

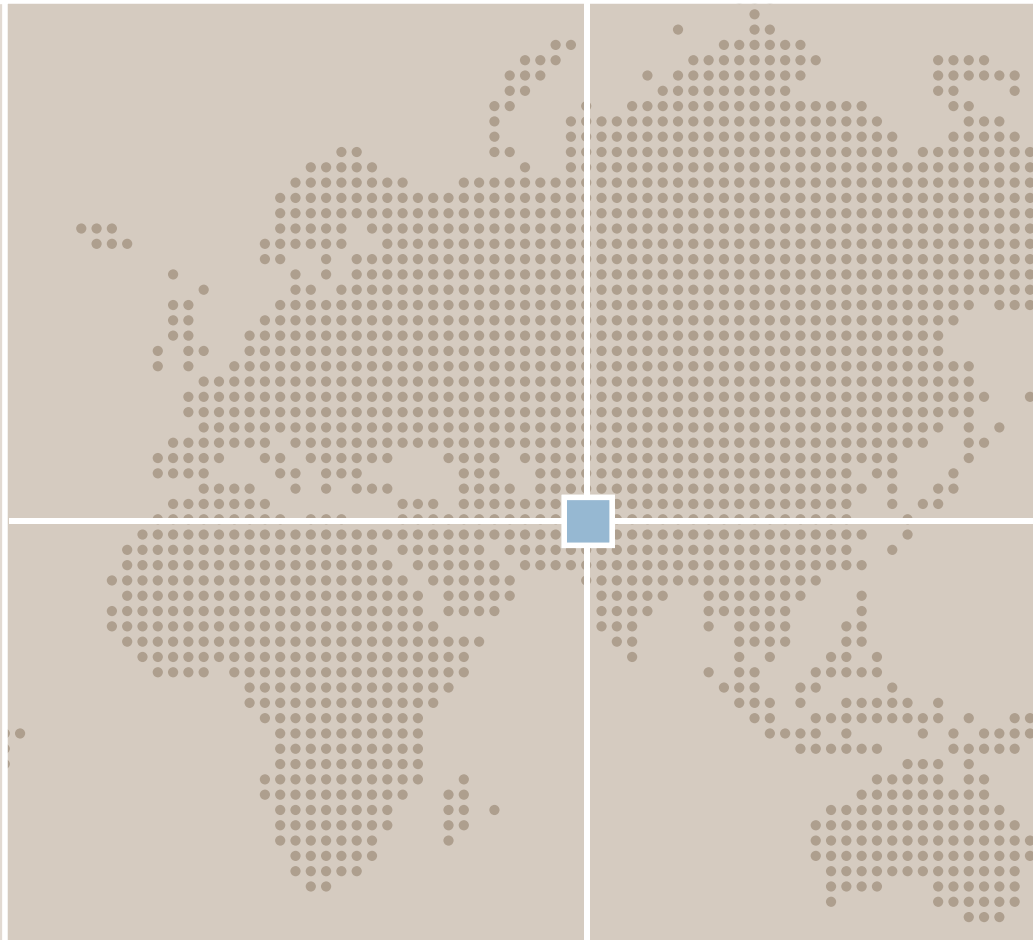
The MAGAI™ Construct and the Northern Distribution Network

A Report of the CSIS Project on the Northern Distribution Network for Afghanistan

PROJECT CODIRECTORS
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About the Northern Distribution Network Project

As the U.S. presence in Afghanistan increases, so too will its demand for nonmilitary supplies. To accommodate this growth and address ongoing concerns with Pakistani supply lines, U.S. planners have opened the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), a commercially based logistical corridor connecting Baltic and Black Sea ports with Afghanistan via Russia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.

The NDN has impacted the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia. While key transit states enjoy new leverage over Washington, the NDN also serves as a potential vehicle for constructive U.S. engagement. Understanding how to manage these geopolitical risks and opportunities will be critical for the United States and is the first goal of this project.

Though the impetus behind the NDN is grounded in the military's immediate needs, its establishment nonetheless also offers a unique opportunity for the United States to help facilitate intercontinental trade. Such commerce can provide sustainable income for Afghanistan, deepen its integration with neighboring states, and ultimately contribute to the country's stabilization. Thus, the second goal of this project is to ensure that the expansion of supply routes is fully leveraged to further this long-term objective.

Acknowledgments

This publication was made possible by a grant from the Waring and Carmen Partridge Foundation. The CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program wishes to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for its core project support. Overall support for the CSIS Transnational Threats Project is provided by the Sarah Scaife Foundation.

Executive Summary

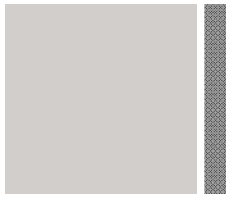
The United States is pouring massive resources and risking precious lives of its soldiers in its efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, a part of the world most Americans could not identify on a map before 9/11. President Barack Obama has already increased the U.S. force presence considerably and is deliberating further increases in what may be the most portentous decision of his presidency. But his administration, as well as its predecessor, undercuts the rationale for engagement in this remote barren land by emphasizing only the prevention of future and perhaps catastrophic terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland. As this paper argues, there is a deeper and broader strategic argument for U.S. engagement, shaped by longstanding global forces illuminated in a novel manner by the MAGAI™ Construct.

The MAGAI™ Construct presents a unique way to capture the transcontinental, indeed global, dimensions of instability in Afghanistan and the surrounding region. The MAGAI combines two post–Cold War strategic realities:

1. A Modern Activity Gap (MAG) precariously positioned in Central Asia that acts as a barricade to the flow of deepening economic interdependencies that circumnavigate the northern hemisphere; and
2. The Arch of Instability (AI), a zone of unstable conditions from the Middle East to South Asia first identified by Zbigniew Brzezinski nearly 30 years ago. This post–Cold War instability has gained a firm foothold in the MAG where its risks are magnified by Islamic extremists seeking to overthrow weak regional governments as well as foment terrorist acts around the globe.

The MAG exists in stark contrast to the rapidly evolving economic conditions to its east and west. Rooted in the MAG, unstable conditions meet an inexorable demand to connect Europe with Asia across a new land bridge, the modern Silk Road (MSR). Along the MSR, transcontinental tensions among the world's largest economies, competition for access to resources and routes, and a radical Muslim agenda merge.

In this environment, CENTCOM's Northern Distribution Network pursues options for Afghanistan resupply by involving a wider group of linked partners along the MSR. To meet the demand signals from increased force levels engaged in higher levels of sustained combat, supporting transport infrastructure and processes need to be improved, security needs to be maintained, and sensitive political conditions must be considered. Addressing the immense challenges and the opportunities across the MAG is an imperative, and tools that help the experts to visualize, quantify, and analyze the MAGAI™ Construct are badly needed.



THE MAGAI™ CONSTRUCT AND THE NORTHERN DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Stephen Benson¹

Using Supply Lines Strategically: How Can Supply Lines Facilitate Broader Objectives in Eurasia?

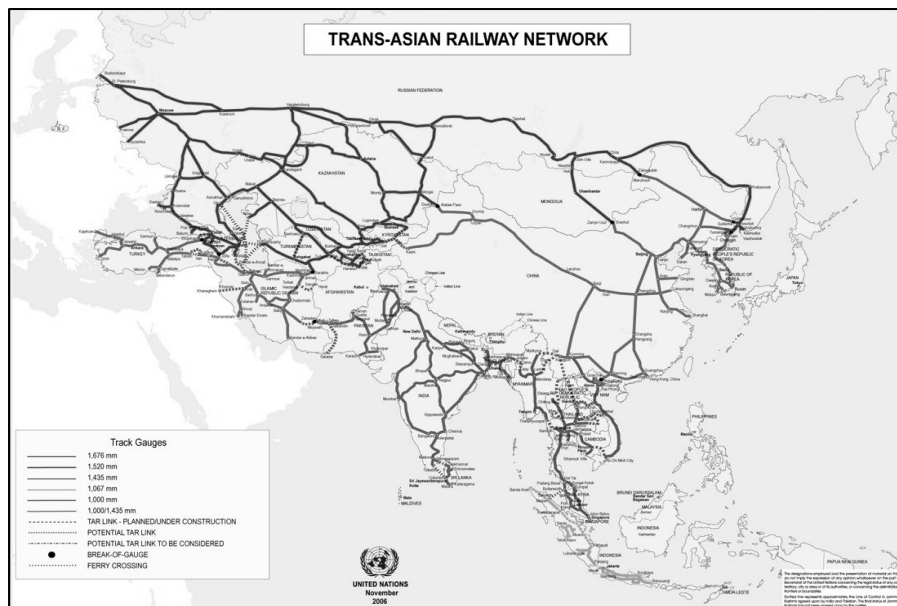
A military logistics demand signal pulling all classes of supply from bullets to beans to band aides from all directions across continental distances to the most landlocked region on earth is a unique challenge. U.S. military logisticians wrote of the “tyranny of distance” when they talked about NATO resupply via the North Atlantic routes during the Cold War; more recently, the phrase was used in addressing supporting operations in Iraq. However, support to the Afghanistan campaign provides a brand new perspective on the “tyranny of distance.”

The prime movers for supporting operations in Afghanistan are commercial transportation companies operating through dozens of countries over land, sea, and air. The road, rail, and air transportation infrastructure supporting Afghanistan starts with the modern, high-tech infrastructure of Western Europe and East Asia. The supply lines and the transportation infrastructure then slowly deteriorates the closer one gets to Afghanistan. In fact, at or very near the borders of Afghanistan modern transportation nearly ceases: only a few canalized avenues of approach exist on semi-improved road surfaces to military logistics hubs in country. To illustrate, figure 1 is a 2005 UN depiction of railways surrounding and within Central Asia. The image shows an Afghanistan strikingly removed from the transcontinental rail flow—off the transportation grid.

This transportation marginalization calls attention to the difficulties in achieving overall strategic objectives. It also begs the question, how does the demand signal emanating from Afghanistan impact the surrounding region. Planners and operators must recognize the lack of logistics capability organic to Afghanistan, and they must accept, at least for now, a regional transportation infrastructure that has been neglected over the past two decades. Moreover, this transportation system was structured to satisfy Soviet central planning objectives and may have little to do with

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Figure 1. Central and South Asian Railways



efficient and effective regional and transregional commercial transportation. The impact of these conditions on the required flow of supplies will be more pronounced as the demand signal increases. Over the past year some measures have been taken to expand the supply lines from primarily southern-oriented sea-ground functions to include northern lines of support that extend westward and eastward across Eurasia with air nodes and expanding multimodal demands.

The future will require even more capability. From 2007 to 2008, prior to the new administration and its emphasis on Afghanistan, the U.S. and allied troop count in Afghanistan grew by 40 percent. In September 2008, General David McKiernan, commander of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) and commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), requested an additional 30,000 U.S. troops, a 46 percent increase. President Obama has yet to put a ceiling on troop strength.

The majority of military supply tonnage is normally transported by ground means. Extraordinary circumstances, like those that existed during the Berlin Airlift, forced the use of primarily air logistics support lines. The circumstances are not the same in Afghanistan. Although, there are needs for air transport of personnel and contingency supplies, more than 80 percent of support will go by land. It is estimated that the Northern Distribution Network will need to source 70,000 standard commercial containers a year to support forces in Afghanistan. This fortunately does not account for sustained high-intensity combat operations like those envisioned in major theater war (MTW) planning.

The demand for support pulls to the south, from the northern Arabian seaports through Pakistan's vulnerable supply lines. It pulls from the United States through the countries of the

western Pacific, China, and Central Asia. It pulls from the west, from the United States through Europe and the new eastern European partners and Caucasus countries. It even eyes a potential Iranian component sourcing certain classes of supply from Western Europe. From the north, it is receiving supplies that transit through Russian territory. The entire region around Afghanistan is involved.

A “True Regional Approach to Afghanistan”

A traditional approach to the region around Afghanistan will not be, by itself, adequate. The region of Central Asia has unique geopolitical and geostrategic conditions, and the expanding support functions for the forces in Afghanistan must work within this unique environment. There are also growing effects from beyond Central Asia and across Eurasia that must be considered.

Given the logistical level of effort for Afghanistan, and the remote landlocked nature of the theater of operations, the United States requires robust and practical engagement across the Eurasian landmass. The question is, how can the United States promote a “true regional approach to Afghanistan,” one that recognizes the need for partners but also the partners’ needs, all in pursuit of a broader stability across the wider Eurasian region? How can supply lines facilitate wider regional objectives while avoiding the many geopolitical snares that are part of a rapidly evolving and complex transcontinental dynamic?

To answer this question, we must first look at a much bigger construct, one with a unique, reality-based planet view. The construct is called the MAGAI™, which stands for Modern Activity Gap (MAG) + Arch of Instability (AI). The MAG is a visually compelling and quantifiable reality, a phrase that describes an area of relative inactivity within a dominant pattern of global economic flow. The pattern can be seen in figure 2. The Northern Corridor of Modern Activity (NCMA) circumnavigating the earth is shown as tens of thousands of small black dots on a blank sheet of paper. These dots represent overhead satellite signal intercepts of all types of telecommunication activities taken over one 24-hour period in the late 1990s. They form a familiar picture as many of the intercepts fall in the world’s littoral areas where the links and nodes of modern economic activity converge, making the Southern Hemisphere’s continents clearly visible.

In the Northern Hemisphere however, the saturation of the intercepts both on land and on the oceans is so dense that there are no clear continental images. These electronic intercepts are representative of the broad spectrum of modern human activity that has developed in various phases over thousands of years. The lines of communication, the infrastructure, and the organizations of modernity are predominantly in this corridor, and they efficiently serve the activities of a growing set of interconnected and developed nations. This corridor is called the Northern Corridor of Modern Activity (NCMA).

The MAG is a growing anomaly in the NCMA. In figure 3, it is shown as roughly between the eastern Black Sea region (~40° longitude east) and the eastern provinces of China (~110° longitude east), the center of the MAG being roughly at Afghanistan and the Central Asian region.

Figure 2. The Northern Corridor of Modern Activity

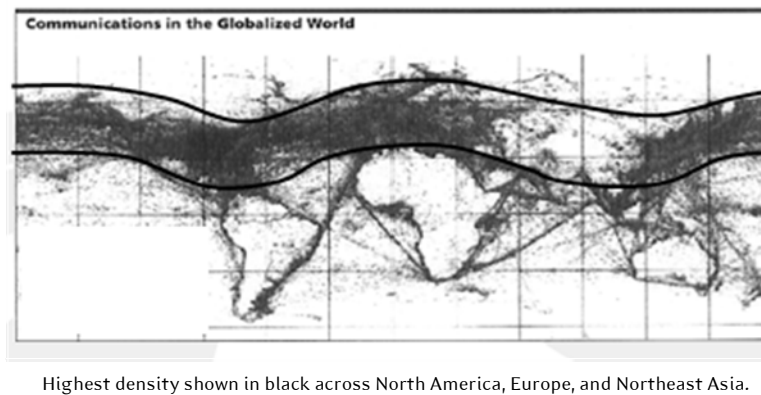
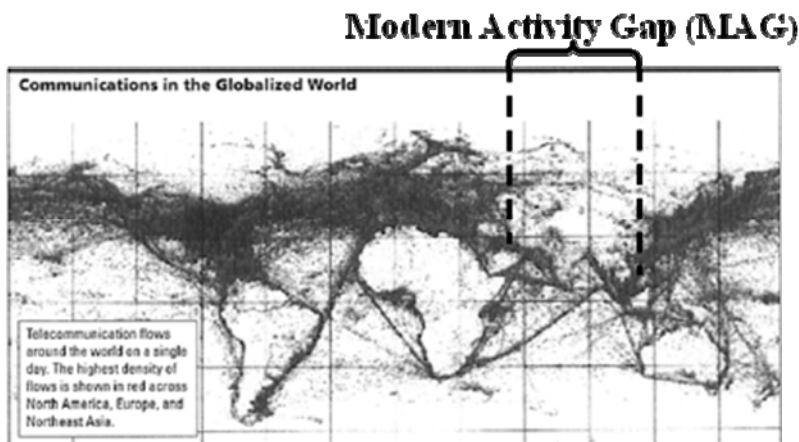


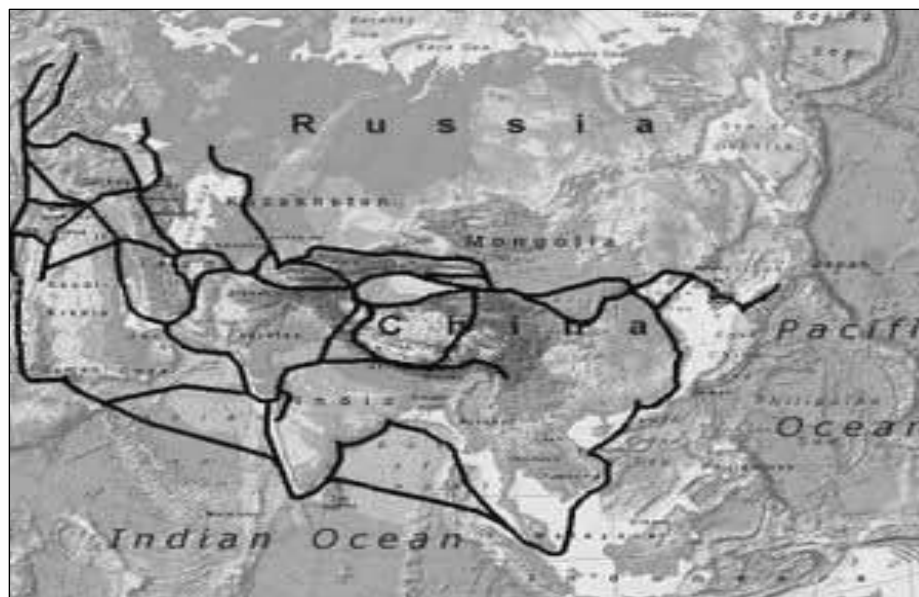
Figure 3. The Modern Activity Gap



Interestingly, the MAG encompasses the heart of the ancient Silk Road, which waxed and waned over a millennium. The Silk Road version of the MAG was created in hoof prints instead of electronic intercepts and would map as a negative of figure 3. During the golden age of the Silk Road, multiple routes from Eastern China to Europe were the dominant avenues of trade and transport, as seen in figure 4.

Straining at the boundaries where the MAG and the NCMA meet are the new and rising economies and markets of the twenty-first century. In the West, the awakening and increasingly interconnected nations of Eastern Europe, the Baltics, the Balkans, and the Black Sea region comprise over 150 million consumers in growing free market economies. Released from Soviet

Figure 4. The Silk Road



control they have leveraged the strength of the core West European nations and the Europe Union to transform their economies rapidly. In 2005, European economies for the first time in recorded history traded more to the east than to the west to North America.

There is growing pressure to expand this eastward flow into adjacent markets in the western MAG. Expansion of the European Union and NATO adds to this pressure. A similar but westward pressure from the western Pacific and the eastern provinces of a rising China matches Europe's eastward pressure for access to markets. Exploitation of vast gas and oil resources across the MAG is lubricating development giving it transcontinental dimensions.

This emerging Eurasian reality is further emphasized by what the National Intelligence Council calls the "transformation [of the international system]...fueled by a globalizing economy and marked by a historic shift of relative wealth and economic power from West to East."² Associated foreign currency reserves in sovereign wealth funds (SFWs) are estimated to climb to \$12 trillion by 2012. The overwhelming majority of these nontransparent, government-managed accounts are located at the periphery of the MAG, and they are sources for large infrastructure projects that are closing the MAG. The prospect of closing the MAG and connecting the western and eastern economic juggernauts across the Eurasian landmass presents immense opportunities and

² National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, November 2008), http://www.dni.gov/nic/PDF_2025/2025_Global_Trends_Final_Report.pdf, p. 1.

challenges. The campaign in Afghanistan finds itself in the middle of these great tectonic forces, and the manner in which the multinational effort chooses to support and execute the campaign can have a multiplier effect on the stability of a much wider, more strategically important area.

Within the MAG, we see developments such as nascent democracy in Iraq, thriving gas and oil economies in the former Soviet satellites of Central Asia, colored revolutions in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus, and slow but meaningful reform in China. These developments provide a sense that with the right policies in place the MAG can continue to close. There are, however, complex and counterproductive forces at work as well. A post–Cold War geopolitical construct called the “arch of instability” (AI) captures them. First articulated by former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in the 1980s, the AI has been depicted in a number of ways depending on the factors used to define instability. A clear representation of the AI comes from the U.S. Marine Corps’ strategic perspective as expressed in its top strategic documents, shown in figure 5. The AI, outlined in black, shows a region of the world nearly exclusive of the NCMA yet adjacent along its southern border. In figure 5, the NCMA is superimposed on the Marine Corps 2009 depiction of the AI. This depiction outlines the factors for instability that contribute to failed states, transnational dangers, crisis, and outright war. It is noteworthy that the AI includes a bulge on the northern boundary that enters and nearly envelopes the MAG. Factors that contribute to instability throughout the AI include:

- Al Qaeda and associated movements
- Extremist Sunni agendas—reestablishment of the caliphate
- Radical Shia Islam, sponsored by Iran
- Corrosive effects of the continuing Israel-Palestinian conflict
- Single commodity economies (oil and gas)
- Ungoverned areas
- Increasing youth bulge
- Unemployment among youths
- Undernourished populations—diminishing water supplies
- Drug trade and nonstate, criminal elements
- Lack of democratic institutions and processes
- Lack of education and modern technology
- Border disputes
- Uncontrolled borders
- Frozen conflicts

Across the Eurasian landmass, the AI falls almost completely below the NCMA, and the areas of greatest instability are outside the NCMA. One need only recognize how Islamic extremists view their friendly center of gravity to understand the importance of the clash of wills at the boundaries

of the MAG and the AI. Figure 6 illustrates a commonly held view of the “coming caliphate” as seen by radical Islam. In the eyes of the extremists, the MAG is in play and central to the overall struggle. Tactically, the insurgency in Afghanistan is a key element.

As stakeholders in the MAGAI™ Construct, Europe, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Central Asian nations, and others have significant interests in the outcome of the stabilization effort in Afghanistan. They all recognize the strategic contours in the images above. The logistics demand signal in Afghanistan pulls inward across all these contours. Creating logistical cooperation among the stakeholders in varying degrees will require the ultimate in harmonizing soft and hard power. This is the perspective that enables a “true regional approach to Afghanistan.”

How Can Supply Lines Be Used to Promote More of a Regional Approach to Afghanistan?

The various supply line options surrounding Afghanistan have unique advantages and disadvantages. They all provide opportunities for engagement across borders, and many expand beyond the region across Europe and Asia employing combinations of sea, air, and ground transportation facilitating the movement of liquid and dry cargo and passengers. They all provide opportunities that if approached properly could assist in closing the MAG; however, in the region around Afghanistan: (1) transnational complexities intensify; (2) almost no quantitative analysis on the associated nodes and links of transportation exists; (3) there is no adequate modeling and simulation aide to assist in assessing this rapidly changing environment; and (4) efforts by USCENTCOM to expand beyond the vulnerable southern supply route through Pakistan have put in place a logistics network that has yet to be adequately assessed from a broader geopolitical perspective. It is useful to look at a snapshot of the nations and regions involved to appreciate the scope of any true regional approach.

South

To the south, supply routes into Afghanistan are not well developed, but they are improving. As mentioned earlier, they rely primarily on roads for the cargo tonnage. The dominant route from the south is a single ground line of communication (GLOC) through Pakistan. Pakistan routing moves seaborne cargo through the port of Karachi to Kabul via Peshawar and the Khyber Pass. This is a journey of 1,250 miles with average transit time of 10 days.

A secondary GLOC provides supplies to Kandahar from Karachi via the Bolan Pass and the Chaman border. Risk is increased by the routine backlog of trucks at borders and choke points along the way. These routes pass through insurgent-held areas; however, the continued access to lucrative contracts keeps the trucking companies in business and the drivers on the roads.

Additional seaport throughput could be achieved by using the port of Gwadar in Pakistan, where improvements by Chinese firms are increasing capacity; however, recently increased threats to all

supply lines make Pakistan less suitable as a primary transit country for military supplies to Afghanistan.

The pressure on these supply lines was reduced somewhat in 2008 by the Defense Energy Supply Center Middle East (DESC-ME) shifting approximately 20 percent of bulk fuel supplied from the south to refineries in the Caspian region.

North

To the north is the largest stakeholder (in terms of square miles) in the NCMA—Russia—and Russian decisionmakers recognize this. Russia's former president, Vladimir Putin, proposed setting up an “arch of stability” incorporating NATO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) nations to ensure the security of Europe and Asia from the “arch of instability” in the south. He even proposed a NATO-Russia security pact to be signed by the 19-member Western military alliance, Russia, and the SCO, of which China is a founding member.

Putin's then—first deputy prime minister, Dmitri Medvedev, at the 2007 World Economic Forum at Davos signaled a clear and related Russian interest: “The Russian economy will...fully take up our historical mandate as the energy and transportation center of Eurasia.” The recent withdrawal of Russia's application to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and then the resubmission as a member of a trade zone with Belarus and Kazakhstan can be seen as a strategy to exploit potential economic gains across the northern portion of Central Asia to China, while hedging against slow progress and potential failure in southern Central Asia. Failure to stabilize and modernize in southern Central Asia decreases the potential that Russia sees in expanding transport routes to the North Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf from the most landlocked of economies.

Russia has in fact been helpful in expanding supply routes to Afghanistan. Movement of cargo through Russia to Afghanistan includes military supplies—even lethal materiel by air. Northern supply lines to Afghanistan affect Russian interests in a zone where Russia expects privileged relations. Northern routes through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia to Latvia are used today. They facilitate a northern supply route expected to reach 70,000 twenty-foot-equivalent unit (TEU) containers per year with average transit times of nine days. This requires cooperation with three former Soviet satellites that are protective of their sovereignty particularly when it comes to dealing with Russia.

Northward supply lines do not yet include any significant use of Tajikistan. Tajikistan is well postured to offer viable air base accommodations in Farkhor/Ayni. Road transportation through Afghanistan is not well developed, and corruption, the illicit drug trade, and inefficiency prevent any significant improvement of routes. The United States has yet to focus any significant assistance on Tajikistan. Yet Tajikistan, a key player in Afghan stability, has signaled the desire to cooperate on a regional basis and has asked for U.S. assistance, among other things, to enhance border security patrols and to implement a centralized e-passport capability that reaches out to its remote border checkpoints. A bridge over the Panj River to Afghanistan was recently built with

international funds. This border checkpoint and the Tajik-Afghan border control missions would benefit from the technology in the e-passport system.

As the northern distribution network (NDN) develops, all supply routes north will have to contend with increasingly mobile insurgent activity. Recent increases in attacks by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) raise questions of adequate protection of commercial transportation and its investment in assets and infrastructure.

West

Iran and to a lesser extent Turkmenistan dominate access to the west of Afghanistan. Although former CENTCOM commander General David Petraeus hinted at the possibility of allies making use of Iranian GLOCs, there has been little if any use of this avenue for military supplies. Cross-border trade does occur between Afghanistan and Iran. In fact, some of the electricity needs of the western provinces of Afghanistan are met by Iranian-generated electricity. Cross-border trade exists, but Iran does not serve as a trade transit country for Afghanistan. Though potential exists for relatively short GLOCs connecting Afghanistan to Persian Gulf and North Arabian seaports, this rational has not overcome significant political hurdles and poor relations between Iran and the West.

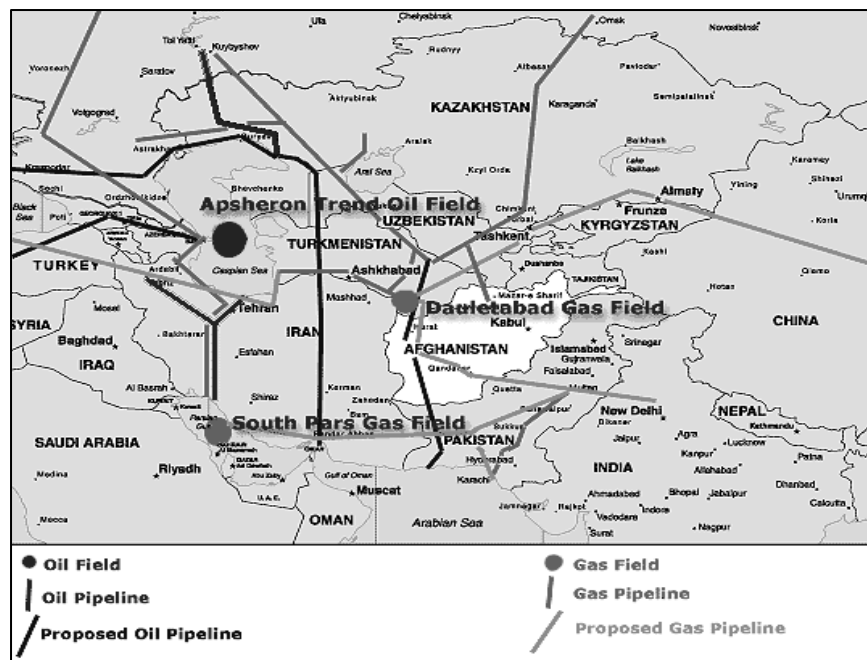
West of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan's indigenous petroleum industry serves as a significant supplier of fuel (aviation and diesel) to the forces in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan also offers a unique supply line option as its port at Turkmenbasy, with some improvements, could be a major throughput node for cargo moving through the Mediterranean and Black Seas and through Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. In Turkmenistan, however, contracting is cumbersome and prices are often artificially raised because competition is suppressed around U.S.-funded support for Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Turkmenistan provides a unique westward dimension to the Afghanistan theater.

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have supply lines to the west through commercial and military aviation logistics hubs. Kyrgyzstan recently completed an agreement for continued U.S. access to the airbase at Manas, and Uzbekistan has been developing Navoi airport to handle greater throughput of air cargo for further transfer to Afghanistan by truck. Global leaders in commercial transportation are pursuing all aspects of this business. As in Afghanistan, there are weaknesses in ground services, safety of flight, air traffic control systems, and trained personnel. The standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in many cases are not met. There is significant room for modernization in the aviation sector, which would not only improve supply throughput to the forces in Afghanistan, but the interoperability achieved through broader compliance with international standards will impact throughput across and beyond the MAG.

East

To the east, China is the dominant influence. Supply lines from China to Afghanistan are not any longer than others, and there are fewer borders to contend with. Western China has access to

Figure 7. Asian Oil and Gas Pipelines



Afghanistan via GLOCs going through Tajikistan and can access Afghanistan directly. Though underdeveloped, these GLOCs fall within an overall Chinese economic policy that is focused on transportation infrastructure serving to modernize the Silk Road. Pressure to modernize is largely a function of the need to put in place efficient movement of gas and oil from Central Asia to China. Figure 7 provides a glimpse of the complex gas and oil pipeline networks that now exist. Plans for pipeline growth are many along with the associated road and rail links to accommodate not only the demand from China's maritime regions but also overall transcontinental demand.

At the crossroads to the east, the Xingjian region shares a border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. They are connected to China by several roads and the China-Kazakhstan railway, facilitating transport of goods—one via Kazakhstan and Russia to Europe and the other to Europe via Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran. China claims that it trades with 148 countries and regions through Xingjian.

China's interests extend across a developing Eurasian land bridge, which it needs to relieve congestion in its western Pacific seaports and to continue to expand trade with Central Asia, which has grown 10-fold since the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Pressures to decrease costs and reduce transit times have the public and private sectors focused on ground transportation from China's eastern coast to Rotterdam cutting the distance from 26,000 kilometers for sea routes to 6,400 kilometers and reducing the cost by as much as 30 percent for freight forwarders.

Figure 8. Road Transportation Infrastructure in and around Afghanistan, including the ring road



Afghanistan

The NDN must make use of the existing transport infrastructure in Afghanistan. Improvements to the infrastructure are being made. For example, efforts to improve the Afghanistan ring road have helped (see figure 8). However, Afghanistan has been marginalized in terms of transportation capabilities going back even to the height of the Silk Road. Existing and planned trans-Afghanistan transport routes must account for an Afghanistan that is connected not just for trade with Central Asia but also for Eurasian trade. This will depend on more than just infrastructure. Overall competitiveness relative to existing routes for the surrounding countries must be enabled. Russia's main access to the Persian Gulf at present is through the Caspian and Iran, while China has direct access to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean through the Karakorum Highway and improved port facility at Gwadar. Both of these alternative routes face far fewer border crossings.

Knowing how Afghanistan fits and could fit into the transit and trade flows across the MAG is vital to understanding the effects of decisions already made on the NDN. Future decisions on expanding supply lines should have, as expressed earlier, a comprehensive model for analyses across the public and private sector. The private sector, outside of the demand signal for support to Afghanistan, is not well equipped to assess return on investment for projects in the MAG. A

public-private effort to generate a high-fidelity model with validated assumptions will help in establishing a better path toward self-sustainable progress in transportation and distribution within and beyond the MAG. This model should cover the links, nodes, and flows of land, sea, and air conveyance for liquid and dry cargo and passengers. Knowing the “as is” and “to be” conditions and being able to analyze alternate futures across the MAG would be a powerful tool. This public-private effort should be initiated soon.

How Can New Supply Lines Catalyze and Sustain Development? What Impact Can this Development Have on the Region—and Afghanistan in Particular?

First, it must be acknowledged that the United States has its most precious resources engaged in combat in Afghanistan, and support for that effort is the main objective. However, a 2006 World Bank report stated that “...governments and partners in the region should, first, keep the ‘big picture’ issues of regional cooperation and development in mind, including the linkages among them and the obstacles.”³ NDN is one initiative that can directly affect the levels of cooperation in ways that can break down trade and transportation inhibitors. Examples of the trade and transit inhibitors include the following:

- Differences in tariff rates
- Overlapping, sometimes inconsistent regional trade preferences
- Nontariff tax barriers, such as excise taxes on imports, labeling requirements, import licenses
- Lack of harmonized customs procedures, leading to detailed checks on both sides of the border
- Numerous and cumbersome documentation requirements
- Inadequate application of ICAO standard for civil aviation
- Lack of recognition of transit international routier (TIR) seals and high cost of transit convoys
- Lengthy transshipment procedures and lack of adequate logistics (e.g., trade terminals, etc.)
- High levels of corruption of customs officials and other inspection agencies
- Visa restrictions on foreign truckers
- Cartels to ensure safe passage of trucks
- Lack of modern (i.e., TIR-compatible) trucking fleet
- Slow speed of rail cargo leading to lack of competitiveness for time-sensitive goods
- Lack of freight forwarding companies offering smaller tonnage freights on rail cargo

³ William Bryd and Martin Raiser, *Economic Cooperation in the Wider Central Asia Region*, World Bank Working Paper no. 75 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2006), <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOUTHASIA/556101-1101747511943/21363080/WiderCAWorkingPaperfinal.pdf>, p. viii.

- *Tactical Example:* Within Afghanistan and among its neighbors, there must be an effort to link U.S. support to reducing transportation inhibitors. The strongest and quickest advantage comes by way of contracts. Contracting terms could lead the way toward implementing improvements that are self-sustaining and that reduce the factors for instability. For example, a new key objective, interdicting the drug supply chain, could be attained in part by reliable, cost-effective, and plentiful distribution of licit crops supported by strategic management of transport resources. Further, where infrastructure for education does not exist, carve out a percentage of the TEUs that will undoubtedly remain stowed and unretrogradeable in Afghan terminals and use them for classrooms or other training facilities.
- *Strategic Example:* Given its central position in the MAG, Afghanistan should be envisioned as a distribution hub of transport. Developed with the broader interests of key Eurasian stakeholders, Afghanistan might well become what Kansas City was to the United States as it moved to close its own MAG in the mid-1800s. Breaking down trade and transit barriers may be as basic as starting with the requirement to implement the internationally recognized e-passport regime in all countries providing transportation logistics to military operations in Afghanistan. Contracts could be written to include cofunded (e.g.: U.S.-partner) initiatives to stand up the e-passport capability in individual countries.

Hedging against the possibility of having to provide sustained support at major theater war levels to the most landlocked region in the world, the NDN and other supply lines not yet utilized provide alternatives, in addition to forcing increasing economic interoperability across Eurasia. With the stressors at the convergence of the MAG and the AI, there are unprecedented challenges and opportunities that must be studied in depth by a full spectrum of expertise in hard and soft power, and in concert with the key stakeholders in the NCMA and the MAG.

The tensions that existed in Balkans before World War I pale in comparison to the tensions that exist within the MAGAI™ Construct. The United States by virtue of its involvement in Afghanistan is the stability broker. The NDN in its early development already facilitates support by engaging across a region and a continent piecing together the mechanisms of commercial transportation that will ultimately change Central Asia by working to close the MAG. The NDN and other supply lines not yet opened present opportunities to bring nations together with coherent transportation schemes under international standards and law.