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**THE UNITED STATES' OIL INTERESTS AND THE  
RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN**

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## INTRODUCTION

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In the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the events in Afghanistan have brought to light a track record of self-serving American initiatives in central Asia. Prior to the terrorist attacks, the American press had successfully filtered much the information pertaining to US activities in central Asia that was available to the general public in the United States. As a result, most of the United States' actions taken (by both the Government and private industry) in central Asia went unchecked by the court of public opinion. However, the United States' highly publicized actions in Afghanistan that led to the fall of the Taliban have stirred up a fair amount of interest and consequently, a lot of press. We have chosen to pursue this by exploring the history of the United States' involvement in central Asia and Afghanistan, the US's current role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the anticipated future role of the United States in central Asia's greater economy. Throughout our exploration, we have made an effort to read between the lines in order to synthesize a complete picture of the United States' intentions in Afghanistan. Sadly, what has been found through our research paints a picture of American imperialism, collusion, coercion, and selfishness.

Such an attitude in the United States' foreign relations is not surprising given that American interests in the Middle East are dominated by a dependence on the central Asian oil supply. This dependence is a chief vulnerability for the American economy. The US believes that protecting its interests in the Middle Eastern oil supply is a matter of national security. Further, the central Asian oil supply holds tremendous profit potential for American companies which remains largely untapped. Exploiting this potential would strengthen the American economy by providing US oil companies with

billions of dollars in additional revenue. Together, the American dependence on, and the profit potential provided by the central Asian oil supply offer very strong motives for the United States and private American industry to take aggressive actions to serve its interests. However, these motives do not justify the United States' actions as being morally and ethically correct.

The United States' true intentions behind its actions in Afghanistan were demonstrated by the initiatives that began at about the time when the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Afghanistan. These intentions can also be seen today in our political, cultural and economic reconstructive efforts in Afghanistan and the impending war in Iraq.

## MODERN HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN

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Since the mid 1920s, Afghanistan has been plagued by political unrest. After fighting the British in the 1920s, Afghanistan established a constitutional monarchy. This governmental structure seemed to be a good fit for the predominantly Muslim culture in Afghanistan, but the geographically and politically divided ethnic groups (as seen in the picture below) were not represented fairly. Although the form of monarchy changed structure several times from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, the people of Afghanistan remained unstable.



Figure 1. The Ethnolinguistic Groups of Afghanistan (National Geographic)

In 1973 Mohammed Daud seized power in Afghanistan and created a republic through his right-wing coup (BBC). In attempts to solidify his stay, Daud played off the USSR movements against Western powers. However, Daud's strong actions caused a left-wing faction to develop and overthrow his reign. Shortly afterwards, temporary leaders began fighting for control. These political struggles resulted in revolts throughout all of Afghanistan.

While Afghanistan floundered to establish a stable government, Afghanistan began to gain recognition in international circles because of its geographic location and its potential role in the transport of \$5 trillion of oil from the areas surrounding Afghanistan (Alexander's). The mushrooming demand for oil through the mid twentieth century, and the oil crisis of 1973 established oil as a dominant driver in the world economy. Seemingly resource-poor Afghanistan became a key to controlling a significant portion of the oil in central Asia. In 1979, Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Tarki began an intense battle over Afghan leadership (BBC). As the threat of political and economic danger elevated, the Soviet Union decided to send in troops to help remove Amin and prop up a Communist government, thus strengthening the Soviet Union's position within Afghanistan.

In place of Amin, the Soviet Union installed Babrak Karmal as leader of the People's Democratic Party. As expected, many Afghans rebelled against the Soviet Union's efforts and Afghan mujahedin groups began anti-regime resistance against Soviet forces. In an effort to thwart the Soviet Union, the United States, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia began supplying money and arms to the mujahdedin groups fighting against the Soviet Union.

In 1985, the mujahedin officially came together in Pakistan to form an alliance against Soviet forces (BBC). At this time, it is estimated that half of the Afghan population had been displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighboring Iran or Pakistan. To much of the world's encouragement, Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the new Soviet leader and then promises to withdraw his troops from Afghanistan.

Despite the Soviet's 1985 promise, the US begins supplying mujahedin with Stinger missiles in 1986, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopters (BBC). Finally in 1988 after much bloodshed and little progress, Afghanistan, the USSR, the US, and Pakistan sign peace accords and the Soviet Union begins pulling out its troops.

Although all the Soviet troops had left the area by 1989, civil war continued in Afghanistan as mujahedin push to overthrow Najibullah, the new Soviet-backed Afghan leader that replaced Karmal. In 1991, in attempts to simmer political tensions, the US and the USSR agree to end military aid to both sides. In 1992, the mujahedin successfully overthrow Najibullah and the Tajik's win power with Burhanuddin Rabbani proclaimed as president (BBC). 1992 is the first time since the Soviet invasion in 1979 that the United States could begin to pursue a role in central Asian oil transport.

At this same time, Afghanistan's northern neighbors began vying for US investments for the development of oil extraction and transport capabilities. In March of 1993, President Niyazov of Turkmenistan brought on former US National Security Advisor Alexander Haig to lobby for American investments to this end and for the loosening of sanctions on Iran (worldpress.org). However, a strong Israeli lobby in Washington prevents any loosening of the current Iranian sanctions. In 1995, Turkmenistan and Pakistan select Unocal, a California-based oil company, to build a

pipeline through Afghanistan. However, Bidas, an Argentinean oil company, had signed exclusive rights with the Afghan government for the oil transit rights (Ottoway).

At this same time, the Afghan people are still not content with the governmental structure so the Taliban, primarily headed by people of the Pashtun ethnic group, gain support as a major challenge to the Rabbani-led government. In 1996, the Taliban seized control of Kabul, thus giving Unocal new hope in its pursuance of the Afghan pipeline contract. The Taliban immediately introduced a strict version of Islam, banning women from work, and introducing many stiff Islamic standards such as dress and behavior codes (Ottoway). In fear of his life, Rabbani flees to join an anti-Taliban regime known as the Northern Alliance (BBC).

The central Asian pipeline development grows in urgency as the major players (The US, Russia, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Argentina, and various private companies therein) recognize the quantity of oil that may be accessible in central Asia. "The deposits are huge," said a diplomat from the region. Kazakhstan alone may have more oil than Saudi Arabia. Turkmenistan is already known to have the fifth largest gas reserves in the world (Telegraph 10/11/96)."

In 1997, Afghanistan is still not under complete control. The upper one-third of the nation is controlled by the Northern Alliance while the bottom two-thirds is under the Taliban. At this point, a few countries begin recognizing the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. However, most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as the head of state. Unocal enters into talks with Taliban leaders in an effort to reach an agreement to push forward with the Afghan pipeline development.

In 1998, the Taliban is accused by the US of harboring known terrorists including Osama bin Laden. In efforts to thwart the Taliban efforts, the US launches missile strikes at the suspected bases of militants. In response to the US bombings, Unocal officially removes all US personnel involved in the Afghanistan pipeline development and withdraws from the pipeline consortium. Soon much of the world backs the US claims, and the UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial. In 2001, the UN imposes further sanctions on Taliban to force them to hand over Osama bin Laden.

America's involvement Afghanistan came to a head in the fall of 2001, when Osama bin Laden and the Taliban were accused of committing the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Soon thereafter, the US and Britain launched air strikes against Afghanistan because the Taliban refused to hand over Osama bin Laden. All US activities pertaining to the Afghan pipeline have been on hold since the Unocal withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1998.

After ousting the Taliban in December of 2001, Afghan representatives from the major cities and ethnic groups assemble in Bonn and agree of terms for the interim government. On December 22, 2001 Pashtun royalist Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of a 30-member interim power-sharing government. Shortly thereafter, the UN Security Council extends mandate of the peacekeeping International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan until December 2002. Turkey prepares to take over command of the 5,000-strong ISAF from Britain by the end of June 2002. Pervez Musharraf, the current President of Pakistan, and Karzai agreed to push forward with the construction of an oil pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan via Afghanistan (Irish Times, Feb. 9, 2002).

# INTERNATIONAL PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN

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## Overview of International Plan

After the Taliban was ousted in the fall of 2001, Afghanistan began the difficult process of reconstruction. Several countries and institutions proposed their respective ideas and plans on how to best rebuild Afghanistan and establish a viable Afghan government and economy. In this section, we will outline the major international proposals for Afghan reconstruction including those from the United Kingdom, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation. However, before delving into the specifics of each plan, it is first necessary to outline the common groundwork that each of these proposals must follow according to current Afghan law.

As previously mentioned, after the Taliban was removed from power in the fall in fall of 2001 a conference was held in Bonn to coordinate the establishment of the new Afghan government. A loya jirga, or counsel comprised of tribal chiefs, intellectuals and religious leaders, was formed to promote representatives of the Afghan people to express their respective concerns and concessions for the new Afghan government (UN 1363). By drawing from all segments of society including all ethnic and religious communities as well as women representatives, the future of the Afghanistan government was able, for the first time, to represent all of the Afghan people. After forming a general consensus, the Bonn Agreement was agreed upon and signed on December 5, 2001 (UN 1383).

The agreement lays out several processes through which power will be exercised and then transferred over time to a fully representative government selected through free

and fair elections. It provides for the sovereignty of Afghanistan to reside first in the Afghanistan Interim Authority (AIA), then succeeded by the Afghanistan Transitional Authority (ATA), and then ultimately within about 2 and a half years, by the Government of Afghanistan (UN 1383).

In addition, the Bonn Agreement also appointed Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the AIA, clarified the status of the Afghanistan constitution and other laws, and set in motion entities enabling the development of the nation including the Civil Service Commission, the Human Rights Commission, and the Judicial Commission.

Within the confines of the Bonn Agreement and pending the approval the AIA, several formal reconstruction efforts have been developed by various countries and institutions. Proposals from the United Kingdom, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation each focus on different Afghan concerns. By highlighting the major international proposals, we hope to distinguish their well-intended plans for the Afghan people and later contrast this with the self-serving plans of the United States.

### **The United Kingdom's Plan**

The United Kingdom's commitment to rebuild Afghanistan is headed under their Department for International Development (DFID). The UK's broad objective is "to help support a stable and secure Afghanistan restored to its rightful place in the community of nations and enjoying mature relations with its neighbours" (DFID). In hopes of creating a better Afghanistan, the UK has outlined what it believes to be the most central Afghan concerns. The UK aims at: 1) establishing a self-sustaining economy, strong institutions, and a broad-based, multi-ethnic regime, 2) eradicating terrorism 3) eliminating opium

production, 3) reducing poverty, 4) establishing a society that respects human rights, 4) enabling Afghanistan to be involved in the international community and honor the country's other international obligations (DFID). With these goals, the UK believes it can be a contributing factor to the success of the Afghan people, its economy, and its political structure.

Socially, the UK sees Afghanistan as one of the world's poorest countries in the world and is planning to address several of its most appalling social conditions. The UK notes that Afghanistan has one of the world's highest child and maternal mortality rates, lowest literacy rates, and lowest life expectancy (UN 1363). In addition, there has been a long history of regional power-brokers who have considerable control over local Afghan people. According to the UK, these leaders have been the root of many of the atrocious social conditions and the UK has vowed to help eradicate these hostile people.

As for the economic redevelopment, the UK's main priority is "to establish sound revenue collection and public expenditure management systems" (DFID). This includes developing public works and establishing the necessary legal and institutional infrastructure. Part of this infrastructure is creating conditions for new income and employment opportunities as well as the access to credit. Given the volatility of the area it is extremely difficult to currently access commercial credit and the UK has agreed to begin extending lines of credit for economic redevelopment.

Funding these redevelopment efforts will be of considerable expense and the UK has pledged £200 million (about \$285 million) for their development strategies (DFID). In fact much of the UK support has been in coordination with the United Nations' plan for Afghanistan which will be discussed next. However, the UK has led its own charge

in many respects. From rebuilding schools, factories, and government buildings to repairing roads and providing basic education to more than 3 million boys and girls, the UK has made large efforts to truly help the Afghan people.

### **The United Nations' Plan**

The United Nations' Plan for Afghanistan is headed under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and has been outline under UN Resolutions 1363, 1378, 1383, and 1386. Under the UNDP, the UN has provided for the “opportunity and framework for recovery and reconstruction efforts to buttress the political settlement” (UNDP). In accordance with the Bonn Agreement the AIA, the UN proposal focuses on improving nearly all aspects of the Afghanistan life including security, justice, human rights, governance, economic management, heath, education, urban infrastructure, and natural resource management. While we only intend on briefly highlighting these concerns, it will be quite apparent that many of them indeed overlap.

Of course the security of the Afghan people is of utmost concern. The UN contends that Afghan safety will be largely dependent upon removing the military mines from common lands as well as curbing the drug market of poppy production. The UN estimates that there are some 200,000 survivors of mine accidents nearly 150-300 deaths or injuries per month from mines (UN 1378). Given the severity of the problem, the UN has stepped up its efforts and plans for Afghanistan to be free of mines in 5-7 years (UN 1386). The UN also contends that poppy production is of grave concern because of its use to make opium. Prior to Taliban rule, Afghanistan had been the source of 80% of the world's poppy production (UN 1378). While the Taliban was in rule, however, poppy production was all but eliminated because of strict Islamic law and harsh enforcement.

Now that the Taliban is gone, Afghanistan has again become a center for drug lords, and the UN believes that the new Afghan government must effectively ban opium production for the safety of the people.

The UN notes that while poppy production should be avoided, other agricultural systems must be put in place. The UN is attempting to provide alternative livelihoods to farmers and seasonal workers who depend on the poppy harvest. In addition to finding new markets the UN is also attempting to overcome the most recent 2 year Afghan drought by increasing supply of seeds, fertilizers, and tools for agricultural development as well as restoring the livestock sector (UN 1386). The UN stresses that if Afghanistan is to regain economic control, the agricultural sector must make a turnaround.

Another major UN undertaking is improving the Afghan health. The UN believes that the in health, “the most urgent mission is to revive the preventative and public health services, including a few low-cost interventions to that have high payoff” (UNDP). This includes programs such as immunization, reproductive health, communicable disease control, maternal and child health issues, and health and hygiene education.

Education is also of importance if Afghanistan is to gain sustainable economic development. Under current situations, only 38% of boys and 3% of girls are enrolled in primary education (UNDP). The UN has outline measures to reopen government schools at the primary and secondary level and well as reopening Kabul University and other regional colleges. The costs for these educational efforts will be extremely high, but the UN and other non-government organizations have pledged to volunteer support and give funds to ensure a strong Afghan educational system.

The UN also stresses that urban development within Afghanistan must proceed if the nation is to become an integrated economy. At present, only 23% of the population has access to safe water while only 12% has access to adequate sanitation (UNDP). Of course government and commercial buildings as well as citizen's homes must be rebuilt. Successful integration will also largely depend on rebuilding the 2500 kilometer primary road network through Afghanistan.

Through Resolution 1378, the UN has specifically outlined the measures it intends to undertake to ensure a successful reconstruction of Afghanistan. While the costs of these measures vary between \$11 and \$18 billion over the next 10 years, the UN is committed to creating a promising Afghanistan culture and economy.

### **The World Bank Approach**

The World Bank Approach for Afghanistan is built on the Bank's core competencies and comparative advantages, based on its experience with reconstruction in other countries as well as its previous work within Afghanistan. As expected, the World Bank's approach primarily focuses on the funding of Afghan redevelopment. The Bank's plan is clearly outlined and aims to: 1) Formulate a reconstruction plan for Afghanistan whose process and product align with the Bonn Agreement and the AIA, 2) Design and help put in place appropriate mechanisms to fund and manage the reconstruction effort, 3) Initiate full-scale needs assessments leading to the development of detailed reconstruction plans, 4) Develop specific plans for those components of Afghanistan's reconstruction where the Bank can be of help through financial support and/or technical assistance (The World Bank Group).

Within these objectives, the World Bank has also distinguished its plan from the others by detailing several underlying principles which will guide their efforts in the reconstruction process. In attempts to truly represent the Afghan people, the Bank has laid out conditions that will ensure a successful economy and culture while helping to avoid self-serving initiatives. One such principle is that the reconstruction be demand driven and not supply driven so as to only give Afghanistan what all of the Afghan people need. Secondly, the Bank emphasizes equity among different regions, ethnic groups, religions, and gender. Thirdly, the World Bank recognizes the importance of quickly generating income throughout the population through large-scale employment. Fourthly, the Bank is committed to working with current existing programs as well as scaling these projects for greater outreach. Fifthly, the World Bank specifically details its dedication to ensuring continuity between humanitarian and reconstruction activities. This is crucial because unlike many other international organizations, the World Bank is prepared to examine a larger scope of the problems at hand and deal with Afghanistan in a consistent manner as to ensure certain projects do not jeopardize the ethical standards set before them. Sixthly, the World Bank stresses the importance of the private sector, calling it the “central pillar” of the reconstruction strategy because eventually, international support will leave Afghanistan and the country will need to survive and thrive on its own. Lastly, the Bank strives to avoid centralized bureaucracies and other inflated, self-interested organizations that will not truly help the Afghan people (World Bank Group). With these clear underlying principles, the World Bank believes that their selfless intentions will truly help Afghanistan rebuild its economy and its people.

While the World Bank has further supplied short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals for Afghanistan, we believe its most distinguishable contribution to Afghan redevelopment is its commitment to high standards of work and its dedication to improving the lives of Afghans while seemingly leaving their own interests out of the picture.

### **The Japanese Bank of International Cooperation's Approach**

The Japanese Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) is known for its unique style of economic redevelopment. Under its Overseas Economic Cooperation Operation, the JBIC has had great success in further developing economies throughout Asia, Oceania, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas. Although the JBIC has not directly had a significant individual involvement within Afghanistan, the principles by which the JBIC operate are of great importance to the Afghan community and will be quickly discussed.

The JBIC is firm believer in decentralized nations. While the most country's government structure is 75% federal and only 25% state or provincial, the JBIC aims to reverse this trend (JBIC). It points to the recent success of China. In China the proportion is closed to 30% federal, with the other 70% being spent by the local or provincial governments (JBIC), providing a more viable political structure to its nation thereby enhancing its probability of international success.

The JBIC argues that decentralization in the developing world corrects the problems of the previous era's Colonialism, which drew the boundaries of the new "nations" for the convenience of the colonial powers. Instead, the JBIC pushes for smaller government boundaries that encompass coherent strategies and resources. The

JBIC argues that decentralization will allow cultural groups of specific regions to dictate their own government decisions and will likely lead to a more peaceful nation as powerful regions or interest groups cannot easily exploit their dominant roles on smaller ethnic groups and regions.

Again while the JBIC has not clearly defined specific projects within Afghanistan, the JBIC contends that Afghan redevelopment is contingent upon its ability to create a decentralized government within Afghanistan. As home to more than ten separate ethnic groups, the new Afghan government has a considerable task of encompassing such a diversity of interests. In accordance with many of the JBIC's fundamental ideas, the AIA and the ATA have built the Afghan government in such a way as to accommodate the many different groups. The loya jirga, or tribal counsel, is in many ways adherent to the JBIC's typical format. Many of the decisions through AIA including the idea of the loya jirga can be associated with the JBIC's dedication to decentralization. Though JBIC's advice is clear, it remains to be seen how the future governmental structure of Afghanistan will be created. Nevertheless, the JBIC has shown its success and from evidence of the AIA and ATA's decisions, it has been well accepted.

### **Overall International Role**

As described above, the international redevelopment of Afghanistan is of great importance to the world. While the UN, UK, World Bank, and JBIC all have slightly different objectives within the reconstruction process, it is evident that each of these entities is striving for the success of Afghanistan and not their own selfish intentions. Through reconstruction of the urban areas to establishing health care facilities and school

houses, the international effort for Afghanistan is based on good intentions and strives to build a better Afghanistan for the people of Afghanistan.

## AMERICAN ROLE AND INTENTIONS IN RECONSTRUCTION

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Although the front used by the American Government to justify its involvement in Afghanistan has changed dramatically since the Soviet-era conflicts in Afghanistan, the profile of American interests in central Asia has remained relatively unchanged. While initially leveraging human rights violations by the Soviet regime and humanitarian issues associated with the devastating poverty in Afghanistan to justify its support of the mujahedin groups, the US has now changed its justification to a war against terror and nation building. To this end, the United States has about 60,000 troops currently stationed in Afghanistan (Washington Times, February 12, 2003). However, “there is little doubt that [the US troops] are meant to also serve purposes other than the declared one. In fact, this became evident short[ly] after the military deployment began, as it was inconsistent with a limited war in Afghanistan ([www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org)).” American troops in Afghanistan outnumber the aggregate foreign forces by a factor of about ten to one. Having such a strong presence in Afghanistan, not to mention the 150,000+ troops in other Middle Eastern countries (not factored into the ~10:1 ratio) gives the United States a great deal of influence. The current Bush Administration is using physical force through a dominating military presence to see through its interests in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as neighboring nations.

So why has the United States established an unnecessarily strong military presence in central Asia? While it is impossible to infer all of the intentions of the Bush Administration, hints to its intent can be found in the reactions of other countries to the United States’ actions. Clearly the United States needs to follow through on its promise

and its charter to help stabilize Afghanistan. Doing so will also help the U.S. maintain political favor with the AIA. But what else is the US hoping to achieve? This question is raising a great deal of concern among leaders of nations in the area. “[The] American military presence in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan since October 2001 has been a source of concern for countries having grievances with the United States, such as China, Iran and Russia. These regional powers, which share long borders with Afghanistan and/or Central Asia, were suspicious of the long-term objectives of the American military in their region, a region of interest to the Americans not least for its fossil energy resources. Strategic considerations, i.e., its potential to offer to the US a regional presence to keep Iran, China and Russia in check, also add to American interests in the region ([www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org)).”

It appears that the United States is using the war on terrorism as an excuse to pursue its own political and economic interests. International suspicions of American imperialism will undoubtedly damage US relations with the aforementioned countries and is very likely to damage relations with others, such as Pakistan and India. Further, our attempts to capitalize on the potentially lucrative oil trade in central Asia will raise already heightened tensions with Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan and India.

Existing and proposed developments for the extraction and transport of the Caspian region’s oil supply can be seen in the figure below. Arguably, the most significant pipelines are those yet to be built. These pipelines will deliver oil from the Caspian Sea to Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and China as well as facilitate oil exports to the western world.

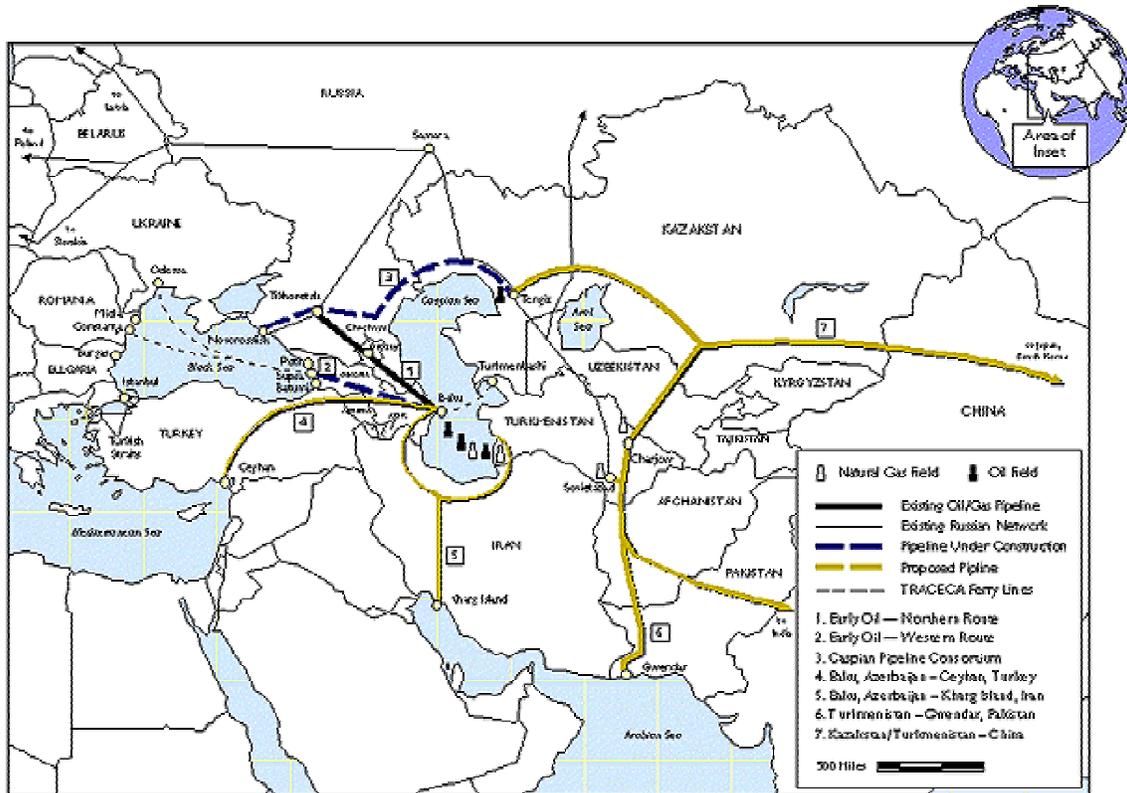


Figure 2. Overview of proposed and existing hydrocarbon transport through central Asia

Because so much of the development is still in the proposal stage, the US believes that if it establishes a strong enough presence, it will be able to better leverage its control of the available oil. Further, it is in the United States’ best interest to make sure that the oil is channeled through Afghanistan and Pakistan instead of Iran and/or Russia. If pipelines are built that allow for the transport of oil through Pakistan and Russia, America will almost certainly have no control of the oil coming out of the Caspian region. Because of this, U.S. Government officials recognize that “Afghanistan occupies the central position in the US strategy for the economic control of the oil and gas

resources in the entire Middle East (The Hindu, 10/31/01).” Without the Afghan oil plans, the US will certainly be at a loss.

Given potential alternatives to a pipeline through Afghanistan can be seen in the figure below. It is in the U.S.’s best interest to block the development of these alternatives through political pressure. So now the circumstances, the US is in a foot race against the likes of Turkey, Iran and Russia to get a solid foothold on the pipeline development. Figure 3 below outlines the various international oil pipelines within Central Asia as well as those pipelines under current development. As shown, there are several Russian oil pipelines as well as existing international lines. This outlined infrastructure indicates the enormous wealth of opportunity for oil exploration within the region. Perhaps this foot race for development explains the seemingly unnecessarily strong US presence in central Asia.



**Oil and Natural Gas Export Infrastructure in Central Asia and the Caucasus**

Sources: U.S. Department of State.

**Figure 3. Current and proposed pipelines in the Middle Eastern region.**

## CONCLUSION

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Through our discussion of Afghanistan's seemingly unending strife, we have sketched the various political structures attempted within Afghanistan and their plight. Most recently, as the Taliban has been removed from power, Afghanistan is again planning a new political structure. In this rebuilding process, we have characterized the efforts of various nations including the UK and the US as well as efforts from non-governmental organizations including the World Bank and the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation. In analyzing the major propositions, it is quite evident that while the international plans for Afghanistan are good natured and well-intended, the US plan for Afghanistan boasts of humanitarian aid and ridding the nation of terrorists but in actuality, attempts to establish its control in the development of oil pipelines through the country. In reading credible international news reports, it seems undeniable that the US involvement in Afghanistan primarily seeks to establish leverage within the construction of pipelines pumping oil from the areas surrounding the Caspian Sea. The US has recognized that Afghanistan can provide a viable route for the US to capture a large portion of the \$5.5 trillion within the area. In addition to the inherent wealth of the oil, this particular oil is also significantly valuable for the US because it is not controlled by OPEC, thus allowing the US to somewhat circumvent OPEC's market and price setting powers. From our work, we have learned that despite US media and the US government claims, the US involvement in Afghan redevelopment has not been solely intended for the betterment of Afghanistan.

Instead of the US plan, we believe many of the other international approaches to Afghan redevelopment are considerably better. At the heart of these plans lies the importance of decentralization and multi-ethnic representation. We these two primary focuses we believe Afghanistan can finally instill a government can properly represent the many ethnic groups within the nation, thereby providing peace and the building blocks for the development of a viable and stable economy.

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