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A U.S. AGENDA FOR AN AFGHAN PEACE SETTLEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union has failed to subjugate Afghanistan despite a brutal war of attrition that has claimed more than a million Afghan lives and created five million Afghan refugees. While prosecuting a relentless war against the Afghan people since 1979, Moscow has been hinting in recent months that it is willing to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. The most important statement was Soviet Communist Party chief Mikhail Gorbachev's February 8 announcement that if a settlement could be reached in the U.N.-sponsored Geneva talks on Afghanistan by March 15, then the Soviets could begin a nine-month withdrawal process on May 15.

Gorbachev apparently hopes that Washington will help Moscow win favorable terms for the withdrawal of Soviet forces. This seems to be what Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze was demanding last month in his inconclusive Washington talks with Secretary of State George Shultz. In particular, Moscow would like the United States to press Pakistan to make key concessions. Moscow's goal is to coerce Pakistan into striking a deal over the heads of the Afghan freedom fighters that will preserve a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

Cosmetic Withdrawals. The latest Soviet peace offensive, however, cannot be taken at face value. Despite Gorbachev's soothing rhetoric, Soviet forces continue to fight brutally against the Afghan resistance. Moscow has staged sham "withdrawals" in the past and has ordered cosmetic changes in its Afghan puppet regime to defuse international opposition to its policies.

This is the tenth Heritage Foundation study on Afghanistan. Previous studies included: *Backgrounder* No. 552, "Updating U.S. Strategy for Helping Afghan Freedom Fighters," December 22, 1986; *Backgrounder* No. 236, "Afghanistan Three Years Later: More U.S. Help Needed," December 27, 1982; *Backgrounder* No. 101, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Quagmire," October 25, 1979.

Note: Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

Gorbachev clearly is attempting to salvage, not abandon, the huge Soviet political, economic and military investment in subduing Afghanistan. Because of the rising military costs of the war and declining prospects of an outright military solution, Gorbachev is searching for a diplomatic solution that will perpetuate a pro-Soviet regime at the lowest possible cost to Moscow. Unable to eliminate the Afghan resistance through military means, he seeks to isolate it, deprive it of external support, divide it, demoralize it and eventually strangle it in a diplomatic "settlement."

Excluding the Resistance. Efforts at finding a settlement in Afghanistan have been undertaken by the United Nations for the past five years. These U.N.-sponsored peace talks are seriously flawed because they: 1) exclude the Afghan resistance; 2) fail to address the central issue of the war, Afghan self-determination; 3) propose a drawn-out timetable for Soviet withdrawal which poses unacceptable risks to the resistance; 4) call for suspension of U.S. and other aid to the resistance at the start of the Soviet withdrawal; 5) fail to demand a reciprocal suspension of Soviet aid to Afghan communists; 6) create enormous loopholes; and 7) include weak provisions for verification of compliance.

The U.S. and Pakistan should not make concrete concessions in return for ill-defined Soviet promises. Washington must not agree to act as guarantor of a Geneva settlement unless the accords guarantee Afghan self-determination and do not become a smoke screen for continued Soviet domination. Given the sordid record of communist regimes ignoring and betraying the commitments made in 1945 at Yalta regarding Eastern Europe, in 1962 regarding Laos, and in 1973 regarding Vietnam, the U.S. in 1988 cannot give the Soviet Union the benefit of any doubt in Afghanistan.

As such, the U.S. should:

1) continue sending its military aid to the Afghans until the last Soviet soldier has exited Afghanistan. The U.S. goal should be to force a total Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a strategic stepping stone to the Persian Gulf and a geopolitical lever for influencing and possibly dismembering Iran and Pakistan. It is not the U.S. goal simply to "bleed" the Soviets. This would only prolong the agony of the Afghans.

2) work for a settlement that creates a neutral Afghanistan, just as the 1955 Austrian State Treaty created today's neutral Austria.

3) not allow Moscow to engineer a settlement that transforms Afghanistan into another Lebanon, doomed by a lack of national consensus to chronic civil war. This would give Afghan communists the chance to subdue a splintered resistance. Worse, it could breed instability that invites Soviet re-intervention.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

Approximately 120,000 Soviet troops, backed up by more than 30,000 support and combat personnel nearby in the Soviet Union, have failed to crush the elusive Afghan *mujahideen* — or holy warriors. The *mujahideen* are estimated at up to 200,000 strong.

Always courageous and indefatigable fighters, in the long course of the war they have been bolstered by more effective organization, better training in some groups, modern arms, and growing foreign support. Gradually there has been improved operational coordination between the seven major resistance groups.¹ A "natural selection" process has produced a class of battle-hardened field commanders whose claim to leadership is based on proven performance rather than traditional or tribal connections.²

The *mujahideen* control more than 80 percent of Afghanistan and are supported by the overwhelming majority of the Afghan people. The Soviets control the major cities, air bases and primary roads. Though the *mujahideen* harass Soviet supply lines and besiege isolated garrisons, they have been unable to destroy major Soviet bases because of a lack of heavy weapons and mine clearing equipment.

Indiscriminate Bombing. The Afghans have paid dearly for their fierce resistance. Some 1.24 million Afghans, roughly 9 percent of the prewar population, have been killed in the fighting since the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in a coup in 1978.³ Most of those killed were civilians slaughtered in indiscriminate Soviet bombing and artillery attacks designed to depopulate resistance strongholds. Today the Afghans comprise the world's largest refugee group, with roughly 3.5 million displaced Afghans in Pakistan and more than one million in Iran.

The Soviets have suffered an estimated 36,000 casualties, with half of the total killed.⁴ Estimates of the annual economic cost of the war to Moscow range from \$5.5 billion⁵ to \$12 billion.⁶ These costs have risen steeply in the past two years.

Forcing Gunships to Fly Low. Last year the *mujahideen* at last gained an effective air defense due to the arrival of limited numbers of U.S.-supplied *Stinger* and British-supplied *Blowpipe* anti-aircraft missiles. By one estimate, 150 *Stingers* were supplied to the *mujahideen* in late summer 1986 and 600 in early 1987.⁷ The *Stingers* initially scored an impressive 80 percent kill ratio, bettering the results of U.S. army field tests. The *Stingers* blunted Soviet air power and air assault commando forces that had been the cutting edge of Soviet counterinsurgency efforts. The *Stingers* forced Soviet warplanes to drop their bombs from higher altitudes, thus with much less accuracy. The U.S.-supplied missiles also forced the Soviets' dreaded Mi-24/25 HIND helicopter gunships to fly at low altitude and at night. By last summer, the Soviets were losing an average of 1.3 to 1.4 aircraft a day. Even after

1 The resistance coalition consists of four fundamentalist groups: the Islamic Society, the Islamic Party of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Islamic Party of Mohammed Yunis Khalis and the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan; and three moderate/traditionalist groups: the National Islamic Front for Afghanistan, the Islamic Revolutionary Movement and the Afghanistan National Liberation Front.

2 See Almerigo Grilz, "Afghanistan: The Guerilla Is Changing," *Military Technology*, June 1987.

3 Survey of the Gallup organization's affiliate in Pakistan, cited by *The Washington Times*, December 9, 1987.

4 Statement of Vincent Cannistraro, Department of Defense, Before the Asia Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, February 25, 1988.

5 *Strategic Survey 1986-1987*, p. 134.

6 Nake Kamrany and Leon Poullada, *The Potential of Afghanistan's Society and Institutions to Resist Soviet Penetration and Domination*, Modeling Research Group, Los Angeles, 1985.

7 *The Washington Post*, July 6, 1987, p. A14.

cutting back their sorties, the Soviet and Afghan air forces lost about 200 aircraft during the year.

The *Stingers* reduced *mujahideen* casualties and hampered the Soviets' ability to interdict supply caravans from sanctuaries in Pakistan and Iran. *Stingers* also gave the Afghans an enormous psychological boost, providing tangible proof that the Afghans had significant foreign support and had not been abandoned by the outside world.

Isolated Outposts. Invigorated by its *Stingers*, Chinese-supplied rocket launchers, and an improved logistical infrastructure, the *mujahideen* held the battlefield initiative through much of 1987. They compelled the Soviets to withdraw from isolated outposts and overwhelmed several Afghan army garrisons.⁸ At the end of the year the *mujahideen* massed around the besieged Afghan army base at Khost. The Soviets responded by launching the largest winter offensive of the war, eventually lifting the siege.

By this, the Soviets also lifted the sagging morale of the Kabul regime. It strengthened the Soviet bargaining position at the impending Geneva talks by confirming that the Soviets still had the upper hand in the fighting. Finally, it forced the *mujahideen* to deplete their war supplies at a time when they should be stockpiling supplies as a safeguard against a one-sided settlement that could deprive them of external assistance.

Further *mujahideen* military gains, however, are possible this year. Newly arrived heavy mortars and mine-clearing equipment will enhance *mujahideen* ability to attack Soviet and Afghan government bases and airfields. These long-awaited supplies give them for the first time a capability to destroy, rather than merely harass, Soviet fortified positions.

THE SOVIET STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN

Moscow now finds that it must pay a growing military price to contain, let alone defeat, the *mujahideen*. Pouring more troops into Afghanistan would strain what is surely an already overburdened Soviet logistical infrastructure dependent on Afghanistan's rudimentary road system.

To win the war in Afghanistan, Moscow has tried to make an end run through Pakistan, which has offered sanctuary to the *mujahideen*. Gorbachev buttonholed Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq at the 1985 Moscow funeral of Konstantine Chernenko and warned of dark consequences if Pakistani "aggression" persisted. Gorbachev then launched an escalating war of nerves against Pakistan. The Soviet press has castigated Pakistan as a "colonial creation." Pakistani separatist and terrorist groups have been armed and trained in base camps inside Afghanistan. The KGB-controlled Afghan secret police, the KHAD, has fomented uprisings among dissident Pushtun tribes straddling the border. Pakistani border towns have suffered increasing numbers of air attacks and cross-border artillery bombardments.

⁸ See: David Isby, "1987: The War Swings in the Afghans' Favor," *Free Afghanistan Report*, January/February 1988.

The KGB, through the KHAD, has orchestrated one of the largest state-sponsored terrorist campaigns ever mounted, assassinating Afghan exiles and planting bombs that have killed Afghans and Pakistanis alike. About 500 people have been killed by terrorist bombs in Pakistan since mid-1987.⁹ In addition to signalling the Afghans that they cannot escape communist terror, these terrorist bombings are meant to sap Pakistan's willingness to aid the *mujahideen*. Moscow and Kabul hope to strike a deal with Islamabad over the heads of the Afghans.

Najib the Bull. The Soviets have attempted to undermine the political base of support of the *mujahideen* within Afghanistan, as well as in Pakistan. In May 1986, the Soviets discarded Babrak Karmal, the quisling puppet whom they had installed in December 1979. They replaced him with the ruthless head of the KHAD, Najib, known as "the Bull." At Soviet prompting he has proclaimed a policy of "national reconciliation," seeking to lure war-weary Afghan political figures into a sham coalition government that the communists control. "The Bull" has made cosmetic changes in the Kabul regime. He has promulgated a new constitution, changed the national flag and has even changed his own name to Najibullah to pay lip service to his Islamic heritage. Yet he has failed to overcome the revulsion of his countrymen; last November his own brother defected to the *mujahideen*.

The backbone of the regime is the KHAD, which Najibullah is trying to expand from 30,000 to 70,000 members. KHAD agents permeate all government bureaucracies. A state within a state, KHAD has its own armed forces, intelligence and covert action organs, and spearheads the extensive "Sovietization" program that seeks to transform Afghan political, economic and cultural life.¹⁰

Maintaining Control. The Soviet strategy for Afghanistan is not solely military; it integrates political, coercive, and diplomatic policies with military control. Although the Soviet Union has been unable to crush the *mujahideen* militarily, it now hopes to defeat them through diplomacy. It seeks a negotiated settlement that would deprive the *mujahideen* of external support while allowing massive Soviet aid to continue to flow to a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. It seeks to end outside support for the resistance while maintaining effective control over the Afghan government and retaining its options to intervene covertly or overtly in the future.

THE SOVIET PEACE OFFENSIVE

Gorbachev's latest peace gambit is a continuation of longstanding Soviet policy regarding Afghanistan — diplomatic initiatives aimed at defusing international criticism, reducing external support for the *mujahideen*, driving wedges between resistance groups, and buying time to crush the resistance. As early as February 1980, less than two months after their invasion, Soviet officials hinted that Moscow was eager to withdraw, but could not do so until "external intervention" had ceased. In the Soviet view the problem was not the Soviet invasion but resistance to the invasion. Soviet diplomacy consistently has attempted to

⁹ *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 16, 1988, p.9.

¹⁰ See: Rasul Amin, "The Sovietization of Afghanistan," in Rosanne Klass, *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited* (New York: Freedom House, 1987).

deflect attention from the Soviet presence, reject the legitimacy of the *mujahideen*, and focus on non-Soviet "intervention" in internal Afghan affairs. The United Nations General Assembly has made it easier for Moscow to do so by refusing to condemn the Soviet Union by name for invading Afghanistan.

Gorbachev escalated the peace campaign in a July 28, 1986, speech at Vladivostok in which he promised to withdraw six Soviet regiments as a gesture of good faith in the U.N. peace process. His announcement came three days before the resumption of the Geneva talks and the "withdrawal" was executed with a flourish in October 1986, shortly before the U.S.-Soviet summit at Reykjavik. The much-heralded event, like a previous "withdrawal" staged before the 1980 Moscow Olympics, turned out to be a propaganda exercise. The units withdrawn, some of which had been introduced into Afghanistan shortly beforehand, were replaced by forces more suitably equipped to fight a guerrilla war.¹¹

Pressuring Pakistan. Then this February 8, Gorbachev announced a possible start of a Soviet withdrawal on May 15 if a settlement were reached at Geneva by March 15. As previous Soviet peace offensives, the February 8 statement is well timed. By suddenly announcing a date for withdrawal after more than five years of desultory talks at Geneva, Moscow is pressuring Pakistan to accede to the vague wording of the Soviet proposal now on the table. When the March 15 deadline passed without an agreement, Moscow complained about Pakistani and American footdragging.

By fixing the start of proposed withdrawal at May 15, shortly before the next U.S.-Soviet summit, the Kremlin apparently is confident that the State Department, always eager to make "progress" at a summit, and the Reagan Administration, eager to make the summit a success in domestic political terms, will acquiesce to an Afghanistan settlement tailored to Soviet needs.

THE SOVIET DESIGN FOR A FALSE SETTLEMENT

Although Western diplomats tend to conceive the Geneva talks as a diplomatic "endgame," the Soviets consider the negotiations to be "the first move in the next phase of that continuing game."¹² Moscow is not merely seeking an exit. After all, the Soviet Union could withdraw its troops without an agreement. Instead, the Soviets want the U.S. and Pakistan to help create conditions in which Moscow can withdraw its overt military presence after "winning," while using its covert KGB/KHAD network to retain control over the government left behind. Warns a Western diplomat based in Kabul: "The Soviets want you by diplomatic means to help them stay in Afghanistan... Beware of a kind of Munich."¹³

Above all the Soviets seek an agreement that seals the Pakistani border and thus terminates foreign aid to the *mujahideen*, while leaving Moscow a free hand to bolster the Kabul government with aid and advisors. A cutoff of external aid would undermine the *mujahideen's* political unity and military strength. It would weaken the seven political

11 State Department Special Report No. 155, "Afghanistan: Seven Years of Soviet Occupation," December 1986, p. 10.

12 Marin Strmecki, "Gorbachev's New Strategy in Afghanistan," *Strategic Review*, Summer 1987, p. 33.

13 Cited by Lally Weymouth, "Tough Talk From Najibullah," *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1988, p. C2.

parties based in Peshawar, Pakistan, that have served as conduits for aid, would increase the political independence of regional field commanders inside Afghanistan and would make it easier for Moscow to win through divide-and-rule tactics.

Najibullah already has appealed by name to eight *mujahideen* field commanders, offering to pull Soviet troops out of their sectors if they agree to a separate peace.¹⁴ Covert KGB/KHAD operations undoubtedly will be mounted to fan the flames of suspicion between rival resistance groups. The February 11, 1988, assassination in Peshawar of Professor S.B. Majrooh, a respected figure who worked tirelessly to promote Afghan unity, may have signalled the start of a campaign of assassinations to decapitate and fracture the resistance.

"Lebanonizing" Afghanistan. Moscow presumably is reckoning that a splintered resistance weakened by internal infighting and an aid cutoff would be unable to defeat decisively the Soviet-backed communist regime that controls the city-state of Kabul, but not much else. Moscow may attempt to enhance the survivability of a pro-Soviet "Kabulistan" by replacing Najibullah with an Afghan military figure similar to Polish General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who would head a relatively non-ideological regime that could hope to establish local alliances with dissident *mujahideen* groups. The short-term Soviet goal seems to be the "Lebanonization" of Afghanistan — plunging the country into anarchy by driving wedges between rival resistance groups in an effort to preserve a weak central government.

Moscow meanwhile will continue attempting to integrate northern Afghanistan into a Soviet economic and political sphere. Soviet influence is strongest in the north because the relatively flat terrain is ill-suited for guerilla warfare, a disproportionate number of the 2,000 Afghan children taken each year to the Soviet Union for "education" come from this area and many of the Soviet advisers stationed there are members of the Tajik and Uzbek ethnic groups that straddle the border.¹⁵

Northern Soviet Security Zone. The Soviets are grooming a northern militia commander, Sayed Naseem Shah, as a regional leader who may be able to survive even if the Kabul regime collapses. In that event, Moscow may try to construct a northern security zone manned by local militias backed by long-range Soviet artillery and air power. Soviet military forces then could be inserted into Afghanistan covertly to stiffen the spine of pro-Soviet forces. There is a precedent for such a covert intervention: in 1929 Soviet troops disguised as Afghans were deployed to aid King Ammanallah.¹⁶

FLAWS IN THE GENEVA DRAFT ACCORD

Since June 1982 indirect peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been held in Geneva under United Nations auspices. These talks have produced a framework for an agreement based on four "instruments": 1) "non-interference" in Afghan and Pakistani internal affairs; 2) international guarantees of the bilateral agreement; 3) the safe and

14 *The New York Times*, December 1, 1987, p. A13.

15 See: *Afghan News*, Bulletin of Jamiat Islami, September 1, 1987, and Elie Krakowski, "Afghanistan and Soviet Global Interests," in Klass, *op. cit.*

16 See: Thomas Hammond, *Red Flag Over Afghanistan* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1984) pp. 14-18.

honorable return of Afghan refugees; and 4) "interrelationships" specifying the linkage between the first three instruments and Soviet withdrawal.

Nearly five years ago, U.N. mediator Diego Cordovez of Ecuador proclaimed that the draft agreement was "95 percent" complete. Little progress was made after that as Moscow refused to specify a time frame for Soviet withdrawal. This might have been changed by Gorbachev's February 8 offer to begin Soviet withdrawal by May 15, yet it is still too early to tell.

Ignoring Self-Determination. The most glaring flaw in the Geneva draft accord is that the Afghan resistance has been barred from the negotiations. Yet if Geneva does not address Afghan concerns, Geneva cannot end the war. The *mujahideen* will continue to fight the Afghan communists during any Soviet withdrawal, just as they fought them before the Soviet invasion. Moscow may use this as a pretext to halt its pullout or to intervene at a future date. If Moscow wants a cease fire during its proposed withdrawal, then it should talk directly to the resistance.

The central issue of Afghan self-determination is ignored in the Geneva draft. In fact, the agreement favors the current communist regime by affording it tacit recognition, denying the *mujahideen* any political status, and ignoring the legitimacy of the resistance. By failing to link Soviet military disengagement to a political settlement, Geneva enables Moscow to retain control of the Afghan government. Moreover, the absence of agreement on a transitional Afghan government gives Moscow the opportunity to play one *mujahideen* group against another. Political, ideological, and personal rivalries long submerged by common hostility to the Soviets will emerge as the Soviets lower their profile.

Wearing Down the Resistance. Pakistan's justifiable concern is that by ignoring Afghan self-determination, the Geneva draft would perpetuate the kind of turmoil in Afghanistan that would discourage the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Already, Pakistan's economy and social fabric are strained from hosting almost four million Afghan refugees, with their three million head of livestock. They compete with Pakistanis for scarce water, grazing rights, firewood, and jobs.¹⁷ Pakistan's President Zia, who served as an adviser to the Royal Jordanian Army during the 1970 "Black September" civil war with the Palestine Liberation Organization, is acutely aware that the highly politicized Afghan refugee community could become a volatile destabilizing force within Pakistan, particularly if it sensed a diplomatic sellout.

Another major weakness of the Geneva draft accord is the one-sided prohibition of external assistance. Aid to the *mujahideen* from the West, China, and the Muslim world is slated to stop at the outset of the Soviet Union's withdrawal, no matter how leisurely the pace of the Soviet departure may be. This would give Moscow a chance to wear down the resistance. Moscow, moreover, claims the right to continue to aid Afghan communists even after a withdrawal. This puts the *mujahideen* at a disadvantage and partially negates their hard-won gains on the battlefield.

17 See: Tom Rogers, "Afghan Refugees and the Stability of Pakistan," *Survival*, September-October 1987.

A Pentagon study concludes that the Soviets could withdraw within 30 to 40 days, based strictly on logistical considerations. The Geneva proposals assume that Moscow would withdraw within three to four months. Yet the Soviets demand nine months for their pullout, enough time to batter the *mujahideen*, deplete their supply stockpiles, and provoke friction between rival *mujahideen* groups by selectively attacking certain groups and offering others a tacit cease fire. The KHAD, which is believed to have penetrated some resistance groups, would have ample time to find and destroy secret arms caches.

Elastic View of Self-Defense. Although Soviet officials have promised to fight only in self-defense and to front-load the pullout by recalling half of its forces in the first three months, such pledges are of questionable value. The Soviet Union has taken an extremely elastic view of self-defense, as the devastating attack on Korean airliner KAL 007 confirmed. Furthermore most of the Soviet offensive operations are performed by the airborne, air assault, and *spetsnaz* (special forces), who comprise less than 20 percent of the Soviet occupation force.¹⁸ Such units might also be assisted by air and commando units stationed on the Soviet side of the border.

To make matters worse, the Geneva accords are vague on whether Soviet military and political advisors can remain in Afghanistan. The "second army," the 9,000 strong contingent of Soviet and East Bloc advisers that currently dominates the Afghan government, is an important lever of control that cannot be permitted to remain. It also is suspected that the giant military infrastructure that the Soviets have established would be turned over to the Kabul regime and would not be dismantled. Left unanswered too are such important issues as the return of Afghan children taken to the Soviet Union and the payment of war reparations. A particularly important question is the status of the more than 300 treaties that Moscow has signed with Kabul. If allowed to stand, the Soviets would have a "legal" pretext to remain involved at the "request" of the communist regime.

False Withdrawals. Any Afghan peace settlement must have strong and effective verification provisions. After all Moscow already has staged two false withdrawals. The Soviets could disguise their annual May rotation of troops, which normally involves one-fourth to one-third of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, as the beginning of a pullout. Yet as soon as the world's attention strayed and the U.S. was distracted by its presidential election campaign, Moscow could halt the withdrawal and continue the war more covertly, assuming that Washington would lack the will to respond to violations of the agreement, just as it failed to respond to violations in Laos and Vietnam. Moscow already seems to have prepared to undermine the accords. In fact there are reports that Soviet personnel of Central Asian descent operate within the Afghan armed forces in Afghan uniforms.¹⁹ This indicates that the Soviets will seek to maintain a covert military presence after a "withdrawal." The Geneva draft agreement reportedly provides for only 50 observers to verify Soviet compliance. This is far too few — and they probably will have far too limited powers.

18 Statement of Alexander Alexiev before the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, February 18, 1988.

19 Statement of Rosanne Klass before the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, February 17, 1988.

UNITED STATES POLICY

The U.S. must not be stampeded into a quick fix solution that allows Moscow to prop up the Kabul regime while weakening the *mujahideen*. The Soviet Union was wrong when it invaded in 1979 and its occupation remains unacceptable today. It should not be allowed to extract strategic advantages in return for vague promises to reduce its illegitimate presence.

Washington probably must help the Soviet Union leave Afghanistan, but should do so only in a manner that: 1) ends the fighting 2) insures that the Soviets do not return at a later date and 3) insures that the *mujahideen* are not left vulnerable to attack if a negotiated settlement unravels.

A genuine settlement must:

Assure Afghan Self-Determination

There can be no true peace in Afghanistan until the puppet communist government is replaced by a legitimate government enjoying popular support. The central issue of Afghan self-determination must be explicitly guaranteed through the formation of an interim government that will hold elections. The KGB/KHAD coercive apparatus must be dismantled.

Warns *mujahideen* leader Abdul Haq. "What is important is not that the Soviets leave but what they leave behind."²⁰ It is for this reason that Pakistan, seeking a settlement that will encourage Afghan refugees to return home, is demanding a neutral transitional government to prepare for elections to determine Afghanistan's future. Washington should support Pakistan's demand and not press the Pakistanis to bend. Although some State Department officials argue that "We would not want to miss the bus,"²¹ it would be preferable to wait for the next "bus" rather than to board one that denied seats to the Afghan refugees. Too often State Department professionals care only about getting on "the bus" and care little about what kind of "bus" it is or where it is heading.

Maintain U.S. Aid

U.S. military aid has been provided to help Afghans resist Soviet occupation and should continue until that occupation has ended. To abandon the *mujahideen* before a total Soviet withdrawal would repudiate the Reagan Doctrine and abandon a victim of direct Soviet aggression. A premature aid cutoff would weaken the resistance, leave it vulnerable to Soviet attack and give Afghan communists the opportunity to split and outlast a divided, demoralized resistance. Once Pakistan shuts the aid pipeline, it will be difficult to reopen. Not only will the *mujahideen* harbor resentment toward Pakistan, but the Pakistani opposition will serve as a brake on Islamabad's willingness to assuming risks on behalf of the Afghans.

²⁰ *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 18, 1988, p.10.

²¹ *The New York Times*, February 24, 1988, p. A14.

U.S. military aid should phase down only in direct proportion to the withdrawal rate of Soviet troops. This will give the Soviets an incentive to accelerate their departure rather than stretch it out to consolidate the power of the Kabul regime. U.S. humanitarian aid must continue unabated to help the Afghans rebuild their shattered lives and nation. Although Moscow will drag its feet before accepting a settlement that includes continued U.S. aid, it eventually will relent when it realizes the alternative is an increase in U.S. military aid to the *mujahideen*.

Require Rapid and Total Soviet Withdrawal

The U.S. negotiated at Geneva on the assumption that a Soviet withdrawal would take two to three months. Pakistan has indicated it would accept a nine-month timetable if the Kabul regime is replaced by a transitional government. Moscow rejects the transitional government but still wants nine months to depart. Washington should back Pakistan. If Moscow continues to balk on the transition government, then the U.S. should demand the three-month timetable.

Regardless of the timetable, the withdrawal should be front-end loaded in terms of equipment and troops. Powerful helicopter gunships, ground attack aircraft, and other strike weapons should be withdrawn early in the schedule. Withdrawal, moreover, must include all Soviet civilian and military advisors, not just Soviet troops. Soviet bases should be dismantled and prohibited by treaty. The number of treaty verification observers should be greatly increased. Equally important, the U.S. should specify that violations of the accord would result in rapid restoration of U.S. military aid to the resistance.

Abrogate One-Sided Treaties

Moscow has signed more than 300 treaties with its Kabul clients that codify Soviet domination. The 1978 Friendship Treaty was invoked by the Soviets to justify their invasion. Moscow also is suspected of concluding a secret treaty under which Kabul ceded to the Soviet Union the Wakhan Corridor in the northeast. If such treaties are allowed to stand, the Soviets will have a pretext to remain involved in Afghan affairs or even to re-intervene at the "request" of the communist regime. All previously concluded Soviet-Afghan treaties should be declared null and void.

Require Soviet War Reparations

Should the Soviet Union withdraw from Afghanistan tomorrow, the Afghans will suffer the devastating consequences of the Soviet invasion for decades to come. Moscow should be required to pay war reparations to be determined by an impartial international commission. The thousands of Afghan children transported to the Soviet Union, moreover, should be repatriated.

All that the Soviet Union should gain from its Afghan adventure is safe passage for its troops and Afghan surrogates, and guarantees of a neutral Afghanistan free of foreign bases.

Ensure Freedom of Choice for Soviet POWs

Some 200 captured Soviet soldiers are being held as prisoners of war by the *mujahideen*. Up to 50 more have defected and joined the *mujahideen* to fight against the Soviet army. Repatriated Soviet POWs from other wars faced harsh punishments or execution when they returned home. There is no reason to believe today's POWs would fare differently. Those POWs and defectors who do not want to return to the Soviet Union must not be compelled to do so. Some State Department officials, however, are believed to be ready to press the *mujahideen* to force the Soviet POWs to return to the USSR.



To attain the above goals, Washington must coordinate its policies with Pakistan, which has made tremendous sacrifices on behalf of the Afghans. Close Pakistani-American relations are the strongest guarantee against the creation of a Soviet satellite regime in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

After years of obstructing a negotiated settlement the Soviet Union suddenly wants to wrap up the Geneva peace talks in a rush. Moscow is pressuring Pakistan to agree to a one-sided deal, replete with loopholes, that would undermine the *mujahideen* by weakening their military strength and eroding their political unity. Pakistan is holding out for a neutral transitional government that would end the fighting, not just make it easier for Moscow to cut its losses while assuring it control over Kabul.

Sacrificing Too Much. The U.S. should stand by its friends, not pressure them into a false settlement. The *mujahideen* and Pakistan have sacrificed far too much to be shunted aside in a short-sighted rush to an Afghanistan peace in time for the May superpower summit. Ronald Reagan should continue to honor his public commitments to aid the Afghans until a total Soviet withdrawal is completed and Afghan self-determination is assured.

If the Soviets resist a genuine settlement then pressure should be increased, not relaxed. Gorbachev's celebrated "new thinking" on Afghanistan was prompted by Afghan *mujahideen* steadfastness and American *Stingers*, not diplomatic niceties. If the Soviets prolong their brutal occupation then more *Stingers* will be needed to prompt "newer thinking."

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