IN SEARCH OF A NEW NARRATIVE
RETHINKING THE AF-PAK THEATER

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Contributed for International Fellowship
George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Statement

1. **A Prelude**
   1.1. Where do we stand?
   1.2. Pakistan and Afghanistan; Conjoined Twins
   1.3. A Re-evaluation of the Narrative

2. **Holy End to a Cold War**
   2.1. Afghanistan – The Clash of the Doctrines
   2.2. What made the Success possible?
   2.3. Narrative Jihad

3. **Failing Strategies and Trajectories**
   3.1. Decade of Disdain
   3.2. 9/11, the Second Blowback
   3.3. The Af-Pak Strategy
   3.4. A Year After
   3.5. Counter Narrative Vacuum
4. **The Way Forward, Need for a Change of Narrative**

4.1. Narrative HOPE, with Hope Management Structure

4.2. Zone of Conflict

   4.2a. Afghanistan
   
   4.2b. Tribal Belt

4.3. Key Players

   4.3a. Internal
   
   4.3b. Regional
   
   4.3c. Extra Regional

4.4. Short Term Strategies

   4.4a. Afghan Zone – Strategy of Broadening the Patchwork
   
   4.4b. FATA – Strategy of Opportunity Zones

4.5. Long Term Strategy

   4.5a. Security Problem with Ideological Solution
   
   4.5b. Afghanistan as a Moderate Islamic Democracy
   
   4.5c. Minerals-An Alternative to War and Poppy

5. **Conclusion**

**Bibliography**
THESIS STATEMENT

ISAF operations in Afghanistan have entered into its tenth year. December is the review month for the policy makers to find another way forward. South and Southeast of Afghanistan are still the most turbulent of the areas within the country. North has also seen emerging pockets of resistance. Governance vacuum and never ending poppy growth is still a challenge at large. Across the border, Pakistan continues to paying a huge price for peace with the loss of fighting military personnel and innocent civilians.

This paper is an effort to provide an optimistic approach to the new way forward. Completion of the paper within December is also aimed at providing a shade of thought process for the analysts who are thinking for the better future of Af-Pak theatre. War of ideas has been re-assessed and a search for a new narrative based on hope has been structured within the paper.

The successful Cold War narrative within the same theatre by the key players has been linked to the analysis. Reconciliation, reintegration with focus on the trouble spots as patchwork and opportunity zones have been explained as short term quick fixers. Long term solution is driven by a hope management based on the potential of the area and futuristic approach.

I strongly believe that a re-modeling of Narrative based on war of ideas and reconciliation can prove strong enough to embark upon the existing structure. Patience and finding optimism within pessimism at this critical juncture provides a ray of hope.
IN SEARCH OF A NEW NARRATIVE
RETHINKING THE AF-PAK THEATER

A Prelude

Where do we Stand?

The “Concept Withdrawal” or the “Exit Strategy” linked to a timeline has added a degree of pessimism to the efforts in Afghanistan. In the quest to broaden the base of anti-war public opinion, Wikileaks has further added to the pessimism of few of the leading Allies. In the words of Andrew Small, “We have moved from a Narrative, which lasted for years that everything is fine when it wasn’t to a narrative that everything is going wrong when it isn’t. The new found fear is that while the battle is still on, it may already have been lost in the Western Capitals.”

Even with the surge of US troops in Afghanistan, the coalition’s position continues to erode as the Taliban gain strength. Ahead of the July 2011 date to start pulling troops out of Afghanistan, the Obama Administration approaches a strategic review of the war in December and will have to decide whether to maintain course or change direction. Meanwhile, American public support for the war is waning.

Dr. Henry Kissinger, in an interview to Financial Times on June 25, 2010, was asked whether the insurgents could be defeated and he replied: “In the traditional sense of fighting against an adversary, with whom it is possible to make an enforceable agreement, no. In the sense of gradually

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1 Andrew Small, July 29, 2010, Afghanistan: The Consequence of a “Conceptual Withdrawal”, Transatlantic Take,

2 Gilles Dorronsoro, September 9, 2010, Worsening Outlook in Afghanistan, Carnegie Endowment, FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE,
defeating the insurgency and reducing it to impotence, theoretically yes, but it would take more time than the American political system would permit.”

It has emboldened the insurgents who boast that “the occupation forces may have the clocks, but we have the time.”

**Pakistan and Afghanistan; Conjoined Twins**

President Karzai in his visit to Pakistan in March 2010 referred to Pakistan and Afghanistan as “Pakistan is a brother of Afghanistan, Pakistan is a twin brother ... we’re conjoined twins, there's no separation.”

Turbulent Afghanistan has spilled enormous burden on Pakistan, from a coalition partner it is now engaged into war of its own. It’s the War which is complex in nature and has engulfed every social fiber of the country. Afghan-Pak Strategy, a neologism (or a newly coined word) or shorthand that refers to Afghanistan and Pakistan as one strategic unit is the outcome of their regional co-existence.

Historical facts suggest that this mutual relationship has proved pivotal in getting out of global pitfalls. Strategic events within this region have frequently brought the United States and Pakistan into close cooperation on three occasions: during Cold War (the 1950s and 1960s); during the fight against the Soviets (the 1980s); and currently in the global war against terrorism. While the previous occasions of the US involvement

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4 Ibid.


with the twins proved successful, the alliance in war on terror hasn’t yet produced the desired outcomes.

**A Re-evaluation of the Narrative**

Focusing on the region from the lenses of a Narrative may prove useful to seek a way forward. Religion based narratives have proved to be huge attractions in history, may it be Pope Urban II seeking to initiate *first crusade* for liberation of Holy land or *Jihad* against the evil Soviet empire. Pakistan and USA visualized, nurtured and successfully concluded “*The Narrative Jihad*” towards a collapse of Communist Soviet. Guerilla tactics proved enough for monstrous Soviet armed forces.

The question arises, if that strategic affinity could thwart a much more superior “evil empire”, how can it fail the present challenge? The battle front is not new but identifying a way forward needs a much wider re-evaluation of options available. Battle of narratives or the battle of ideas cannot be delinked from the battle on ground.

The need for a re-evaluation of the *Narrative* more than the strategy itself can provide the change for future. Extremists seem to be on a high in terms of the possible comparison of ideology or Narratives. Fighting an ill-defined having a shade of local support for reinforcements and recruitments is a great cause of concern. The re-modeling of a Narrative strong enough to embark upon the existing structure to counter the extremists, defines the desired *optimism*. *Patience* and finding optimism within pessimism at this critical juncture provides a ray of hope.
**Holy End to a Cold War**

Thinking of last battle field of Cold War reminds me of John J. Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) fighting along side the larger than life figures of Afghan Mujahidin. Or, getting *Pukhtunwali* lessons from the block buster movie “The Bear Trap”, indicating the importance of *Badal* (revenge) and *Nanawatai* (sanctuary) for the battle hardened Pukhtuns of Afghansitan. Today, however, the Mujahidin leaders are condemned universally as murderers and thugs, but it shall remain a historical fact that these very men had been celebrated as heroes. TV cameras have recorded for posterity the day when Ronald Reagan feted them on the lawn of White House, lavishing praise on “brave freedom fighters challenging the Evil Empire” and claiming that they were “the moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers of America.”

Without getting into the contesting notions of *was it right? Or was it wrong?* It has to be safely and strongly admitted that it was a significant factor in the elimination of Soviet Empire and an end to Cold War. President Jimmy Carter’s national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, the key figure towards drafting the *Carter Doctrine*, made the following observation:

> *What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Moslems or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?*

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7 Pervez Hoodbhoy, Afghanistan and the Genesis of Global Jihad: Peace Research, May 2005

8 ibid
Afghanistan – The Clash of the Doctrines

Operation Storm 333 marked the beginning of the end for the Soviet ambitions in Afghanistan. Soviet Special Forces stormed the Tajbeg Palace on December 27, 1979, and killed President Hafizullah Amin, his 200 personal guards and eleven year old son. The Brezhnev doctrine which justified the Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia had its goals broad enough to cover its invasion of Afghanistan with 80,000 troops.

President Carter was seen as the President free from fear of Communism and an advocate of US and USSR strategic balance. SALT II was signed as result of negotiations between him and the controversial Leonid Brezhnev from 1977 to 1979 to curtail the level of strategic nuclear weapons. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, however, changed his thinking towards a more aggressive course. On 23 January 1980 in his State of Union Address, President Carter announced a new American policy that came to be known as the Carter’s Doctrine

An attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf Region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interest of the US, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force.⁹

Reagan’s Doctrine resulted in funding surge in October 1984, bringing the total Afghan program budget for 1985 up to $250 million, about

⁹ Lawrence E. Grinter, Avoiding the Burden, the Carter Doctrine in Perspective, Air University Review, January – February 1983
as much as all the previous years combined. Matching contribution by Saudi Arabia through their intelligence service GID resulted in influx of about $500 million for purchase of weapons for the Mujahidin fighters.

National Security Decision Directive 166 changed the role from harassing the Soviets to uprooting the Soviets from Afghanistan. April 14, 1988, marked the signing of Geneva Accord Treaty, which finalized the formal terms of Soviet withdrawal. The first half of the Soviet contingent was withdrawn from May 15 to August 16, 1988 and the second from November 15 to February 15, 1989. In order to ensure a safe passage the Soviets had negotiated ceasefires with local Mujahidin commanders, so the withdrawal was generally executed peacefully.

What Made the Success Possible?

CIA, ISI and GID proved to be winning Alliance of the war. Spearheading the Operation Cyclone (Soviet Uprooting from Afghanistan), the intelligence agencies started building up a structure to support the cause of fighting the Soviets; “Narrative Jihad began to manifest.” Despite being burdened by the influx of millions of refugees, Pakistan’s resilience and allegiance to the cause strengthened with each passing day. Strongly and carefully grafted Narrative began to shape up through the madrassas by preparing the Afghans, Pakistanis and foreign fighters for Jihad. The border madrassas formed a kind of Islamic Ideological picket fence between communist Afghanistan and Pakistan.\footnote{Steve Coll, Ghost Wars, The Secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001, The Penguin Press, 2004, New York} Legion of Islamic fighters
from then on got their name, *The Mujahideen*. Faculties of the madrassas transformed the raw group of motivated youngsters into formidable guerilla fighters through battle hardened training and galvanizing spirit of martyrdom and jihad.

Next was the stage to arm them. The CIAs idea was to buy communist weapons through global arms markets and putting them in hands of anticommmunist Afghans. October to October fiscal years saw huge sums of money pouring into the CIA’s Afghan program. $30 million in fiscal 1981 to about $200 million in fiscal 1984 came through congressionally authorized annual budgets. Saudi General Intelligence Department *GID* headed by *Prince Turki Al Faisal* ensured a matching flow of finances and Arab fighters joining the Afghan Program. *Howard Hart* the CIA’s Chief of Station in Islamabad consulted with *General Akhtar Abdur Rahman*, the Director General ISI, as each new fiscal year approached to draw up lists of weapons needed by Afghan rebels.¹¹

**Narrative Jihad**

Graphical analysis of triumphal Afghan Program suggests that a very strong narrative like *JIHAD*, brought the diversified resistance movement together. Strong support structure in form of *madrassas* in tribal belt and Refugee camps provided recruitment of locals and outside fighters. A well-articulated faculty was to inculcate spiritual understanding of the narrative and trainers to transform students into Mujahidin. Most importantly,

financial support ensured the smooth supply of weapons and equipment to fighters.

Narrative Jihad, with a well thought out infrastructure marked the beginning of the end for the Soviets. Pakistan proved to be the last fort against the Soviet expansion in Southwest Asia and the key ally throughout this period.
Failing Strategies and Trajectories

Decade of Disdain

After making the unthinkable possible, both Afghanistan and Pakistan were left alone, which may be termed as the decade of disdain. During this period, Afghanistan suffered its worst ever civil war and the resultant emergence of Taliban, mostly composed of the Mujahidin. Al-Qaeda emerged and found ideal breeding ground in a devastated Afghanistan to pursue a self-righteous unfinished narrative of Jihad. Taliban were skeptically welcomed by a civil war wary Afghans as the lesser evils.

Pakistan made bilateral efforts to bring normalcy into the country after the ravages of war. All democratic efforts within Afghanistan and all the reconciliation efforts were closely supported by Pakistan. Afghanistan with its internal complexities and heterogeneity drifted towards Talibanization as a consequence.

Pakistan having constantly suffered from the civil wars within Afghanistan and the refugee burden accepted Taliban as a reality in the interest of the region and in the interest of Afghan people. Al-Qaeda kept the in power Taliban confused in oscillating between a strictly Afghan approach to a beyond borders approach.

Pakistan internal dynamics faced enormous burden of the Afghan war in the decade of disdain. A witches’ brew of problems that continues to plague the nation today, weakening the traditional fabric of society in its western provinces. The explosive legacy of the Afghan jihad included
militancy and violent extremism, millions of Afghan refugees, and the exponential growth of madrassas, narcotics and proliferation of arms\textsuperscript{12}.

US-Pakistan relations suffered a major blow, from a decade of courtship during the Cold War to the decade of disdain which started with enforcement of Pressler Amendment. Pakistan swung from being America’s most “allied ally” to “most sanctioned friend” to a “disenchanted partner.”\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{9/11, The Second Blowback}

The second blowback followed 9/11, and the US military involvement in Afghanistan. Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance was relied upon to oust the Pashtun Taliban regime, which provoked opposition from the Pashtun tribes that straddled both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border known as Durand Line. The over-militarized approach involved heavy reliance on aerial bombings and high collateral damage of civilian casualties. This fueled support for the growing insurgency and gave Taliban a rationale to rally traditional resistance against foreign occupation.\textsuperscript{14}

The inability to distinguish between Al-Qaeda and Taliban began to result in the growing confusion about the aims of war effort. It also led to the growing fusion between Pashtun nationalism and Muslim radicalism, which in turn strengthened the insurgency. The fatal distraction of Iraq War

\textsuperscript{12} Maleeha Lodhi, The Future of Pakistan-US relations: Opportunities and Challenges, April 2009, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University

\textsuperscript{13} ibid

\textsuperscript{14} ibid
and the consequential diversion of resources and attention compounded the problems.\textsuperscript{15}

The downward trajectory in Afghanistan caused devastating fallout on Pakistan, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) where it spread militancy and radicalization. Much like the war in Vietnam was pushed into Cambodia, the escalation of the military campaign and failure to contain and subdue the Taliban in Afghanistan pushed the conflict into Pakistan’s tribal belt. The deterioration in the security situation in FATA has been a consequence and not a cause of the collapse of security in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{The Af-Pak Strategy}

Af-Pak strategy was announced by President Obama in his December 2009 speech at West Point. The strategy was further expanded in the Department of State’s Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy subsequently published in January 2010 and summarized in Quadrennial Defense Review\textsuperscript{17}.

In theoretical terms, the Af-Pak strategy for a new way forward provided a much logical approach towards addressing the issue. The core goals were to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and

\textsuperscript{15} Maleeha Lodhi, The Future of Pakistan-US relations: Opportunities and Challenges, April 2009, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University

\textsuperscript{16} ibid

\textsuperscript{17} Malik Zafar Iqbal, An Appraisal of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy to Counter Terrorism, Parameters, Summer 2010, US Army War College
Pakistan and to *prevent its return*. Key elements of the strategy included a significant change of stance in the willingness towards negotiating with Taliban. A surge in reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan with a civilian led effort was realized. An ownership of security responsibility was assessed as the necessity with the expansion in Afghan army and police. Narcotics trade was re-iterated to be a fuel for insurgency and strict measures to curb its flow were considered essential. A surge in the military efforts in south and east of Afghanistan was announced to control the insurgency.

**A Year After**

Shortcomings within the strategy overshadowed the clarity of the concept. Surge versus exit strategy 2011, and surge versus reconciliation contradicted to what it espoused. The surge in south of Afghanistan, resulted in extremist elements moving inside parts of FATA to make the counter insurgency efforts of Pakistani armed forces more intensive. The influx of these elements also resulted in the increased vulnerability of the NATO supply convoys passing inside Pakistan. Drone strikes within FATA resulted in collateral damage and consequential public anger. Economic assistance like Kerry Lugar bill was attached with unprecedented conditionalities. “In stating that Washington will not provide a blank cheque to Pakistan, President Obama struck a note that proved counterproductive. This stance reinforced the *transactional* nature of the US – Pakistan relationship, and it strengthens rather than breaks from the paradigm of
treating Pakistan as hired help rather than a valued ally.”\textsuperscript{18} Afghan National Army (ANA) is still short of holding independent operations and the quantity versus quality debates remains ever increasing. Control on the growth of poppy and resultant narcotics problem still stays at large with no significant remedies.

**Counter Narrative Vacuum**

On the conceptual front, the extremist’s / Al-Qaeda’s Narrative is yet to be challenged. Military surges and military means are tactical approaches to an ideological fight. While confronted with an ambiguous enemy success cannot be ideally quantified. The ability of this ambiguous enemy to find followers or reinforcement (equally motivated) for replacements against those taken out is the major cause of concern. “A counter Al-Qaeda strategy must attempt to neutralize the network’s ideological appeal in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other parts of the world where it finds recruits and allies. Al-Qaeda is now more of an idea; terrorist operations are increasingly conducted mostly by self generated “affiliates” drawn from young men in various countries who have been radicalized by Al-Qaeda’s ideology. The notion of fighting them only militarily will remain only a partial response”.\textsuperscript{19} In the absence of a counter narrative based war of ideas, world unfortunately may see tragic events like Major Nidal Malik Hasan, a US born, raised and educated American, opening fire on

\textsuperscript{18} Maleeha Lodhi, The Future of Pakistan-US relations: Opportunities and Challenges, April 2009, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University

\textsuperscript{19} ibid
comrades. Major Nidal got hijacked by propagated narrative of *Why the War on Terror is a War on Islam.*

Graphical comparison between the military versus the ideological approach towards fighting Al-Qaeda and extremist can be gauged by a progress chart. The values can be simplified for easy reference into two sets. A military effort, and an ideological effort, both targeted towards problem solving. At the start of the war on terror both were identified as the objectives of the campaign itself. Following are the quantified values to approach the graph:

- War of Military Gains - MIL
- War of Ideas - ID

Ideal ladder of the progress was to be viewed as,

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20 Thomas L. Friedman, America Vs. The Narrative, The New York Times, November 29, 2009 Sunday, Late Edition – Final, Section WK; Column 0; Editorial Desk; OP-ED COLUMNIST; Pg.8
To strike at the *Center of Gravity* of rooting out extremism, the ID was to progress along with MIL. Transition and end state was to find a well rooted and established ID, with MIL in support role.

State of the war, however, suggest a different view:

An analysis at the start of the war suggested that this war could not be won, merely contained. But would require war aims focused on enemies’ ideology, not their tactics. This in turn demanded especially close interconnection between a *war of military gains* and an inseparable *war of ideas*. The best lens for understanding at the start of the war and finding end states was suggested to be the great military-ideological struggle of Cold War.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) Stephen Biddle, War Aims and War Termination, Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses, January 2002
The Way Forward, Need for a Change of Narrative

Narrative HOPE, with Hope Management Structure

To all my valued readers, I want to elaborate an important factor right at the start of this core of my study. My opinion is based on Optimism, it is an opinion of Self Belief and an opinion based on verity that Crisis is not to be bypassed or overlooked but to be managed towards solution.

Any way forward is in no way solution oriented unless its status is beyond a yet another trial version mindset. New narrative is, therefore, defined as HOPE, with a hope management structure based on short and long term policies and strategies.

Zone of Conflict

Within Afghanistan and Pakistan, zones of concern or the zones of conflict are much more crystallized as the war effort is into its tenth year. South and Southeast of Afghanistan offers the biggest challenge to the ISAF forces and carries the solution to the crisis, towards Pakistan side, counter insurgency has unsettled the Taliban substantially but remains the area of concern. Both the areas offer exclusive challenges and resultantly exclusive strategies to deal with.

Afghanistan

Afghan south and southeast presents the major challenge. No Go areas for the ISAF forces and ANA make this mostly Taliban dominated belt unmanageable and the main cause of pessimism. Central government of Karzai is nonexistent within this zone and the governance vacuum is
filled by the Taliban. Inhabitants of the area are Pushtuns, lacking even the most basic of amenities, infrastructure or state apparatus. In his key findings Gilles, Dorronsoro describes the situation as, “The insurgency advances are now irreversible. The Taliban are increasingly taking over the administration of the population; there are more and more areas of anarchy, and the government controls only the urban centers. Considering the rapidly weakening Afghan government, turning security over to the Afghan army is impossible in near term.”

Statistics of the causalities suffered by the Coalition forces also shows the bulk to have been suffered in the south and southeast. The most challenging test case for the Narrative Hope to shape in is in this part of the zone of conflict.

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**Tribal Belt**

Pakistani part of the zone of conflict, the Tribal areas are in a transition state. Status of belt is no more a *No Go* area except few places, military counter insurgency operations have been conducted with unparalleled resolve. Starting with counter insurgency operation in Swat valley; the successful operation, management of 2.5 million IDPs, presence of armed forces to strengthen the gains and joining in reconstruction efforts proved to be an iconic operation. Operations of similar nature have been and are in progress within the bulk of the FATA area. People of the area have seen a flushing out of extremist, however, to fully benefit from the presence of armed forces within the flushed out areas, a full scale reconstruction effort supported by US to transition towards development is vital. Consolidation and built up towards a successful hope management therefore, to be seen in this part of the zone of conflict can be transformed into the *zone of opportunity*.

*Pakistani casualties*(army, civilian) & *Terrorists Targeted*

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<th>PAKISTAN ARMY</th>
<th>PAKISTANI CIVILIANS</th>
<th>TERRORIST TARGETED</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>9057</td>
<td>19167</td>
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<td><strong>2.19 / DAY</strong></td>
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<td>2.4 / DAY</td>
<td>5.25 / DAY</td>
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PAKISTAN ARMY

PAKISTANI CIVILIANS

TERRORIST TARGETED
**Key Players**

Reconciliation strategy with the talks to the Taliban has always been the Pakistani stance for a way forward. Outcome desired from the effort is to segregate the good and bad Taliban and to bring them within the solution loop. An ethnically balanced approach with Pukhtun voice of the south and south east forming part of the solution rather than problem is an important development. Having identified the Afghan side of the zone of conflict to be the focus of the narrative itself, three categories of Key players are to play a role in it:-

**Afghan / local players.** Afghan / local players include; Karzai government, Taliban leadership and the provincial / area leadership of the south and southeastern provinces.

**Regional players.** Pakistan with its historical linkages and the main stake holder towards a stable Afghanistan has a leading role. With an age long suffering and spill over of the Afghan problems in its territory, Pakistan has always wished for a stable Afghanistan for its own stability. Pakistan can also play a *bridging role* in bringing the immediate neighbors like China, Iran and bordering Central Asian states.

**Extra Regional Players.** US, Coalition partners, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have a role to play in the solution loop. Acceptability factor also plays a key role in reconciliation initiatives, Muslim
countries like Turkey and Saudi Arabia can play a leading role in achieving the watershed. Pakistan having mutual understanding with Saudi Arabia and Turkey can form the troika of acceptable players to manifest the narrative of Hope.

**Short Term Strategies**

Short term strategies vary from zone to zone, the analogy is the immediate impact. A Progressive and staged approach will be required for this set of strategies. Zone of conflict towards Afghan side will be dealt with by dividing the zone into smaller areas, these areas may be based on provinces, terrain similarities or trends of resistance. These areas will then be termed as patches and the strategy will therefore, be termed as the *Strategy of Broadening the Patchwork*. Reconciliation conceptualizes the initiation of the strategy for a selected patch and tends to gain a strategic inroad towards approaching the people. A graphical explanation of the strategy depicting the stages with its names and the outcome desired from each stage is explained as follows:-
AFGHANISTAN ZONE
STRATEGY OF BROADENING THE PATCHWORK

STAGE 1
Reconciliation & Reintegration

STAGE 2
Reconstruction & Development

STAGE 3
Engagement & Education
**Strategy of Broadening the Patchwork**

**Stages 1 – Reconciliation and Reintegration**

The first stage of reconciliation has already started with negotiations with Taliban. HOPE has opened up; however, the process itself has to be given more weight i.e. from a trial version to a systematic version with the ability to sustain the peace prospect. Profile of the stage has to be upgraded from a private natured effort between Karzai and Taliban. Adding credibility to the process and giving it a bench mark status suggest that involvement of additional players can play an important role. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan with a strong backing of US and NATO can provide the desired weight behind the process.

Expectations of local commanders/ local Taliban will be enormous; they would also be in the notion of being at a stronger position for the talks. Key will be to give them the required hope, to clarify and crystallize their possible role in the peaceful power structure of Afghanistan. Incentives offered should be dictated by the localized effects desired for that respective patch. Cease fire and a possible withdrawal of ISAF forces from the patch will be the ultimate incentive for the talks.

Demands should be well thought out, simple and implementable. The approach should be finding an opening, finding a hope avenue. Area opened has to be offered reform based future development framework. Progressive opening up should be driven by continuous engagement milieu. Governance vacuum should be replaced with a reform based self
governance model. Involvement of the people from the respective patch can generate jobs and confidence of people. Re-integration reforms based on DDR processes can be introduced with the incentives offered. Identifying the hardliners / the potential saboteurs of the process can lead to expectations from Afghan government’s security apparatus. To fill in the gap, a role of the ANA and Afghan police has to be presented to the local stake holders of peace. Jirga’s, peace efforts and peace makers have been targeted in the past by the hardliners; the same has to be countered through credible guarantees.

**Stage 2 – Reconstruction and Development**

Reconstruction and development stage will be driven by the local ownership and tribal self-governance concept. Two major reforms will include, construction of *schools* (may be even termed as religious schools to let the project find its willingness amongst patch occupants) and *alternative farming* incentives. Infrastructure will be agriculture driven with farm to market concept. Local priorities should be given preferential status to gain the willingness of the people.

Incentives on offer will include, generation of economic activity by offering jobs to the local laborers. Local contractors will be given opportunity to spearhead the projects. Provision of alternative seeds, fertilizers, tractors and expertise will be made available at the doorstep to

23 Alex Tallchief Skibine, Reconciling Federal and State Power inside Indian Reservation with the Right of Tribal Self-government and process of Self-determination, 1995, Utah L. Rev. 1105
ensure convenience of acceptance. This stage may look over optimistic, but the success threshold will be gauged by the successful stage one itself. Shaping up of stage two should be seen in the Hope Management preview.

Demands will be simplistic and self explanatory, the troika with the support of US and NATO should provide sufficient resources to ensure that the hope is not drifted towards false hope. Sequential and progressive release of funds will be based on progress and result oriented approach. Stoppage of poppy growth in the patch will be mandatory during stage two. Training of local militia for integration into the Afghan National Army will be undertaken by the training teams of troika duly supported by US and NATO. *Train the trainers programs* for the available people with educational backgrounds will be undertaken by Troika to create a base of teachers for the existing and upcoming schools of the area. A minor signature of media with local news about the local leaders involved in area reconstruction will be established to gain a foothold of awareness mechanism.

**Stage 3 – Engagement and Education**

A comprehensive approach will be required to make stage three as the consolidation stage. During this stage an engagement of Karzai government with the local leaders and people will take shape. Regular reform based negotiations with local leaders and contractors etc has to take place within the village or local headquarters. An engagement infrastructure on a more continuous basis is to be seen manifesting during
this stage. Enlightenment through engagement will be the concept on which awareness to children education including girls education using Quranic teachings will be offered. Carefully selected faculty from within and from troika countries will be contributed to teach the essence of Islam i.e. *Peace and Respect for Humanity*.

Incentives offered will include provision of free books, free stationary and free furniture for schools. Media growth will be offered as the incentive, Islamic channels will find an automatic acceptance amongst locals. Carefully selected themes based on moderation and national approach will be aired through these channels to start with intellectual capacity building.

Stage three will have a sound base to start onwards from stage two. Ideological turnaround will be brought about by a successful stage of education during this stage. Mosques and newly established schools will be turned into institutions for *hope building and hope management*. A successful completion of this stage will result into a progressive, moderate and prosperous patch to be seen as an icon patchwork.

**Tribal Belt-Strategy of Opportunity Zones**

Tribal region of Pakistan along Afghan border presents a different challenge plus opportunity. Within the Af-Pak theatre the only success stories have been seen in the FATA region with strong commitment from Pakistan Armed Forces supported by Pakistani Nation. Status of the area to large extent has been converted from No Go area to approachable area. After the successful counter insurgency operations by the armed forces the
people have found an alternative to the extremists and extremism. A critical question is the sustainability of the peace itself.

An obvious and instantaneous answer to the challenge is to provide youth of the area an alternative source of occupation. An extensive reconstruction and development efforts are the immediate need. Recent devastating floods have crippled the economy to an extent that supporting an urgent and vigorous reconstruction and development effort is next to impossible. A two-staged strategy termed as Strategy of Opportunity Zones is required to be initiated with quick implementation plans.

**Stage 1 – Reconstruction and Development**

A stabilizing tribal belt may prove to be a catalyst for the success of Strategy of Patchwork within Afghanistan. Reforms generating economic activity through developmental projects within each agency and especially for the agencies regained from terrorists have to take shape. A conference on the lines of Friends of Pakistan forum may be organized in Islamabad. Theme may be termed as *Sponsors of the Tribal Areas Re-integration Initiatives*. US, Coalition partners, China, Saudi Arabia and Turkey may then select the agency to be supported basing on the reforms presented. Youth of the area may be provided by the sponsor country with educational and job opportunities. Economic reforms should encourage establishment of mini specialized industrial base for each tribal agency to open it up as tax free zone.
**Stage 2 – Education Reforms**

Education reforms within the FATA region should be supported to finance and encourage establishment of Tribal School system using the existing madrassas in the area. Faculties spreading the enlightenment of Islam as the religion of peace, tranquility and humanity may play an important role towards Hope Management.

Stages for the *Strategy of Opportunity Zones* will shape as under:-

- **Stage 1**
  - Reconstruction
  - Development
  - Trade Sponsorship

- **Stage 2**
  - Education
  - Enlightenment
**Long-Term Strategies**

Afghanistan is a land known to be a spiel platz or a *land of the great games*. Each great game of the history has been indecisive, leaving the country itself in more precarious condition. Situation presented today gives a much different perspective and political landscape. Security coupled with economic interests has involved more than two traditional opponents in the game itself. Optimism this time is in the commonality of interest for each stake holder i.e. Stability in Afghanistan itself. Desired hope is embedded in a long term commitment to the country and region.

A long-term strategy for Afghanistan can be simplified and summarized in the desired end state. For the end state to find a shape or a foreseeable future, short term strategy with Hope Management structure has to succeed. While the short term strategy offers an opening, the long term strategy structures a prolonged commitment. Afghanistan has to be seen as following:

- A Nation State.
- A Moderate Islamic Republic.
- A state with fully functional Jirga system and suited democratic institutions.
- A stable country with ethnically balanced power sharing apparatus.
- A country which is not a threat to the security of the others.
• A mineral rich country earning from its resources and providing transit facilities linking Central Asian resources to the coast lines.
• A poppy free country.

President Obama’s words, that “the long term solution to Afghanistan’s problems lies in the neighborhood”\(^{24}\) provides an ideal platform for thinking long term in Afghanistan. US has to now turn towards coordination of efforts for the cause of stability in Afghanistan. Pro-active role of US in the regional peace and stability is a necessity than a choice. Regional problems are to be resolved for the sustainable stability in Afghan. Af-Pak theatre cannot afford proxy wars, people of the region are to be seen as the real stake holders. Re-inventing new allies and ignoring the traditional ones may deflect the Hope toward yet another in-decisive end state for the country.

**Security Problem with Ideological Solution**

From the perspective of the first major concern is to eradicate extremist elements from Afghanistan. No Go areas of the south and south east pose the main problem and are still at large. No serious challenge has been offered to the extremist elements within that area. Towards Pakistani side, such elements have faced the challenge with the counterinsurgency operations of armed forces. The porous border between the two countries and the vacuum of ideological challenge has made the success gauge

more complex. Short term strategy undertaken by the Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey troika with support of US towards the agenda of reconciliation and possible reintegration will open up the Hope narrative to the areas on either side.

Matching support in counter extremism effort towards ideological gains has to come from West. Nine years have seen buzz words of Islamism, Islamic terrorism, Islamic extremism making headlines. Scholarly discussions have always remained focused towards confrontationist agendas. Books like Clash of Civilizations etc have propagated “Islam against the West” debates. In my personal opinion, I have always argue that in the effort against Non State Actors the west has been making efforts to give State to Non State Actors, rather it has actually gone a step further of handing over a complete Religion to non state actors. Muslims as a whole are the greatest sufferers of terrorism and extremism. Many enlightened religious scholars including the Imam of Kabba have issued Fatwas against terrorist and extremist ideas. On the western side, however, a more generic approach is adopted towards the Muslims and Islam. In media discussions and scholarly discussions the moderate and enlightened Muslims find a confrontationist approach. On the other half of the coin, the extremist tend to pollute the minds of young men in all parts of the world by their west against Muslim themes. Long standing issues such like, Palestine and Kashmir issues need a more serious settlement approach to eliminate the root causes of extremism.

“President Obama’s speech to the Muslim world in Cairo in Jun 2009 provided indicators of his insights about the politics of the Muslim world. He
emphasized the need for a relationship based on *mutual interest and mutual respect*. These words should transform into empowering progressive Muslim intellectuals and bridge the gap between Muslims and the West. US funds and aid should be geared towards support and reform of *public education systems* in Muslim states, as that would naturally counter the messages being promulgated by conservative and extremist religious centers."^{25}

**Afghanistan as a Moderate Islamic Democracy**

Two of the potential binding strengths to get the ethnically and tribally diverse people of Afghanistan are; Islam and Nationalism or Afghanism. An investment into the progressive intellectual Muslims as core of the new narrative Hope, a moderate Islamic state will be an obvious outcome. Quranic concept of state is based on goals and ideals of governance, establishing a system of justice, providing security for the people, promoting consultation (and even consensus building) on important matters, and the most importantly exercising *ijtihad*, the use of independent and rational judgment. One can strongly argue that these principles of governance can best be achieved through democracy.\(^{26}\) A moderate Afghanistan can, therefore, embark upon two strong democratic principles for future. The Quranic concept of state and the code of conduct of

\(^{25}\) Hassan Abbas, Engaging the Muslim world, The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Medford, Summer 2010, Vol. 34, Iss. 2, pg. 9, 7 pgs

\(^{26}\) Hassan Abbas, Engaging the Muslim world, The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, Medford, Summer 2010, Vol. 34, Iss. 2, pg. 9, 7 pgs
*Pukhtunwali* based on *Jirga* system is respected by each ethnicity and is not new to Afghanistan political and social landscape.

**Minerals-An Alternative to War and Poppy**

New York Times reported $1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself. The deposits include iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like lithium. Scale of the reserves are so big and include so many minerals that are essential to modern industry that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world. The report also referred to the potential of Afghanistan becoming the future Saudi Arabia of Lithium. The value of the newly discovered mineral deposits dwarfs the size of Afghanistan’s existing war bedraggled economy, which is based largely on opium production and narcotics trafficking as well as aid from the US and other industrialized countries. Afghanistan’s gross domestic product is only about $12 billion.  

President Karzai has expressed his worry along with optimism about the Afghan future linked to mineral wealth. During his visit to Japan, he mentioned about his concern in following words, “There will be rivalry over the resources, especially now that the world knows the significance of Afghan resources. I hope we will be able to manage it properly both in  

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27 James Risen, US. Identifies Vast Riches in Afghanistan, June 13, 2010, NYTimes.com, website approached on 4 December, 2010
terms of rivalry from the international bidders in Afghanistan and also within Afghanistan, we should be able to manage the returns of those mineral extractions properly for Afghanistan.”

28 Gulf Times, Karzai worried about Afghan minerals rivalry, Publish Date: Saturday, 19 June, 2010, at 12:33 PM
Doha Time
Afghan people and leadership have rightly attached a significant Hope to the uncapped mineral wealth. It offers tremendous strength to the Narrative Hope; it can be an asset / linchpin for the Hope Management. Traditional binding factors for Afghanis i.e. religion and jirga system will be significantly augmented by this third factor of national convergence.

Concern, however, is the competition which it may generated towards traditional great games. Key players have to play a converging rather than a diverging role. Moving forward with mutual interests and mutual investment in the projects and construction of infrastructure can provide a win win outcome for all. Afghanistan’s hope and future as a reservoir of mineral wealth and a poppy free country with no wars, therefore, hinges on the mutual interest of key players.

Pakistan again can figure out in bringing two important players, US and China together, similar to playing key role in February 1972 in arranging Dr. Henry Kissinger’s and subsequent visit of President Richard M. Nixon to China. Key to the landlocked Afghanistan and in particular the turbulent south opens towards the coast line of Pakistan, newly established deep sea port *Gawadar*. Infrastructure development in the south towards Pakistan is indeed the genuine *Hope Infrastructure* towards a future war and poppy free Afghanistan.
Conclusion

This paper was an effort to create hope for an optimistic approach to the new way forward. Afghanistan cannot afford another game, no matter how great or small it may be. A stable Afghanistan is the desire of all the key players’ especially immediate neighbor like Pakistan which has faced the maximum brunt. Hope is the key word to bring a coordinating narrative for the region; hope is the resolve to give a try to the peace effort each time that the peace seems a distant possibility. The analysis and strategy is based on my personal knowledge of tribal areas and region being a Pakistani. Afghan angle is based on my previous understanding of country due to the interactions with Afghan refugees. Marshall Center tenure crystallized my thoughts and Afghan colleagues of the course provided me an ideal insight within the country. Still I believe that the short term strategies require further research to shape it up towards more quantification of outcomes rather than its present generic concept version. Long term strategies have been unfolded considering the ideological and futuristic approach, however, I still believe that each of its aspect will be interesting subject for future researchers.


4. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.


19. Ibid.


26. Ibid.
