WASHINGTON, MOSCOW AND THE STRUGGLE FOR KABUL
THE COLD WAR CONTINUES IN AFGHANISTAN

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INTRODUCTION

Suspicions, often based on misperceptions, tend to lead to conservative, confrontational policies; this trend has characterized US-Soviet relations vis-a-vis Afghanistan for years. In spite of recent talk from Moscow and Washington about resolving regional conflicts by stressing common interests over cold war attitudes, mutual distrust of each other's intentions in Afghanistan remains very high. In spite of the Geneva Accords signed in April 1988, the subsequent Soviet withdrawal, proposals from Gorbachev in December 1989 for a mutual arms cutoff both to the Kabul Government and the rebels (an idea originally put forth by the Americans but rejected by the Soviets and now rejected by the Americans), and a pledge earlier this year by the Bush Administration to play "a catalytic role" in Afghanistan, both sides continue to supply their respective clients with large quantities of arms. Tragically, while Moscow and Washington remain indirectly locked in battle to prevent each other from achieving their respective goals, countless Afghans continue to die.

Is there a way for the superpowers to break this cycle of distrust and to disengage from the world's bloodiest regional war? To what degree are Washington and Moscow's perceptions of each other's objectives accurate or inaccurate? To what extent are their interests in Afghanistan mutually exclusive from one another? These difficult questions may never be answered conclusively, but any attempt to understand why Afghanistan became and continues to serve as a superpower battlefield should move us closer to finding ways of giving Afghanistan back to the Afghans.

Drawing from declassified US Government material and interviews with US, Soviet, Pakistani and Afghan officials and representatives of the Mujahidin, I shall briefly trace the evolution of US-Soviet rivalry in Afghanistan and, using lessons from the past, examine current prospects for disengagement.1

THE EARLY PERIOD

"Afghanistan is of little or no strategic importance to the United States." This is what the US Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded in 1950, several years after the US had replaced Great Britain as the major Western presence in South Asia.2 Of course there were no Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan at that time. American objectives in the area - containing the Soviet Union, protecting sea lanes in the Indian Ocean and keeping oil flowing to the "free world" - could be secured without courting Afghanistan, so any Soviet interest there was of little concern to Washington. In fact, the US understood that the increasing amount of Soviet aid to Afghanistan was, according to a 1954 US National Intelligence Estimate, "part of a general effort to counter recent...US gains in the Middle East-South Asia area."3
Although stemming largely from these US "gains" and the Soviet's perceptions of how they fit into Washington's South Asia policy, Soviet interests in Afghanistan were economic and political as well as strategic. Economically, Afghanistan provided a market for Soviet and East European goods and served as a possible doorway to other markets and resources. Although very poor in terms of its own purchasing power, Afghanistan's economic importance lay in its natural gas reserves, its potential role as a transit route, and its need for military equipment and other goods. Politically, Afghanistan could serve as a bridge between the Soviet Union and the Muslim and non-aligned countries of the Third World. Once a significant Soviet aid program was launched in 1954, Afghanistan allowed the Soviets to display their development programs, demonstrating to other countries the benefits which could accrue to them if they remained outside the United States' sphere of influence.

Nevertheless, the main Soviet interest in Afghanistan was strategic. With a long common border, any instability within Afghan borders was viewed as a threat to Soviet national security. Any US presence in the region was also viewed as such a threat. For example, in 1947, in response to rumors of US offers to construct airports in Afghanistan, the Soviet Ambassador to Kabul protested "that the USSR was being encircled...and that after the experience of the recent war the USSR could not view with unconcern the development of any alien interest in countries bordering on Russia." Krushchev expressed the same concern in his memoirs: "At the time of our visit there [1954-55], it was clear to us that the Americans were penetrating Afghanistan with the obvious purpose of setting up a military base." After the formation of the anti-Soviet CENTO alliance in the early 50s, the CIA-aided coup in Iran in 1953 which brought the pro-US Shah to power, and the signing of the US-Pakistan mutual defense agreement in 1955, the Soviet Union, by offering large aid packages to Kabul, attempted to bring Afghanistan closer into its sphere of influence in order to deny what it saw as another potential link in the Americans' chain of strategic allies below its southern border.

The first time the US showed any significant concern about Soviet-Afghan relations came in the early 1960s when Pakistan, during a dispute with Kabul over the issue of Pushtunistan, decided to sever Afghanistan's trade route to the Indian Ocean. This presented the US with a dilemma: while it did not want to alienate Pakistan, which was playing an important role in the US strategy of containment, the prospect of forcing Afghanistan into a closer embrace with the Soviet Union was also disturbing. So in 1962, the US and Iran began discussions with Afghan officials about building a major road from Afghanistan through Iran which, as US officials put it, would provide the Afghans with "an outlet to the free world." Still, while signalling the Afghans that they need not depend entirely on Moscow for aid, the US decided not to participate in a "bidding game" with the Soviets. As the State Department concluded some years later: "Regardless of Russian politics or world role, Afghanistan has a natural political, economic, commercial, and cultural relationship with Russia. Any effort on the part of other nations to reduce Soviet-Afghan relations below this natural level would be contrary to the interests of both and the resulting situation could not persist."
THE MIDDLE PERIOD: DEALING WITH DAoud

The overthrow of King Zahir Shah by his cousin Mohammad Daoud in 1973 marked the end of an era not only for Afghanistan but for US-Soviet relations there as well. Zahir Shah had often played the superpowers against each other to benefit from both, but Daoud proved to be especially flirtatious in his foreign policy. This worried the Soviets while pleasing the Americans. As a CIA biographical report on him noted, Daoud "was happiest when he could light his American cigarettes with Soviet matches." US and Soviet policies toward Afghanistan during the Daoud era are worth examining in light of today's predicament.

It is often noted that Daoud came to power with the help of a communist-infiltrated military and that he set the stage for the 1978 communist coup and the subsequent Soviet military intervention by allowing too much leftist influence in his government. The record, however, indicates that following an initial stage of granting leftist demands for land, education and other reforms, Daoud eventually shunned the communists — banning political opposition altogether in 1975 — and turned increasingly away from Moscow and toward the West in foreign policy. One year after coming to power, Daoud sent a large contingent of military officers to India and Egypt for training instead of to the Soviet Union. In the same year he approached the Shah of Iran for financial aid. The Shah responded by offering Daoud $2 billion in aid over 10 years, including $400 million up front, as an alternative to Soviet assistance.

On a trip to Kabul in 1976, Secretary of State Kissinger expressed "the United States' strong support for Daoud's initiatives which, " he claimed, had "improved relations among the states of the region."

Iranian offers to help wean Daoud from the Soviets continued. According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Shah, in a 1977 visit to Washington, "spent a good portion of his presentation to President Carter... expounding the shared American-Iranian interest in protecting Afghanistan's genuine neutrality," which, as one American analyst translated, meant "moving Afghanistan politically closer to the West."

Despite Daoud's flirtations with the West, Soviet aid continued in large amounts and Daoud, seeing little reason not to, accepted it. From the Soviet point of view, continued military and economic aid would perpetuate Afghan dependence and ensure its role, if not as a bridge, then at least as a buffer. As a State Department report put it in 1975, Afghanistan was "a militarily and politically neutral nation, effectively dependent on the Soviet Union." Given the circumstances, that assessment was the best Moscow could hope for.

So while US policy toward Afghanistan became more active under Daoud, Soviet policy remained basically the same. Moscow often interpreted American efforts to influence Daoud's foreign policies as attempts to supplant Soviet influence, even though the evidence indicates only that Washington was hoping to gain a more "neutral" Afghanistan and more regional stability. Daoud's policies, however, did not contribute to such goals in the end. On April 17, 1978, Mir Akbar Khyber, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan and a critic of Daoud, was assassinated. Since it was widely believed that Daoud's Interior Minister had ordered the killing, thousands turned Khyber's funeral into a major anti-government demonstration. The incident was the culmination of years
of political oppression and failed promises of economic and political changes from Daoud. Neither the leftists nor the Islamic fundamentalists were happy with him. The left, by virtue of its support in the military, was in a better position than the Islamists to do something about it. Days after the demonstration Daoud was overthrown in a military coup.

Due to internal developments out of either superpower's control and to misunderstandings of each other's policies - US insensitivity to Soviet security concerns and Soviet paranoia over US intentions - Moscow and Washington had, by the time of Daoud's overthrow, already put themselves on a collision course in Afghanistan. More de-stabilizing developments in Afghanistan and Iran (influenced by the superpowers, but for the most part indigenous in nature) coupled with more misperceptions eventually exacerbated the situation to the point where we are today.

PRELUDE TO INTERVENTION

The debate which took place within the Carter Administration following the 1978 coup illustrates US perceptions of Soviet policy. Days after the coup, Assistant Secretary of State Harold Saunders wrote Secretary of State Cyrus Vance a memorandum stressing that the "US needs to take into account the mix of nationalism and communism in the new leadership and seek to avoid driving the regime into a closer embrace with the Soviet Union than it might wish. On the other hand," Saunders added, "anti-regime elements in Afghanistan will be watching us carefully to see if we acquiesce in or accept the communist takeover." Vance decided to urge self-restraint so as not to attract more Soviet attention. However, hard-liners, led by National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, warned the President that to stand back from Afghanistan, especially in light of growing instability in Iran, would signal America's allies in the region that Afghanistan had been "written off" as unimportant to American interests.

Brzezinski, who also suspected Soviet designs on Iran, eventually prevailed over Vance and other moderates. By his own admission, he pushed a decision through the National Security Council in March 1979, nine months before the Soviet intervention, to be, as he put it, "more sympathetic to those Afghans who were determined to preserve their country's independence." Although deliberately opaque as to what this meant, the contextual evidence revealed in documents and interviews shows that it entailed covert support to certain rebel groups. This support began no later than May 1979 when the CIA provided aid to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami party in Pakistan. The assistance was financial and was "modest" in amount. China provided training and other assistance as well. Also, starting no later than April, State Department officials began meeting rebel leaders on a periodic basis, usually listening to the leaders' views and demands.

The US decision to ignore the original warning to "avoid driving the [Afghan] regime into a closer embrace with the Soviet Union" and instead to aid the regime's opponents, albeit at modest levels, is especially curious in light of two things. First, US officials did not believe the rebels could serve as a viable alternative to the DRA leadership; rebel leaders themselves had confided to Embassy officials that they
likened a dissident provisional government to "putting five different animals in the same cage." Second, while the US was covertly supporting the rebels, US Embassy officials in Kabul were reporting back to Washington about Soviet efforts to broaden the base of the Afghan Government which was apparently too radical for Moscow. It seems clear from interviews with former Carter Administration officials cognizant of US aid to and meetings with rebel groups that they did not think low level contact with the Mujahidin would cause the Soviets alarm. They certainly did not believe the Soviets would send troops to Afghanistan, an opinion supported by the US Embassy in Moscow at the time: "A Soviet invasion would probably redound to the disadvantage of global strategic interests. It would deal a severe blow to detente with the West at a time when it is increasingly preoccupied with the growing Chinese threat in the East..."

Resistance to Soviet influence and Afghan communism stemmed more from Afghan xenophobia and strong religious and ethnic traditions than from US support for the rebels - however substantial it was. Still, the fact that US officials were meeting with (and to the Soviets presumably aiding) anti-regime elements must have concerned Moscow. As one analyst opines, "at the least it contributed to Soviet fears of the desire and readiness of the United States, supported by Muslim allies and co-ordinated with the separate assistance of the Chinese, to attempt to influence the situation in Afghanistan." In interviews, many Soviet officials and scholars, even those who were opposed to Soviet military intervention, said that they believed in 1979 that Washington viewed Afghanistan as a possible alternative to Iran, the strategic linchpin of US regional strategy which had just been "lost" with the fall of the Shah.

In any event, Moscow eventually decided to shore up its slipping influence in Afghanistan militarily, having failed to do it politically.

Prior to the 1978-79 period, each superpower could pursue its regional interests without threatening those of the other. With the exception of Daoud's final years - when the Soviets saw US policy as encroaching somewhat on "its" territory - the Soviet Union remained the dominant outside force in Afghanistan, allowing the Soviets to attain their minimum objective of securing their southern border. However, Soviet inability to establish a solid foothold prevented them from pursuing opportunities beyond Afghanistan's borders. Thus, the US felt secure from Soviet "adventurism" while its regional interests remained protected with the help of its regional allies, particularly Iran. As both Iran and Afghanistan began to boil over, however, both Moscow and Washington modified their policies toward the region.

It was the combination of both powers misperceiving the other's new approach, together with their inability to control events in the region, that put them on a collision course in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union, concerned about its national security and its own influence in the region, tried desperately to salvage the immediate guarantor of those interests - the DRA - even if it meant changing the composition of this body to something less than a communist government. The US was well aware of Soviet efforts to seek a political solution to the growing instability in Afghanistan, but it was not aware of how its own policy was perceived by the Soviets as impeding their search for
such a solution. In the Soviet view, its continued failure to "stabilize" the situation in Afghanistan and secure its southern flank was due in part to US support for those responsible for de-stabilizing it: first Daoud, then the rebels. Despite these concerns, a number of Soviet officials in Afghanistan, according to documents and interviews, believed—and in some cases told US officials—that Soviet military intervention would not occur because it "might solve one problem but would create another..." A smaller but more powerful group of officials in Moscow, however, was apparently not listening.

INTERVENTION AND CONFRONTATION

The deployment of roughly 100,000 Soviet troops to Afghanistan beginning in December 1979 gave impetus to the American hard-line view that Soviet objectives in Southwest Asia—and throughout the Third World—were expansionist in nature. Several days after the invasion a US intelligence report estimated that "...the key motivation that propelled Moscow's move was to bring its long-standing strategic goals closer within reach. Control of Afghanistan," it continued, "would be a major step toward overland access to the Indian Ocean and to domination of the Asian subcontinent." It is important to recall that this was the prevailing view upon which the "Carter Doctrine" of containing Soviet "expansionism" was predicated. To increase the price of Soviet "aggression," the US imposed a number of sanctions on the USSR, sought international support to oppose the intervention, established base agreements with Southwest Asian countries, and provided more aid to the Afghan rebels. The level of aid to the rebels was to be commensurate with their contribution to US regional security, which at first appeared minimal, as reflected in a State Department report to President Carter on January 1, 1980: "The resistance movement will probably continue tying up some 85,000 or more Soviet troops but the rebels are fragmented, lack effective national leadership, and certainly cannot force a Soviet withdrawal." Congressional support for the rebels was not hard to get. Selig Harrison described the two camps of Congressional backers: "There are those who viewed aid as part of a two-track policy in which the US simultaneously pursued a Soviet force withdrawal through a negotiated settlement, and another which discounted the possibility of a withdrawal but supported unlimited weapons aid for its own sake as a means of raising the costs of the occupation." Not surprisingly, the Soviets reacted to US actions defensively. But it is important to examine their subsequent statements and actions to begin to understand what they had hoped to accomplish by intervening militarily. Speaking to an American audience shortly after the invasion, a Kremlin official asked "...how would the United States react if the Soviet Union assumed the right to build up and maintain a continuous chain of military bases around the United States, as is being done by the USA in relation to the Soviet Union." This analogy, I believe, points to the real reason for Soviet intervention. Obviously the Soviets had not intervened on behalf of President Amin, who they falsely claimed had invited them in to save his government from "imperialist reactionaries." Soviet soldiers, upon entering Kabul, promptly assassinated Amin and installed what they
hoped would be a more moderate and pliable regime. Although Soviet officials must have feared the political consequences of losing a socialist ally to "anti-communist" forces, they were more concerned about what this would have meant for their own national security.

They may have thought that taking drastic measures to shore up their slipping influence in Afghanistan would have been understood by the US, which had behaved similarly toward other countries within its own sphere of influence. While pointing out that the Soviets would not admit to such imperialist behavior, one analyst speculates that in Moscow's view, "the situation was...comparable to that involving American interests in the Dominican Republic, where the United States had intervened directly in 1965 without an invitation from a previously recognized government, and before departing the US had established a responsive government." 30 Mexico probably provides a better analogy. If anti-US rebels were thought to be receiving support from Moscow to topple a waiving pro-US, Mexican regime, the US would probably consider intervening for similar reasons and probably face similar consequences.

Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was unwise and damaging in many ways. It is ironic, however, that those officials and Congressmen who are the most critical of Soviet policy toward Afghanistan, the most supportive of continued aid to the rebels, and the first to ridicule the notion that Afghanistan could pose a security threat to the Soviet Union are the same people who maintain that the US has the legitimate right to "influence events" in Nicaragua because it poses a threat to our own national security - even though it is hundreds of miles south of our border and surrounded by pro-American states.

FROM REAGAN TO GORBACHEV

It is little wonder that the so-called Reagan Doctrine of "rolling back" communism by aiding anti-communist forces overlapped and surpassed the Carter Doctrine on Afghanistan. The Reagan team applauded the mujahidin for achieving three important goals for the "free world": 1) they made the Soviets pay a heavy price for trying to subjugate a "free" country to their rule and ideology; 2) they halted Soviet "expansionism" in a region where vital American interests had become vulnerable, allowing for the restoration of US influence there; and 3) they showed the Soviet leaders and the rest of the world that socialist revolutions are, in fact, reversible. Reagan's policy toward Afghanistan was not fully articulated until 1985 with the signing of National Security Decision Directive 166 which called for efforts to drive Soviet forces from Afghanistan "by all means available." 31

Support for this policy again came from two camps: those who viewed military aid as a way to bring about a negotiated settlement, and those who were less optimistic about a peace settlement, but thought that given enough military aid the rebels might push the Soviets' pain threshold to an intolerable level. Today, this latter group claims that military pressure was the main factor in convincing the Soviets to withdraw and continues to stress its usefulness in current efforts to topple the Afghan Government.
While the level of covert military aid to the rebels grew tremendously under Reagan and Bush, little importance was attached to the UN-sponsored proximity talks on Afghanistan. The assumption (or perception) upon which this policy was formulated was that the Soviets were not seriously interested in withdrawing until they had ensured the Afghan Government's ability to survive on its own, no matter how long it took - unless the military and economic stakes became unaffordable. Therefore, according to this view, more attention had to be paid to military pressure than to diplomacy.\textsuperscript{32}

At first, the assumption that Moscow was not interested in withdrawing its forces without having subjugated the rebels was probably a fair one. Initially Moscow concentrated on a brutal counterinsurgency strategy which indicated its belief that the rebels could be defeated eventually. Guerrilla, Pakistani and American resolve, however, forced the Soviets and the PDPA to change their strategy to more of a carrot-and-stick approach - bombing the countryside while simultaneously attempting to broaden the DRA's base through political concessions to opposition groups. More emphasis was put on the UN negotiations, with some Soviet officials discussing the need to invite rebel groups into the government.\textsuperscript{33} However, hard-line elements in the Kremlin and in Kabul, according to interviews, were not eager to pursue such moves unconditionally and unilaterally. For one thing, not all Soviet officials were convinced that the war was unwinnable. Stubbornness and strong anti-US sentiment probably were two reasons for this. But lack of good information apparently was an even more important factor. Today, in retrospect, Soviet experts on Afghanistan bitterly complain about how little they were consulted by policy-makers; instead, Soviet officials in Kabul and Moscow, they claim, relied on reports based on information given to Soviet military and political officers by their Afghan counterparts, whose interests were not always served by painting a gloomy picture of their own situation.\textsuperscript{34} The continuing escalation of US aid to the rebels proved also, in the hard-liners' view, that Washington was more interested in bogging down the Red Army than in facilitating a withdrawal agreement.

They were right on this last point, it seems, but for the wrong reasons. According to a former State Department official, the main reason the US even "played along with the negotiations," as he put it, was because Pakistan felt it needed the talks to maintain domestic and international support for its own support of the rebels.\textsuperscript{35} Another former US official intimately involved with the negotiations claimed that as long as the Soviets insisted on a future role for the PDPA, the US was not interested in an agreement. Even if the rebels were to be granted a major governing role, he said, the PDPA, by virtue of its superior organizational skills, would probably dominate the government, and that would allow the Soviets to maintain a foothold in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{36}
Moscow and Kabul failed to stabilize the government as rebel military prowess grew steadily through the years. Moreover, to many Afghans and much of the international community, the hands of the PDPA and its Soviet caretakers are forever stained with blood. Still, Soviet efforts to stabilize a "friendly" government in Kabul have met with some success.

For years the popular perception of the Afghan military has been that it was on the verge of collapse. However, given the unfavorable circumstances, DRA troops have done relatively well in holding their ground. Defections and improved guerrilla tactics have constantly plagued the military, but a healthy budget - which includes double pay for the KGB-styled WAD (previously KHAD) agents - has probably cut the rate of desertions. Defections have not made a significant difference to the ratio of government to rebel forces. As far as guerrilla tactics are concerned, government forces have derived counter-measures that have enabled them to defend themselves. The rebels' use of Stinger and Blowpipe anti-aircraft guns has forced Afghan pilots to fly higher, making bombing missions less accurate and search and destroy missions less feasible. But for several years the Afghan forces have increasingly opted to abandon offensive missions in favor of defending key cities and military outposts, placing the rebels in the unfamiliar and difficult position of the conventional attacker. In addition, the government has employed more subtle ways to counter improved rebel tactics, seeking to deny the mujahidin their infrastructural support by exploiting the diverse ethnic and tribal nature of Afghanistan's population and pitting the disparate groups against one another.

Several political gains have been made also: the government has broadened its base of support, albeit marginally, by moderating its policies and buying off tribal militia groups; party cohesion is stronger; and an intelligence network, WAD, has proven effective in protecting the government from subversion in government-controlled cities. However, at least 60% of the members of the communist party have been assigned to the army, the police and WAD, thus draining the government of loyal and much needed personnel. Furthermore, the presence of Soviet advisors and Soviet-picked government leaders, particularly Najibullah, hinders the PDPA's ability to project a nationalist image. Therein lies the Soviet Union's dilemma: the attainment of its goal to establish a friendly government in Afghanistan has been dependent upon the same elements that threatened it throughout the war - the Soviet presence (first soldiers, now advisors) and a Soviet-tainted leadership.

It appears that Soviet policy-makers recognized this dilemma as early as 1986 and have been dealing with it (with increasing desperation) ever since. Shortly after Gorbachev came to power, he reportedly began to seek a way out of Afghanistan, at first through direct military means. In July 1985, he hand-picked General Mikhail Zaitsev who was given a year or two to "start winning in Afghanistan." But by autumn 1986, according to Pentagon analysts, Soviet officials were beginning to reassess the military situation. In retrospect it may be fair to assume that Moscow decided around that time that direct military assistance to Kabul
was no longer practical, but that a gradual phasing out of its military presence in Afghanistan - with indirect assistance to come later - mixed with efforts toward a political solution would ensure that a less than hostile government would be left standing in Kabul or, at the very least, that a "decent interval" for a Soviet departure could be made. In December 1986, Gorbachev informed Najibullah that the Soviet troop commitment to his regime was limited. 43 Najibullah immediately announced his program of national reconciliation, offering a unilateral cease-fire and several posts in a coalition government to rebel leaders. Offers of political concessions to the rebels from Kabul became increasingly far-reaching, but were rejected for a number of reasons, most notably because they came from Kabul and Najibullah. Fewer offers of such concessions have been made recently, in part because the Kabul regime has proven stronger militarily than was expected.

THE CURRENT STRUGGLE FOR KABUL

Indeed, most private and government analysts in Moscow and Washington are surprised by the PDPA's staying power. 43 Their respective policies during and immediately after the withdrawal period reflect their common assumption that a change in power was going to take place. While in Moscow last November, I was consistently told by Soviet officials that they were prepared to work with a new government in Kabul even if it were dominated by rebel elements. A few experts on Afghanistan, however, did not believe the PDPA would be chased from Kabul so easily. The consensus was that if Pakistan and the US would reciprocate, Moscow would be willing to let the internal situation play itself out because it was believed that a change in the Kabul government's composition was inevitable, and because it was doubted that Moscow's most feared rebel elements, like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, would ever survive a power struggle.

Most Soviet officials insisted that their concerns were more political than strategic. Withdrawing their troops was a difficult foreign policy move, they claimed, but a necessary one. But reducing or cutting aid would amount to pulling the rug out from under a neighboring socialist ally, which, they feared, would send the wrong signal to their other allies, especially when the US was still supporting the anti-regime forces.

Some officials, who weren't so sure Hekmatyar and others would fade from the scene, stressed the continuing strategic value of Afghanistan as a buffer state, pointing to the potential threat of Islamic fundamentalist forces below their border. These officials claimed that it was important for Moscow to prevent the ascension to power in Kabul of radical religious forces - some which threaten to take their jihad to Soviet Central Asia - because of Gorbachev's policy to grant more autonomy to Central Asian and other republics. These are Moscow's concerns. And given the Soviets' sudden reduction of attention paid to Afghanistan in public statements, it would seem that they are willing to keep Kabul supplied as long as the rebels continue to flounder or until Washington proves it wants to negotiate. In the meantime the Soviets hope to strengthen Kabul's bargaining position.
US officials, surprised and frustrated by the PDPA's continuing show of strength, point to a variety of sources of the rebel's problems, ranging from the CIA to Pakistani interference to the imbalance of military wherewithal between the rebels and Kabul. Congressional hard-liners have been the most vociferous in offering a solution: improve the CIA operation, send the rebels more weapons, and circumvent the Pakistanis by working more directly with internal commanders - or, as one Congressman put it, give the Afghans "a chance to win it by themselves." 45 Rebel supporters in Washington insist that these actions are necessary because, as was learned by the end of the Soviet occupation, the only way to get concessions from Moscow is by applying the right amount of military force. Only then, they reason, will the Soviets negotiate in good faith. The optimal objective of this strategy is still the overthrow of the PDPA. Besides the original strategic rationale of denying the Soviets a foothold in Southwest Asia, some key officials and Congressmen who have supported the rebels for years have taken a personal interest in their struggle and are intent on not letting the US "sell them out." These and other officials also still see in Afghanistan the necessity to demonstrate to the international community a strong show of American resolve and commitment to "freedom fighting" forces. The overall consensus in Washington at present is that continued military pressure along with efforts to broaden the rebels' Afghan Interim Government will at least improve their bargaining position if and when negotiations with Kabul take place. 46

CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS FOR DISENGAGEMENT

Moscow's and Washington's policies are flawed in their expectations and are once again based partly on misperceptions of each other's intentions. In placing the blame for rebel failures on arms shortages, Congress neglects two important reasons behind the mujahidin's inability to seize power in Kabul: 1) Deep, historically-rooted divisions among Afghans, cut along ethnic, religious, tribal and family lines, prevent any chance of forming the kind of united "liberation front" that the West feels is necessary to break the current stalemate; 2) Fear of the mujahidin's fundamentalist elements discourages government soldiers and Afghan city-dwellers from defecting to the rebels, depriving the mujahidin of the urban support they need.

In the past, the fragmented nature of the mujahidin worked to their advantage as a guerrilla force, making it impossible for the Soviet/Afghan military to strike the central nervous system of its opposition. But with the Soviets gone, the order of battle has changed and the rivalries among the various rebel factions - which never were completely buried - are re-emerging, impeding attempts to coordinate attacks against the fortified, government-controlled cities. In Southwestern Afghanistan, for example, rebels belonging to the Durrani tribe still refuse to cooperate in a strategy planned by Pakistani intelligence and Eastern Ghilzais to encircle and attack the city of Kandahar. The Durrani commanders, like other commanders and whole minority groups, were largely excluded from the Pakistani-sponsored Shura [held in February 1989] and see little reason to risk their lives and those of relatives living in Kandahar for the unrepresentative Afghan Interim Government (AIG) which the Shura created.
Recognizing these rivalries as harmful to the rebels' strategy, the US now intends to arm only the more cooperative and strategically placed commanders, hoping to broaden the AIG's base and to create a constellation of resistance cells, or "pressure points" on the Kabul Government. 47 Najibullah, on the other hand, will continue to offer weapons and food to lure rebel groups away from Pakistan's sphere of influence. But what Najibullah realizes and the US has yet to learn is that in most cases these groups' acceptance of outside aid - whether it comes from Kabul or Washington - is dictated by local needs rather than ideological loyalties. Thus the weapons sent to indigenous forces are likely to be used to fuel tribal and family rivalries as often as they are to battle their sponsor's enemy.

Equally problematic for the rebels are their more radical elements whose tactics have discouraged the massive defections which US and Pakistani intelligence had counted on to take place once the Soviets withdrew. The rebels' unsuccessful campaign to capture the city of Jalalabad - which some Congressmen attribute to weapons shortages - is a good case in point. Not long before the battle, in the nearby village of Shewa, Arab Wahabis, assisting radical rebels, raped and sold the village women and reportedly videotaped themselves slitting the throats of captured soldiers. Government soldiers in Jalalabad had undoubtedly heard of this and other similar incidents and fought to the bitter but successful end to keep hold of the city, apparently preferring to go down with a gun in their hands rather than suffer a similar fate.

Such incidents have recently sparked some media coverage and official criticism of the radical forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who is often tied to rebel abuses and who one Congressman believes "is now - apart from Najibullah's Government - the most dangerous threat to the aims of the mujahidin." 48 But the problem goes beyond Hekmatyar. In November 1988, for example, the forces of Yunis Khalis, whom the same Congressman refers to as "public spirited," welcomed an estimated 70 surrendering soldiers from the eastern border town of Torkham with summary executions, later dumping their bodies on the side of the road in tea crates. 49

Although Najibullah and the PDPA lack popular support, many government forces and the people they are protecting do not see an Afghan Interim Government, which is in disarray and dominated by such radicals, as an attractive alternative. The Government forces, therefore, will continue to fight. In the meantime, continued US military aid to the rebels may at best weaken the Kabul Government, but it also exacerbates violent, domestic rivalries and is certain to increase resentment among Afghans of US meddling. A strong possibility also exists that Kabul will actually benefit from continued fighting, putting the rebels in an increasingly weaker position at the negotiating table.

Neither superpower's interests will be served by continued fighting. As Afghans continue to turn their guns on each other, the chances of stabilizing Afghanistan become more remote. The concept of revenge runs deep in Afghan society and, regardless of which group survives and wins the ongoing power struggle, pockets of resistance are likely to remain, perpetuating internecine warfare. If the Soviets are truly interested in stabilizing their southern border, they should pursue with more vigor a political settlement that incorporates all sectors of Afghan society.
and minimizes the duration of continued fighting. Until Moscow and Washington break their cycle of distrust over Afghanistan - a country that now has an estimated 1 million Kalashnikov rifles and many other weapons - the war will propel itself for years to come, with or without superpower sponsorship.

Is there a way out? In order to break the cycle of confrontation, Moscow and Washington first need to discuss, then at least reduce their suspicions of one another's intentions - suspicions that have consistently led to conservative, militaristic policies which in turn perpetuate mutual distrust. This is not to imply that the Soviet Union and the United States have the same specific objectives in Afghanistan and that the war stems solely from misunderstandings. Moscow would obviously prefer that pro-Soviet elements play a significant role in any Afghan government, and Washington wants to prevent such a scenario. But if the war has proven anything, it is that outside powers cannot control the outcome of Afghan power struggles. Furthermore, the superpowers do share some common interests in Afghanistan. For strategic and political reasons, both would benefit from a neutral and stable Afghanistan. Instability affects not only the Soviet Union, but also Pakistan, an important US ally whose own stability and current, shaky efforts toward democratic reform depend on its ability to concentrate on domestic issues. As far as Afghan neutrality is concerned, at least 10 years of experience with Afghan fighting should have taught Moscow, Islamabad and Washington that a strategic alliance with Afghanistan is probably not tenable. Still, strong economic relations between the USSR, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Afghan respect for Soviet and Pakistani security concerns are inevitable.

The Geneva Accords, as much as they were scorned by some, do provide the UN with a mandate to facilitate superpower disengagement from Afghanistan and a political process toward constructing a new coalition government. Thus far, neither Moscow nor Washington has been willing to disengage without assurances that the other will do the same and that the political process will assure a significant role for their respective clients. UN officials have worked on several plans to achieve these goals. One stage of whichever specific plan they finalize will require both superpowers to cease arms supplies to their clients and will probably urge Moscow to withdraw some of its excess weapons stocks from Kabul. This stage of the plan is known as "Negative Symmetry Plus" and would be linked with a broader political process which would seek agreement between Kabul and non-Kabul elements about the composition of, and the process toward constructing, a future government. Since the UN maintains a mandate to oversee the implementation of the Geneva Accords, its Good Offices Mission could monitor the cutoff and withdrawal of arms and provide space for the various Afghan representatives to discuss a settlement.

If Moscow and Washington are truly interested in Afghan self-determination, they should concentrate on mutual disengagement and support such UN efforts. The Soviets should pursue this option with vigor before the chaos in Afghanistan becomes self-propelling and irreversible. The US should pursue it before it finds itself associated with the same bloody, no-win situation the Soviets left behind.
NOTES

1. Some of this information has been drawn from an earlier article of mine, "Rivalry and Reconciliation in Afghanistan: What Prospect for the Accords?" in Third World Quarterly, October 1988. Other information, particularly that relating to the present period, is taken from my research for a book on US policy toward Afghanistan during the war.


3. Ibid


5. Ibid


15. Department of State Memorandum dated 4/30/78


17. Confidential interviews with Pakistani and US officials.


19. Department of State cable #05531 14 May 1979. This cable refers to a previous meeting with a rebel leader in Islamabad on 23 April 1979.


21. Department of State cable #5470, date unclear but Henry Bradsher, author of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union in which this same cable was cited, estimates the date to be 31 July or 1 August because it was relayed by Department of State cable #199533 on 1 August 1979; and Department of State cable #05459 18 July 1979.

22. Department of State cable #13083, 24 May 1979.


34. Ibid. These Soviets also spoke consistently of the lack of information coordination among the Ministry of Defense, Foreign Ministry and KGB officers in Afghanistan.

36. Interview with former State Department official who asked not to be named.
38. For a good explanation of the military significance of the reaction of government to resistance forces, see Rod Paschall, "Marxist Counterinsurgencies," Parameters, (16), Summer 1986.
39. I have taken this figure from Selig Harrison's article in the Washington Post, 13 May 1984, which he wrote upon his return from a trip to Kabul. From my own observations during a trip to Kabul in November 1988, it appeared that the percentage had grown.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
46. Recently there has been talk of developing a "Structured Afghan Delegation" which would either replace or complement the AIG. According to one scenario, the Structured Afghan Delegation would be formed after an "International Consensus" among countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States and China. These countries would attempt to provide incentives and disincentives to a small delegation of non-Kabul Afghans—chosen by a larger "gathering" of anti-government Afghans—to move toward a political settlement. This settlement would presumably be pursued only after Moscow made commitments to cut aid to Kabul, reduce the government's weapons stockpile, and showed a willingness to urge Najibullah and other top PDPA officials to step down.
47. Some observers question whether the US has actually taken much control of the weapons supply line.
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PINR, PIMR, PEPR, AF, PK, US
SUBJECT: AFGHAN OPPOSITION COALITION REPORTEDLY FORMED
IN PAKISTAN

REF: STATE 141033 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. THE REPORTED INFORMATION OF AN OPPOSITION COALITION
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OF AFGHAN EXILE GROUPS IN PAKISTAN HAS STIRRED HOPE WITHIN

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THE HEARTS OF SOME ANTI-REGIME AFGHANS, ALTHOUGH, IN OUR VIEW, REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN MOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI'S REGIME FACES NO UNMANAGEABLE THREAT AT THE MOMENT. IF PAKISTAN OR IRAN ARE EVENTUALLY PERCEIVED BY THE NEW REGIME AS BASES FOR HOSTILE GUERRILLA OPERATIONS, HOWEVER, RELATIONS BETWEEN KABUL AND ITS NEIGHBORS COULD BECOME SEVERELY STRAINED. WE COULD ALSO BECOME INVOLVED IF GUERRILLAS WERE FOUND TO HAVE "AMERICAN-MADE" ARMS. WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY ISLAMABAD'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE ALLEGED COALITION. END SUMMARY.


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5. ONLY SCANT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO US CONCERNING MOST OF THESE PARTIES. THE ISLAMIC PARTY, HOWEVER, IS A WELL-KNOWN, RADICALLY CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATION, WHOSE CHARTER WAS ANALYZED BY
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AMBASSAD NEW DELHI
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AMCONSUL Peshawar
AMBASSAD TEHRAN
AMBASSAD ROME
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6. COMMENT: SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT, SEVERAL LOCAL AFGHANS
WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED HAVE CLAIMED ENTHUSIASTICALLY THAT
THE ALLEGED ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS COALITION REPRESENTS THE
BEGINNING OF A "COUNTER-REVOLUTION" WHICH WILL SWEEP THE LEFTIST
NON-BELIEVERS OUT OF POWER, IN OUR VIEW; HOWEVER, THESE HOPES
ARE MADE UP MOSTLY OF WISHFUL-THINKING, AND PROBABLY REFLECT
LITTLE AWARENESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH MIGHT FOLLOW A SERIOUS
CHALLENGE TO THIS MOSCOW-SUPPORTED REGIME, OR THE COMING
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TO POWER OF AN AFGHAN RIGHTIST PARTY. NEVERTHELESS, CONFIRMED
REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE REGIME CONTINUES TO ENCOUNTER ACTIVE

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ARMED RESISTANCE IN THE MOUNTAINOUS PUSHTUN TRIBAL AREAS OF EASTERN AFGHANISTAN. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, WE DISCERN NO SERIOUS MILITARY THREAT THAT THE MONTH-OLD DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (ORA) CANNOT HANDLE -- ESPECIALLY NOW THAT THEY PRESUMABLY CAN DEPEND UPON THE ASSISTANCE OF THEIR GREAT AND FRIENDLY NORTHERN NEIGHBOR.

7. THIS BBC REPORT WELL ILLUSTRATES THE TYPE OF "REACTIONARY PROPAGANDA" WHICH IS HELPING TO KEEP THE BRITISH IN THE DOGHOUSE HERE. IN ADDITION TO HAVING THEIR GOVERNMENT PROTRAYED DAILY BY THE AFGHAN MEDIA AS THE IMPERIALIST MANIPULATORS BEHIND THE NADERI CLIQUE'S DESTRUCTION OF THE PROGRESSIVE "AMANI REVOLUTION" IN 1928 AND 1929, BRITISH EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN CALLED ON THE CARPET BY THE NEW REGIME WHICH FINDS ESPECIALLY OFFENSIVE THE TART COMMENTARIES ON AFGHAN DEVELOPMENTS BY BBC'S VERY INFLUENTIAL PERSIAN-LANGUAGE SERVICE. THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH TOTALLY CONTROLS ALL MEDIA IN THIS COUNTRY -- AND VERY TIGHTLY INDEED, FINDS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THE BRITISH DIPLOMATS' EXPLANATION THAT, ALTHOUGH THE BBC IS INDEED A GOVERNMENT-OWNED SENDER, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS NO INFLUENCE OVER ITS EDITORIAL POLICIES.

8. IF THERE IS INDEED A NFLA TRYING TO COMMENCE OPERATIONS IN PAKISTAN, WE TURST THAT THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT WILL WEIGHT CAREFULLY THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON ITS ALREADY SHAKY BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH KABUL. EVEN BEFORE THE REVOLUTION, FORMER PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOUOD COMPLAINED TO GENERAL ZIA ABOUT PAKISTANI-BASED TROUBLEMAKERS WHO WERE CREATING SECURITY PROBLEMS WITHIN AFGHANISTAN -- AND THE PRESENT REGIME HAS ECHOED THESE SAME CONCERNS IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH PAKISTANI DIPLOMATS. THE COMPLAINTS OF BOTH AFGHAN REGIMES HAVE BEEN SECRET.

9. SHOULD AN NFLA-TYPE ORGANIZATION EVER OPEN OFFENSIVE GUERILLA OPERATIONS WITHIN AFGHANISTAN AND THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT FINDS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ARMED WITH "AMERICAN-MADE WEAPONS" -- WHICH ARE PRESUMABLY READILY AVAILABLE IN PAKISTAN, WE COULD WELL END UP IN A FAR STICKIER POSITION THAN THE BRITISH HERE.

10. WHATEVER HIS MOTIVES OR ABILITIES, DR. BURHANUDDIN WOULD NOT APPEAR TO HAVE THE POLITICAL PRESENCE AND LEGITIMACY TO
CLAIM THE ALLEGIANCE OF AFGHANS OPPOSED TO THE NEW REGIME.
(AS OF A MATTER OF FACT, THE CURRENT AFGHAN LEADERS ALSO LACK
THE TRADITIONAL CREDENTIALS OF LEGITIMACY: LIKE THE BACHA BAQAO
IN 1929, THEY SEIZED POWER ONLY THROUGH FORCE AND ARE NOW
ENERGETICALLY TRYING TO CREATE THEIR OWN LEGITIMACY. INTERESTINGLY
ENOUGH, ONE OF THEIR PLANS HAS BEEN TO PORTRAY THEMSELVES
AS THE IDEOLOGICAL HEIRS OF THE PROGRESSIVE KING AMANULLAH,
WHO WAS DEPOSED IN 1929.) SEVERAL OBSERVERS HERE ARE FAR MORE
INTERESTED IN THE WHEREABOUTS AND ACTIVITIES OF PRINCE ABDUL
WALI, FIRST COUSIN AND SON-IN-LAW OF DEPOSED KING ZAHIR, AND A
TOUGH AND CREDIBLE MUSLIM CONTENDER FOR AFGHAN LEADERSHIP
IN HIS OWN RIGHT. WERE THERE EVER TO BE A LARGE-SCALE TRIBAL
UPRISING, HE COULD WELL BECOME THE "BONIE PRINCE CHARLIE"
OF THE AFGHAN MOUNTAINS IN COMING YEARS. WE WOULD APPRECIATE
WHATEVER INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS WHEREABOUTS AND ACTIVITIES
ADDRESSEE POSTS CAN DISCREETLY OBTAIN.
ELIOT

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The Soviet invasion and continuing occupation of Afghanistan have had a profound effect on regional nations — particularly Pakistan — and on our interests in regional security. Previously, we saw this area as an important but not vital area somewhat removed from direct superpower confrontation. The Soviet thrust has changed this situation. The President's State of the Union address in January signalled a strong US commitment to the security and stability of this region, and we have taken a number of steps to bolster our presence in the area and to reassure countries such as Pakistan of our commitment to their territorial integrity.

Afghanistan: The Soviets are probably in Afghanistan for an extended stay. Their immediate goals are to pacify the countryside and to secure a stable and compliant regime in Kabul. The resistance movement will probably continue tying up some 85,000 or more Soviet troops but the rebels are fragmented, lack effective national leadership, and certainly cannot force a Soviet withdrawal.

We and our allies have limited our contacts with the Afghan regime and have avoided actions which imply recognition. We still maintain a seventeen person embassy in Kabul under a charge d'affaires.

Our Embassy's activities, however, are severely circumscribed by security conditions and Afghan Government restrictions.

With strong Soviet support, the Government controls Kabul, but not the countryside.
1. Peshawar has recently been reporting on the tribal areas of Pakistan, and local press reported this past week an example of revenge (badal) which is worth noting both because it involves Afghan refugees and because it illustrates the concept as it is practiced in the tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan.

2. On the evening of November 30, a total of thirteen persons died in the village of Zara Kela, in the un-administered ("tribal territory") area of Kurram agency. The killings resulted from a long-standing dispute between two groups of Pakistani tribesmen in the agency, principally over a broken engagement. One of the groups hired eight Afghan refugees to assassinate members of the other group.

3. The assassins found their targets in the village mosque at the time of evening prayers. They attacked with kalashnikovs, killing six (four of whom were brothers) and injuring two more. One Afghan was killed in the incident when one of the targets turned his weapon on the attackers. One additional Afghan was captured by the villagers, and six more escaped.

4. The captured assassin provided the village with information on the attackers who escaped. He named two local persons as the instigators of the attack, as well as the remaining six refugees from the Waziristan camp near Terti Mangal. The elders of the Mosazai tribe held a jirga which decided to take badal.

5. The jirga fined the local instigators Rs. 300,000 each and burned fifty (50) houses belonging to associates of the group. They then sent a delegation to the refugee camp, which demanded that the six refugees be handed over to the jirga. The culprits were given up, brought back to the site of the incident, and put to death by firing squad. Ceremonial firing into the air celebrated the conclusion of the incident, in which the Pathan code of honor was fully satisfied.

6. Comment: While the incident and its resolution...
CONCLUSIONS WERE

SIMILAR:

--PREVIOUS FDPA FEARS HAVE BASED IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS (FOLLOWING GORBACHEV'S FEBRUARY 6 ANNOUNCEMENT)
BECAUSE OF PAKISTAN'S INSISTENCE ON A NEW GOVERNMENT
IN KABUL. FDPA FIGURES BELIEVE THIS WILL ISOLATE
PAKISTAN INTERNATIONALLY AND CONTRIBUTE TO TENSION
BETWEEN THE GOP AND DIVERSE GROUPS OF MUJARIDIN AND
AMONG THE MUJARIDIN THEMSELVES.

--FDPA CONTACTS BELIEVE THAT ANY ALTERNATIVE
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GOVERNMENTAL SCHEME WOULD HAVE TO BE PUT TOGETHER UNDER
GOP PRESSURE AND, THEREFORE, WOULD PROMOTE RESENTMENTS.

--THE FDPA HAS BEEN TOLD BY THE SOVIETS THAT RA FORCES
HAVE BEEN WELL-EQUIPPED. EVEN IF GENEVA IS SIGNED,
THE SOVIETS WILL ALWAYS BE NEARBY WHILE

THE U.S. IS FAR AWAY AND WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY
IRRELEVANT ONCE ITS ARMS SUPPLIES ARE CUTOFF.

THAT CONFIDENCE IS BEING BOOSTED
BY PERSONNEL CHANGES TAKING PLACE. HE CITED THREE
EXAMPLES--THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, THE MINISTRY
OF COMMERCE, AND THE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE. IN ALL
THREE LOCATIONS, HE SAID, HE SAW SOVIET-TRAINED AFGHAN
OFFICIALS (THOUGHT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE KGB/LOT;
IN SOME CASES, NOT FDPA PARTY MEMBERS) RECENTLY HAVE
CONFIDENTIAL

ORDERED FOREIGN (BUT NON-SOVIET) TRAINED MID-LEVEL AFGHAN OFFICIALS INTO MILITARY SERVICE. SOME OF THESE OFFICIALS HAVE FLED THE COUNTRY TO AVOID SERVICE. (COMMENT: WE RECENTLY RECEIVED A REPORT FROM A SEPARATE SOURCE INDICATING THAT MANY DIVISION CHIEFS HAVE "DISAPPEARED" FROM THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.) REMOVED OFFICIALS ARE BEING REPLACED BY STUDENTS RETURNING FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

3. COMMENT: THE PDPA FIGURES MAY BE TEMPORARILY RELIEVED, AS ARE MANY KABUL RESIDENTS, BY THE SUDDEN BREAK OF LONG YEARS OF TENSION THAT THE SOVBACEV STATEMENT PROVIDED. THE SEEKING SITTING OF THE POLITICAL ONUS TO PAKISTAN MAY ALSO BE WELCOME. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT, IF SOVIET WITHDRAWAL BECOMES A REALITY AND MUJAHIDIN PRESSURE INCREASES, RATHER THAN DECLINES, THE PDPA CADRE WILL BE SINGING A DIFFERENT TUNE.

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4. REGARDING THE SUBSTITUTION OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL BY INDIVIDUALS RETURNING FROM THE SOVIET UNION, WE REGARD THIS AS A PLAUSIBLE PART OF MOSCOW'S EFFORT TO FORTIFY THE REGIME AND SOVIET INFLUENCE IN PREPARATION FOR POSSIBLE PROOF WITHDRAWAL. WE WILL SEEK TO VERIFY HOW WIDESPREAD SUCH A PHENOMENON IS.

CONFIDENTIAL
ARAB EXTREMISTS IN AFGHANISTAN

by Yossef Bodansky*

Mujahideen camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan have become sanctuaries for a wide range of Muslim extremists and radical revivalists. Most of these foreign volunteers arrived in Pakistan not only to participate in the Jihad of their Afghan brethren, but also to train and acquire military experience for later use in liberating their own countries.

At present, the camps of their Islamist Afghani resistance in Pakistan have actually become the center of radical Islamic terrorism, with Sunni radical revivalists (fundamentalists) comprising the majority of the fighters.

Revivalist radical Islam is on the rise throughout the Islamic world as a popular reaction to the pressures of the modern world, and especially relations with the West. The mounting frustration of the Islamic masses has led to the emergence of a dedicated, militant vanguard with an unprecedented commitment to the cause of the revivial of traditionalist Islam. Their religious zeal makes these believers committed to their cause to the point of disregarding their own lives, the extent of the carnage that they inflict on their victims, and the overall consequences of their actions.

In this quest for Islamic revolutionary violence, the camps of the Afghan radical-Islamist (fundamentalist) resistance parties in Pakistan are to Islamic terrorism what Lebanon used to be to Arab radical terrorism. Pakistan has become a mecca of pilgrimage for aspiring Islamist radicals.

Islamist terrorists seek quasi-autonomy - a sort of a state within a state - as the ideal circumstance for their training and center of operations. The most devout and radicalized challenge the concept of an Islamic State under contemporary conditions.

* Director, Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare
The parties had told them next to nothing about the plans for a consultative shura. He said that if the people were not consulted, they would not feel bound by what the shura decided. If it chose an interim leadership the people could respect, the mujahidin would accept it. If it did otherwise, the people would resist it.

Poloff said that, as he understood it, a consultative shura was only being planned because of the need to establish some free Afghan political institutions quickly that could deal with the problems of arranging the transition to a popular government. The shura would select an interim administration that would be given the job of organizing elections within one year. There was really no way to hold elections in Afghanistan in the middle of the winter during a war. He noted that it had taken months over a movie to travel.

Conducting elections would take many months. The Afghans simply could not afford to take that much time.

He was glad to hear this explanation. He was, however, still worried by the whole idea. The consultative shura would have no popular mandate, and there was no guarantee that the interim leadership would be made up of good people. "A bad leader can do a lot of harm in one year," he noted, adding: "This shura is like a covered pot. We are being asked to accept it, not knowing what is inside."
As a result, they consider the existing Sunni Islamic are to be Jahilia (apostate barbarity entities), and thus are enemies. Iran in this view is an Islamic State, but it is also Shi'ite. The Afghan Islamist community conducts a Jihad in pursuit of an utopian Islamic community that can harbour and support radical-militant Islam. Such autonomy has also some practical benefits such as lesser dependence on states and their intelligence services, and sense of accomplishment and independence.

Despite its reactionary character, the Soviets consider the revival of radical-revivalist Islam as a favorable trend because of its strong anti-American stand. Writing in Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent) on 13 June 1985, M. Usmanov emphasized that

"the struggle of the peoples of the East under the slogan of Islam here and there acquired a patently anti-imperialist and, above all, anti-American character during the past few years. This was manifested especially distinctly in the struggle of the Iranian, Palestinian, Lebanese and a number of other peoples. In the Islamic countries with the exception of a number of reactionary regimes that are under economic and political pressure of the United States, there has been an intensification in the anti-imperialist sentiments."

Indeed, even the most radical Islamist groups manifest their hatred of the U.S. and their commitment to fighting at all costs.

The Soviets have no illusions; they know that the most militant radical organizations in the Muslim world are basically anti-Communist. They are aware that any exacerbation of these sentiments is also bound to have also anti-Soviet implications.

"The activization of the role of Islam manifests itself especially distinctly in the past few years in the advancement of Islamic slogans in socio-political processes and revolutionary movements taking place in Muslim countries. Moreover, these slogans are being utilized both in democratic movements and by reactionary forces aspiring to preserve and strengthen conservative regimes," wrote Usmanov. However, the U.S.S.R. capitalizes on this ostentatious, anti-Communist nature of some of the radical groups in order to conceal their own subversive and terrorist operations. A former KhAD colonel who had dealt with covert manipulation of such organizations prior to his defection in 1982 explained that it is extremely easy for one militant group to disguise its action under the banner of another ideology or organization. The Communists tend to use any name or identity,
except their own, while operating in the Islamic world because of the inherent mistrust and hatred of most Muslims.

As a result, the more radically Islamic a group or organization is, the more vulnerable it is to Soviet manipulations. This principle was exploited by the KGB during the 1979 campaign conducted under the direct leadership of Ghaider Aliyev to subvert the Near East and 'blind' the U.S. prior to the invasion of Afghanistan. The attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca was one part of this campaign. It preoccupied the U.S. for a lengthy period, which feared for the stability of the Saudi regime. Although this series of events appeared to be unrelated and to be fueled by revivalist-Islamic sentiments, evidence suggests these attacks were either planned or encouraged by Moscow. The result was that key United States embassies were "knocked out" as Moscow prepared to invade Afghanistan. The affected U.S. embassies were most important to the U.S. because they were the centers for HUMINT on the region and also played an important role in the formulation and execution of U.S. policy, including the reaction to the local Soviet activities.

On 20 November 1979, the Grand Mosque in Mecca was seized by a well-organized group of some 1,300 to 1,500 men under the leadership of Juhayman ibn-Muhammad ibn-Sayf al-Utaibi, a former Captain in the White Guards (National Guard) who declared that his religious guide was Abd Allah al-Qahtani a mahdi (messiah). The core of the group included, in addition to Saudis, well-trained mujahideen from Egypt, Kuwait, Sudan, Iraq, the YAR (Yeminite Arab Republic - North Yemen) and the PDRY (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen - South Yemen). Although the assault was in the name of the return to the purity of Islam, most of the 500 leading attackers were trained and equipped in South Yemen and Libya. The attackers included strong communist elements who guided the group and demonstrated excellent organizational and tactical skills. The bulk of the weapons used had been smuggled from South Yemen over a lengthy period of time.

Juhayman's men had recruited several members of the elite White Guards (National Guard) and received active support in the smuggling of weapons and equipment into Saudi Arabia and the Mosque. Moreover, a Guards' Colonel was among those who had instigated the plot. He organized the smuggling of automatic weapons, provisions and supplies into the Qaaba. The rebels smuggled into the basement huge quantities of food and drinking water intended to support themselves and their supporters for a long siege. Sermons and discussions of corruption, wastefulness and pro-Westernism of the Royal Family gained the rebels' support among the worshippers. Most of the 6,000 pilgrims taken hostage demanded to be issued arms and joined the revolt. Juhayman's sermons even won over students who had previously suspected him of Marxist sympathies. Almost simultaneously, a series of bombs exploded in locations associated with the Royal Family in Mecca, Medina, Jeddah and Riyadh. News about Juhayman's sermons incited
militant mobs throughout Saudi Arabia to storm local mosques and government posts.

The most significant lesson of the Mecca uprising is that it demonstrated that radical-revolutionary elements, both revivalists Islamists and seculars on the extreme left, including Marxists, have a lot in common and are capable of cooperating closely in their struggle.

These principles applies even to the Afghan resistance, which is fighting a Soviet occupation. In his commitment to the achievement of an utopian Muslim state, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar appeals to the conservative Arab world.

Gulbuddin has declared that Hezb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) "will not have achieved its goal with the fall of the Kabul regime. Even with a full Soviet withdrawal, Hezb-i-Islami will continue the Jihad until an Islamic State is established." Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is the leader of Hezb-i-Islami, according to the tenets of the Muslim Brotherhood, according to which, in such a struggle the fight against the apostates within takes precedence over the fight against a foreign enemy. For the Jihad to be successful, and the Islamic Revolution to be realized, the ranks of the Mujahideen must first be purified from apostates and lackeys of imperialism. Therefore, the zealous pursuit of these utopian ideas caused Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i-Islami to fight with the other resistance groups, to betray their leaders and weapons to the Soviets, and to reach regional ceasefire compromises with the DRA authorities. In his pursuit of an extremist ideal long-range solution, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is willing to reach temporary, regional compromises with the communist infidels. The Soviets exploit and manipulate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i-Islami primarily through the numerous agents in his own military council, which includes representatives of not only the Muslim Brotherhood, but also Libya, Iran and the PLO. Gulbuddin is known to have visited Libya and Iran, and is rumored to have visited the PDRY.

The myriad of Afghan Islamist parties and organizations are eager to assist and support any radical Islamist movement. The better organized parties - Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and Hezb-i-Islami of Younis Khalis - have accumulated vast amounts of money and weapons that they are willing to share with fellow "mujahideen" - radical Islamist terrorists - worldwide. Since the mid-1970s, these parties developed very close relations with the Jama’at-i Islami (of Pakistan) and the Muslim Brotherhood. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has provided the Jama’at with weapons, while Arab money for Islamic revolutions, mainly from Saudi sources, is channeled through him. During Zia ul-Haq’s days, the Pakistan government ignored the buildup of terrorist infrastructures in the Afghan camps because of pressure from Jama’at-i Islami (of Pakistan) and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Pakistanis still tolerate the close relations between Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Qaddafi, as well as the presence of members of such
organizations as the Egyptian Takfir wa’il-Hijra (who assassinated Sadat) and Syrian and Lebanese Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood). One reason for this tolerance was the growing Afghan shielding of Pakistan’s increased support for the ‘Armed Forces of Khalistan’ Sikh separatist movement in India.

In order to expedite and expand its own terrorist training and support programs, Pakistan encouraged the expansion and internationalization of the Islamist training and support effort. Volunteers from several Arab and Asian countries were encouraged to come to Pakistan and join the Afghan jihad. The Islamist terrorists and their Afghan benefactors did not appreciate the Pakistani hospitality. The hijacking of the Pan Am 747 in Karachi on 5 September 1986 shocked the Zia Government. "The hijackers are specially trained and are hard nuts with a suicide mentality," claimed a Pakistani intelligence officer, pointing to the quality of their training and preparation.

The Pakistanis believed that the terrorists had contacts with the Abu Nidal group. However, prior to the attack, the hijackers were sheltered in Afghan refugee camps and were helped by mujahideen in Lahore and Karachi. Responsibility for the hijacking was claimed by the ‘Libyan Revolutionary Cells’ and by a Lebanese spokesman of Gundullah’s, which is associated with an Afghan group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Iranians. However, it was not established that this group was connected to Libya. That is why President Zia ul-Haq was so infuriated and felt betrayed by the terrorist attack. He described the attack as a stab in the back. However, the rapid rise of KGB-KhAD supported terrorism in Pakistan had already overwhelmed the Pakistani internal security system. Pakistan was in no position to challenge the Islamist terrorism. The last thing that Zia needed was to be declared a Jahilia and engage in additional confrontations with the Islamist radicals.

In 1986, the PLO began to send its most promising radicalized youth for advanced training in resistance camps in Pakistan. Special training facilities are provided by all the Islamist parties, and especially Gulbuddin and Sayaf. Resistance sources point that although the Arabs (especially Egyptians, Saudis, Palestinians and Jordanians) are provided with intensive training, very few of them are sent to fight inside Afghanistan. Instead, many tend to disappear soon after their training period. The foreign volunteers (trainees) receive specialized training in such topics as the use of shoulder-fired SAMs and sabotage (especially the use of sophisticated remote-control detonators and advance explosives). They also undergo extensive Islamist indoctrination that makes them devout and zealous.

According to resistance sources, several hundred Arab terrorists have been trained in Pakistan. Each year the mujahideen also train several tens of future commanders for the MNLF Islamic rebels in the Philippines as well as several Islamic commandos from other southeast Asian countries (Malaysia,
Indonesia, Thailand, etc.). The Pakistani and Afghan resistance aid to the MNLF was openly hailed during the Philippine Muslim Solidarity Conference in Karachi on 26-30 January 1983. These projects are financed by Libya, and the Libyan embassy in Islamabad and its consulate in Karachi handle the transfer of the equipment provided to the graduates.

Several Pakistani members of the armed wing of Jama'at-i Islami Pakistan and separatist Sindis are similarly trained, equipped and sheltered by the Afghans in their camps. Arab trainees come from virtually every Arab country, including several Commando officers (both active duty and "recently retired") who are sent to acquire combat experience. In the 1970s, such arrangements existed with al-Fath' and the PFLP and most Arab countries. Several officers were sent to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, and many participated in attacks on Israel.

Most significant is the growing cooperation between the Afghan Islamist parties and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the spread of the Islamic Revolution throughout the world. In a Top Secret meeting in Tehran on 26 May 1984 devoted to the "creation of an independent brigade for carrying out unconventional warfare in enemy territory," the chairman and Brigade Commander, identified only in the nome-de-guerre Mirashem, outlined Tehran's objectives: "The target countries are as follows. The first tier is Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The second tier is as need be, France and other countries who will try and confront the Islamic Republic." The U.S. was placed in the third tier in a subsequent meeting.

The cooperation between the Afghan Islamists and the Iranians had become extremely close in 1980 when Abbas Zamani became the Iranian ambassador to Islamabad. Using the name Abu-Sharief, Zamani was involved in overseas terrorist operations for al-Fath' and Black September (as well as their offshoots) during the 1970s. He then supervised the PLO support for the organization, training and equipping of the Pasdaran commandos (the most extremist wing of the Revolutionary Guards). Abbas Zamani was recruited by the KGB while serving with Black September and remained a dedicated agent.

While in Islamabad, Zamani spent most of his time organizing close cooperation between Iran and the Afghan Islamist radicals. He also coordinated the transfer of funds, weapons and trainees between Iran and the camps in Pakistan. Some of these transfers were conducted across Afghanistan with the full knowledge and cooperation of the KGB-KHAD. Zamani was quietly recalled after his role in the formenting of Afghan-Pakistani Islamist terrorism and Sunni-Shi'ite rivalries was exposed, Zamani was quietly recalled and nominated Deputy Chief of the IRGC Intelligence. He was then the senior Soviet agent in Tehran. Nevertheless, he was eventually betrayed by the KGB as a step in the opening of a new era in Soviet-Iranian strategic cooperation.
As a result of Zamani's effort, in the early 1980s, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar reached a special agreement with the Ayatollah Khomeini on close cooperation in the spread of Islam. Consequently Gulbuddin's followers in the refugee camps in Iran and the western provinces of Afghanistan were organized into a new Sunni organization called Gundallah. Training camps were organized in IRGC camps near Meshad by Mohammad Mussavi-Khoiniha. The Afghan graduates were then sent to acquire combat experience in the Iraqi front, particularly in Kurdistan, where they acquired valuable experience in mountain fighting. The most promising among the Gundullahi are sent to the several terrorist training centers in Iran for advanced training.

Mohammad Mussavi-Khoiniha was the co-commander of the 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Mussavi-Khoiniha, then the spiritual leader of the DAPKHA (Students Following the Imam's Line - the organization responsible for the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran), is a radical mullah committed to close cooperation with the U.S.S.R. Mussavi-Khoiniha is a graduate of the KGB-controlled Patrice Lomumba University and had extensive training in intelligence and subversive work. During the Islamic Revolution, he was a prominent member of the IRP and the leader of a Tehran University komiteh. In 1980-81, Mussavi-Khoiniha was nominated by Khomeini as the commander of the campaign to subvert Saudi Arabia. In that capacity he lead the 1982 Iranian delegation to the Haj' in Mecca that included some 500 Hezbullah terrorists. Mussavi-Khoiniha and 140 of his men were subsequently expelled from Saudi Arabia after they were caught planning a widespread sabotage campaign. The quality of his training and close cooperation with the KGB are apparent from his current successes as the prosecutor general in the suppression of the Iranian opposition.

In 1984, on the instruction of Mirhashem, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was asked for his help in the new terrorist campaign. The Iranians wanted to use some of the Afghan mujahideen with combat experience in both Afghanistan and the Iraqi front as instructors for the terrorists of the Brigade. They also wanted to deploy some of the Iranian terrorists in the ranks of Hezb-i Islami and Gundullah so that they could acquire combat experience in irregular warfare, such as urban warfare. Hekmatyar agreed to both requests, and implementation began within a short time. Soon afterward, Afghans volunteered, and in some cases were invited, to join Hezbullah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards commandos. Because their experience and expertise were invaluable to the Iranians, and their commitment to Islam was beyond reproach, the Afghans were accepted.

As Iran's involvement in and support for international terrorism became known, it became more effective and expedient for the Hezbollahi to travel to the Arab world and the West through Pakistan using the makeshift travel documents of the Afghan refugees and resistance fighters. The KGB was kept fully
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As Iran's involvement in and support for international terrorism became known, it became more effective and expedient for the Hezbollah to travel to the Arab world and the West through Pakistan using the makeshift travel documents of the Afghan refugees and resistance fighters. The KGB was kept fully
informed on these arrangements. Little wonder that Izvestiya was the first to report, on June 1 1987, that "agreement was reached between IPA leader G. Hekmatyar and the Iranian authorities, where by Tehran will help to establish an Islamic republic in Afghanistan. In turn, the IPA pledged to include Iranians in its missions in Arab and Muslim countries and in its delegations visiting the Persian Gulf countries." As indicated above, these countries are the "first tier" priorities of Mirhashem and his terrorist Brigade. Resistance sources claim that such an agreement was signed only in late-June or early-July of 1987 and that the agreement also applies to Western Europe, the United States and Canada.

The extent of the Afghan Islamist influence is rapidly becoming apparent in the Middle East. Corresponding to the return of Arab volunteers from Pakistan, there is a marked revival in Islamist terrorism and subversion in the pro-Western states, and in particular, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. There is a marked intensification of radical Islamist and leftist insurgencies in Jordan. Of paramount significance is the growing subversive activities among the Bedouin youth in southern Jordan, the strongest and most loyal support basis of the Hashemite regime. Like their veteran compatriots in central and northern Jordan, the Bedouin leftists were trained primarily by Palestinians in Pakistan.

The radical Islamicist activity is a new phenomena directly attributable to the mujahideen activities. These Jordanians were also trained in Pakistan in Sayaf and Gulbuddin camps and some claim to have fought in the ranks of the mujahideen. They received their weapons and equipment through mujahideen channels. Upon returning to Jordan, the Islamist leaders established close cooperation with the conspiratorial cells of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan's urban centers, especially Amman and Irbid. Presently, there are widespread rumours in Amman that Islamists and leftists conspirators have even succeeded to penetrate the Jordanian High Command to the point that the loyalty of the military to Hussein and Hassan is no longer assured.

The extent of the Afghan mujahideen involvement in Islamist subversion was clearly demonstrated in Mecca and Jeddah in the second week of July 1989. At least two large bombs exploded in Mecca on 2200 hrs on 10 July 1989, killing one Pakistani and one undocumented pilgrim, and wounding 16 others, two of them severely. Reportedly, another explosion took place in Jeddah but Saudi Arabia did not mention it. Riyadh immediately blamed Tehran for the bombing although it is the second year that Iran has boycotted the annual pilgrimage. Also, there is no Iranian delegation in Mecca. Tehran retaliated by calling the bombing a Saudi provocation against Iran and the entire Islamic pilgrimage movement. Another bomb exploded on 0130 hrs on 17 July 1989 in an isolated spot, probably after being discarded by its intended operator who had lost his courage.
The bombings were carried out by Sunni radical Islamists with pro-Iranian tendencies. The bombs themselves were brought in, dismantled, by members of the Pakistani and the Afghan mujahideen haji delegations and assembled on the spot. Indeed one of them exploded in the midst of the Pakistani delegation on a bridge leading to the Mosque, apparently while being carried in.

On 12 July 1989, an Arab-Sunni group called Jabal al-Ghadab al-Arabi (Mountain/Mounting Accumulation of Arab Rage). In another report, the organization was called the Generation of Arab Rage) claimed responsibility for the Mecca bombing in a written announcement published in west Beirut. Their justification is that the Saudi royal family "betrayed Islam and desecrated the Holy Places." The announcement further threatened that "if the Al-Saud family persists in the policy of treason, we shall settle the scores directly with members of this family whom we shall physically liquidate." They also accused Saudi Arabia of harboring a willingness to recognize Israel and reach compromise with Israel. It is significant that several of Lebanon's most prominent Sunni Islamist leaders were the most vocal in their blaming of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. for the Mecca explosions echoing Tehran's denials. The first to speak up were Shaykh Mahir Hammud, the senior Sunni Alim (religious scholar and guide) of Beirut, and Dr. Ali Ammar, the political leader of the Islamic Society (Jamiat Islami) of Lebanon.

Most importantly, the Jabal al-Ghadab al-Arabi themes are very similar to the sermons of Juhayman ibn-Muhammad ibn-Sayf al-Utaibi, and Abd Allah al-Qahtani during the seizure of the Grand Mosque in 1979. In both cases, the personal behavior of the Saudi royal family was defined as treason against Islam, a mixture of social and revivalist-religious themes that characterize radical Islamist groups influenced by Khomeini. This similarity was recognized by official Riyadh. A group of members of the revolutionary pro-Iranian 'Hizbullah Party of Hijaz' were arrested in the Hasa province in connection with the bombing. On 17 July 1989, the Qom-based She'ite 'Society of Hijaz Ulema' denied any Hizbullah involvement in the bombing and reiterated Tehran's accusations of a Saudi provocation.

Another important development achieved as a result of the Afghan-Iranian cooperation was the integration of Afghan Mujahideen into the network of Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah in Western Europe, the U.S. and Canada. A 1985 Open Letter of Hizbullah published in Tehran emphasized that the struggle against the U.S. should take precedence over any other objective of the Islamic world: "We are moving in the direction of fighting the roots of vice, and the first root of vice is America. All the endeavors to drag us into marginal action will be futile when compared with the confrontation against the U.S., Hizbullah and Iran are more than willing to cooperate with any revolutionary movement. Moreover, we "strongly urge on all the oppressed of the world the need to form an international front
that encompasses all their liberation movements in order to achieve effectiveness in their activity and to focus on their enemies' weak points."

Currently, in order to expedite this Islamic-motivated struggle, Hizbullah and Iran openly maintain extremely close relations with Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Libya, North Korea, and various Palestinians and African organizations, all of which are closely allied with the U.S.S.R.

Because of the Western support of the Afghan resistance, and its strong anti-Soviet position, Afghan mujahideen are accepted and supported in Western countries in places where their Egyptian or Iranian counterparts are less than welcomed. Therefore, Afghans became the key to the establishment of new cells of Hizbullah and Islamic Jihad in the West, and especially in the U.S. and Canada. Afghan "refugees and emigres" resettle in the U.S., organize and assume command over new cells of Hizbullah under the guise of solidarity committees with Jihad in Afghanistan. The Soviets support and encourage this undertaking from the background. They assist with the support of intelligence and professional assistance, as well as Soviet-controlled assets. In many cases, the KhAD provided escort for the trips of Afghan-Iranian detachments between Iran and Pakistan.

The U.S.-Canada operation is under the command of Ayatollah Muhammad Nassiri. He is an Iraqi-born Shi’ite who was trained in Tyr, Lebanon in the 1970s. He belonged to a radicalized group of al-Fath’ which participated in Black September operations (and its offshoots) and was known to have special relations with Soviet (East European) trainers. Nassiri enjoyed the special trust of Ayatollah Khomeini because of his close relationship with Khomeini’s dead son Mustafa. Since 1984, Nassiri has visited the U.S. and Canada at least half a dozen times, staying two or three months at a time. He travels all over both countries, addressing Islamic student organizations (including Egyptians, Saudis, North Africans, Iranians, Afghans, South East Asians and black Muslims). His actual mission is to organize and supervise the functioning of the Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah cells in the U.S. and Canada. Some of the cells organized by Nassiri are intended to become the skeletons of Islamic Revolutionary movements in their respective home countries. There was a marked increase in the activities of these cells since the summer of 1987, as Shiekh Sayed Mohammad Hosein Fadlallah promised that the Hizbollah will "rid the countries of the world of the cancerous U.S. gland." The timing of this sudden incitement fits the Iranian agreement made with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

These recent developments in Islamist radical-revivalist subversion and terrorism clearly identify a most important trend, namely, the emergence of a unified front adhering to the essence of Khomeini’s Islamic Revolutionary message whose members are
both Sunni and Shi'ites. Neither the individuals nor the organizations (parties) affiliated with this trend in Islam can be labelled pro-Iranian as a form of identification. There is no doubt that Iran’s financial support and training infrastructure play a major role in the activities of some individuals and organizations. Many of them also receive training and support from the U.S.S.R., its clients and proxies, but none can be labelled pro-Communist. These Islamist individuals and the organizations (parties) have emerged as an indigenous outburst of the frustration and rage that is so prevalent in the contemporary Islamic movement.

However, it was the declaration of Jihad in Afghanistan that provided both a catalyst and a vital unique service for the transformation of a socio-economic trend into a potent subversive and terrorist movement. Groups representing all militant extremist trends in Islam – from Iranian Shi’ites to Arab Sunnis – as well as Soviet, Soviet-controlled and Soviet manipulated groups mixed and cross-influenced in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The zeal of fighting a Jihad made it easy for the manipulators to convert the ideologically committed individuals into undertaking violent revolutionary actions in the name of an Islamic utopian message. Moreover, there is very little most traditional Arab countries can do about local volunteers joining the ranks of the mujahideen they so vocally endorse and support.

The war in Afghanistan did not create the frustration and rage so prevalent in the contemporary Islamic world, or the ensuing outburst of radical-revivalist sentiments and commitment to drastic changes in the Muslim world. However, the camps of the radical Islamist mujahideen, particularly Gulbuddin and Sayyaf, constitute the crucial and vital stage in the transformation of a socio-political trend into a widespread zealous subversive and terrorist movement whose true impact is only beginning to emerge.