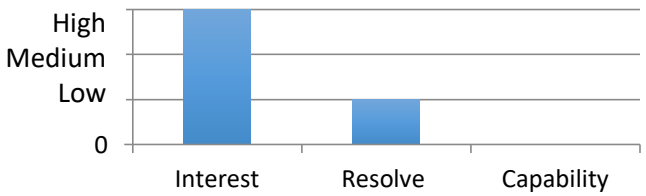
Interest, Resolve, Capability

Stability Outcome: Negotiated political settlement

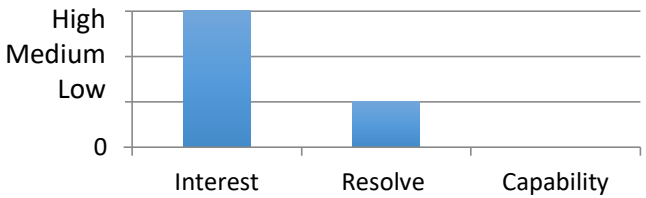
IRC Summary



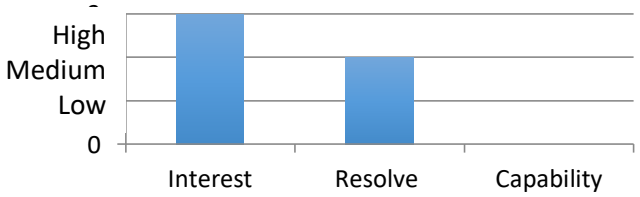
Russia



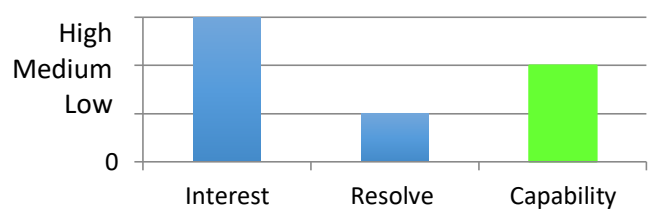
India



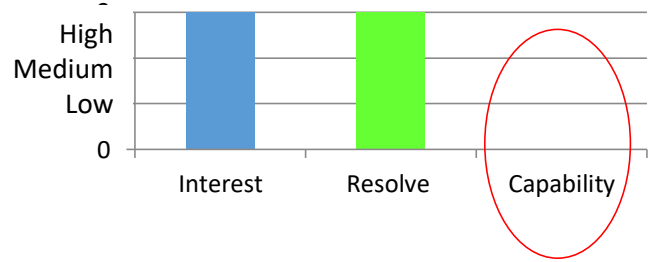
NUG



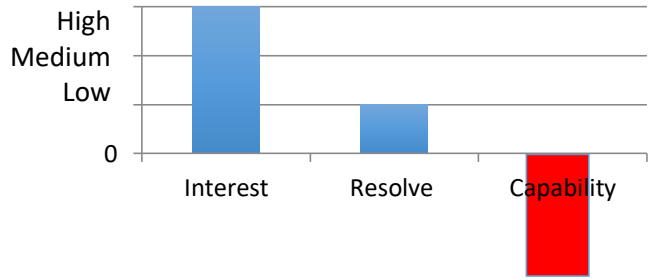
China



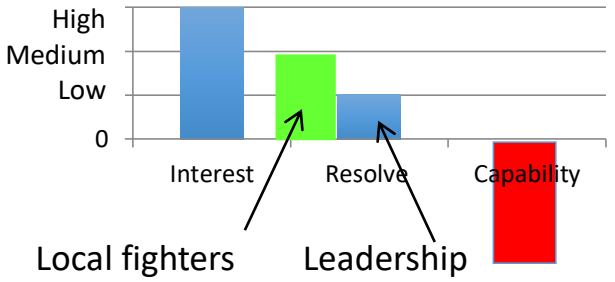
US



Pakistan



Taliban



Take Aways

- Athena analysis has shown that GIRoA structural reorganization will not improve GIRoA control substantially. The only Afghan future that we have assessed so far that produces GIRoA control over the majority of the people, and area of Afghanistan, is a truce combined with demobilization of a majority of QST fighters.

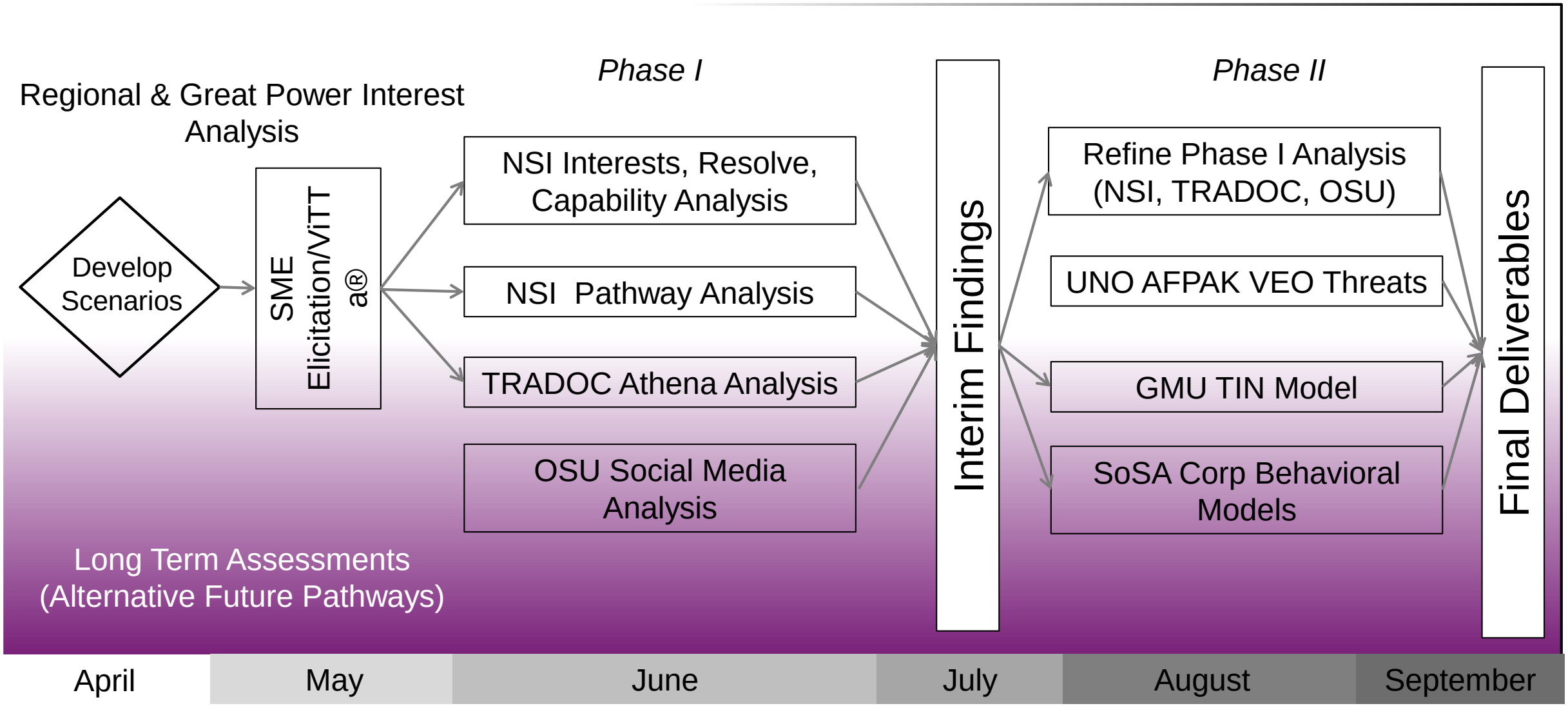
- The stability pathway analysis suggests that Afghanistan is on a fragile muddling pathway. There are several indicators suggesting the situation could get worse and very few indicators suggesting things could get better.

- The ability of the USG to prevent a downward slide is limited. In terms of facilitating a negotiated settlement, China may be the only actor with the relative capability to bring all stakeholders to the table, but it lacks the resolve to do so.

- Russian and Chinese media both present low-levels of resolve toward Afghanistan; Russian interests are related to terrorism proliferation and advocating for political dialogue with the Taliban. Chinese interests are related to regional engagement through SCO and potential expansions of BRI.

BACKUP

Way Ahead


Regional & Great Power Interest Analysis
Develop Scenarios
SME Elicitation/ViTT a®
Phase I
NSI Interests, Resolve, Capability Analysis
NSI Pathway Analysis
TRADOC Athena Analysis
OSU Social Media Analysis
Interim Findings
Phase II
Refine Phase I Analysis (NSI, TRADOC, OSU)
UNO AFPAK VEO Threats
GMU TIN Model
SoSA Corp Behavioral Models
Final Deliverables
Long Term Assessments (Alternative Future Pathways)
April
May
June
July
August
September

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PATHWAYS ANALYSIS

POC: Dr. Sabrina Pagano, spagano@nsiteam.com

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Muddling Path Afghanistan

Governance Dimension

Where is Afghanistan now?

Muddling Down (MD)	Muddling Along (MA)	Muddling Up (MU)
Antecedent Condition		
	Some functioning central or state leadership	
Markers		
Uneven and insufficient internal revenue generation [T1]	**Cont'd contestation of national sovereignty [T1]**	Civilian, military, and judicial roles well-established and respected [T2]
Government system seen as illegitimate by large groups [T1]	**Weak, ineffective governing institutions [T1]**	
Chronic abuse of civil and human rights [T2]	Weak and biased justice system [T2]	
	Poor and/or uneven provision of government services [T2]	
	Civic engagement opportunities; some improvement in representation of women and minorities [T2]	
	Weak national identity and/or competing sub-national identities [T3]	
	Politics heavily influenced by official corruption and patronage networks [T3]	

GOVERNANCE BLUF

- **Markers suggest Afg on MA path**
- **BUT barriers to MU suggest improvement unlikely**
- **Presence of perceived external threat provides some buffer to MD**

What might move Afg to another path?

Drivers		
Events or conditions that weaken or destabilize the government		Some movement toward political liberalization
Buffers		**Barriers**
Perceived external threat strengthening national identity		Well-established patronage networks
		Long-standing racial/ethnic/social disputes
		Government perceived as ineffective and/or unrepresentative

T1: Significant in all cases T2: Appears in majority of cases T3: Indicated by some cases

Muddling Path Afghanistan

Economic Dimension

Where is Afghanistan now?

Muddling Down (MD)	Muddling Along (MA)	Muddling Up (MU)
Antecedent Condition		
	Functioning licit or illicit econ	
Markers		
Insufficient skilled/educated workers to support economic growth and development [T1]	**Insufficient skilled/educated workers to support economic growth and development [T1]**	
Insufficient and poorly developed & maintained transportation infrastructure [T1]	Growth is negative & insufficient for population growth [T2]	
Chronically high and rising unemployment [T1]	Commodity-based economy [T2]	
Poorly developed/ maintained water and irrigation infrastructure [T2]	Limited foreign investment and limited exports [T2]	
Growth is negative & insufficient for population growth [T2]	Weak/ineffective financial system, institutions, and regulation [T2]	
	Major reliance on foreign aid/loans [T2]	
	Significant corruption [T3]	

ECONOMIC BLUF

- **Overall, markers suggest slow economic decline**
- **All critical markers (T1) are MD and no markers are coded MU**
- **Additionally, barriers to MU are present, as are drivers to MD, including poor security situation and likelihood of reduced foreign aid**
- **Only buffers to continued decline are the gray economy and alternative sources of public services**

What might move Afg to another path?

Muddling Down (MD)	Muddling Up (MU)
Drivers	
Events or conditions that weaken or destabilize the economic system	
Buffers	**Barriers**
Some alternative sources of public services	Incompetent or ineffective economic management
Gray economy	Government perceived as ineffective and/or unrepresentative

T1: Significant in all cases T2: Appears in majority of cases T3: Indicated by some cases

Muddling Path Afghanistan

Social Dimension

Where is Afghanistan now?

Muddling Down (MD)	Muddling Along (MA)	Muddling Up (MU)
Antecedent Condition		
A degree of social tolerance short of prolonged civil violence or war		
Markers		
High degrees of intolerance and division between social/ethnic groups [T2]	**Highly structured and entrenched social divisions limit mobility [T1]**	
Large groups with basic needs unmet [T2]	Social cleavages exist, ethnic minorities, & women are marginalized / discriminated against [T2]	
	No significant public support for out-group focused extremism and violence [T2]	
	Perceived unequal access to public goods and services [T2]	
	Violent political action, terrorism present, but trend not increasing [T3]	

SOCIAL BLUF

- **Dominant trajectory is flat (MA)**
- **Additionally, significant barriers to MU suggest improvement unlikely**
- **Attempts by gov't to address institutionalized discrimination and perceived presence of external threats provide some buffer to MD**

What might move Afg to another path?

Drivers		
Events or conditions that perpetuate social conflict, intolerance, and violence		
Buffers		**Barriers**
Perceived presence of external threat		Well-established patronage networks
Some institutionalized discrimination addressed		Long-standing racial/ethnic/social disputes
		Perceived inequality between groups
		Institutionalized discrimination

T1: Significant in all cases T2: Appears in majority of cases T3: Indicated by some cases

Fragmentation Path Afghanistan

Where is Afg now?

What might move Afg to another path?

Divorce	Conflict	Dissolution
Antecedent Conditions		
	Presence of dispute among geographically-associated social, ethnic, or economic groups	
	Call for autonomy	
Common Path Markers		
	Perceived inequitable redistribution of wealth based on social or ethnic group	
	Publicly expressed conflict among elites	
	Public protest	
	Gov't failure to address dispute sincerely and equitably	
	Contested national sovereignty	
	Gov't opposition to and/or repression of discontents	
	Violence and expansion of adherence to the cause	
Catalyzing Events		
Sudden onset of social identity crisis	Major event or condition exacerbating nature of dispute	Major event or condition catalyzing expression of conflict w/in elites or public
Subpath Markers		
International intervention to maintain stability	National sovereignty contested violently	Devolution of national govt authority through institutional means
National sovereignty contested through institutional means	International intervention/ sponsorship in support of pro-autonomy group	Elite support for dissolution
Common Path Buffers		
	Presence of perceived external threat spurring sense of national identity	
	Presence of strong, charismatic nationalist leader	
	Population feels treated equitably	
	Decreasing political salience of social cleavages	
	Government willing to address grievances while able to maintain central decision authority	
	Perceived legitimate governing body	
	Self-sufficient economic success and competent management	

FRAGMENTATION BLUF

- **Majority of common path markers present, but missing critical antecedent condition: call for autonomy**
- **Also, no catalyzing events**

Gray text = marker currently not present Black text = common marker present Purple text = Subpath marker present

University of Nebraska, Omaha

AFPAK VEO LEADERSHIP STUDY

POC: Dr. Gina Ligon, gligon@unomaha.edu

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University of Nebraska at Omaha – AFPAK VEO Threats

- Focused on emerging threats from Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) in the Afghanistan and Pakistan (AFPAK) region using organizational resource comparison framework:
  1. Human Capital and Leadership Capabilities.
  2. Organizational Targeting Patterns over the past 10 years.
  3. Prioritization of AFPAK VEOs' capacity for innovation.
- AFPAK VEOs of Interest (Study Inclusion Criteria):
  1. While the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) indicates that over 100 groups have committed attacks in this region over the past ten years, 31 of them have committed more than 5 attacks and will be used as the primary sample of interest for this effort.
  2. Groups with sufficient secondary sources about leadership, personnel, and organizational structure will be included in the present effort from these 31 active groups.
  3. Subject matter experts will review final sample for relevance and threat level.
- How our findings will contribute to the present effort:
  1. Comparison of the decision styles of AFPAK leaders will help prioritize which VEOs pose the greatest short and long-term threat to regional stability.
  2. We will identify influence mechanisms for high profile VEO leaders in the AFPAK region, to be used in red-teaming and forecasting potential reconciliation scenarios.

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George Mason University

TIMED INFLUENCE NET MODEL

POC: Dr. Robert Elder, relder@gmu.edu

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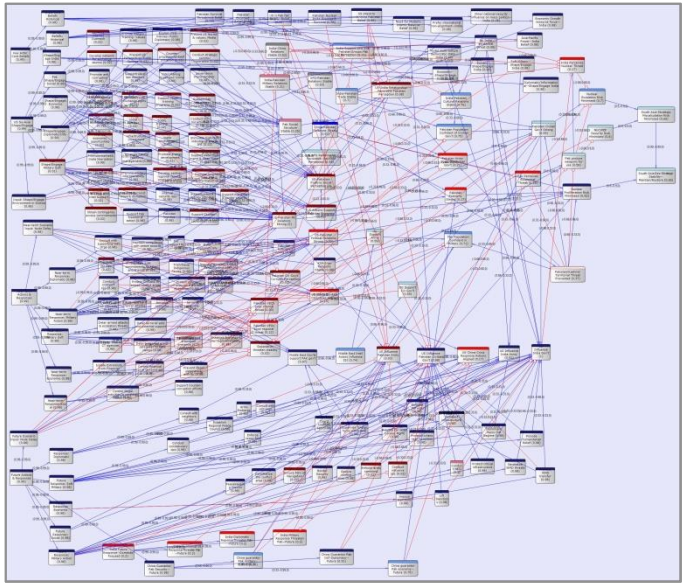
Timed Influence Net Model: AFG Pathway Analysis

- The Timed Influence Net Model starts with possible end-states and examines influence factors that could contribute or undermine attainment of the end-states of interest—in this case political reconciliation in Afghanistan, prevention of extremist safe havens, and a stable security situation in Afghanistan

- In building the model, we are exploring possible intermediate states that would be likely to occur on a path towards political reconciliation and examining their impact on the other two objectives

- Influence factors are still being researched, but will include:
  - Sources of Taliban economic support
  - Taliban security support (Pakistan)
  - Public support (GIRoA and QST)
  - Perceived AFG social and economic well-being
  - QST perception of participation in governance
  - Regional leader acceptance of governance structures
  - China, Russia, India, and Iran political and economic influences



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SMA PEER REVIEW TEAM

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- Ms. Patricia DeGennaro, TRADOC G-2
- Dr. Christine Fair, Georgetown University
- Mr. John Hill, HQ ACC/IA (POLAD)
- Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron & Case Western Reserve University
- Mr. Vern Liebl, USMC University, Center for Advanced Operational & Cultural Learning
- Dr. Gina Ligon, University of Nebraska, Omaha
- Dr. Spencer Meredith, National Defense University
- Dr. Linda Robinson, RAND
- Dr. Leif Rosenberger, former CENTCOM Economic Advisor and CSAG member

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