

New World Strategies Coalition, Inc.

Restoring the Tribal Balance

An Indigenous Solution for Peace in Afghanistan

NWSC INC.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Barack Obama doesn't have a viable Afghanistan exit strategy due to a fatal flaw in America's policy development process, which has been, namely, a complete lack of input from native Afghans. Because there is only one solution for peace in Afghanistan – and it is an Afghan solution.

The New World Strategies Coalition (NWSC) has the inimitable ability to gather feedback directly from tribal elders of well-respected clans in Afghanistan and, as a result, can channel the will of the Afghan people. The purpose of this white paper is not to specify a political solution but a process that will empower this “Silent Majority” so that Afghans can, finally, choose their own destiny.

Afghanistan experienced forty years of peace under King Zahir Shah during an era that began in the early 1930s. 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 last time the Afghan nation saw anything that resembled stability was when its indigenous tribal structure was fully intact and a national unifying monarch sat on the throne - two essential factors that helped maintain the “tribal balance”.

The turmoil we see today is a direct result of foreign intervention that weakened the tribal balance, which can be broken down into the following periods: Soviet Occupation (1979 – 1989); Afghan Civil Wars (1989 – 1994); Taliban Reign (1994 – 2001) and NATO Occupation (2001 – 2010).

General David Petraeus's COIN strategy is designed for failure because of the stratospheric odds against winning Afghan hearts and minds primarily because the U.S. is aligned with a perceived corrupt and illegitimate puppet government in Kabul.

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.

If the root cause of the current dilemma is tribal imbalance, the obvious answer should be to reinstate this equilibrium. Thus, the NWSC is proposing a series of “*All-Afghan Jirgas*” be assembled to accomplish this mission. A total of three rounds of *jirgas* will be held to design and implement the solution – two meetings in neutral countries and the finale in Kandahar to announce the new government and head of state.

Other issues must still be addressed including neutralizing Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and addressing the drug trade. The next step would be to establish an independent commission of Afghan natives who would handle the logistics of the *jirgas* and act as a liaison between the delegates and the U.S. government.

INTRODUCTION

President Barack Obama wants an Afghanistan exit strategy – and he wants it now. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be a viable solution on the table that will stabilize Afghanistan in the least or serve America's national security interests.

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

- Afghan Proverb

Some of the alternatives bandied about by senior administration officials are, unfortunately, formulas for state collapse - including the continuance of a 10-year-old failed counterinsurgency strategy, a Special Operations and C.I.A. drone war and a power-sharing solution that would divvy up the country amongst corrupt Afghan government officials, violent Islamic fundamentalists, *mujahideen* warlords and various other maligned actors. A recent argument for a de facto partition of Afghanistan, recently brought to the debate by Robert Blackwill, a former policy advisor to both presidents Bush, would condemn the region to an endless ethnic conflict.

The fatal flaw in the Afghanistan policy development process has been the complete lack of input from the Afghan people - the stakeholders with the most to lose. The best-laid plans of global powers have failed miserably over the past three decades, and it is time for the U.S. and international community to come to the realization that there is only one solution for peace in Afghanistan – and it is an Afghan solution.

The aim of this document is to give Mr. Obama his exit strategy. The U.S. does not have to choose between President Hamid Karzai's reprobate regime and the Taliban – there is another alternative. It might seem paradoxical but, although the U.S. and NATO should withdraw from the region because their mere presence is fueling the insurgency – they cannot leave.

Because there is one condition on the ground that must be met before the U.S. can drawdown, which is the implementation of an indigenous political solution that has the best possible chance of stabilizing the country.

AN AFGHAN PERSPECTIVE

The concepts contained herein are radical 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 solution – one with zero interference and participation from any other foreign entities.

Any remedy concocted must be designed by native Afghans and imbued with their tradition and custom, because, historically speaking, every other medicament imposed by foreign powers has exacerbated the situation, causing the country to rapidly deteriorate into an unrecognizable shell of what it once was.

External interference in Afghan affairs has resulted in nothing more than ultra-violence, radicalism, poverty, and the destruction of the very fabric of Afghan society. It is nigh time that Afghans are allowed to determine the fate of their own country by reconstituting the sacred unifying tribal structure that has been decimated by over 30 years of foreign invasion, incessant civil war and chaos.

This is the primary focus of the New World Strategies Coalition (NWSC), a think tank founded by Afghan expatriates who possess deep tribal connections. The group focuses on developing political, economic and cultural initiatives 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, and is thus able to channel the collective voice and will of the Afghan people.

This is an important point because the Obama administration, U.S. policymakers, military officials and congressional leaders have absorbed analyses and have made strategic decisions without the participation of and feedback from native Afghans, which the NWSC believes is a primary reason for America’s defective policies.

The reason the NWSC has a built-in advantage is fairly straightforward: the tribes will only disclose sensitive information to other Afghans whom they trust. This is for cultural and practical reasons. The cultural aspect is based on hundreds of years of anthropology and the practical reason is based on fear of reprisal from the powers that be.

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.

This study is also unique because many of the NWSC’s members, being Afghan expats, serve both the American and Afghan people in their effort to bring peace and prosperity to a war-torn nation, which has been embroiled in a conflict that has caused both countries to lose much in terms of blood and treasure.

They see this mission as a moral obligation – undertaken not only on behalf of their forefathers’ homeland, but for love of their adopted country as well. And the unique Afghan-led solutions proposed herein have the potential to dramatically improve the lives of Americans and Afghans, and can positively alter the momentum and change the dynamics of the overall struggle.

The purpose of this white paper is not to actually specify a political solution, because the crux of the approach is based on Afghan native self-determination. Every significant political

Throughout Afghanistan's era of peace the government was based on indigenous principles, intuitions, custom and tradition. 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 are still central to Afghan life, as the tribe continues to be the most integral political, economic, military and cultural unit 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. 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.

PASHTUN DURANNI TRIBAL BALANCE

- ☐ **Intra-tribal:** cohesion at the family unit driven by tribal moral code called *Pashtunwali*
- ☐ **Inter-tribal:** balance maintained by common filial thread, national solidarity in times of crisis.
- ☐ **Super-tribal:** distribution of power and authority between the state sovereignty and the tribes (monarch-elites who derived power from moral authority).

Figure 1.0 Tribal Balance

TRIBAL DESTRUCTION: 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 landmined 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.¹ As a result, Afghanistan now has the highest percentage of disabled people in the world.

The root cause of the turmoil we see today is that foreign intervention has weakened the tribal balance. 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.

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 Fascism	Islamic reactionary religion the result of foreign pan-Islamic Deobandi Wahhabism of Saudis, Pakistanis
NATO Occupation (2001 – 2010)	U.S. and NATO- sponsored Afghan government	Western-style Centralized Democracy	Blatant installment of a “puppet” regime by U.S. and an attempt to implement a corrupt democratic system

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

¹ <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1051546.html>

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.

TRIBAL WEAKENING

Kabul has fought against restoring the tribal balance 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 fascism. The Taliban tried to establish Deobandi networks and replace tribal-centered villages with ulema and madrasa-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 Islamaic 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.

The implosion and degradation of the tribal structure 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.

health insurance program. Thousands of American and allied personnel have been killed or gravely wounded.

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 it⁶:

“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.

However, with all that said the great paradox is that though U.S. military strategy is currently making things worse, they cannot leave – at least not until a political solution is put in place that can empower the people and allow them to take back their country.

⁶ <http://www.quadrant.org.au/magazine/issue/2009/4/how-to-win-in-afghanistan>

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.

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 - regardless of region, ethnicity or tribe - has been swift and at times even threatening. According to [Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid](#):⁷

⁷ <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.

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 indigenous tradition and custom. And it is very clear what happened when this tribal balance was decimated. Hence, a logical conclusion would be that a restoration of said balance 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 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 Hezbi-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 as well.

THE ALL-AFGHAN JIRGA

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 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.

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*.

Some objections may be raised that the Taliban toppled Kabul in the past and will take over once again after NATO leaves. 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.

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:

- x **Pakistan / Saudi Arabia:** How does Afghanistan neutralize Pakistan and Saudi Arabia during the *jirga* proceedings and keep them out of Afghan affairs in general going forward?
- x **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.
- x **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.
- x **Political Fallout:** This process should not be seen as a “loss” to the U.S. government but a big “win”. It is not a rejection of Jeffersonian democracy, but a rejection of its current form. Left to their own devices, the Afghans will perhaps progress to a similar type of government.
- x **Security:** 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 U.S. will have to take care to provide this security so that the delegates will be safe until the political solution is in place.

