

Enemy Reactions to the US Strategy and Force-Sizing Options

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Purpose

As we evaluate the various options available to us in Afghanistan, it is essential to consider the path from the current situation to the proposed future strategy. What will Afghanistan and the region look like as the US and NATO withdraw forces and prepare to pursue a pure counter-terrorism strategy? How will the various enemy groups and Pakistan likely react to a reinforced counter-insurgency strategy? What would emphasizing only the training of Afghan security forces look like? This report seeks to address these and other critical questions.

Military Planning

- The process of developing a military strategy and campaign plan requires evaluating in detail the probable reactions of enemy groups and outside interested states and actors to the proposed approach.
- Military planners generally consider two sets of possible reactions of each enemy to each approach: the most likely course of action and the most dangerous course of action.
- Enemy reactions are predicted based on the enemy's objectives, known capabilities and current plans, current disposition, and historical behavior patterns.
- The thirty years of nearly-continuous war in Afghanistan provides an unusual amount of information about how the specific enemy groups we now face have typically behaved.
- The purpose of this exercise is not to predict what the enemy will do, but to describe the range of likely enemy reactions to each approach in order to determine which approach is most likely to lead to success.

Abbreviations



ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AQ	Al Qaeda
BAF	Bagram Airfield
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
CAS	Close Air Support
EFP	Explosively-formed penetrator
FOM	Freedom of movement
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HQN	Haqqani Network
HRV	Helmand River Valley
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IJU	Islamic Jihad Union
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
KAF	Kandahar Airfield
K-G Pass	Khowst-Gardez Pass
LOC	Line of Communication
MANPAD	Man-portable air-defense system
MDCOA	Most dangerous course of action
MLCOA	Most likely course of action
QST	Quetta Shura Taliban
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SVBIED	Suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device
TK	Tarin Khowt

Scenarios

- Scenario 1: President orders all US forces out of Afghanistan, including Special Operations Forces (SOF) and classified forces
- Scenario 2: President orders US combat forces out of Afghanistan, including all trainers and forces supporting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), but not including SOF and classified forces
- Scenario 3: President orders US combat forces out of Afghanistan, but trainers, SOF, classified forces, and forces assisting the ANSF remain
- Scenario 4: Combat forces remain as currently deployed, with additional emphasis on expansion of the ANSF
- Scenario 5: Combat forces augmented as proposed by McChrystal and expansion of the ANSF is accelerated

Scenario 1 (Withdrawal)

Summary

- Taliban takes control of the region from Farah to the gates of Kabul in 2010; Kabul likely falls in 2010 or early 2011
- Quetta Shura Taliban (QST) and Haqqani Network (HQN) likely conduct determined attacks on critical Lines of Communication (LOC) to cause significant casualties during the withdrawal of Coalition combat forces
- Al Qaeda senior leadership and training centers likely re-emerge in Taliban-held areas
- Ethnic civil war likely develops between Taliban-led Pashtuns and Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras
- Conflict likely generates new waves of refugees into Iran and Pakistan
- Malign elements within Pakistan prevail in their efforts to support the Taliban and to stop the Pakistani government from fighting Islamist extremists within Pakistan
- NATO withdraws in defeat, possibly with significant resentment of the US for abandoning the alliance
- Al Qaeda will portray the US withdrawal as a stunning victory over the infidels, greater than the defeat of the Soviet Union
- Humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and possibly Central Asia
- Reimposition of Taliban interpretation of shari'a law, including violent reaction to efforts to emancipate women over the last decade

Scenario 2 (SOF Only)

Summary

- Taliban takes control of the region from Farah to the gates of Kabul in 2010; Kabul likely falls in 2010 or early 2011
- QST and HQN likely conduct determined attacks on critical Lines of Communication (LOC) to cause significant casualties during the withdrawal of Coalition combat forces
- Al Qaeda senior leadership and training centers likely re-emerge in Taliban-held areas cautiously and covertly
- Ethnic civil war likely develops between Taliban-led Pashtuns and Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras
- Conflict likely generates new waves of refugees into Iran and Pakistan
- Malign elements within Pakistan prevail in their efforts to support the Taliban and to stop the Pakistani government from fighting Islamist extremists within Pakistan
- NATO withdraws in defeat, possibly with significant resentment of the US for abandoning the alliance
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Scenario 3 (SOF and Training Only)

Summary



- QST operations:
 - launches major effort to capture and kill embedded trainers
 - conducts large-scale targeted assassination campaign against ANSF and GIROA leaders
 - redoubles efforts to acquire advanced MANPADs
 - seeks to establish firing positions from which to rocket/mortar airfields
- HQN pursues similar tactics in attempt to regain control of Greater Paktia
- HQN also expands reach of radicalizing madrassas in Greater Paktia
- Both groups likely conduct determined attacks on critical Lines of Communication (LOC) to cause significant casualties during the withdrawal of Coalition combat forces
- Al Qaeda senior leadership and training centers may start to re-emerge in Taliban-held areas cautiously and covertly
- Ethnic civil war likely develops between Taliban-led Pashtuns and Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras
- Increasing conflict and loss of confidence likely generates new waves of refugees into Iran and Pakistan
- Malign elements within Pakistan prevail in their efforts to support the Taliban and to stop the Pakistani government from fighting Islamist extremists within Pakistan
- NATO withdraws, with possible exception of some UK trainers, support elements
- Al Qaeda will portray the US withdrawal as a stunning victory over the infidels, greater than the defeat of the Soviet Union
 - When the Soviets withdrew, they also left behind a “puppet government” of Najibullah
 - Al Qaeda and the Taliban will portray the US transition to a pure SOF/Training mission as a repetition of the 1989 Soviet withdrawal

Scenario 4 (Steady-State with Increased Training) Summary



- QST continues ongoing efforts
 - consolidate control of areas lacking ANSF and Coalition forces, especially: Farah, Oruzgan outside TK, Kandahar, Now Zad and Nad Ali in Helmand, northern Ghazni, most of Zabol
 - contest coalition operations in the Helmand River Valley (HRV), working to inflict maximum casualties on British forces
 - vigorously contests US operations in Arghandab and Canadian operations in Zharay-Panjwayi districts of Kandahar, working to inflict maximum casualties on Canadian forces
 - continues to infiltrate Kandahar City and solidify shadow governance throughout the south
 - emphasizes Afghan nationalism to build anti-occupation sentiment
- QST may
 - attempt to spark inter-ethnic fighting through mass-casualty attacks, information operations, or other means
 - Launch a concerted campaign of SVBIED, rocket, and mortar attacks on coalition bases
- HQN continues ongoing efforts to
 - disrupt construction of the Khowst-Gardez Pass (K-G Pass) road
 - gain influence and, where possible, control over the Khowst Bowl
 - conduct spectacular attacks in Kabul and elsewhere to raise funds and international support
 - expand its presence in Wardak and Lowgar Provinces and to interdict Highway 1
- Pakistan will very likely view the rejection of GEN McChrystal's request for additional forces as an indication of waning US commitment to Afghanistan
- Islamabad will become more likely to increase support to HQN and QST in the expectation of a complete US withdrawal
- The death of Beitullah Mehsud and the perception of waning American commitment in Afghanistan may also persuade Islamabad to reduce American operations of all varieties within Pakistan

Scenario 5 (Fully-Resourced COIN) Summary



- QST will likely
 - contest important areas in Helmand and Kandahar (esp. Arghandab, Zharay-Panjwayi, Sangin, Nad Ali) until coalition forces achieve overmatch in those areas, whereupon QST withdraws leaders and strategic assets to surrounding safe havens; local fighters either reconcile or go to ground
 - attempt to consolidate control, maintain FOM, support contested areas, and prepare to defend sanctuaries
 - Prominently seize isolated district centers and attempt to retake areas “cleared” by coalition forces
 - increase attacks against more vulnerable coalition partners
 - QST highlights illegitimacy of GIRoA
 - QST emphasizes Afghan nationalism to build anti-occupation sentiment
- Pakistan
 - will most likely view the deployment of more US forces to Afghanistan as an indication of US commitment, although that perception depends on the way the deployment is described (i.e., if the president emphasizes a time-limit or hints at the likelihood of a changed strategy within a year, the perception of US commitment may be undermined even despite the increased deployment)
 - will not take action against the QST or HQN in any likely scenario, regardless of US decisions
 - is more likely to continue the fight against its own internal enemies if it believes that the US will prevail in Afghanistan
 - is very unlikely to increase support to the QST and HQN if the US deploys additional forces
 - If and when Islamabad becomes persuaded that the QST and HQN will NOT likely prevail in Afghanistan, it becomes more likely to reduce support to those groups

NATO Reaction

- In response to scenarios 1 and 2, NATO forces withdraw completely from Afghanistan
- In response to scenario 3, it is conceivable that the North Atlantic Council could be persuaded to accept a modified mission focused solely on training with a handful of member states providing very limited support to the new NATO Training Mission—Afghanistan (already being created). Some member states may also continue to provide limited air support.
- In response to scenarios 4 and 5, the Dutch pull out in 2010 and the Canadians in 2011 as already planned, but other NATO forces likely remain

Quetta Shura Taliban (QST)

- Objective: Regain control of Afghanistan as it was before 9/11, including control over Kabul and as much of the north as possible
- Concept: QST will most likely attempt to replicate the offensive operations to take ground that they used successfully in the mid-1990s. These operations would likely feature attacks from a secure base around Kandahar both toward Herat and toward Kabul, possibly attempting to link up in the Kabul area with Haqqani Network (HQN) forces advancing from Greater Paktia (Paktia, Paktika, and Khowst Provinces)

QST Reaction to Scenario 1 (full withdrawal) & Scenario 2 (SOF only) Phase a (consolidation)

- QST rapidly seizes the portions of Helmand and Kandahar it does not already control, including Lashkar Gah and Kandahar City, as coalition forces withdraw to their bases (Camp Bastion and Kandahar Airfield [KAF])
- Most Likely Course of Action (MLCOA): QST does not directly attack KAF or Bastion as coalition forces withdraw and does not attempt to interdict the retrograde movement with IEDs and so on
- Most Dangerous Course of Action (MDCOA): QST seriously contests coalition withdrawal, which could inflict significant casualties on withdrawing coalition forces, particularly if the QST attempts to rocket KAF and Bastion
- QST forces in Oruzgan, Farah, Zabol, and Ghazni work to consolidate control; QST probably does not divert significant resources to these areas until Helmand and Kandahar are under control, including Spin Boldak (which may require some fighting against local tribes)
- ANSF forces in all six provinces are unable to fight Taliban without US assistance and units disintegrate—some defect to the Taliban, some try to go home, some fight and are overwhelmed

Phase b (offensives to north and east)

- With control of the area roughly bounded by Garmsir-Spin Boldak-Qalat-Tarin Khowt-Nad Ali-Lashkar Gah solidified, the QST prepares for offensive operations to the north and east
- MLCOA: QST forces advance through Ghazni and Zabol toward Wardak, attempt to negotiate a link-up with Haqqani (HQN) forces advancing from Paktia; QST forces may also attempt to drive on Herat at once, although they are more likely to need time to prepare for that attack
- MDCOA: QST forces execute MLCOA and also attempt to expand control from their bastions in Badghis and Konduz directly into non-Pashtun areas
- QST probably attempts to work with local proxies in the Nangarhar bowl, Kapisa, and Parwan but does not divert significant resources to those areas in this phase
- QST takes control of KAF, Bastion, Tarin Khowt, Qalat, and all other airfields in the area as rapidly as possible and denies access to them by coalition forces
- QST works to mobilize Pashtun populations into a mobile force (repeating the exercise of the mid-1990s), relying on the threat of Tajik-Uzbek attack and, possibly, engineered conflicts to generate enthusiasm
- QST conducts negotiations with HQN, Hekmatyar, and other local groups for the formation of a new Taliban government

QST Reaction to Scenarios 1&2



Phase c (Kabul and beyond)

- QST attacks Herat (outcome uncertain; depends on performance of ANSF and ability of Ismail Khan to mobilize local resistance)
- QST surrounds and then enters Kabul, most likely without serious resistance
- If ANSF forces fight for Kabul, QST tries to defeat them outside the city and tries to avoid attacks within the city as much as possible
- QST forces push around Kabul toward Bagram as quickly as they can to secure the airfield or at least deny it to the ANSF/Coalition; QST quickly secures Kabul International Airport

QST Reaction to Scenarios 1 (complete withdrawal) & 2 (SOF only) Timeline

- If US announces adoption of either scenario in October 2009 and begins withdrawing forces immediately, QST begins to prepare for a spring offensive at once
- QST most likely achieves phases a (consolidation of south) and b (offensives toward north and east) by the end of 2010
- Phase c (Kabul and beyond) may be delayed until early 2011
- US forces may retain some access to KAF, BAF, and other airfields through 2010, although QST attacks on those airfields become more likely as the year goes on
- US forces likely to lose uncontested access to Afghan airfields and freedom of movement by early 2011 at the latest
 - Afghan airfields are vulnerable to rocket and mortar attack unless surrounding areas, especially high ground, are held, which requires significant combat forces (as the Soviets discovered)
 - US forces could not rely on ground transportation into Afghanistan or within Afghanistan in these scenarios

Scenario 3 (training and air support only)

Assumptions

- Most NATO forces depart, leaving Oruzgan, Ghazni, Herat, and Farah without any coalition forces, trainers, partners, or mentors
- US (possibly with some coalition assistance) continues to provide trainers and air support to ANSF forces in areas in which it now operates (Kandahar, Zabol, Helmand, and east)
- See UK response slide for UK COAs

QST Reaction to Scenario 3

Phase a (kill and demoralize)

- **Objective: Break US will to continue training and supporting by taking advantage of increased vulnerability of US forces; Break ANSF will to fight**
- QST conducts targeted attacks on ANSF units with embedded trainers in order to:
 - Kill trainers
 - Take trainers hostage
 - Force trainers to call in close air support (CAS) in populated areas to generate civilian casualties
 - Demoralize ANSF units and persuade them to disarm, defect, or disintegrate
- QST works to establish firing positions near KAF, Lashkar Gah, TK, Bastion, and other critical coalition airfields and bases to conduct rocket and mortar attacks
- QST establishes complex IED fields along roads leading from ANSF bases to interdict ANSF freedom of movement (since ANSF has extremely limited route-clearance ability, ANSF units are likely to lose FOM very quickly)

QST Reaction to Scenario 3

Phase b (disintegration)

- **Objective: Disintegrate the Afghan state and security forces; split US from Afghan partners; obtain international assistance; continue demoralization**
- Assuming US forces continue to support ANSF and that ANSF forces continue to fight, QST may attempt to negotiate with Karzai, offering him some titular position in return for his ejecting US forces
- QST will redouble its efforts to acquire MANPADs with which to target US transport aircraft supplying KAF and any other critical bases in the area
- QST will launch targeted assassination campaigns, working from within the ANSF whenever possible, against ANSF leaders who continue to resist, as well as their families
- QST will mobilize forces in order to attempt to overrun one or more US/ANSF bases
- QST will seek short-term bargains with Iran and/or international terrorist groups for high-end weaponry to compel complete US withdrawal
- QST will continue consolidation of its control of all areas outside of US/ANSF bases, including the normalization of “shadow” governance, elimination of GIRoA entities and agents, conscription of fighters, and establishment of defended sanctuaries

QST Reaction to Scenario 4 (Steady-State)



- **Objective: QST continues to highlight illegitimacy of GIRoA and to develop its own credentials as de facto government**
- **MLCOA**
 - QST continues to consolidate control of areas lacking ANSF and Coalition forces, especially: Farah, Oruzgan outside TK, Kandahar, Now Zad and Nad Ali in Helmand, northern Ghazni, most of Zabol
 - QST continues to contest coalition operations in the Helmand River Valley (HRV), working to inflict maximum casualties on British forces
 - QST vigorously contests US operations in Arghandab and Canadian operations in Zharay-Panjwayi districts of Kandahar, working to inflict maximum casualties on Canadian forces
 - QST attempts to draw US forces, especially in Arghandab, into causing civilian casualties
 - QST continues to infiltrate Kandahar City and solidify shadow governance throughout the south
 - QST continues to sponsor attacks in Konduz, Badghis, and Herat to generate the impression that their presence is pervasive
 - QST emphasizes Afghan nationalism to build anti-occupation sentiment
- **MDCOA**
 - QST may attempt to spark inter-ethnic fighting through mass-casualty attacks, information operations, or other means
 - QST launches a concerted campaign of SVBIED, rocket, and mortar attacks on coalition bases
 - QST acquires MANPADs capable of successfully attacking coalition transport aircraft
 - QST acquires EFPs in numbers sufficient to restrict coalition freedom of movement severely (this COA is highly dependent on Iranian strategy in response to any additional sanctions or other US/international actions threatened or undertaken in response to recent revelations about the Qom nuclear facility—the QST probably has very little ability to affect this COA)

Scenario 5 (Full Resources)

Assumptions

- 4-6 additional US brigade combat teams (BCTs) deploy over course of 2010, primarily into Kandahar and Helmand
- ANSF development accelerated
- UK forces remain constant
- Dutch forces withdraw in 2010 as planned
- Canadian forces continue to fight through 2010 as planned, preparing for 2011 departure

QST Reaction to Scenario 5, MLCOA

- **Objective: Weather the storm; show that the coalition strategy is failing; separate the US from Karzai and the Afghan people; peel away US allies**
- QST contests important areas in Helmand and Kandahar (esp. Arghandab, Zharay-Panjwayi, Sangin, Nad Ali) until coalition forces achieve overmatch in those areas, whereupon QST withdraws leaders and strategic assets to surrounding safe havens; local fighters either reconcile or go to ground
- QST forces in uncontested areas attempt to consolidate control, maintain FOM, support contested areas, and prepare to defend sanctuaries
- Prominently seize isolated district centers and attempt to retake areas “cleared” by coalition forces
- QST increases attacks against more vulnerable coalition partners
- QST highlights illegitimacy of GIRoA
- QST seeks to cause significant increase in coalition, especially US, casualties
- QST seeks to draw US forces into operations that generate large numbers of civilian casualties
- QST offers to negotiate with Karzai government in order to persuade US that a negotiated settlement is possible
- QST emphasizes Afghan nationalism to build anti-occupation sentiment

QST Reaction to Scenario 5, MDCOA

- **Objectives: Break US will rapidly; show that the coalition strategy is failing; draw US forces off plan**
- Includes activities described in MLCOA plus the following
- Assumes QST is willing to accept significantly increased risk
- QST conducts spectacular attacks against NATO bases, Afghan bases, and government offices
- QST focuses attacks on Herat and expands operations from Konduz to the north and west
- QST makes a concerted effort to rocket coalition bases
- QST acquires advanced technology (EFPs, advanced MANPADs, etc.)
- QST conducts effective assassination campaign against Afghan leaders working with the coalition

Haqqani Network (HQN)

- Objectives:
- Regain control over historically-controlled territory of Greater Paktia (provinces of Paktia, Paktika, and Khowst)
- Retain autonomy from QST in Greater Paktia
- Negotiate a position of power in a Taliban-controlled government, retaining leverage and some independence from QST
- Promote radical Islamist ideology

Haqqani Reaction to Scenarios 1 (full withdrawal) and 2 (SOF only)

- HQN launches operations to retake Greater Paktia (Khowst, Paktia, and Paktika)
- MDCOA – short term – HQN contests U.S. withdrawal over Khowst-Gardez pass
- HQN leadership returns to Afghanistan quickly in scenario 1, more slowly and cautiously in scenario 2
- HQN may attack into Ghazni, Logar, and Wardak to expand control or gain leverage in negotiations with QST for future power-sharing
- HQN participates ostentatiously in QST operations to take Kabul
- HQN negotiates aggressively with QST for prominent role in future Taliban government
- MDCOA – intermediate term - HQN allows al Qaeda to return to Afghanistan

Haqqani Network and al Qaeda

Have directly supported one another in the past:

- Personal relationships dating from mid-1980s
- Common ideological commitment to radical and violent Islamism
- War-tested alliances (victory against Soviets; survived defeat by US)
- Common sources of funding
- Can mutually benefit one another in Afghanistan in the future:
- AQ resources can support HQN autonomy from QST, give HQN regional or global significance
- HQN can give AQ leaders physical sanctuary in Afghanistan
- HQN can expand successful programs to indoctrinate and radicalize youth in madrassas in Waziristan into Greater Paktia, and possibly throughout Afghanistan, building cadre for al Qaeda recruiting
- HQN can offer AQ training facilities—especially small-footprint facilities to teach skills in building and using explosives and other technical skills that do not require large visible compounds (can be established within cities and towns)

Al Qaeda Needs Sanctuary for Global Operations

- Al Qaeda leadership and cadre have historically relied on physical sanctuaries in sympathetic or weakly governed states, such as Sudan in the early 1990s, Afghanistan in the late 1990s, and currently Northwest Frontier Province / Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan
- Al Qaeda has continued to plan international attacks (such as the UK 7/7 attack) from its sanctuaries in Pakistan
- Al Qaeda has publically supported the return of Mullah Omar's government to Afghanistan and would likely seek safe havens there should he or Haqqani succeed

Timeline, HQN Reaction to Scenarios 1 (complete withdrawal) & 2 (SOF only)

- If US announces adoption of either scenario in October 2009 and begins withdrawing forces immediately, HQN begins to prepare for a spring offensive at once
- Haqqani most likely achieves freedom of movement in summer 2010 and control of Greater Paktia by the end of 2010
- HQN force projection into provinces near Kabul and participation in Kabul offensive likely in early 2011
- US forces may retain some access to BAF and other airfields outside of Greater Paktia through 2010, but might have to fight HQN for the lines of communication out of the Khowst bowl

HQN Reactions to Scenario 3 (trainers and air support only)

Objectives: Gain territorial control of greater Paktia; destabilize Afghan government; break the Coalition from the Afghan government; force Coalition withdrawal; position leadership for power-broker role in future government

- HQN will attack ANSF in Greater Paktia in order to disintegrate that force and increase its freedom of movement
- HQN will launch targeted assassination campaigns against ANSF and government officials, as well as their families
- HQN will continue spectacular attacks against the Afghan government in Kabul and its environs
- HQN will attempt spectacular attacks against U.S. bases or soldiers, including kidnapping or an attempt to overrun one or more US/ANSF bases
- HQN may increase its efforts to acquire MANPADs with which to target US transport aircraft
- HQN may seek short-term bargains with Iran and/or international terrorist groups for high-end weaponry to compel complete US withdrawal
- HQN will continue to tolerate limited QST shadow government in Greater Paktia
- HQN promotes radicalization of madrassas in Greater Paktia as it grows more powerful

HQN Reactions to Scenario 4 (steady state)

- **Objective: Weaken coalition and Afghan government control of Greater Paktia, isolate the Khowst Bowl, gain control of Greater Paktia**
- **MLCOA:**
 - HQN continues efforts to disrupt construction of the Khowst-Gardez Pass (K-G Pass) road
 - HQN continues efforts to gain influence and, where possible, control over the Khowst Bowl
 - HQN continues to conduct spectacular attacks in Kabul and elsewhere to raise funds and international support
 - HQN continues efforts to expand its presence in Wardak and Lowgar Provinces and to interdict Highway 1
- **MDCOA:**
 - HQN receives increased support from AQ and other regional/international terrorist organizations in the form of suicide bombers and/or advanced weaponry
 - Extremist leaders in Waziristan (e.g. Gul Bahadur, Maulvi Nazir, Hakimullah Mehsud) commit significant fighters and/or resources to support HQN efforts in Afghanistan
 - Mullah Omar regularly presses Pakistani Taliban groups to focus on fighting the US in Afghanistan
 - Malign elements within the Pakistani military-intelligence complex could offer incentives, including peace agreements, for such leaders to turn their attention toward Afghanistan and away from Pakistan after the death of Beitullah Mehsud

HQN Reactions to Scenario 5 (troop increase)

Objectives: Maintain presence, influence, and freedom of movement in Greater Paktia; increase spectacular attacks to discredit government and force U.S. withdrawal

- **MLCOA:**
 - HQN continues to conduct spectacular attacks in Kabul and elsewhere to raise funds and international support
 - HQN increases spectacular attacks in Khowst Bowl
 - HQN continues efforts to disrupt construction of the Khowst-Gardez Pass (K-G Pass) road
 - HQN continues efforts to expand its presence in Wardak and Lowgar Provinces and to interdict Highway 1
- **MDCOA:**
 - HQN receives increased support from AQ and other regional/international terrorist organizations in the form of suicide bombers and/or advanced weaponry
 - Extremist leaders in Waziristan (e.g. Gul Bahadur, Maulvi Nazir, Hakimullah Mehsud) commit significant fighters and/or resources to support HQN efforts in Afghanistan
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 - Malign elements within the Pakistani military-intelligence complex could offer incentives, including peace agreements, for such leaders to turn their attention toward Afghanistan and away from Pakistan after the death of Beitullah Mehsud

UK Responses

- In response to Scenarios 1&2 (full withdrawal and SOF-only), the UK most likely withdraws all forces
- In response to Scenario 3 (training only), the UK withdraws all combat forces
 - UK may leave some trainers and other support elements, especially if NATO modifies its mandate rather than abandoning the effort entirely
- In response to Scenarios 4&5 (steady-state and fully-resourced COIN), the UK most likely sustains its current deployment
 - The UK might agree to a small increase in its forces, at least temporarily, if the US presence increased dramatically, particularly if more US forces deployed to Helmand

Pakistan Responses (Scenarios 1-3)



- Malign elements within the Pakistani military-intelligence complex have argued for the need to support the QST and HQN on the grounds that the US would sooner or later abandon Afghanistan
- President Asif Zardari has been unable to prevent these elements from supporting those groups, but has been able to mobilize the Pakistani military against extremists within Pakistan whom those malign elements also generally sympathize with and support
- There is also considerable resistance to Pakistani operations against even internal Islamists on the grounds that they are a diversion from the real threat—India
- The withdrawal of US combat forces envisioned in Scenarios 1, 2, and 3 will very likely tip the balance of these arguments in favor of the malign actors and against Zardari and others seeking to marginalize extremists within Pakistan
- It will certainly cement continued active Pakistani support for HQN and the QST, and Islamabad is extremely unlikely to support US attacks on those groups, even for harboring al Qaeda operatives, after US forces are gone
- The heavy reliance on airpower required by scenarios 2 and 3 will continue to fuel regional anger at the US over inevitable collateral damage (and the lack of US forces on the ground will make combating enemy information operations even about “clean” strikes impossible—blood beats gun-camera footage every time)
- Pakistan will likely be tempted to resettle groups like Lashkar-e Tayyiba into border regions or even into Afghanistan in order to:
 - Create depth for those groups from potential Indian attack
 - Create “plausible deniability” about the location of training bases and the origin of attacks on India
 - Move those groups away from sensitive areas in metropolitan Pakistan (Punjab especially)

Pakistani Responses (Scenario 4)



- Pakistan will very likely view the rejection of GEN McChrystal's request for additional forces as an indication of waning US commitment to Afghanistan
- Islamabad will become more likely to increase support to HQN and QST in the expectation of a complete US withdrawal
- Islamabad may also work more actively to undermine the Karzai government, which some see as nearly an Indian proxy
- The death of Beitullah Mehsud and the perception of waning American commitment in Afghanistan may also persuade Islamabad to reduce American operations of all varieties within Pakistan

Pakistani Responses (Scenario 5)

- Pakistan will most likely view the deployment of more US forces to Afghanistan as an indication of US commitment, although that perception depends on the way the deployment is described (i.e., if the president emphasizes a time-limit or hints at the likelihood of a changed strategy within a year, the perception of US commitment may be undermined even despite the increased deployment)
- Pakistan will not take action against the QST or HQN in any likely scenario, regardless of US decisions
- Pakistan is more likely to continue the fight against its own internal enemies if it believes that the US will prevail in Afghanistan
- Islamabad is very unlikely to increase support to the QST and HQN if the US deploys additional forces
- If and when Islamabad becomes persuaded that the QST and HQN will NOT likely prevail in Afghanistan, it becomes more likely to reduce support to those groups

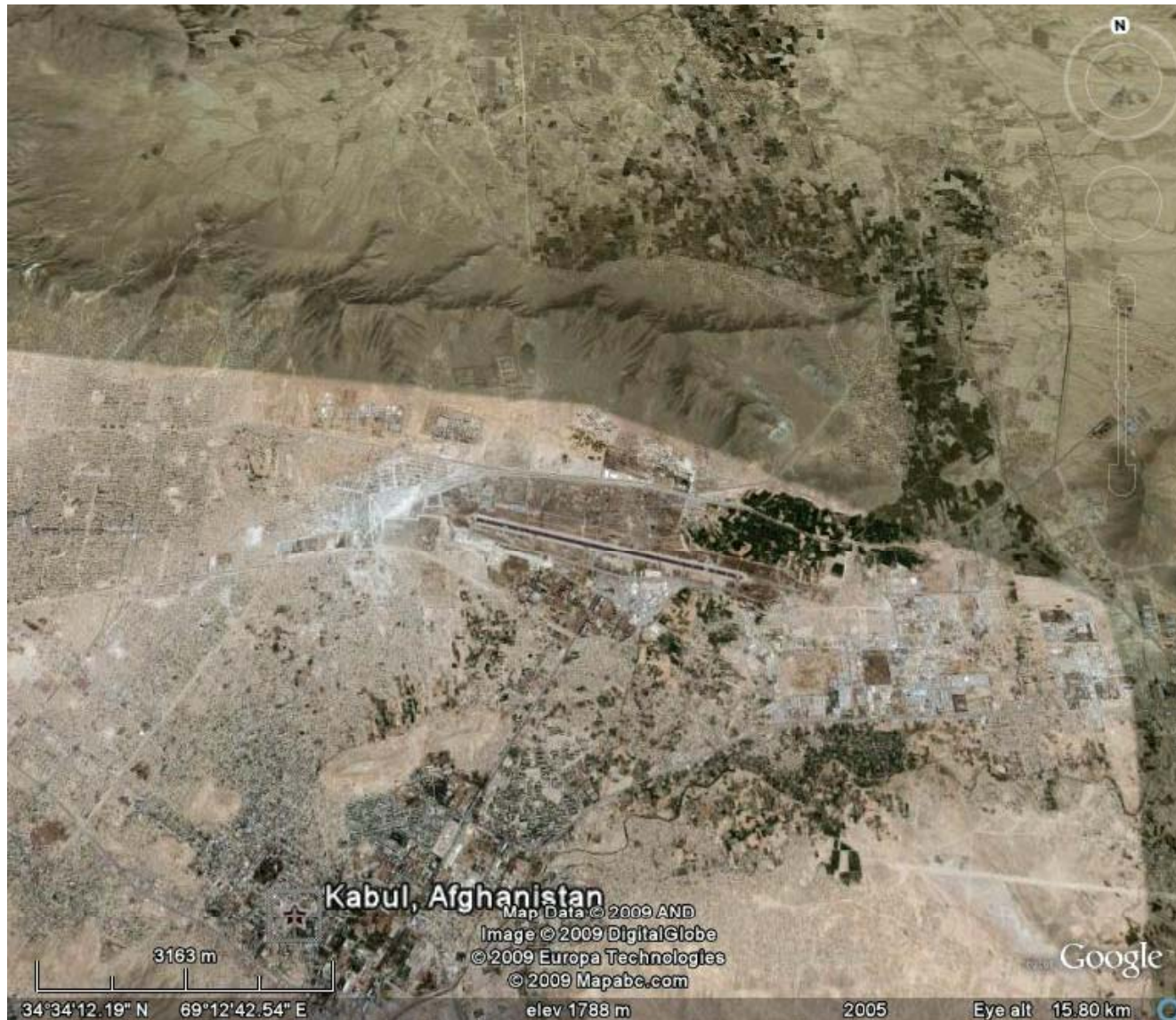
Securing Lines of Communication (LOCs) for Exit

- Must retain air and ground LoCs in order to move heavy equipment as well as people
- LOC 1: Torkham Gate – existing forces in RC East could hold Jalalabad Road during exit
- LOC 2: Spin Boldak – Stryker battalion deploying to Spin Boldak could probably secure the LOC with some reinforcement
- LOC 3: Northern ground LOC – additional forces would be required in Konduz to secure the movement of troops and materiel from the south

Airfields

- US will need assured access to multiple airfields in any scenario, including withdrawal
- Airfields are vulnerable to rocket attacks unless the surrounding area (out to 6 km range at least) is either controlled by friendly forces or actively supports the coalition
- Terrain greatly complicates any such effort in isolation from a more general COIN approach

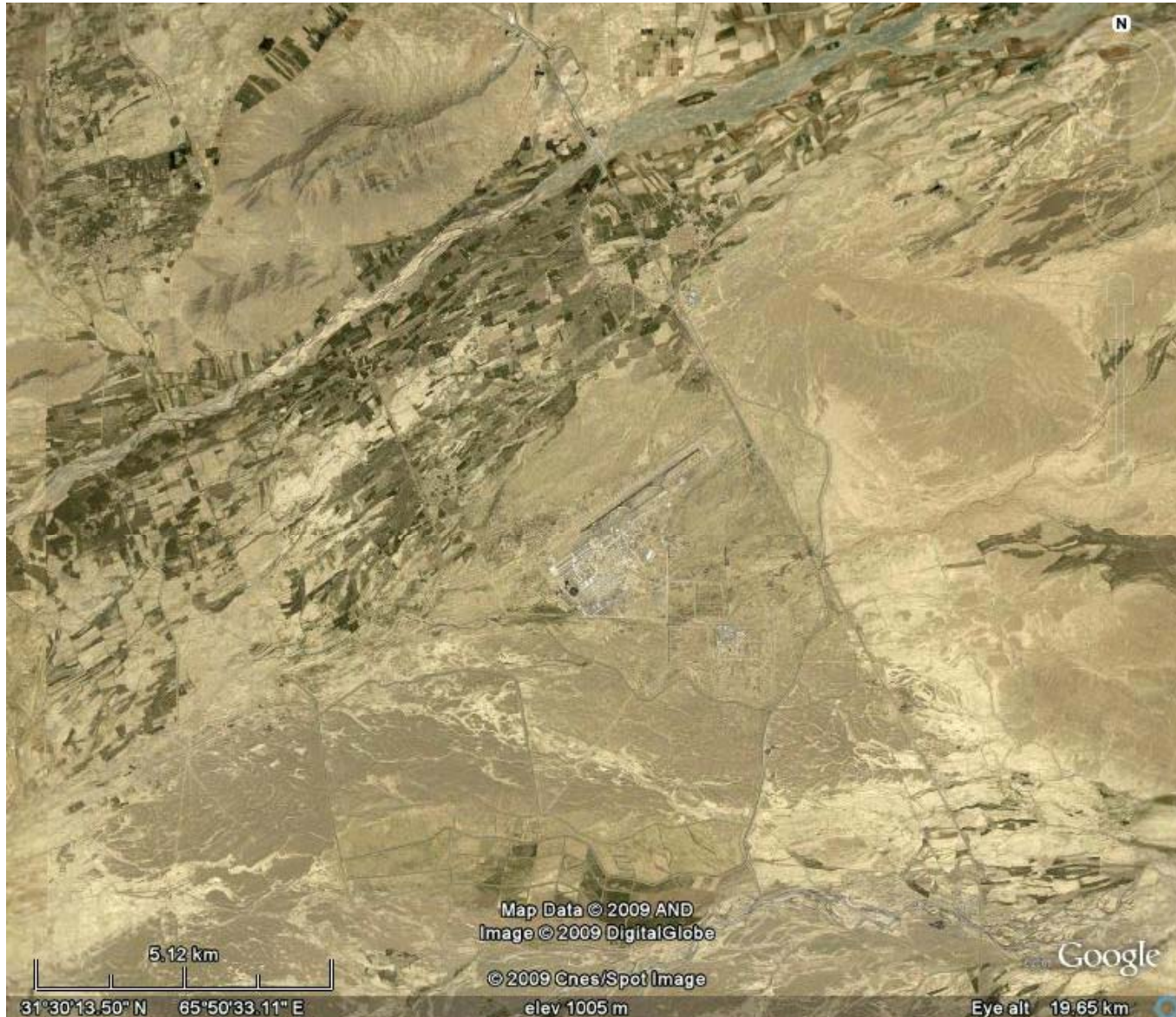
Kabul International Airport



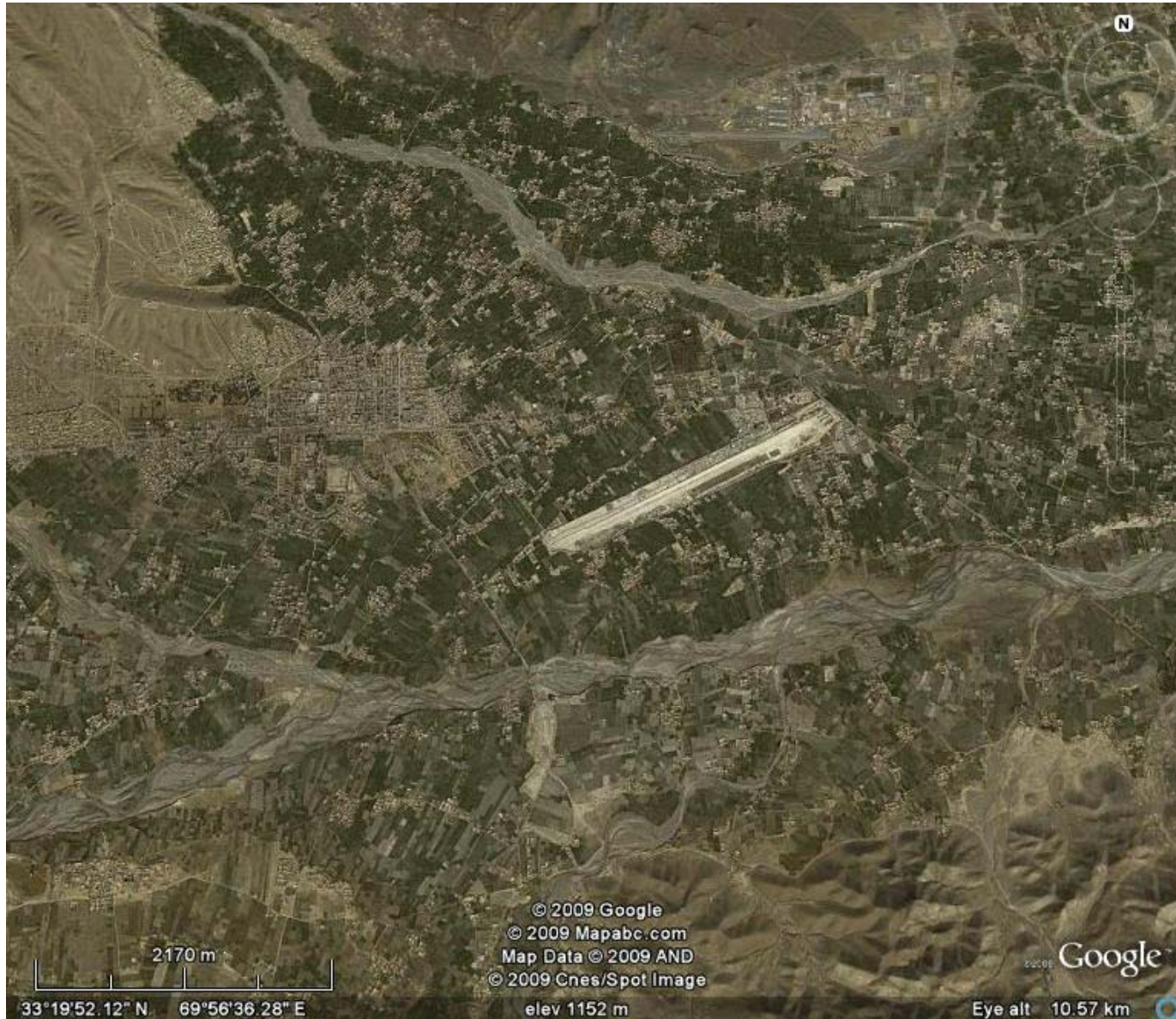
Bagram Base and Airfield



Kandahar Base and Airfield



Khowst Airfield



Jalalabad Airfield



Ethnic Civil War

- The withdrawal of significant numbers of American combat forces in the current environment will very likely result in the mobilization of Tajik, Uzbek, and possibly Hazara militias in preparation for Taliban (i.e. Pashtun) attacks
- If it appears that Taliban forces may be moving toward Kabul, militias (especially those based in nearby Panjshir) may move preemptively to take control of the city and/or its approaches (as happened in the 1990s)
- Unless the Taliban significantly reduces its activity in Konduz, Badghis, Herat, and elsewhere in the north, the threat of rising Taliban power from the south will likely lead to Tajik and Uzbek militia attacks on Pashtun pockets in the north
- Uzbek extremists (IMU and IJU) who have already moved from Pakistan into northern Afghanistan will be drawn into the fight, and may bring reinforcements
- Expanding civil conflict may destabilize extremely fragile Tajikistan and re-ignite conflict in Uzbekistan
- The prospect of such renewed ethnic conflict will very likely generate another set of waves of migration into Iran, Central Asia, and Pakistan
 - In the current environment, it is far from clear how Iran would react to such a development, since Tehran has been steadily repatriating Afghan refugees and migrant workers involuntarily for the past three years
 - Significant renewed Pashtun migration into Pakistan would likely fuel anti-Islamabad insurgencies there, particularly those with significant roots in the refugee camps already in Pakistan
 - Pakistan does not have the resources or capabilities to deal with another large-scale humanitarian crisis following closely on the heels of the Swat operations

Humanitarian Consequences of Taliban Return

- Taliban will reimpose their interpretation of shar'ia law
- Progress made in human rights, particularly the rights of women, will be reversed quickly and probably likely
- Conflict will generate large numbers of internally displaced persons and likely regional emigrants
- Conflict will disrupt transportation, severely hindering or preventing current international efforts to redress the worst effects of Afghanistan's poverty

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