AFGHANISTAN IN 1986

The Balance Endures

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Afghanistan under Soviet occupation calls to mind the classic Japanese film, Rashomon. In both violence is at center stage, and in both opinions as to the nature of a crime are sharply divided. In Rashomon a half-dozen observers recount their version of a violent encounter between a man and a woman. For some of the witnesses, what took place was a rape; for others, no crime was committed. The preconceptions and prejudices of each observer shape how each interprets the events witnessed.

While the number of "expert witnesses" of the Afghanistan situation are far greater and the story they seek to explain more complex, the range of opinion as to what is happening there is as wide and varied as in the Japanese film. Different observers stress different aspects of the conflict to support their conclusions as to which side is gaining the upper hand. For some, the very fact that the back of the Afghan resistance has not been broken in more than seven years of fighting is crucial. The resistance is better armed, trained, and organized inside Afghanistan, and its military operations reflect the growing sophistication of its commanders. At the leadership level, the resistance has formed an alliance which, while still inchoate, is beginning to take steps to exploit the considerable latent international sentiment that supports the Afghans' struggle. By contrast, the Kabul (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan or DRA) regime has made no progress in building an effective army and relies entirely on the Soviets to keep it in power. The opprobrium of the overwhelming majority of Afghans and its own bitter factional disputes have kept the Afghan Communist Party from developing anything approximating a political base in the towns where it has some measure of control. Meanwhile, the Soviets...
suffer growing human, material, and political losses and may be looking for a way out of a self-created impasse.

Others see the situation very differently. For them, such considerations as population dynamics are central. As many as five million Afghans, between a quarter and a third of the prewar population, has sought refuge abroad, and the flow of refugees, while no longer a flood, remains steady. Inside Afghanistan large areas of the country have been deserted, and up to one million internal exiles now live in areas controlled by the regime. Such areas are inhospitable to the mujahidin (holy warriors) of the resistance whose units often must carry all their supplies with them from Pakistan and cannot benefit from the support of the local population as guerrilla armies are supposed to do. Soviet educational efforts are also seen as building a new generation of Afghan communists, some of whom are beginning to give the regime army the backbone it has lacked. At the same time, the resistance appears faction-ridden, lacking in political purpose, and unable to establish itself in the eyes of the world as a bona fide national liberation movement. Lastly, the Soviet Union is seen as an implacable foe that will never relinquish a strategic conquest or accept the humiliation a withdrawal from Afghanistan would entail.

If anything, the gulf between these competing views of the situation in Afghanistan has widened over time. For each, the evidence in support of its arguments is more and more compelling. Those who see the resistance as gaining the upper hand can cite the increase late last year in the guerrillas' ability to bring down Soviet aircraft, the effective use of rockets against Kabul, the large-scale assaults against regime garrisons in northern Afghanistan, and the continued turmoil in Kabul and Herat, the country's second and third largest cities. The opposing view is that improved weaponry. In 1986, resistance forces in various areas of the country made better and better use of the 122-mm rocket. Although in military parlance a "theater weapon"—that is, one that cannot be precisely aimed—this rocket gave the resistance the ability to remind people in Kabul, where regime control is supposedly at its height, that the war was still very much on. Rockets fell close to the Soviet Embassy early in the year, and both the Polish Embassy and the Soviet Cultural Center in the capital were heavily damaged by rockets during the summer.

In late August, the 122-mm rocket was put to its most spectacular use since the beginning of the war. On the night of August 26–27, a group of guerrillas led by one of the resistance's most resourceful and imaginative commanders managed to direct a rocket into an ammunition dump located in the garrison of the regime's 8th Division near Qargha Lake five kilometers north of Kabul. The result was a spectacular series of explosions which lasted for two hours and threw a volcano-like fireball 1000 feet into the air above the capital. An area comparable to several city blocks inside the garrison was swept clean of all its structures, and loss of life among the garrison personnel was believed to have been heavy. The event was filmed by a hardy newsman and ran on television screens in the United States and Europe as a reminder that, while not yet a "living room war," the conflict in Afghanistan was real and ongoing.

Another significant resistance success in 1986 was its improved ability to bring down regime and Soviet aircraft, particularly the redoubtable M1–24 helicopter gunships. By fall, the benefits of improved weaponry and of training began to be apparent as the rate of downings of aircraft rose to approximately one per day over a three-month period at the end of the year. In early January, observers in Kabul witnessed the spectacular crash of a regime military transport which was hit close to the city and went down in flames in an unsuccessful bid to reach the airport. Soviet and regime aircraft, particularly those of important visitors such as Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, are now routinely surrounded on takeoff and landing by a 4th of July-like display of rockets designed to divert heat-seeking antiaircraft weapons from their targets. How the war in the air will develop in 1987 is difficult to predict; for the moment, their new-found ability to destroy regime and Soviet aircraft has been a major morale booster to resistance forces.
**Stronger tactics.** With seven and more years experience to draw on, certain of the country's commanders have become skilled military and guerrilla tacticians. In the north, the Jamiat-e-Islami\(^1\) commander, Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, directed two operations against Kabul regime garrisons without being physically present on the battlefield. In mid-August, elements of six resistance units from four provinces under the field command of Abdul Wodud launched an assault on the post at Farkhar in northern Takhar province. Although the Kabul regime had wind of the attack before it took place, the post fell with substantial loss of life and materiel and remained in resistance hands for several months thereafter. Three months later, Jamiat forces attacked the headquarters element of Kabul's 18th Division located at Nahrin in Baghlan province immediately to the south of Takhar. As in Farkhar, Mas'ud planned but did not take part in the operation, which resulted in the loss of a substantial amount of equipment for the Kabul garrison. Mas'ud's ability to act, in effect, as a general rather than as a field commander marked a new step in his own development as a strategist and in the sophistication and discipline in the forces of the resistance.

Elsewhere in the country, other leaders improved their tactical skills. Two commanders affiliated with the Younus Khalis faction of the Hezb-e-Islami\(^2\)–Jalaluddin Haqqani from Paktia province and Abdul Haq, an urban warfare specialist active in Kabul—reacted well to the new military circumstances they faced. In April, Jalaluddin's base at Zhawar Kili near the Pakistan border in Paktia province was overrun in a bloody assault by Kabul troops massively supported by Soviet helicopters and jets. Although burned by napalm and evacuated during the assault, Jalaluddin saw to it that his guerrillas reoccupied Zhawar within hours of the withdrawal of Kabul forces and set about rebuilding the base and replacing the stocks of weaponry lost to the regime. In his area around Kabul, Abdul Haq learned how to cope with the heavily defended security perimeter manned by regime and Soviet troops around the capital, using rockets to increasingly good effect to harass the city from outside the perimeter while continuing from time to time to mount sabotage operations and to fire at targets from closer range.

Finally, Ismail Khan, a former army captain who is the Jamiat's main commander in western Afghanistan, overcame formidable logistical problems to keep heavy pressure on Herat, Afghanistan's third largest city, throughout the year. Fighting in the city was more or less constant as the Soviets and DRA regime carried out reprisals for each resistance attack. An Afghan who went into Herat with Ismail's forces in the summer reported having spent several nights in the commander's company in various houses inside the city limits. Foreign journalists brought from Moscow to witness a staged withdrawal of Soviet forces in October were not allowed to spend the night in Herat but were moved to and from the city in armored personnel carriers during the day. While it is hard to know how much control each side has in Herat, these two vignettes suggest that Ismail and his guerrillas are well entrenched and able to deny the Soviets anything like security there.

**Improved organization.** Resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is still based on large numbers of leaders who lead small bands of followers in isolated attacks on DRA and Soviet targets of opportunity. The direction these men take from anyone is minimal, and instances even of tactical cooperation are the exceptions which prove the rule of a very decentralized command. While some of the seven major resistance parties based in Peshawar, Pakistan, are more tightly organized than others, the party leaders are for the most part incapable of imposing either strategic discipline or tactical control over the groups inside Afghanistan ostensibly operating under their direction.

As noted above, there are exceptions to this rule. In the north, Ahmad Shah Mas'ud has built an organization of between 10 and 15 units with a combined strength of over 5000 hard-core fighters. Although his base in the Panjsher Valley 100 kilometers north of Kabul is now heavily occupied by Soviet and DRA garrisons for at least half its length, Mas'ud has concentrated on gaining the loyalty of commanders outside the valley and now exercises a fair degree of military control in several of the country's northeastern provinces. To judge by Farkhar and Nahrin, Mas'ud has developed the ability to impose his direction and discipline over widely dispersed resistance units.

Resistance organizations are being developed in other areas of the country as well. The Jamiat, for example, claims that Ismail Khan's authority is sufficient to make him the predominant politico-military force not only in Herat province but in Badghis to the northeast as well. In the south, Jalaluddin has from time to time taken command of units affiliated with several different political parties in conducting sieges of DRA regime/Soviet bases in the Paktia province towns of Ali Kheyl and Khost. Similarly, resistance units from different parties have joined forces in the eastern province of Kunar to mount operations against the exposed garrison at Barikot on the frontier with Pakistan.

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1. The Jamiat-e-Islami-ye-Afghanistan (Islamic Society of Afghanistan) is one of the seven resistance groups in the Alliance, the Etehad-e-Islami-ye-Mujahidin-e-Afghanistan (Islamic Union [Unity] of the Holy Warriors of Afghanistan) based in Peshawar, Pakistan.
2. The other faction of the Hezb-e-Islami is led by Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.
While the Afghan resistance will continue to be based on small units fighting small fights, the growing organizational skills and ambitions of the country's major commanders bear watching. Mas'ud's disciplined successes at Farkhar and Nahrin are complemented by the major accomplishments of a number of more traditional commanders in Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city, where a number of guerrilla leaders cooperated loosely to keep major Soviet and regime troop concentrations under steady pressure. It is too early to tell whether ambitious politico-military leaders like Mas'ud will supplant their more traditional brethren; for the moment, each sort of leader is effective in his own way, and both methods of operation cause DRA and Soviet forces endless grief.

Turning to Moscow's side of the ledger, a number of developments suggest that the Soviets and their Kabul surrogates may be gaining the upper hand. Some of these elements are problematic. All are sources of concern for the resistance.

**Improved Soviet tactics—the Spetsnaz and convoy security.** Throughout the year, resistance leaders have spoken of the difficulties improved Soviet tactics have caused their operations. In discussing Soviet successes, commanders and other spokesmen return again and again to the 4,000–5,000 special purpose (Spetsnaz) commando troops deployed to various centers around the country. The Afghans admit that these troops, unlike the rest of the Soviet army, fight well and cleverly, causing resistance forces difficulties in several areas.

Two examples highlight the growing sophistication of Soviet ambush tactics. One resistance commander from an area adjacent to Kabul province was the only survivor of a night ambush in late December 1985 near the Pakistan frontier. The unit he was leading had no conception of convoy security and was quickly and completely wiped out. (The commander survived only because he was riding a motorcycle at the head of the convoy and was allowed through by the Soviets before the trap was sprung.)

A more costly defeat for the resistance came during the summer in a valley near Jegdelek to the southeast of Kabul. There a large Jamiat-e-Islami supply convoy learned from the local inhabitants that Soviet troops had been in the area and had driven the inhabitants of a nomad camp from their tents. The commander halted for a day but then chose to move down into the valley. The Soviets, it turned out, had hidden in the nomad tents and brought overwhelming firepower to bear on the convoy. Jamiat casualties and losses of materiel were extensive.

Experiences such as these are forcing resistance units to move more carefully and in smaller groups. Men and supplies continue to move more or less freely within the country, but the logistics of doing so have become more complex. How the new Soviet tactics will affect the overall performance of the resistance remains to be seen.

**Heliborne assaults and use of air power.** Frequently using Spetsnaz forces, the Soviets improved their assault tactics and used air power in support of Kabul regime troops more freely and to greater effect than in the past. In late 1985 and early 1986, Soviet units conducted a series of land and air assaults against resistance strongholds beginning at Paghman just to the north of Kabul and proceeding southward to the town of Ghazni 125 kilometers south of the capital. A resistance commander whose guerrillas had faced one of these assaults said the Soviets dropped Spetsnaz troops from helicopters around the strongpoint and also surrounded it with tanks. Helicopter gunships then circled the strongpoint and delivered withering supporting fire as the Spetsnaz moved in.

These tactics gave the Soviets more control over Paghman than they had had in recent years and forced the resistance to abandon, at least temporarily, a number of strongpoints between Kabul and Ghazni. Since the beginning of the war, the mountains around Paghman have served both as a transit point for resistance supply convoys and a safehaven for guerrilla units operating against the capital. Although control of the town of Paghman is apparently still contested, the resistance may have lost some of its freedom of maneuver in the area as a result of the late 1985 operations.

Soviet airpower was also decisive in the Kabul regime's temporary reductio in April 1986 of Jalaluddin Haqqani's base at Zawar Kili in Pak tia province ten kilometers from the Pakistan frontier. After DRA regime paratroops had suffered a bloody defeat in an opening assault on the base, Soviet helicopters and bombers flew a record number of sorties against it. Without more or less continuous air support, regime forces could not have won even the Pyrrhic victory of occupying the base for 24 hours and destroying or removing the large stores of materiel it contained.

**Road security:** Since early in the war, convoy security has been a major preoccupation for Soviet and regime forces. A program of opening fields of fire several hundred yards back on each side of every major highway in the country may be largely finished, and the main highway over the Hindu Kush south to Kabul is manned by small security posts every few kilometers. Convoys sometimes move with four supporting helicopters—two flying low along each side of the highway to look for resistance ambushes and the other two higher up to provide support to the ones below. Helicopters also patrol the highways, calling suspect traffic to a halt with loudspeakers and then coming down to run a search. The Soviets and Kabul forces have also begun building hilltop strongpoints at key points in the eastern prov-
inches of Afghanistan. Typically, these are built of concrete slabs brought in by air, and the garrisons receive their supplies by the same route. The strongpoints are intended to check the movement of resistance convoys along key supply routes.

How effective these tactics have become is an open question. Convoy ambushes continue, and in January there was a gasoline shortage in Kabul. This normally is a sign that a tanker truck convoy has been ambushed crossing the Hindu Kush. Nonetheless, an Afghan traveler reported that on an extensive journey both north and south of Kabul and on the road to Pakistan he saw none of the resistance checkpoints which had been a regular feature of the highways a few years ago. The picture is clearly a mixed one.

Regime militias. Since the beginning of the war, the DRA regime has played the tricky and dangerous game of tribal politics with unstinting efforts to neutralize the civilian population in contested areas or even to turn it against the resistance. The 1980 assassination of the regime's Minister of Tribes and Nationalities by Paktia tribal representatives to whom he was delivering a subsidy payment points up the hazards of the business. More recently, 400 men brought into the militia in December 1985 attacked the brigade they had joined near Ghazni, and Afridi tribesmen did the same in the Nazian Valley in Nangarhar province near the Pakistan frontier early in 1986. Still, the regime presses ahead with whatever leaders it can, typically offering 3000 Afghanis (US$200) per month per man plus a weapon for every man recruited.

The regime has shown increasing flexibility in deciding the sort of relations it will accept with those it recruits. The former army captain and resistance fighter Ismatullah Muslim Achekzai, who joined the DRA for good in 1985, has been made a member of the regime's Revolutionary Council and fights single-mindedly against the resistance in the area to the south of Kandahar. In the east near the Pakistan border, large numbers of Shinwari tribesmen have provided route security along the main highway to the Pakistan border.

Other regime-militia relationships are less satisfactory from Kabul's point of view. The Ismaili Shi'i leader, Sayyid Mansur, whose influence in the region around Kayan in Baghlan province is considerable, receives full subsidies for his men in return for agreeing not to give active support to the guerrillas operating in his area. Similarly, the regime has developed an ambiguous relationship with Sarwar Nuristani, a former army officer who has set himself up as a warlord in the western part of the Nuristan region in east-central Afghanistan. Despite the subsidy and weapons he receives, Sarwar portrays himself as "neutral" and so far has done little to interfere with resistance convoys moving through the region he controls. The DRA apparently pays him off to keep him and his men from joining the resistance.

Although its failures in recruiting and retaining militiamen probably outnumber its successes, the DRA recognizes that in this sort of subversion lies a hope of denying segments of the rural population to the resistance. Guerrilla commanders make it clear that they are in constant competition with regime militia recruiters in the countryside. With a growing secret police apparatus at its disposal, Kabul may be expected to intensify its recruitment efforts in the months and years ahead.

Population migration. Probably the most serious problem facing the resistance is the flight of the rural population from areas near the Pakistan border, and along principal highways, where fighting has been heavy and where Soviet and regime bombardments have made living conditions impossible. The Panjsher, Logar, and Konar river valleys, all strategically located in the northern and eastern parts of the country, have lost substantial percentages of their populations. In fact, a visitor who returned from the Konar Valley in late 1986 asserted that the only people now living there were resistance fighters, DRA soldiers and a few Soviet advisors and townspeople.

The difficulties with which the rural population exodus presents the resistance are agonizing. Without the aid and comfort of the civilians, resistance fighters moving from one place to another are forced to carry their food with them instead of living off the land as they did earlier in the war. Also, with no local populace to blend into, resistance units are easier for regime and Soviet forces to identify and destroy. Further, as villages are abandoned, their fragile economic infrastructures—notably irrigation systems—are often irreparably damaged, leaving the impoverished refugees with no choice but to stay away or, as is the case in the Panjsher, to be fed and supported by the resistance. Finally, the civilians who leave for Pakistan, Iran, Kabul, and a few other towns inside Afghanistan are lost to the resistance in a political sense.

How the resistance will cope with this problem is not clear. A few commanders, recognizing that without a population base the resistance is likely to fail over time, have forced civilians to stay in place. Jamiat-e-Islami leader Burhanuddin Rabbani, during his visit to Washington as resistance Alliance spokesman in June 1986, pleaded for the humanitarian aid he sees as essential to supporting the country's civilian population. His argument was that delivering social services to Afghans in areas under its control was essential to the resistance's effort to build itself into an effective administrative as well as military force. Efforts are underway to restore some
modicum of the primitive social services network Afghanistan enjoyed before the Soviet invasion. Until now these have been no match for the pressures which compel the continued migration out of the country's war zones.

Rabbani's plea makes a good bridge from the battlefield to a consideration of the political dimension of the war in Afghanistan. In a military sense, there is an apparent balance between the obvious successes of the resistance and the problems which beset its leadership and its commanders and guerrillas in the field. Politically, the accomplishments of the resistance are on their face more modest, and the advantages enjoyed by the Soviets loom large.

The Political Dimension

There are two points to be made about the place of the Afghanistan issue in world public opinion. First of all, there is no ambiguity in the eyes of the world about what happened in Afghanistan in December 1979 and what has been going on there since that time. The Soviet Union is seen to have occupied a defenseless neighbor and to have imposed an alien rule by a small minority of Afghans on the overwhelming majority of their countrymen. Eight United Nations General Assembly resolutions, which in deference to Soviet sensibilities call for the withdrawal of "foreign" forces from Afghanistan, have been adopted by very large majorities. These documents are a good measure of how the world views Afghanistan.

Second, Afghanistan is not on the international "front burner." With the exception of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, no government has broken formal diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, and among international organizations, only the Islamic Conference Organization suspended Afghanistan's membership following the Soviet invasion. The United Nations Development Program, UNICEF, the WHO, and UNESCO are all active in Kabul even though security conditions do not permit them to operate outside the capital. In a formal sense, the Kabul regime can make a good case that it represents Afghanistan throughout the world.

Four reasons for this situation can be quickly listed. First, the war is not a daily news story. Foreign correspondents can visit war zones only at considerable peril. Their reports are generally less than the vividness they need to command front-page attention. Second,

3. A number of governments, notably those of the United States, China, Iran, Japan, and five from NATO, while maintaining embassies in Kabul, base their presence there on their recognition of the state of Afghanistan rather than of the regime currently in power in Kabul. They therefore refuse to deal with the regime on substantive diplomatic issues and limit their contacts with it to administrative and consular matters.

...many governments know that the Soviet Union will react forcefully to any effort to make Afghanistan impinge on their bilateral relations with Moscow and therefore tend to shy away from more than their annual, and by now somewhat ritualistic condemnation of the invasion in the General Assembly each fall. Third, there is a reflexive tendency not to seek the Kabul regime's ouster from international organizations for fear of setting a potentially dangerous precedent. Fourth, the opinion is widespread that the Soviet Union never steps back and that, however determined and however representative of the Afghan people's wishes, the resistance to the Soviet occupation is doomed to failure.

The rest of this paper concerns itself with a fifth reason for the failure of the Afghanistan issue to capture and hold the world's attention. This is the inability, at least until recently, of the Afghan resistance to project itself as a coherent national liberation movement. As the following pages seek to show, there are a number of good reasons for the resistance's lack of an international political presence, and there is evidence that the situation may be changing. At present, however, the world calls the mujahidin "rebels," and looks on their struggle, not as a national liberation movement, but as a politically purposeless exercise by fractious groups of tribal warriors.

THE RESISTANCE ALLIANCE

As with the war on the ground, a useful way to look at the political development of the Afghan resistance is to draw up a balance sheet of its achievements and of the difficulties it faces. Such a listing should begin with the resistance Alliance (formally, the Islamic Union of the Mujahidin of Afghanistan). This group, based in Pakistan, is made up of the seven principal resistance parties and ostensibly represents the bulk of the resistance's guerrilla fighters.

The seven party leaders agreed to form their Alliance in May 1985 and chose Younus Khalis, the leader of one faction of the Hezb-e-Islami-ye Afghanistan as their spokesman. In October of that year, agreement was


5. Prior to 1985, there had been two alliances, each called the Islamic Union of the Holy Warriors of Afghanistan. These were factions of an earlier union which had split along ideological lines.
announced that the role of spokesman would rotate among the seven member organizations, each incumbent serving for three months, and that a council and a number of Alliance committees would be formed. In mid-1986, it was announced that the Alliance would conduct elections both inside Afghanistan and among the refugees. To date, six of the seven party leaders have served a tour as spokesman. The seventh is scheduled to take up his duties in the latter part of January 1987.

**International activities.** The Alliance leadership has been increasingly active on the international scene. In October 1985, spokesman Gulbuddin Hekmatyar led a delegation from each of the seven parties to New York for the 40th anniversary session of the U.N. General Assembly. He was barred from entering the premises of the United Nations, and his request to meet with the Secretary General and/or the latter's personal representative on Afghanistan, Diego Cordovez, was ignored. Despite a series of well-presented interviews, Hekmatyar's visit received only passing mention in the international media. Nonetheless, Hekmatyar and his associates were active in calling on the U.N. delegations of various governments.

In the winter and spring of 1986, the new spokesman, Pir Sayyed Ahmad Gailani of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, made two forays overseas. In January, he visited Fez, Morocco, for the annual meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Gailani was well received, and the Conference adopted a lengthy resolution condemning the Soviet occupation and calling for its end. Gailani also went to Geneva for the meeting of the Human Rights Commission in March but was unable to speak or even enter the room where the report on human rights abuses in Afghanistan by the Austrian jurist, Felix Ermacora, was being debated.

In June 1986, the new spokesman, Burhanuddin Rabbani, visited Washington, Saudi Arabia and France where he met with President Reagan, King Fahd and Prime Minister Chirac. He was accompanied by Gailani and by Sebahatullah Mojaededi and Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, leaders of the National Liberation Front and the Islamic Revolutionary Movement, respectively. The Rabbani visit received considerable media attention, with one major theme being the announcement in Pakistan by Hekmatyar and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, who heads the Union of Mujahidin of Afghanistan, that they had opposed the visit to Washington and that Rabbani therefore had no mandate to undertake it. Another was Rabbani's call for formal recognition of the Alliance and for the ouster of the Kabul regime from the United Nations.

In the fall of 1986 Nabi, who was spokesman, Gailani and Mojaededi, and second-line figures from the other four parties came to New York to represent the resistance at the 41st General Assembly. This time the delegation was able to hold a press conference inside the United Nations where it was assaulted by members of the DRA's U.N. delegation. Through an appeal to the Secretary General, the Soviet Union managed to prevent the holding of a reception in the delegation's honor on United Nations premises. Except for the assault on the delegation, Nabi's visit received little media attention. In part as a result of the travels of its spokesmen, the Alliance has received a modicum of international recognition. A few governments deal regularly with the spokesman and with Alliance committees in Pakistan, primarily to discuss various assistance proposals. There is also the beginning of a diplomatic dialogue between those governments and the Alliance.

**Public information.** While the Alliance lacks a public information arm, several of the parties, particularly Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami and Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami, are quite effective in this area. They issue statements on developments in the war, issue multilingual publications on a regular basis, and are engaged in training cameramen and still photographers. The overseas offices of the various parties are sometimes active in the public information field. Both Hezb-e-Islami and the Jamiat have assigned a few full-time staff members to man their offices; others rely on refugees who work for them on a part-time basis.

**Internal development.** The Alliance's 1985 announcement on forming committees has produced some results. In addition to a previously existing military body, the Alliance now has committees dealing with health, education and agriculture. All seven members of these committees meet regularly and have concerned themselves with the pressing need for social services inside Afghanistan. The education committee, for example, has agreed on the sites at which more than 2000 schools could be located and will work closely with the project for funding teacher salaries, textbooks and school materials proposed to it by the United States. Individual parties and commanders are also active in delivering social services inside Afghanistan and deal extensively with various governmental and private aid donors in this connection.

In concluding this list of resistance political accomplishments, a word should be said about the individual party organizations. While these vary in size and sophistication, each is responsible for the management of a sizeable war and political action effort. Particularly in the case of the Jamiat and Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami, the structures are quite elaborate, and they deliver extensive services through their commanders to civilians inside the country. Depending on the initiative and sophistication of indi-
individual commanders, the scope of their administrative operations inside Afghanistan is often wide.

Weakness of the Kabul Regime

Before turning to the political difficulties of the resistance, a word should be said about what is perhaps its greatest asset. This is the weakness of the Kabul regime. In 1986, the Soviet Union undertook its most extensive effort to give the regime an air of respectability, to build it into an entity which could survive the withdrawal of Soviet forces, and to convince the world of Moscow's wish to end the war. An elaborate program of cosmetic regime broadening went on throughout the year, with nonparty figures being brought into ostensibly important positions in the government and with the regime's Revolutionary Council being expanded so that the percentage of party members in it would be reduced. Further, Babrak Karmal was replaced in the summer by secret police chief Dr. Najibullah, whose supposedly good tribal connections were expected to enhance the regime's ability to weaken the resistance through co-option of tribal elders. Finally, as 1986 drew to a close Moscow embarked on a "peace offensive" involving exchanges of visits between Najibullah and Shevardnadze, the proclamation of a unilateral cease-fire by Kabul and Soviet forces, and the formation of a national reconciliation council for broadening the regime to include all elements of the society.

Of these three initiatives, two have not improved the regime's position, and the fate of the third is unclear at this juncture. The alleged broadening of the regime is widely dismissed as cosmetic as the co-optees are correctly seen as being without influence. Najib's elevation has not paid dividends in terms of co-opting tribal leaders; its principal result has been to add "Najib" and "Babrak" factions to a Communist party which has been divided into two wings since its creation twenty years ago. As for the peace offensive, it has captured headlines but has not diverted attention from the need for the Soviets to produce a short timetable for the withdrawal of their forces.

In short, the Kabul regime's 1986 maneuvers have failed to give it the legitimacy it has been seeking since the Soviet invasion. It is certainly true that the Communist party has been growing slowly, that the administration in the capital is increasingly dominated by party members, and that large numbers of Afghans being educated in the Soviet Union may eventually become the new generation of young Communists Moscow has been trying to create. For the near and middle term, however, the prospect is for a regime unable to extend its control beyond a few cities and towns, incapable of commanding anything more than sullen acceptance by those Afghans living under its control and detested by the rest. If there is a challenge to the resistance for the support of the Afghan people, it does not come from Kabul.

Alliance Problems—Structural and Ideological

The foregoing catalogue of achievements by the Alliance and the parties, and of the Kabul regime's inadequacies, cannot disguise the underdevelopment of the Afghan resistance's political dimension. The Alliance's problems are both structural and ideological. With the exception of its four committees, the Alliance lacks a structure. It has no headquarters, no permanently assigned staff, no offices overseas, and no budget on which to operate. Despite the apparently sizeable resources available to each of the parties, the question of how the overseas trips of Alliance spokesmen will be financed is frequently not answered until the last minute.

The lack of overseas representation sharply limits the international effectiveness of the Alliance. Its spokesmen arrive in foreign capitals unprepared to deal with a round of diplomatic calls or with the media and must rely on the good offices of friendly embassies to brief them and handle arrangements for their visits. Advance arrangements with the media are generally haphazard, and attention to the visitors minimal.

At the heart of the political difficulties are the sharp ideological and personal splits among resistance leaders. At one end of the political spectrum, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, often loosely termed an Islamic "fundamentalist," is a youthful political activist who was never a part of the Afghan political establishment that existed before the Communist coup d'état. Hekmatyar holds that establishment, of which the traditionalist leaders Gailani and Mojaddedi were part, to be responsible for what befell the country. He also appears suspicious of western intentions towards Afghanistan.

These attitudes, which are shared by Sayyaf, make conflict within the Alliance inevitable. They result in the leaders' inability to agree on a wide range of administrative and substantive questions, from opening offices overseas to accepting an invitation from President Reagan. The leaders individually understand the need for speaking to the world with a single voice and the Alliance's development since its creation a year and a half ago represents slow progress in this direction, but much more needs to be done before what is now a loose coalition becomes a functioning political entity.
Some Concluding Observations

As noted above, this article makes no effort to forecast the military course of the war in Afghanistan. As the struggle enters its eighth year, resistance morale is high and there is every prospect that the Soviet army will face continued, increasingly effective opposition. The dynamics in the standoff, particularly population migration, which seem to order a Soviet victory will continue to plague the guerrillas. Whether these result in a less effective resistance will depend in considerable measure on the ability of the major commanders to deliver social services to the civilian population.

The politics of the war are crucial. Up to now, the resistance has been incapable in both institutional and substantive terms of presenting its case to the world. Its lack of institutional development, both at home and internationally, has kept it from being present in the U.N.-sponsored negotiations that seek to decide Afghanistan's future. Equally important, the open disagreements among the leaders of the Alliance ensure that its pronouncements on Afghanistan-related issues are treated as less than authoritative in the media. The Alliance leaders have begun a process of institutional development that, if continued, could force their union on the USSR as its interlocutor in any serious peace effort Moscow may decide to make. Whether this process continues is central to Afghanistan's future.