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AFGHANISTAN: THE U.S. ROLE IN THE APPROACHING ENDGAME

INTRODUCTION

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan transforms the near decade-long Afghan conflict from a war against Soviet invasion into one between Afghans. Although the Soviets apparently for the moment have ended their direct military involvement, they continue to militarily aid, diplomatically support and economically assist the beleaguered communist regime of Afghan strongman Najibullah.

The victory of the Afghan *mujahideen* (holy warriors) over the Soviets is due in large part to the weapons and other aid from the United States. Now that Washington has achieved its first victory under the Reagan Doctrine — the withdrawal of Soviet troops — it cannot abandon the *mujahideen*, but must focus on the long-term task of helping to build a free and stable Afghanistan that can resist future Soviet attempts at domination. This may be only the first Soviet-Afghan war, just as Britain fought three wars against the Afghans in the 19th century.

Violating the Geneva Accords. Despite the Soviet withdrawal, Afghan peace is not at hand. Fighting actually intensified in recent months as the Soviets escalated its air war to stave off *mujahideen* efforts to fill the power vacuum that the gradual Soviet withdrawal created. Moscow repeatedly violated the April 1988 United Nations-sponsored Geneva accords on Afghanistan by launching offensive operations, introducing new weapons into the conflict, dispatching aerial attacks from bases inside the Soviet Union, and continuing efforts to intimidate Pakistan. Fighting is sure to continue until the communist regime in Kabul is overthrown.

The war in Afghanistan has now entered its endgame as the *mujahideen* push for full military victory and attempt to unite on a political program to

offer the Afghan people an alternative to the communist regime in Kabul. The U.S. has a role in the endgame. To help the *mujahideen* win the final battles of their war and safeguard the peace after victory, the Bush Administration should:

1) Maintain the flow of U.S. arms to the *mujahideen*, particularly the accurate heavy mortars and mine removing equipment needed to minimize casualties in assaults on heavily fortified areas. More *Stinger* anti-aircraft missiles also are needed to protect the *mujahideen*'s civilian supporters from communist reprisal bombings.

2) Distribute supplies to favor those resistance groups willing to cooperate within a broad anti-communist coalition to build a pluralist Afghanistan. Any group that places its own interests above those of the resistance coalition as a whole should be denied American aid. The U.S. should work closely with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and, if possible, even Iran to help forge a unified resistance coalition government.

3) Carefully monitor Soviet compliance with the Geneva accords. Warn Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that compliance will be a litmus test of his vaunted "new thinking" on international matters and that backsliding will chill superpower relations on every front. If the Soviets violate their commitments, particularly by continuing air attacks or retaining clandestine fighting forces inside Afghanistan, then the U.S. immediately should increase military aid to the resistance.

4) Continue the economic sanctions imposed on the Soviet Union because of its December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan until Moscow's puppet regime in Kabul has been replaced.

5) Organize a multilateral reconstruction effort to restore economic and political stability in Afghanistan.

THE MILITARY SITUATION

After losing roughly 15,000 Soviet lives and shattering the Red Army's image of invincibility in its failed effort to subdue Afghanistan, Moscow has withdrawn its military forces, meeting the February 15, 1989, deadline set by the Geneva accords.

Under these accords, the U.S. and USSR are committed to "refrain from any form of interference and intervention in the internal affairs" of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The U.S. has stressed that these obligations are symmetrical and that it reserves the right to aid the *mujahideen* to the extent that the Soviet Union aids the communist Kabul regime. (This "positive symmetry" was imposed on the State Department by bipartisan congressional pressure.) Because the Soviet Union did in fact continue to assist the Kabul

regime after May 15,¹ the U.S. has continued to supply the *mujahideen*, although on a reduced scale.

Yet, to demonstrate restraint, the quality as well as the quantity of U.S. military aid was reduced after May 15. The supply of *Stinger* portable anti-aircraft missiles, which played a major role in blunting Soviet air power, apparently was cut off. Although the *mujahideen* have hoarded these missiles, Soviet air attacks increased as the threat posed by the *Stingers* declined.² Mine-clearing equipment and accurate heavy mortars remain scarce, though they long ago were promised to the *mujahideen* by Washington. The *mujahideen* partially have offset the cutback in foreign supplies by capturing increasing amounts of military supplies from government troops.

Hostage Cities

As the *mujahideen* forces advanced, the Soviets adopted a brutal "hostage city" strategy, destroying any city that fell to the *mujahideen*. The *mujahideen* were not only slowed by the indiscriminate application of Soviet air power against civilian targets, but also by the pleas of civilians living in occupied areas to avoid provoking Soviet retaliation.

Late last October, the Soviets escalated their air war, deploying approximately 30 sophisticated MiG-27 *Flogger* ground attack warplanes from airbases inside the Soviet Union to Shindand air base in western Afghanistan. These planes, together with *Backfire* strategic bombers never before used in combat, launched deadly attacks against *mujahideen* forces surrounding Kandahar and Jalalabad. The intensified Soviet bombing campaign, involving 200 to 300 sorties a day, prompted the *mujahideen* to renew rocket attacks on Kabul in late December, after a six-week lull.

Psychological Weapon. The Soviets also deployed SS-1 *Scud*-B ground-to-ground missiles in Kabul for the first time. Scores of these missiles, armed with 2,100 pound warheads, were fired at *mujahideen* positions near the Pakistani border and at least one exploded inside Pakistan. Because guerrillas are nearly impossible to target with such missiles, the *Scuds* are more of a psychological than a purely military weapon. The noisy launches of the giant missiles presumably raise the sagging morale of Kabul's defenders while the unpredictable detonations terrify civilians in liberated areas.

The immediate impact of these Soviet escalations was to prevent the *mujahideen* from taking Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city after Kabul. Such a blow could have demoralized the Afghan communists — the

1 On May 14, the commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, Lt. General Boris Gromov, revealed that the Soviets intended to leave behind about \$1 billion worth of military equipment and installations. In addition the Soviets have continued to resupply the Afghan armed forces and upgrade their arms.

2 Cord Meyer, "Unfinished Business in Afghanistan," *The Washington Times*, August 5, 1988, p. F1.

People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The brandishing of Soviet air and missile forces reminded the *mujahideen* that they remain vulnerable to Soviet-based airpower even after the Soviet withdrawal.

Despite the peace offensives aimed at world opinion, the Soviets continued their scorched earth tactics including saturation bombing, indiscriminate mining, and poisoning food and water supplies.³ Chemical weapons reportedly were used by the Soviet-backed Afghan army in eastern Afghanistan recently, sending *mujahideen* and civilians fleeing to Pakistan suffering from burns and vomiting blood.⁴

The *mujahideen* fear that after the Soviet troop withdrawal assuages world opinion, the *mujahideen* will be forgotten by the outside world and abandoned to fight alone against the Kabul regime, which will continue to be bolstered by Soviet advisers, arms, and air support.

THE AFGHAN POLITICAL WHIRLPOOL

Though they have been superb warriors against invaders, Afghans historically have had less success in building stable governments. While they seem to have won the war against the Soviets, they may lose the peace among themselves. The same qualities that make them formidable guerrilla fighters — fierce independence and a decentralized structure of authority — make them difficult to organize politically. Both the *mujahideen* and the Afghan communists are hamstrung by personal, tribal, ethnic, and ideological rivalries that undermine their effectiveness and unity.

To date the *mujahideen* have been unable to agree on a comprehensive political program or develop political institutions that could replace the Kabul regime. The seven main political parties based in Peshawar, Pakistan, are divided by personal and ideological feuds.

Four of the parties, often called "fundamentalists," advocate the restructuring of Afghan society along Islamic lines. The most radical fundamentalist group, *Hezb-i-Islami* (Party of Islam), is led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a controversial leader who seeks domination over the other resistance groups, some of which broke away from his leadership. One of these splinter groups, also called *Hezb-i-Islami* and led by Younis Khalis, has grown steadily in strength and now rivals Hekmatyar's party in terms of military effectiveness, if not in numbers.

Broad Ethnic Group Support. A third fundamentalist party is the *Jamiat-i-Islami* (Islamic Society), led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani; it is perhaps the strongest political-military organization. Unlike the two *Hezbi* groups which are dominated by Pushtuns, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group,

3 Rob Shultheis, "The Soviets' Ugly Exit," *The Washington Post*, January 8, 1989.

4 *The New York Times*, November 16, 1988, p. A3.

Jamiat is popular among Tajiks and Uzbeks concentrated in northern Afghanistan and yet also has strong Pushtun following. The smallest fundamentalist group, *Itihad-i-Islami* (Islamic Union), is led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Although it has little military strength it has amassed great financial resources due to Sayyaf's backing from Saudi Arabia.

The three other Peshawar parties are viewed as "traditionalist." They generally support moderate policies that appeal to Afghanistan's traditional elites. Probably the most effective of the three is the *Mahaz-i-Milli Islami* (National Islamic Front), led by Sayed Ahmad Gailani, the religious leader of the Qadiryia Sufi order. *Haraqat-i-Inqilab-i-Islami* (Movement for the Islamic Revolution), led by Mohammed Nabi Mohammadi, though one of the largest of the traditionalist parties is loosely organized. The last traditionalist party is *Jabba-i-Milli-i Najat-i-Afghanistan* (National Front for the Rescue of Afghanistan), a small group led by Professor Sibgatullah Mojadidi, a leader of the Naqshbandiya Sufi order.

Mujahideen Cleavages

These seven parties have not been able to agree on a common vision of a post-Soviet Afghanistan. While some of the traditionalist parties favor a transitional government under the king Mohammed Zahir Shah, who was deposed in 1973 and has been living in exile in Rome, he is distrusted by the fundamentalists. They blame him for allowing the Soviets to subvert the army.

In addition to the political divisions between the Peshawar-based parties, there is chronic friction between the field commanders inside Afghanistan and party leaders in Peshawar. The field commanders, who have led the fight at great personal risk, increasingly are exasperated by the political infighting and what appears like petty intrigue which has hobbled the unity of the Peshawar coalition.

Regional commanders, moreover, have built a personal following based on their military leadership rather than traditional tribal connections or religious credentials. The center of gravity of the Afghan resistance gradually shifted toward the field commanders as the Soviets pulled back, allowing local leaders to establish territorial power bases that are less dependent on supplies from the Peshawar parties due to the capture of government garrisons. Regional commanders such as Ahmad Shah Massoud in the north, Abdul Haq around Kabul, and Ismail Khan in the west are likely to play a growing political role in determining Afghanistan's future.

Squabbling Resistance Groups. Given the lack of consensus on the nature of a future government, let alone on who should lead it, the Afghans have had a difficult time establishing a provisional government that could challenge the legitimacy of the communist regime in international fora. The Peshawar leaders announced the formation of an interim government in February 1988

composed of 28 representatives from the Peshawar parties, Afghan refugees, and traditional leaders inside Afghanistan.

This was a good start. Yet this interim government has been criticized for inadequate representation of non-Pushtun groups, field commanders, and non-fundamentalist groups. Opposition to Soviet occupation has been the chief bond holding the heterogeneous *mujahideen* coalition together. As the Soviets lower their profile, squabbling among resistance groups will become a greater danger.

PDPA Factionalism

Fortunately for the *mujahideen*, Afghanistan's communist party also is split, divided into the *Parcham* (flag) and *Khalq* (masses) factions. Najibullah, the former secret police chief elevated by the Soviets to General Secretary of the PDPA in 1986, belongs to the *Parcham* faction. The *Parchamis* historically have advocated tactical alliances with noncommunist groups to broaden the base of the government. By contrast, the *Khalqis* are diehard revolutionaries who reject political compromise. They also are less subservient to Moscow than the *Parchamis*. In early November, Interior Minister Sayed Mohammed Gulabzoi, a *Khalqi* leader who was Najibullah's foremost rival, was shunted off to Moscow as ambassador. This may have been a preemptive move to forestall a coup by *Khalqi* army officers who oppose the Soviet-imposed policy of "national reconciliation."

SOVIET STRATEGY

The Soviet army was defeated militarily in Afghanistan because it was not capable of suppressing the *mujahideen* at an acceptable cost. This was the first time in nearly a half-century that Soviet military forces were defeated on the battlefield.

Now that Moscow has lost militarily, Soviet leader Gorbachev clearly is seeking a political victory. He is trying to isolate the *mujahideen* diplomatically, cut their foreign support, drive wedges between rival groups and entice some of them into a coalition government with the communists. Although Soviet officials have told Western reporters that the Geneva accords were designed to give the Moscow a face-saving way to leave Afghanistan, the Soviets apparently also have hoped that the accords would give the Washington a face-saving way to abandon the *mujahideen*.

Trying to Spark a Civil War. What Gorbachev evidently wants to avoid is the kind of ignominious defeat in Afghanistan that could threaten his power

at home or fan the flames of restiveness in Eastern Europe, the Baltic republics, or Soviet Central Asia. The Soviets, after all, invaded Afghanistan in 1979 with an eye on Poland.⁵ As they now withdraw from Afghanistan, the Soviets will be mindful of the implications for their captive nations. If they cannot salvage a friendly Afghan government then they probably will seek to promote dissension within *mujahideen* ranks and try to spark a civil war.

Coercing Pakistan

An important element in Moscow's policy has been its relentless effort to intimidate Pakistan. Since coming to power in 1985, Gorbachev has presided over a steadily escalating war of nerves with Islamabad. To drive home the risks to Pakistan of supporting the *mujahideen*, the Soviets frequently violated Pakistani airspace, attacked Pakistani border towns with artillery and from the air, and orchestrated an increasingly bloody campaign of terrorism against Afghan refugees and Pakistanis. The KGB-controlled Afghan intelligence agency (WAD) launched an estimated 127 terrorist attacks in Pakistan in 1987, killing 234 people and wounding 1,200; this was the largest state-supported terrorism campaign in the world.⁶

The WAD, meanwhile, is believed by many to have been responsible for the suspicious August 17, 1988, plane crash that took the lives of Pakistani President Zia al-Haq, the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Arnold Raphel, a U.S. military attache, and ten senior Pakistani military officers. Less than two weeks before the incident, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze warned Pakistan that its continued support for the *mujahideen* would "not go unpunished." The official Pakistani investigation of the incident has ruled out an accident and suggests that the cause of the crash was a highly sophisticated form of sabotage.

Fomenting Discord. The WAD constantly works to exacerbate frictions among rival *mujahideen* groups by planting disinformation, forging letters, and doctoring photographs to discredit prominent resistance leaders and fan suspicions that individual groups have made a separate peace with the Kabul regime. The WAD has used special forces disguised as *mujahideen* to stage robberies along highways and attack villages to undermine civilian support for the resistance and foment discord. By one estimate, up to 70 percent of feuds and conflicts among the *mujahideen* are initiated by the WAD, which has infiltrated many resistance groups.⁷ The Kabul regime particularly would like to heighten tensions between *Jamiat-i-Islami* and Hekmatyar's *Hezb-i-Islami*.

5 One reason that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 27, 1979 was that it feared that if the beleaguered communist regime in Kabul was toppled by nationalist/Islamic opposition forces, it would set a dangerous precedent for Poland, whose communist government was under growing pressure from domestic dissidents and the newly installed Pope John Paul II, a Pole. See James Phillips, "Afghanistan: The Soviet Quagmire," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounders* No. 101, October 25, 1979.

6 U.S. State Department, "Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1987," August 1988, p. 27.

7 See Abdul Rashid, "The Afghan Resistance: Its Background, Its Nature and the Problem of Unity", in Rosanne Klass, ed., *Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited* (New York: Freedom House, 1987), pp. 222-224.

Najibullah has been trying to play local *mujahideen* field commanders off against the Peshawar parties, as well as each other. He has proclaimed "peace zones," attempted to entice local *mujahideen* into *de facto* ceasefires and even offered to make some of them governors of provinces. As the intensity of the *jihad* (holy war) feeling dissipates, Najibullah apparently hopes that *mujahideen* field commanders, exasperated by squabbling, will wash their hands of national politics in return for undisputed control over their territorial powerbases.

Vorontsov's Two-Track Policy

First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Vorontsov, Moscow's chief diplomatic troubleshooter for the Middle East/South Asia, was dispatched to Kabul as ambassador last October. Since then, he has escalated military pressure against the *mujahideen* and has pressed Pakistan to abandon the *mujahideen*. He also initiated exploratory contacts with the Peshawar leaders and met with a *mujahideen* delegation in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in early December. These direct contacts were a victory for the *mujahideen* because representatives of the Kabul regime were excluded; until then the Soviets had refused to accept the *mujahideen* as legitimate parties to the conflict. After a second round, the *mujahideen* broke off the talks early last month because the Soviets continued to insist on a role for the PDPA in a future government.

Moscow's Failed Enticement. These tentative feelers, the demotion of Najibullah's adversary Gulabzoi, and Moscow's grooming of Prime Minister Mohammed Hassan Sharq as a possible successor to Najibullah suggest that the Soviets sought to broker a political solution. Although Sharq is not a PDPA member, he is believed to be a KGB agent through which the Soviets could retain influence in Kabul. Gorbachev's December 7, 1988, U.N. speech contained new proposals aimed at gaining the diplomatic high ground by appealing for an "intra-Afghan dialogue," something that is impossible as long as the communists retain power. Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's visit to Pakistan in early February was a failed effort to go over the Afghans' heads to negotiate a political settlement with Pakistan, an effort that Moscow undoubtedly hoped would drive a wedge between Islamabad and the Afghans.

In any case, Moscow's failure to entice the *mujahideen* into a coalition government with the PDPA led Najibullah to reverse course and consolidate his control rather than continuing attempts to broaden his narrow regime. After the February 15 Soviet withdrawal, Najibullah removed seven noncommunist ministers from his government and replaced them with PDPA members loyal to himself. Prime Minister Sharq resigned on February 20 and was replaced by longtime PDPA member Sultan Ali Keshtmand, ending the charade of the Soviet-imposed "national reconciliation" campaign.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The withdrawal of uniformed Soviet troops does not mean that the Soviets are giving up their efforts to keep communist clients in power in Kabul. By one Soviet estimate, Moscow plans to leave behind 2,000 military advisers and 1,000 civilian advisers to assist the regime.⁸ There also are reports that several thousand Soviet Central Asian troops have been infiltrated into the Afghan army and border guards.⁹ Some Soviet officials have indicated that Moscow will continue aerial resupply missions and bombing raids from Soviet air bases. Indeed, the Soviet Foreign Ministry refuses to rule out such air support.¹⁰

Dangers in Kabul. Although Najibullah's army of roughly 30,000 men has more firepower than the lightly-armed *mujahideen* it has much less willpower. Only elite units such as the 15,000 man Presidential Guard, the WAD, and the paramilitary police are considered reliable fighting forces. Isolated army garrisons are likely to defect *en masse* to the *mujahideen*. Posing a greater problem for the resistance, of course, is the heavily fortified city-state of Kabul. But it depends on external food and fuel supplies that are vulnerable to blockade. Indeed, prices of staple commodities recently have doubled in Kabul due to shortages caused by hoarding and successful *mujahideen* efforts to constrict the flow of supplies from the Soviet border. Kabul is more likely to succumb to a psychological collapse, possibly triggered by the fall of Kandahar or Jalalabad, than to a direct military assault.

If Kabul falls, Moscow and the Najibullah regime seem prepared to shift the government to the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, less than 60 miles from the Soviet border. High ranking government and WAD officials already have moved their families and household goods there.¹¹ At minimum, Mazar-e-Sharif, one of the few cities effectively controlled by the Najibullah regime, would make an excellent staging area for the evacuation of Afghan communists to the Soviet Union.

Retreating to the North. If the *mujahideen* coalition disintegrates amid squabbling over the spoils of Kabul, however, Afghan communists may try to salvage control of northern Afghanistan, backed up by Soviet air power and covert special forces operations. The less rugged terrain of northern Afghanistan is not as favorable for guerrilla warfare as has been the

8 *The New York Times*, August 31, 1988, p. A10.

9 *Mujahideen* commander Abdul Haq claims that 15,000 Tajiks from Soviet Central Asia were brought into Kabul in July. See Claudia Rosett "Zia's Killing Haunts Afghan Peace," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 4, 1988, p. A14. See also Rosanne Klass, "Afghanistan: The Accords," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1988; also *Foreign Report*, *The Economist*, May 26, 1988.

10 *The New York Times*, January 27, 1989, p. 8. See also *The New York Times*, February 8, 1989, p. 6.

11 *The New York Times*, January 4, 1989, and January 25, 1989.

mountainous east, nor are the northern Uzbeks and Tajiks as combative as the Pushtuns to the south.

Such an attempt to partition Afghanistan cannot succeed unless the *mujahideen* fall into fighting among themselves. Vorontsov's recent diplomatic efforts have been aimed at achieving just this. He has reached out to former Afghan king Zahir Shah, in an effort to drive a wedge between fundamentalists opposed to the King and some of the moderates who support the King's return.

Vorontsov also has tried to play the Peshawar groups off against eight small Shiite Afghan groups based in Iran. He has led diplomatic missions to Saudi Arabia and Iran, undoubtedly hoping to exploit the rivalry between these two backers of the *mujahideen*. As tensions build between the U.S. and Pakistan due to Pakistan's nuclear program, Moscow will be in an even better position to exploit disunity among the *mujahideen* and their supporters.

U.S. PRIORITIES

The highest U.S. priority is not just to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan, but to do so in a manner that prevents them from returning. This means the PDPA, Moscow's entree into Afghan affairs, ultimately must be removed from power. As long as the PDPA clings to power, Afghanistan will remain buffeted by instability that could invite future Soviet intervention.

Even the total defeat of the PDPA would not rule out a future Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. After all, the Geneva accords have not altered geography: Afghanistan still shares a long permeable border with the Soviet Union. Exiled Afghan communists may remain a dangerous fifth column. If the *mujahideen* fall into a civil war after ousting Najibullah, some of them may seek Soviet support against the Pakistani-backed rivals. This may be only the first Soviet-Afghan war, just as Britain fought three wars against the Afghans in the 19th century.

Washington therefore cannot disengage from Afghanistan. Instead it should:

◆ ◆ **Reject communist participation in a coalition government.** It is unrealistic to expect the *mujahideen* to accept a coalition now that the balance of power on the ground has shifted to the *mujahideen*. In any event, Afghans traditionally seek *badal* (vengeance) against their enemies; they do not join coalitions with them. It is particularly unrealistic to expect the *mujahideen* to compromise with Najibullah, whom they perceive to be "our Hitler."¹² Soviet attempts to forge a coalition government between the

¹² Najibullah also has been compared to Nazi doctor Joseph Mengele. Trained as a doctor, he used his medical knowledge to torture political prisoners when he headed the secret police from 1980-1985. Klass, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 407.

mujahideen and the PDPA as a face-saving device to facilitate their withdrawal were doomed from the start. The U.S. should press Moscow to discuss power transfer with the resistance, not power sharing arrangements that could mask continued communist domination.

While Afghan resistance leaders may accept individual non-communists associated with Najibullah's regime who have been deemed "good Moslems" as possible members of a transitional government, PDPA members and ex-Prime Minister Sharq are unacceptable. Persistent Soviet efforts to shoehorn them into a transitional government should be perceived as an attempt to buy the Soviets time to exploit *mujahideen* cleavages. The U.S. should be more concerned about preserving unity among resistance groups than about forging an agreement on a transitional government.

◆ ◆ **Continue aid.** The *mujahideen* were fighting Afghan communists before the 1979 Soviet invasion and will continue to fight them now that Soviet troops have retreated. The U.S. should continue aiding the *mujahideen* until the regime imposed by Moscow has been overthrown. *Stinger* anti-aircraft missiles are needed to protect the *mujahideen* and their civilian supporters from air attack. Needed too are heavy mortars and mine clearing equipment for *mujahideen* attacks on fortified positions. The U.S. should err on the side of giving too much rather than too little. Saving *mujahideen* lives should be a higher priority than helping to save Soviet face.

◆ ◆ **Recognize the political leverage in aid.** The distribution of aid to the *mujahideen* should be revised. Until recently, Hekmatyar's *Hezb-i-Islami* has received the lion's share of supplies because Pakistan has favored it over other groups. Pakistani President Zia backed the *Hezbi* because he believed that a fundamentalist regime in Kabul would be anti-Soviet, anti-Indian, and pro-Pakistani. Zia also apparently felt that because fundamentalists believe Islam, not ethnicity, is the basis for state formation, they would be less likely to continue past Afghan support for the formation of "Pushtunistan," carved out of Pushtun tribal areas in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. Encouraged by this Pakistani backing, Hekmatyar has sought to dominate other resistance groups and has elevated his personal political ambitions over the common struggle against the PDPA. The U.S. should not help this anti-Western radical to achieve domination. Washington should reduce the disproportionately large share of assistance that his *Hezbi* now receives and shift resources to the *Jamiat* and other groups.

◆ ◆ **Help the *mujahideen* to reorganize.** Washington must assist the *mujahideen* to adapt to a changing war in which small unit guerrilla operations in the mountains give way to larger multi-unit offensives against government-held cities, garrisons, and airbases. For this, the *mujahideen* need a strategy that integrates the military, political, diplomatic and civic efforts of disparate groups. Administrative planning in liberated territories must be coordinated better to present civilians currently living under communist domination with an appealing alternative to the Kabul regime.

The Najibullah regime has exploited the anxiety of civilians under its control by accusing the *mujahideen* of looting and atrocities in liberated areas. The *mujahideen* need to publicize a general amnesty program that would encourage defections that could undermine the regime.

◆ ◆ **Encourage formation of a broad noncommunist coalition government.**

The Afghans must choose their own form of government. Yet Washington should work with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and possibly even Iran to assure that all non-communist groups participate in the formation of a new government. Iran-based Shiite Afghan groups currently oppose plans made by the Peshawar coalition for convening a *shura* (council) to name an interim government until elections could be held. Washington should press the Peshawar coalition to secure Shiite participation by honoring the agreement that Sibgatullah Mojadidi, the leader of the Peshawar coalition, made with the Shiites that would give them 100 seats in the 526-seat *shura*. All Afghan noncommunist political, ethnic, tribal, and religious groups should be brought into a pluralistic post-Soviet government. A narrow fundamentalist or Pushtun-dominated government would create dissension that the Soviets could exploit.

George Bush should appoint a special envoy with ambassadorial rank to consult with Afghan resistance leaders and non-communist political leaders and coordinate U.S. policy on Afghanistan. Working with the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, this envoy should press the new Pakistani government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to reconsider the late President Zia's commitment to Hekmatyar's *Hezb-i-Islami* and to push Hekmatyar to cooperate fully with other groups. The special U.S. envoy should warn the Peshawar parties that if they are unable to work together to form a new government then Washington will bypass them and channel aid directly to the field commanders inside Afghanistan, who have demonstrated a pragmatic, cooperative spirit.

◆ ◆ **Break relations with Kabul.** Secretary of State James Baker ordered the closing of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul on January 26 because of security and safety considerations. Closing the embassy removed one of the strongest reasons that had been given for maintaining diplomatic relations with the Najibullah regime — that such relations allowed the continued gathering of intelligence inside Kabul. Baker now should break relations with the Kabul regime and recognize the provisional *mujahideen* coalition government as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

◆ ◆ **Link Soviet action on Afghanistan with superpower relations.** The U.S. should warn Moscow that Soviet nonintervention in Afghan affairs will be a litmus test of Gorbachev's claim that there is a Soviet "new thinking" on international matters. If the Soviets resume their air war over Afghanistan, the U.S. should respond across the entire spectrum of U.S.-Soviet relations. U.S. economic sanctions imposed on the Soviet Union in 1979 because of the invasion of Afghanistan should not be lifted until Moscow's puppet regime in Kabul has fallen.

◆ ◆ **Aid the reconstruction of Afghanistan.** Roughly 5 million Afghans have been driven into exile in Pakistan and Iran by a systematic Soviet terror campaign designed to weaken the resistance by depopulating the countryside. This is the world's largest refugee group. These refugees will need extensive help in returning to and rehabilitating their war-torn homeland. Washington should work with Pakistan to assure a slow, phased repatriation of the refugees to liberated areas. Current agricultural production is roughly half of the pre-war level, insufficient to support the existing population, let alone large numbers of returning refugees. If and when Kabul is liberated, the resistance will be responsible for feeding the capital's 2,300,00 inhabitants. Logistical planning for this should begin immediately. To revive agriculture, improved seeds, fertilizer, oxen, and reconstruction of irrigation systems will be needed desperately.

Initially, the highest priority should be mine clearance. The Soviets have scattered up to 16 million mines throughout Afghanistan. The U.S. should organize a multinational military effort, similar to that which cleared the Suez Canal after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, to clear minefields and train the Afghans to do so.

When a noncommunist government has been formed in Kabul, President Bush should request Congress to appropriate substantial war recovery aid. The U.S. government should try to recruit Afghan exiles in the U.S. to return to Afghanistan to help reconstruction. A fund should be set up to lend seed money to small businesses. Washington also should organize a long-term multinational effort to rebuild Afghanistan's shattered economy and restore stability. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Japan, the People's Republic of China, Britain, France, and West Germany could contribute financial aid or advisers to the project.

CONCLUSION

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan does not mean the end of the conflict there — only the beginning of a new phase in the struggle for a free Afghanistan. The *mujahideen* have won their war against the Soviet invaders but still have not overthrown the puppet regime imposed by the Soviets. Moreover, the *mujahideen* are in danger of losing the peace among themselves.

The U.S. therefore must realize that the endgame for Afghanistan is only beginning. Washington should not be distracted by Gorbachev's peace offensives or his unworkable proposal for an "intra-Afghan dialogue." Moscow remains committed to the Najibullah regime, bolstering it with military, economic, and diplomatic aid. The U.S. cannot afford to be less committed to the *mujahideen*.

Ending the "Great Game." Nor should the U.S. lose sight of its ultimate goal — a stable, independent Afghanistan free from Soviet domination. This

means not only that Najibullah must be checkmated militarily, but that the *mujahideen* freedom fighters must be transformed into an effective government. The Bush Administration thus should provide the *mujahideen* with political as well as military help. It should shift the flow of its aid to facilitate the formation of a broad noncommunist coalition government and work with Pakistan and other supporters of the *mujahideen* to minimize Afghan factionalism.

The Soviet army remains poised along Afghanistan's northern border. The Afghans must make a long-term, unified effort to keep them from recrossing that border. If the *mujahideen* fall into political bickering, then their military victory will be put in jeopardy. In that case, the "Great Game" – Rudyard Kipling's term for the 19th century struggle for Afghanistan – will continue unabated.

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