



# Backgroundnder

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## Executive Summary

No. 1383

July 12, 2000

## DEFUSING TERRORISM AT GROUND ZERO: WHY A NEW U.S. POLICY IS NEEDED FOR AFGHANISTAN

*JAMES PHILLIPS*

The United States scored one of its biggest Cold War victories by helping the Afghan resistance to defeat the Soviet Army. Soon after Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, however, the United States withdrew from active involvement in Afghan affairs. Recently, after years of neglect, Washington has been forced to address a long-simmering set of national security and foreign policy problems emerging from a traumatized and radicalized Afghanistan. The August 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by Osama bin Laden's Afghanistan-based terrorist network made it impossible for American foreign policy to continue to ignore Afghanistan. Yet as the world's leading exporter of terrorism, Islamic revolution, and opium, Afghanistan still does not receive the attention it should.

The Clinton Administration has publicized the hunt for Osama bin Laden and made his capture a high priority. By focusing narrowly on bin Laden, however, the Administration has failed to grasp the extent to which he is a byproduct of the revolutionary upheaval in Afghanistan. The war-torn country is a breeding ground for Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and drug smuggling, all of which

are spreading to Afghanistan's neighbors and throughout the region.

The United States needs to develop a coherent long-term policy for building a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that will no longer serve as a safe haven for international terrorists, drug smugglers, and Islamic revolutionaries. This will require a major shift in U.S. policy. Since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the United States has all but ignored Afghanistan, a poor landlocked country slightly smaller than Texas. The absence of American involvement weakened and demoralized moderate Afghan groups and allowed Pakistan to support the radical Taliban ("Islamic students" or "seekers") movement. This ultra-fundamentalist

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Muslim group, unknown before 1994, now dominates Afghanistan politically and militarily and provides support to a wide spectrum of radical Islamic groups, including bin Laden's terrorist network.

The United States must end its passive neglect of Afghanistan. Rather than focusing narrowly on bin Laden, Washington should develop a broad regional strategy to uproot the Taliban regime that protects and sustains him. It should push for broad-based international sanctions on trade and arms to reduce the Taliban's ability to repress the Afghan people and export terrorism. The United States should adopt a more aggressive strategy, in cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbors and Afghan opposition groups, to contain the Taliban regime, cut off its external support, bolster internal Afghan opposition to its radical policies, encourage defections from its ranks, and build an inclusive Afghan government willing to live in peace with its neighbors.

Specifically, the United States should:

- Maximize international pressure on the Taliban, including additional United Nations sanctions, to halt its support of terrorism.
- Pressure Pakistan to end its support of the Taliban.
- Provide military, diplomatic, and economic support to the anti-Taliban opposition.
- Forge a regional coalition to support the anti-Taliban opposition and support an Afghan peace settlement.

- Build an internal Afghan consensus for peace.
- Designate the Taliban as a terrorist organization to set the stage for declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism if it continues to support the Taliban.
- Provide humanitarian aid to non-Taliban areas of Afghanistan.
- Appoint a special envoy for Afghanistan to raise the priority of Afghan policy within the U.S. government and coordinate U.S. policy with other governments.
- Allow the Afghan opposition to reopen the Afghan embassy in Washington, which has been closed since 1997.
- Revive bipartisan congressional activism on Afghanistan similar to the broad coalition that supported aid for the Afghans during the Cold War.

America's neglect of Afghanistan for the past decade has had the unintended effect of allowing the extremist Taliban to emerge as the dominant force in this war-torn country. Only by adopting these measures can the United States hope to help build a stable and peaceful Afghanistan that no longer harbors terrorists, drug smugglers, and revolutionaries.

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# Backgrounder

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## DEFUSING TERRORISM AT GROUND ZERO: WHY A NEW U.S. POLICY IS NEEDED FOR AFGHANISTAN

JAMES PHILLIPS<sup>1</sup>

When the United States helped the Afghan resistance defeat the Soviet Army in a brutal guerilla war, it scored one of its biggest Cold War victories. However, shortly after Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the United States withdrew from active involvement in Afghan affairs. As a result, Washington squandered the residual influence that it had acquired through its \$3 billion aid program for the Afghan resistance in the 1980s. One former U.S. official intimately involved in Afghanistan policy lamented, “Afghanistan has gone from one of Washington’s greatest foreign policy triumphs to one of its most profound failures.”<sup>2</sup>

After years of neglect, recent events have forced Washington to address a long-simmering set of national security and foreign policy problems that leach out of a traumatized and radicalized Afghanistan. In August 1998, Osama bin Laden’s Afghanistan-based terrorist network bombed U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, moving Afghanistan off the back burner of U.S. foreign policy. Yet

Afghanistan has still not received the high-level attention that it deserves as the world’s leading exporter of terrorism, Islamic revolution, and opium.

The Clinton Administration has publicized the hunt for Osama bin Laden and made his capture a high priority. But by focusing narrowly on bin Laden, the Administration has failed to grasp the extent to which he is a lethal byproduct of the revolutionary upheaval in Afghanistan. The war-torn country has become the incubator for a malignant mixture of contagious viruses—Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and drug smuggling—that have spread

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1. The author is grateful to Christina Migally, who contributed extensive research assistance for this paper.
2. Zalmay Khalilzad, “Afghanistan: The Consolidation of a Rogue State,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2000, p. 65.

### OSAMA BIN LADEN

Osama bin Laden first traveled to Afghanistan as one of the 25,000 Islamic militants from more than 50 countries who flocked to the  *jihad*  (holy war) against the Soviets. The Muslim volunteers were referred to colloquially as “Afghan Arabs,” although many were Turks, Bengalis, or members of other ethnic groups. Many of these foreign veterans of the Afghan war have returned to their native countries to spearhead radical revolutionary organizations, particularly in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen.<sup>1</sup>

Bin Laden, a Saudi, is the youngest son of a Saudi construction magnate who built a \$5 billion family fortune and left an estimated \$80 million to his son when he died in 1968. After the 1979 Soviet invasion, bin Laden served primarily as a fund-raiser and recruiter who publicized the  *jihad*  and helped transport Arab volunteers to Afghanistan.

In 1984, bin Laden moved to Peshawar, a Pakistani city near the Afghan border that served as a staging area for the Afghan resistance. He became more involved in the logistics of supporting the  *jihad* , bringing earth-moving equipment from his family’s construction company to carve out roads and bunkers in the rugged terrain of eastern Afghanistan along the border with Pakistan.

Bin Laden did little actual fighting. He worked closely with Pakistani military officials and Saudi intelligence officials, but he did not have a relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which also supported the Afghan resistance.<sup>2</sup> Milt Bearden, the CIA station chief in Pakistan from 1986 to 1989, denied cooperating with bin Laden, but he knew of his efforts: “There were a lot of bin Ladens who came to do  *jihad* , and they unburdened us a lot. These guys were bringing in up to twenty to twenty-five million dollars a month from other Saudis and Gulf Arabs to underwrite the war.”<sup>3</sup>

Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. He was disturbed, however, by the dispatch of American troops to protect Saudi Arabia from Iraq following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. He perceived the U.S. troops not as defenders, but as occupiers, like the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> After he became increasingly critical of the Saudi royal family, which he denounced for corruption, he was expelled from Saudi Arabia in 1991, and his family publicly disowned him.

Bin Laden went into exile in Sudan as a guest of the radical Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi, with whom bin Laden had met frequently regarding the Afghan  *jihad* . Saudi and American diplomatic pressure led Sudan to expel bin Laden in May 1996, and he returned to Afghanistan, where the radical Taliban was gathering momentum. Like Lenin returning to Russia, bin Laden’s return was timely. He promptly gave the Taliban \$3 million to finance the successful capture of the cities of Jalalabad and Kabul.<sup>5</sup>

1. James Bruce, “Arab Veterans of the Afghan War,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, April 1, 1995, p. 175.
2. Frank Smyth, “Culture Clash: Bin Laden, Khartoum and the War Against the West,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, October 1, 1998, p. 22.
3. Mary Anne Weaver, “The Real Bin Laden,” *The New Yorker*, January 24, 2000, p. 34. Former CIA official Vincent Cannistraro has also denied that the CIA cooperated with bin Laden. See Vincent Cannistraro, “Holy Terrorism,” *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2000, p. A20.
4. Significantly, the August 7, 1998, bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania came on the anniversary of the introduction of the first American troops into Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield in 1990.
5. Weaver, “The Real Bin Laden,” p. 37.

to Afghanistan's neighbors and throughout the Muslim world. The United States needs to develop a coherent long-term policy for building an Afghanistan that is stable and peaceful, and that no longer serves as a safe haven for international terrorists, drug smugglers, and Islamic revolutionaries.

Such a plan would require a major shift in American policy. Since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the United States has all but ignored Afghanistan, a poor, distant, landlocked country slightly smaller than Texas. Washington has underestimated its geopolitical, humanitarian, and security interests in Afghanistan. Afghanistan historically has been a strategic crossroads controlling major north-south and east-west land routes. It functioned as a buffer state between the British and Russian empires in the 19th century and was a major battleground of the Cold War. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan produced a humanitarian disaster: 2 million dead, the world's largest refugee population, a limping economy, shattered infrastructure, and a traumatized civil society. Now Afghanistan has emerged as a breeding ground for Islamic revolution and terrorism.

In the critical period following the 1992 collapse of the Afghan communist regime, the United States missed an opportunity to play a constructive role. Afghanistan plunged into anarchy as rival resistance groups fought a prolonged civil war. The absence of American involvement weakened and demoralized moderate Afghan groups and allowed Pakistan to help create and support the radical Taliban ("Islamic students" or "seekers") movement. This ultra-fundamentalist Muslim group, unknown before 1994, now dominates Afghanistan both politically and militarily and provides support to a wide spectrum of radical Islamic groups, including Osama bin Laden's terrorist network.

The United States must end its passive neglect of the festering situation in Afghanistan. Rather than focusing narrowly on bin Laden, Washington

should develop a broad regional strategy and cooperate with other countries to uproot the Taliban regime that protects and sustains him. It should push for broad-based international sanctions on trade and arms that would reduce the Taliban's ability to repress the Afghan people and export terrorism. The United States must adopt a more forceful, proactive strategy to contain the Taliban regime, cut off its external support, bolster internal Afghan opposition to its radical policies, encourage defections from its ranks, and build an inclusive Afghan government willing to live in peace with its neighbors.

## TERRORISM'S GROUND ZERO

Since 1996, Afghanistan has been ground zero for an international terrorist network controlled by Osama bin Laden. At the heart of the network is Al Qaeda ("the base"), an umbrella group that functions as a clearinghouse, dispensing money, logistical support, and training to a wide variety of radical Islamic terrorist groups. Al Qaeda is loosely organized, but it is broadly based and has a global reach. Al Qaeda is emblematic of a new model for terrorism: stateless, diffuse networks of individuals united by a radical ideology rather than common ethnic or national origins.<sup>3</sup> It has created cells in more than 50 countries and has linked itself to numerous already established Muslim extremist groups.<sup>4</sup> Two key allies are the Egyptian Islamic radical groups Al Jihad and Gamaat Islamiya.

Al Qaeda uses training camps in Afghanistan and Sudan to prepare Islamic militants for revolutionary struggles in countries such as Algeria, Bosnia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Egypt, Kashmir, Lebanon, the Philippines, Russia, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Al Qaeda has also sent its members to Lebanon for bomb training from the pro-Iranian Hezbollah terrorist organization and has entered into a formal "working agreement" with Iran and Sudan to work together against the United States, Israel, and the West.<sup>5</sup>

3. See James Phillips, "The Changing Face of Middle Eastern Terrorism," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1005, October 6, 1994.

4. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, "The New Face of Terrorism," *The New York Times*, January 4, 2000, p. A23.

Bin Laden is believed to preside over a loose network of 3,000 to 5,000 Muslim militants dispersed around the world.<sup>6</sup> He functions as Al Qaeda's chief financier, propagandist, and ideological theorist, but not as a tactical planner.<sup>7</sup> Bin Laden has hidden his personal fortune, estimated at \$250 million–\$300 million, in an intricate web of approximately 60 companies spread among many different countries. Ahmed Refai Taha, an Egyptian militant, essentially functions as bin Laden's military commander.<sup>8</sup> In August 1996, bin Laden issued a "declaration of war" against the United States and outlined his goals: to drive U.S. military forces from the Arabian peninsula, overthrow the government of Saudi Arabia, "liberate" Muslim holy sites in "Palestine," and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world.<sup>9</sup>

The results of bin Laden's efforts have been deadly. His henchmen are responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks including a failed June 26, 1995, attempt to assassinate Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak. The August 1999 incursion into the Russian province of Dagestan, which helped trigger Russia's 1999 crackdown in Chechnya, and the February 1999 bombings in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, are also the work of bin Laden's network or organizations linked to it. Bin Laden is believed to be the chief financial backer of the Abu Sayyaf Group, which seeks to carve an independent Mus-

lim state out of the southern Philippines. Bin Laden was implicated in failed plots to assassinate Pope John Paul II during a 1995 trip to Manila, to bomb the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Manila and Bangkok, and to perpetrate a series of Asian airline bombings.<sup>10</sup>

**Bin Laden's War Against America.** Bin Laden has been implicated in a long string of attacks on Americans. His first terrorist attack was a December 1992 bombing of a hotel in Yemen used by American soldiers en route to humanitarian operations in Somalia.<sup>11</sup> Bin Laden told CNN in March 1997 that he had trained the "Afghan Arabs" who helped to kill 18 American soldiers in Somalia in 1993. In addition, he was implicated as a possible unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City, which killed six and wounded over 1,000.<sup>12</sup>

Bin Laden's network remains a prime suspect in two bombings against American targets in Saudi Arabia: a 1995 bombing that killed five American military advisers in Riyadh and the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex that killed 19 American military personnel.<sup>13</sup> According to U.S. government sources, bin Laden also hatched two failed plots to assassinate President Bill Clinton. The first was during Clinton's November 1994 visit to the Philippines, and the second was during

5. Al Venter, "Bin Laden's Tripartite Pact," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 1, 1998, p. 5.
6. James Walsh, "Osama bin Laden," *Time*, December 28, 1998, p. 80.
7. Michael Collins Dunn, "Osama bin Laden: The Nature of the Challenge," *Middle East Policy*, October 1998, p. 23.
8. Bruce Auster, "An Inside Look at Terror Inc.," *U.S. News & World Report*, October 19, 1998, p. 34.
9. U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997*, April 1998, p. 30.
10. Peter Chalk, "Bin Laden's Asian Network," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 1, 1998, p. 6.
11. The soldiers left before the bomb exploded, killing two tourists. Vernon Loeb, "A Global Pan-Islamic Network," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1998, p. A24.
12. While there appears to be no concrete evidence tying bin Laden to the bombing, Ramzi Yousef, the convicted mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, was trained in one of bin Laden's training camps, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Yousef later was involved in bin Laden-financed plots in the Philippines, and Pakistani intelligence officials say that he spent almost three years in a guest house owned by bin Laden before being arrested in Pakistan and extradited to the United States in February 1995. Tim Weiner, "Man with Mission Uses Whole World to Attack the U.S.," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1998, p. A11.
13. David Schenker, "What Can Be Done About Bin Laden?" Washington Institute for Near East Policy *Policywatch* No. 335, p. 1.

a planned February 1999 visit to Pakistan that was cancelled.<sup>14</sup>

Over time, bin Laden's public rhetoric has become increasingly hostile toward Americans. In February 1998, bin Laden announced the formation of the "International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" and signed a *fatwa* (religious edict) calling on all Muslims "to kill the Americans and their allies—civilian and military." According to the CIA, this was the first time bin Laden publicly sought to justify the killing of American civilians.<sup>15</sup>

Six months later, bin Laden's supporters detonated two truck bombs outside the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224 people, including 12 Americans, and wounding more than 5,000. The United States responded on August 20, 1998, by launching 75 cruise missiles against several of bin Laden's training camps near Khost, Afghanistan, and against a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum, Sudan, suspected of making chemical weapons for bin Laden.<sup>16</sup>

Washington is particularly interested in preempting a chemical weapon strike because bin Laden has shown an interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction since at least 1993. In November 1998, CIA officials confirmed that bin Laden sought to acquire chemical weapons for attacks on U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf region.<sup>17</sup> CIA

Director George Tenet testified before Congress in March 2000 that bin Laden was the "foremost" terrorist threat to the United States and that "his operatives have trained to conduct attacks with toxic chemicals or biological toxins."<sup>18</sup>

In December 1999, bin Laden's supporters made concerted efforts to disrupt millennium celebrations inside the United States and abroad. The CIA received reports that operatives linked to bin Laden would carry out as many as 15 terrorist attacks around the world.<sup>19</sup> In early December, American intelligence and law enforcement agencies cooperated with several other governments to arrest 13 men in Amman, Jordan, who were planning to attack Americans. Shortly thereafter, the United States and Canada arrested 26 Algerians suspected of links to bin Laden, including Ahmed Ressay, a suspected member of the Armed Islamic Group, an Algerian terrorist organization, who was arrested entering the United States with explosives.

Bin Laden's terrorist network appears to have been somewhat weakened by arrests on three continents, infiltration by various intelligence agencies, and electronic surveillance.<sup>20</sup> The United States has gained access to at least two defectors from Al Qaeda, including its former finance director.<sup>21</sup> Bin Laden, fearing infiltration by U.S. intelligence agencies, has replaced his Arab bodyguards in Afghanistan with Pakistani and Bangladeshi

14. ABC News, "Plots to Kill the President," August 25, 1999, at <http://abcnews.com/sections/world/DailyNews/binladen980825.html>.

15. Frank Smyth, "Culture Clash: Bin Laden, Khartoum, and the War Against the West," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1, 1998, p. 22.

16. The owner of the pharmaceutical plant later sued to have his assets unfrozen by the U.S. government. The United States declined to contest his claim that the plant was not involved in manufacturing precursor chemicals for chemical weapons, ostensibly because it did not want to reveal intelligence sources and methods.

17. Bin Laden reportedly also tried but failed to buy a nuclear warhead on the Russian black market. See Stefan Leader, "Osama bin Laden and the Terrorist Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1, 1999.

18. George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, "The Worldwide Threat in 2000: Global Realities of Our National Security," testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, March 21, 2000, p. 7.

19. Neil King and David Cloud, "On High Alert: Casting a Global Net, U.S. Security Forces Survive Terrorist Test," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 8, 2000, p. A1.

20. David Vise and Lorraine Adams, "Bin Laden Weakened, Officials Say," *The Washington Post*, March 11, 2000, p. A3.

21. Both appear to have been agents of Saudi intelligence. Auster, "An Inside Look at Terror Inc." p. 35.

militants, according to Pakistani officials.<sup>22</sup> He also is “placing increased emphasis on developing surrogates to carry out attacks in an effort to avoid detection,” according to CIA Director Tenet.<sup>23</sup> Such surrogates include Egypt’s Al Jihad organization, which was responsible for the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Algeria’s Armed Islamic Group. Bin Laden has funded both of these organizations for years.

Bin Laden reportedly has serious health problems, described variously as kidney failure, heart and circulatory problems, or bone marrow disease. These health reports may be a smoke screen to divert attention away from bin Laden and his Taliban hosts. If he does die, however, the CIA reportedly believes that the leader of the Al Jihad group, Ayman al-Zawahiri, will assume control of his organization.<sup>24</sup> Other factions in the loose-knit Al Qaeda organization, though, might launch independent terrorist attacks to prove their own strength.

The United States has ratcheted up the pressure on bin Laden. He is now on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitive list, and there is a \$5 million reward for his capture. The United States has pressed the Taliban to surrender bin Laden but has been repeatedly rebuffed. Washington imposed economic sanctions on the Taliban regime in July 1999 and prompted the United Nations Security Council to follow suit in November 1999. Despite growing diplomatic and economic pressures, the Taliban regime has refused to cooperate. The reasons for this defiance—which ultimately could threaten the Taliban’s hold on power—lie in the nature of the Taliban and the Afghan political scene.

## AFGHANISTAN’S JIHAD AND CIVIL WAR

Islamic networks have long played a vital role in mobilizing Afghans and implementing Pakistani foreign policy. The Islamic rebellion sparked by the April 1978 communist coup in Kabul mushroomed into a broad-based war of national resistance following the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The resistance quickly took on a strong Islamic cast, in part because the communists swiftly eradicated secular urban-based opposition. Also, a network of local *mullahs* (clerics) organized, motivated, and led the rural tribesmen that formed the core of the resistance, while unifying disparate tribes and isolated villages in Afghanistan’s remote valleys. They declared that the war against the Soviets was a *jihād* (holy war), and the fighters called themselves *mujahideen* (holy warriors).

Neighboring Pakistan, which granted sanctuary to more than 3.5 million Afghan refugees, became the chief sponsor of the mujahideen. Because Afghan nationalism was a threat to Pakistani interests, Pakistan encouraged the Afghan resistance to organize along Islamic rather than nationalist principles.<sup>25</sup>

From Pakistan’s perspective, an Islamic Afghan regime installed in Kabul with Pakistani help would be a natural ally. Such an ally could help Muslim Pakistan block Soviet expansion and give Pakistan strategic depth with respect to arch-rival India. Yet Pakistani President Zia al-Haq had been a military adviser in Jordan in 1970 and personally had observed the brutal fighting between the Jordanian army and the Palestine Liberation Organi-

22. Andrew Hill, “U.S. Presses Taliban Again, in Vain, on Bin Laden,” Reuters, May 28, 2000, p. 1.

23. Tenet, “The Worldwide Threat in 2000: Global Realities of Our National Security,” p. 6.

24. Pamela Hess, “CIA IDs Successor of Ailing Bin Laden,” *The Washington Times*, April 18, 2000, p. A11.

25. Afghanistan has historically based claims to much of Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province derived from the controversial British imposition of the 1893 Durand Line establishing the frontier between then-British India and Afghanistan. Afghan nationalists consider the present boundary an anachronistic vestige of British colonialism. Since Pakistan’s founding in 1947, Afghans have sporadically demanded that Pakistan grant the Pushtun ethnic minority within Pakistan self-determination as part of a “Greater Pushtunistan.” This irredentist policy, popular among the Pushtun tribes that comprise the single largest ethnic group of Afghanistan’s heterogeneous population, poses a long-term threat that could inflame Pushtun separatism among the 14 million Pushtuns concentrated along the border in Pakistan.



### AFGHANISTAN FACTS

**Population Total:** 25,824,882 (July 1999 est.)

**Population Breakdown by Ethnicity:**

Pushtun 38%  
Tajik 25%  
Hazara 19%  
Uzbek 6%  
Minor ethnic groups (Aimaks, Turkmen, Baloch, and others) 12 %

**Population Breakdown by Religion:**

Sunni Muslim 84%  
Shia Muslim 15%  
Other 1%

**Gross Domestic Product:** \$20 billion (1998 est.)

**GDP per capita:** \$800 (1998 est.)

**Natural Resources:** natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semiprecious stones

**Export Goods:** fruits and nuts, handwoven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semiprecious gems

Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 1999.

zation. As a result, he was anxious to avoid a similar uprising among Afghan guerrillas given sanctuary in Pakistan. Pakistan therefore sought to forestall the formation of a unified Afghan resistance movement that could operate independently of Islamabad. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Agency, which controlled the flow of supplies to Pakistani-based mujahideen, funneled aid to seven rival resistance groups in order to divide the mujahideen and keep them as dependent on Pakistan as possible.<sup>26</sup> Mohammed Yousef, former

Director of the ISI, revealed that the ISI channeled more than 70 percent of American and Saudi aid to extremist mujahideen groups.<sup>27</sup>

### MAJOR FACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Following the April 1992 collapse of Afghan President Najibullah's communist dictatorship, a loose coalition of resistance groups took power in Kabul. Fifty-one political and religious leaders formed an interim ruling council that selected as its leader Sibgatullah Mojadidi, the leader of the National Front for the Rescue of Afghanistan, one of the smallest mujahideen groups. Mojadidi was chosen as acting president in part because he did not pose a threat to the power of the stronger mujahideen organizations, who zealously guarded their independence.

Nevertheless, the broad mujahideen coalition rapidly dissolved into warring factions when the new government was opposed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The ruthless leader of one of the largest and most radical mujahideen groups, the Party of Islam, Hekmatyar was a virulently anti-Western revolutionary who was determined to seize absolute power. Arab Islamic radicals, Libya, and Pakistan gave him the lion's share of the foreign arms supplied to the mujahideen. Hekmatyar's forces besieged Kabul from 1992 to 1996, bombarding the city with artillery and rockets that killed thousands of civilians. Periodically he launched offensives against the city in league with a shifting constellation of other anti-government groups, such as the Unity Party, an Iranian-backed umbrella coalition of Shia Muslim groups.

The backbone of the provisional government was Burhannudin Rabbani's Islamic Society, a moderate Islamist party predominantly composed of ethnic Tajiks from northern Afghanistan. Rabbani replaced Mojadidi as president in June 1992 and refused to relinquish the rotating presidency

26. The seven groups were composed predominantly of Sunni Muslims, who make up roughly 85 percent of the Afghan population. Eight smaller Shia groups, based in central Afghanistan, were supported by Iran. They were less active in the war against the Soviets than the Pakistan-based mujahideen, but they have become active participants in the factional bloodletting that followed the defeat of the communists.

27. Peter Tomsen, "Beyond Marx and Mullahs," *The Washington Times*, May 23, 1999, p. B3.

in December 1994 as scheduled, because of escalating fighting.

Rabbani's chief lieutenant, Ahmad Shah Massoud, was the most effective mujahideen commander to emerge from the war against the Soviets, earning the *nom de guerre* "the lion of the Panjshir." Massoud engineered the final fall of the Najibullah regime in April 1992 by forging an alliance with disaffected Tajik and Uzbek army and militia commanders who defected in place, allowing Massoud to sweep into Kabul from his home base in the Panjshir Valley. Massoud, a pragmatic and popular Tajik political leader as well as an astute military strategist, became the Minister of Defense and the linchpin of the provisional government.

The ebb and flow of the factional fighting for control of Kabul produced a bewildering series of shifts in factional alliances. In general, Afghan politics from 1992 to 1996 were highly fluid, with mid-sized factions seeking to maximize their room to maneuver by forming a bloc against the strongest faction if it threatened their independence. In January 1994, after Massoud's forces blocked Hekmatyar's campaign to storm Kabul and whittled away his military forces, the Uzbek militia defected from the provisional government. The militia's leader, General Abdul Rashid Dostam, whose defection had helped seal the fate of the Najibullah regime, then fought Massoud's forces to a standstill for two years. The rise of the Taliban forced both to put aside their differences and join forces in the Northern Alliance in October 1996.

## THE RISE OF THE TALIBAN

The Taliban first emerged in early 1994 in the Pushtun tribal areas of southern Afghanistan. The founder of the movement, Mullah Mohammed Omar, reportedly recruited 30 students from his religious school in the Maiwand district to rescue three local girls who been kidnapped and raped by a gang of renegade mujahideen. The Taliban captured the offenders and hung them from the gun barrel of a tank.<sup>28</sup> This Islamic vigilantism was

widely applauded by Pushtun tribesmen in surrounding areas who were fed up with the anarchy and corruption that had descended on many regions as rival mujahideen groups battled for power. Mullah Omar's message was appealing; he preached that many mujahideen leaders were criminals whose lust for power and wealth contributed to the suffering of their people.

As the Taliban's ranks swelled with new recruits, Mullah Omar mobilized them to rout local warlords from neighboring villages. In the summer of 1994, local brigands stopped and seized a truck convoy owned by influential Pakistanis on the road north of Kandahar; these brigands had exacted tribute in the form of "tolls" for many years. Pakistan did not intervene openly but did mobilize several thousand Afghan Islamic students studying in Pakistan to march to the Kandahar area and free the convoy. Strengthened by the influx of young Afghans who had been studying in Pakistani *madrassas* (religious schools), Mullah Omar seized control of Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city, in November 1994.

The Taliban quickly added to the territory under its control. Fired with Islamic zeal, it rolled like a wave out of southern Afghanistan, with members advancing from town to town holding copies of the Koran over their heads. Armed opposition dissolved as rag-tag mujahideen splinter groups defected en masse to the surging movement. The Taliban's early successes cannot be attributed solely to military prowess. Instead they can be ascribed to its political timing, its ethnic appeals to Pushtuns who resented non-Pushtun domination of Kabul, and its opportunistic exploitation of the rising discontent with the bloody anarchy that had plagued Afghanistan since the 1992 collapse of the communist regime in Kabul.

The Taliban also benefited from extensive Pakistani logistical and military support. Pakistan's Interior Ministry mobilized thousands of young Pushtun students from religious schools and transported them to the front. These eager zealots, many of whom grew up in teeming refugee camps

28. John Burns and Steve Levine, "Roots of Repression: How Afghans' Stern Rulers Took Hold," *The New York Times*, December 31, 1996, p. A1.

in Pakistan, were indoctrinated in the strict fundamentalist Deobandi school of Islam. Many of their schools were little more than “jihad factories” that prepared impressionable young men for continuous warfare.<sup>29</sup> The Taliban’s revolutionary ardor and rural roots made them “an Afghan version of the Khmer Rouge.”<sup>30</sup>

While the overwhelmingly Pushtun Taliban rapidly consolidated control in Pushtun areas in southern and eastern Afghanistan, it suffered severe military setbacks in northern Afghanistan, which was dominated by Afghanistan’s Tajik and Uzbek minorities. A large Taliban force was annihilated after seizing the city of Mazhar Sharif in May 1998, after arrogantly trying to disarm local Uzbeks who betrayed General Dostam by defecting to the Taliban. Massoud’s forces repeatedly have inflicted sharp defeats on advancing Taliban columns that had more religious piety than military skills.

The Taliban’s failed offensive in the fall of 1999 has fueled speculation that it is declining in military strength. According to Peter Tomsen, a leading expert on Afghanistan, “Pushtun youth are no longer volunteering to join the Taliban, and Pushtun fighters are leaving the Taliban’s ranks, gravitating back to their southern tribal areas.”<sup>31</sup> Tomsen estimates that more than 10,000 Paki-

Table 1				B1383
<b>MAJOR FACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN</b>				
Party	Leader	Ideology, Ethnicity	Areas of Control	
Taliban	Mullah Omar	Ultra-orthodox Islamic, Pushtun	Virtually all of Afghanistan except the northeast	
Party of Islam	Gulbuddin Hikmatyar	Radical Islamic, Pushtun	Small areas east of Kabul	
Islamic Society	Burhannudin Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Massoud	Moderate Islamic, Tajik	Panjshir Valley, other areas north of Kabul	
National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan	Abdul Rashid Dostam	Socialist, Uzbek	Small parts of northern Afghanistan near the Uzbek border	
Hizb-e-Wahdat (Khalili)	Abd al-Karim Khalili	Shiite, Hazara	Parts of central Afghanistan	
Hizb-e-Wahdat (Akbari)	Akbari	Shiite, Hazara	Parts of central Afghanistan	

Source: Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns,” Congressional Research Service Report No. 98-106F, updated September 17, 1999, p. 4.

stanis and one brigade of Arab militants assist the Taliban.<sup>32</sup>

Julie Sirrs, an Afghanistan expert who recently visited northern Afghanistan, confirms that the Taliban appears to rely heavily on foreign support, given the large number of Taliban prisoners of war that Massoud has captured who were originally from Pakistan, China, and Yemen. Sirrs interviewed foreign POWs who said they joined the Taliban to kill infidels from America, Russia, and Iran; they were surprised to find out that they were fighting Afghans who were good Muslims.<sup>33</sup> The Taliban’s heavy dependence on foreigners, particularly Pakistanis, is resented by many Afghans, who distrust foreign influence and complain about a creeping Pakistani invasion.

**From Pax Talibana to Pox Talibana.** The Taliban’s peculiar combination of ultra-fundamentalist

29. See Jeffrey Goldberg, “Inside Jihad U: The Education of a Holy Warrior,” *New York Times Magazine*, June 25, 2000.

30. Adam Garfinkle, “Afghanstanding,” *Orbis*, Summer 1999, p. 417.

31. Peter Tomsen, “A Chance for Peace in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 2000, p. 180.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

33. Julie Sirrs, “Afghanistan: Update of the Situation in the Non-Taliban Areas,” Committee for a Free Afghanistan, May 8, 2000, p. 4.

### AFGHANISTAN CHRONOLOGY

**July 17, 1973:** King Zahir Shah ousted by his cousin, Mohammed Daoud, with communist support. Zahir now lives in Rome.

**April 27, 1978:** Daoud overthrown and killed in a bloody communist coup. Communist reign of terror begins.

**Summer 1978:** Organized resistance against communist rule begins.

**December 27, 1979:** Soviets invade with 85,000 troops to oust maverick communist dictator Hafizollah Amin and preserve communist rule. Soviets install Babrak Karmal as new communist leader.

**January 1980:** Carter Administration begins American aid to resistance.

**February 1981:** Reagan Administration expands aid, often prompted by U.S. Congress.

**1985–1986:** Soviet troop strength grows to 120,000. Low point of war for resistance.

**May 1986:** Moscow replaces Afghan communist leader Babrak Karmal with Najibullah, chief of secret police.

**April 14, 1988:** Geneva Accords signed, setting terms of Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

**February 15, 1989:** Deadline for Soviet withdrawal set by Geneva accords. Last Soviet regular forces withdraw; more than 300 Soviet military advisers and an unknown number of KGB personnel remain.

**February 23, 1989:** Afghan Interim Government (AIG) formed in Pakistan.

**April 1992:** Najibullah's communist regime collapses, and mujahideen capture Kabul.

**1992–Present:** Civil war fought between contending mujahideen factions. Taliban emerges in 1994 and grows rapidly to become strongest faction.

**September 27, 1996:** Taliban seizes Kabul.

**August 7, 1998:** Terrorists linked to Osama bin Laden bomb U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya.

**August 20, 1998:** United States launches cruise missile strikes against bin Laden's terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan and a pharmaceuticals plant in Khartoum, Sudan.

**July 6, 1999:** President Clinton imposes economic sanctions on Taliban regime.

**November 14, 1999:** United Nations Security Council imposes sanctions against Taliban regime.

ideology and rural Pushtun tribal values steadily grates on the sensitivities of many Afghans, particularly in urban areas. The Taliban's rigid and puritanical rule is alien to the tolerant brand of Islam practiced by most Afghans. Many Afghans regard the Taliban as a foreign movement influenced by radical Arabs and Pakistanis that has adopted the militant values of refugee camps rather than the traditional values of the Afghan village. Many Taliban members are Pushtun chauvinists who have

little sense of Afghanistan's past as a multi-ethnic society before the Soviet invasion. This has alienated non-Pushtun minorities.

Many Afghans and most foreigners have been put off by the Taliban's strict limitations on women's rights. The Taliban has banned women from most forms of work outside the home, severely restricted women's education, and imposed a strict Islamic dress code that requires

women to cloak themselves in full-length *burqas*, the traditional garb of Pushtun village women. Up to 250 women have been beaten in a single day in Kabul for violations of the dress code.<sup>34</sup> Men with clean-shaven faces or short beards have been thrown in jail until their beards grow to the requisite length.

Even rural Pushtuns are increasingly fed up with the arrogant bullying of the self-righteous Taliban. In early 2000, tensions over the supplanting of local officials by Taliban carpetbaggers from Kandahar led to disturbances in eastern Afghanistan near Jalalabad. Traditional tribal and regional cleavages are eroding Taliban unity, and discipline is breaking down. There are increasing reports of armed home invasions by Taliban renegades seeking to rob urban Afghans.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to a backlash against the Taliban's harsh rule, there is growing resentment of their administrative incompetence, as well as of the failure to provide public services, repair Afghanistan's infrastructure, and spur economic development. One farmer in southern Afghanistan lamented, "The Taliban brought us peace. But they have not brought us jobs. People want more now."<sup>36</sup>

**The Criminalized Economy.** According to U.S. government estimates, Afghanistan supplanted Burma as the world's largest producer of opium in 1999.<sup>37</sup> Although the production and consumption of intoxicants is forbidden in Islam, Taliban leaders allow the opium trade and rationalize it by noting that it is intended for export and consumption by *kafirs* (nonbelievers) in the West.

The Taliban controls 97 percent of the territory that produces illicit opium in Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup> It taxes opium dealers at a rate of up to 20 percent, earning at least \$20 million per year in taxes.<sup>39</sup> The United Nations estimates that Afghanistan produces about 50 percent of the world's heroin supply, including 80 percent of the heroin supplied to Europe.<sup>40</sup> Heroin addiction is rising rapidly among Afghanistan's neighbors: Iran is believed to have 3 million heroin addicts; Pakistan, which had virtually no heroin addicts in 1979, had an estimated 5 million in 1999.<sup>41</sup>

## THE GREAT GAME CONTINUES

The Taliban's rapid ascent to power alarms many of Afghanistan's neighbors, who fear that the Taliban's fierce Islamic zeal will have destabilizing spillover effects as it spreads across Afghanistan's porous borders. Afghanistan historically has been a strategic crossroads, controlling major north-south and east-west land routes. This pivotal geostrategic position has made the Texas-sized country a regional flashpoint for colliding power interests, earning it the sobriquet "cockpit of Asia." Afghanistan was a focal point of the "Great Game" that Czarist Russia and the British Empire played in the 19th century for control of Central and South Asia. More recently, it was a Cold War arena for the superpower rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Afghanistan remains an arena for the clashing interests of external powers. Iran, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have sought to bolster the

34. Burns and LeVine, "Roots of Repression: How Afghans' Stern Rulers Took Hold," p. A6.

35. Michael Rubin and Daniel Benjamin, "The Taliban and Terrorism: Report from Afghanistan," Washington Institute for Near East Policy *Special Policy Forum Report*, April 6, 2000, p. 1.

36. Michael Fathers, "Afghanistan: Frozen in Time," *Time* (Asian Edition), May 29, 2000, p. 36.

37. United States Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, 1999, at [http://www.state.gov/www/global/na...\\_law/1999\\_narc\\_report/swasi99.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/na..._law/1999_narc_report/swasi99.html).

38. Martha Brill Olcott and Natalia Udalova, "Drug Trafficking on the Great Silk Road: The Security Environment in Central Asia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Russia-Eurasia Program *Working Paper* No. 11, March 2000, p. 6.

39. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 118-119.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

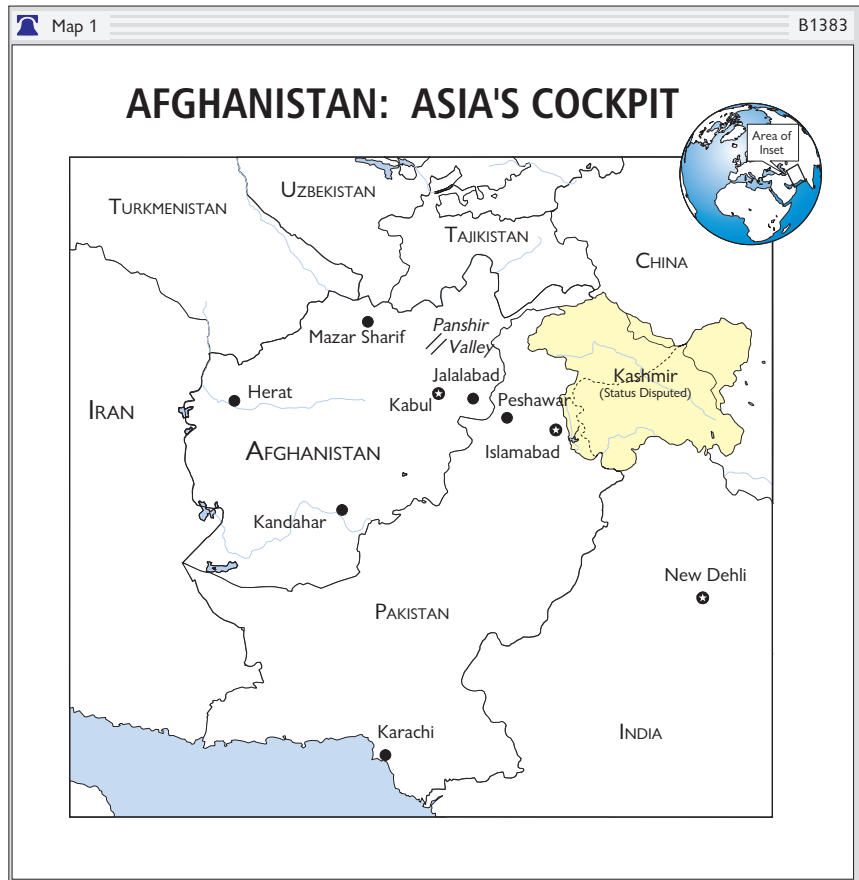
rickety anti-Taliban coalition inside Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan has thrown its weight behind the Taliban in an attempt to extend its own influence through Afghanistan to Central Asia and to open up potentially lucrative trade routes to the energy-rich Central Asian states. Saudi Arabia funded the Taliban in order to encourage the spread of fundamentalist Sunni Islam and contain its arch-rival Iran but then grew disenchanted with the Taliban when it failed to surrender Saudi exile Osama bin Laden.

The United States, one of the chief supporters of the Afghan anti-communist resistance, disengaged from Afghanistan following the disintegration of the communist threat. This disheartened moderate Afghans and helped to produce a power vacuum that the Taliban, backed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, was quick to fill.

As a result, the United States currently has little influence over a country that probably will continue to export Islamic revolution, terrorism, and drugs for years to come.

## FORGING A NEW U.S. POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan, once a decisive battleground of the Cold War, is now a crucible for forging Islamic revolution. The United States, which provided about \$3 billion in economic and covert military assistance to the Afghan resistance from 1980 to 1989,<sup>42</sup> squandered its influence and turned its back on Afghanistan in the 1990s.



Despite warnings that the United States retained a strategic interest in preventing the transformation of Afghanistan into a springboard for Islamic radicals, terrorism, and drug smuggling,<sup>43</sup> Washington's policy drifted after the Soviet withdrawal. As one American diplomat said, "The attitude is, we don't have a dog in this fight."<sup>44</sup> American indifference, however, allowed the extremist Taliban to emerge as the dominant force in Afghanistan, much to the detriment of U.S. national interests. In June 1996, the Clinton Administration embargoed arms transfers to all Afghan factions—a policy that favored the Taliban since it benefited from strong military support from Pakistan.

42. Ken Katzman, "Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns," Congressional Research Service Report No. 98-106F, updated September 17, 1999, p. 2.

43. See James Phillips, "Winning the Endgame in Afghanistan," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder Update* No. 181, May 18, 1992.

44. John Burns, "The West in Afghanistan: Before and After," *The New York Times*, February 18, 1996, p. E5.

Washington initially misjudged the depth of anti-Western hostility within the Taliban and perceived it as a possible ally against Iran. The State Department was overly optimistic that the Taliban's rule would bring stability to Afghanistan and underestimated the threat it posed to regional stability. It urged other nations to "engage" the Taliban in hopes of moderating its radical policies.

Washington's attitude toward the Taliban also was affected by hopes that a stabilized Afghanistan could provide a transit route for oil and gas produced in Central Asia. This would have contributed to the economic development of post-Soviet Central Asia. It also would have preempted a possible pipeline through Iran and reduced Russian leverage over Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, both of which were seeking outlets for their surplus energy resources. The Clinton Administration supported plans for two pipelines, projected to cost \$2 billion each, to transport oil and gas from Turkmenistan through western Afghanistan to Pakistan, where the oil would be routed to an export terminal in Karachi. These plans were suspended after the August 20, 1998, cruise missile attack on bin Laden's training bases.

For the past two years, the primary goal of Washington's Afghanistan policy has been to bring Osama bin Laden to justice. The United States has pressed the Taliban repeatedly to seize or expel him. The Taliban regime, however, maintains that bin Laden is an honored guest who is not guilty of terrorism and cannot be handed over to *kafirs*.

After repeated refusals by the Taliban to take action, President Clinton on July 6, 1999, declared a national emergency with respect to the Taliban. Because of the Taliban's hosting of bin Laden, Clinton imposed sanctions, including a ban on trade with Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan and a freezing of Taliban assets in the United States. On August 10, 1999, the Administration banned U.S. citizens from flying on Ariana Afghan Airlines. Washington prompted the United Nations Security Council to follow suit on November 14, 1999, freezing Taliban assets and embargoing its airline.

These sanctions are designed to induce the Taliban to abandon bin Laden, but among many Afghans, the renegade Saudi is popular because of his efforts during the jihad against the Soviets. Others support him as a symbol of defiance against the West, making American public denunciations of bin Laden somewhat self-defeating. Such denunciations rally support for bin Laden among anti-Western Afghans, contribute to his mystique throughout the Muslim world, and inspire donations from wealthy Gulf Arabs who want to share in bin Laden's self-created image as a champion of Islam. In the words of one Saudi dissident, "What Clinton is saying is there are two superpowers again: the United States and Osama bin Laden."<sup>45</sup>

It is highly unlikely that the Taliban will surrender bin Laden. The wealthy Saudi has supported the Taliban financially and is known to be close to Mullah Omar. Bin Laden reportedly built a house for Mullah Omar, who is rumored to have married one of bin Laden's five daughters.

The Saudi government, which was one of the Taliban's few foreign supporters, reportedly sought to reach a secret deal with the Taliban two months before the August 1998 embassy bombings. Prince Turki al-Faisal, the chief of Saudi Arabia's intelligence agency, met with Mullah Omar in June 1998 and believed that he had negotiated an agreement for bin Laden's surrender.<sup>46</sup> But after the embassy bombings, the Taliban denied that they had made such a promise and blamed the misunderstanding on translator problems. Saudi Arabia retaliated in September 1998 by recalling its Ambassador to Afghanistan and closing the Taliban embassy in Riyadh. Given that the Taliban rebuffed Saudi Arabia, formerly a supportive ally and one of only three countries that recognized the Taliban as Afghanistan's ruling government, it is unlikely to bow to American pressure.

Nor has Pakistan been willing to offer much help in capturing bin Laden. The Pakistanis reportedly dragged their feet on cooperating with a planned American cross-border operation to cap-

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45. Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan: Epicentre of Terror," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 11, 2000, p. 16.

46. William Rempel, "Saudi Tells of Deal to Arrest Terror Suspect," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1999, p. 1.

ture him.<sup>47</sup> Even if the United States gained access to excellent intelligence about bin Laden's movements, a commando raid to capture him would be extremely risky. Bin Laden often is accompanied by up to 100 heavily armed bodyguards, and the Taliban is known to have anti-aircraft missiles capable of shooting down helicopters. Meanwhile, bin Laden has gone into hiding and has become more security-conscious.

The United States, therefore, must hold the Taliban responsible for the terrorism of its protected guest. Washington has stressed this point repeatedly to the Taliban. After bin Laden's plots in Jordan and Canada were uncovered in December 1999, Michael Sheehan, the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, called the Taliban's foreign minister to warn him that the U.S. military could retaliate against the Taliban for any future bin Laden terrorism. Sheehan told him that bin Laden "is like a criminal who lives in your basement. It is no longer possible for you to act as if he's not your responsibility. He is your responsibility."<sup>48</sup>

**Steps to a New U.S. Policy.** The United States should follow through on the implications of its own rhetoric. It should not focus narrowly on bin Laden, but instead should focus on the radical Islamic trend he represents, which is actively supported and protected by the Taliban. Even if the United States apprehends bin Laden, the Taliban has given sanctuary to many other terrorists who pose threats to Americans. In the words of one Taliban intelligence officer, "What will the Americans do even if they find bin Laden? There are hundreds of bin Ladens just up the road."<sup>49</sup>

Rather than obsessively focusing on bin Laden, the United States should develop a regional strategy to build allies and contain the spread of radical Islamic terrorism. The sad truth is that the United States will face terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan as long as the Taliban dominates that country. Moreover, the Taliban presents even

greater threats to Afghanistan's neighbors in terms of terrorism, subversion, and drug smuggling. Therefore, the United States should work to end the Taliban's harsh rule over Afghanistan and replace it with a stable, inclusive government that will live in peace with its neighbors and respect the human rights of Afghan minorities and women.

To this end, the United States should:

- **Maximize international pressure on the Taliban to halt its support of terrorism.** The U.S. has little leverage with the Taliban. Therefore, Washington should work with a broad international coalition of states to ratchet up the political, economic, and diplomatic costs that the Taliban must pay to continue its support of terrorism. Because all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China—have seen their citizens attacked by one or more groups supported by the Taliban, the United Nations could be a useful forum for applying pressure. Washington should press the Security Council to follow up its November 1999 sanctions with a total trade and arms embargo against the Taliban. This would help create a *cordon sanitaire* around Afghanistan that would prevent arms and fuel from entering the country while making it more difficult to export drugs under the cover of other legal goods. Areas controlled by opposition forces would be exempt from the embargo.

Broad-based international sanctions also would impress upon the Afghan people the costs of the Taliban's misguided policies and make clear that most of the world, not just the United States, shuns and penalizes the Taliban. They would also escalate the pressure on Pakistan to end its support for the Taliban, or at least raise the cost of continuing that support.

47. Massimo Calabresi, "The Bin Laden Capture That Never Was," *Time*, March 20, 2000, p. 24.

48. King and Cloud, "On High Alert: Casting a Global Net, U.S. Security Forces Survive Terrorist Test," p. A6.

49. Ahmed Rashid, "Afghanistan: Heart of Darkness," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 5, 1999, p. 9.



- **Pressure Pakistan to end its support for the Taliban.** The United States historically has deferred to Pakistan, an important Cold War ally, when crafting its policy toward Afghanistan. This was sensible during the Soviet war in Afghanistan because Pakistan was an indispensable front-line ally that took considerable risks in opposing the Soviet invasion of its neighbor. Since the Soviet withdrawal, however, Pakistani and American interests have diverged significantly. Pakistan has sought to put a client regime in Kabul that will help it tilt the balance of power against India. It wants a friendly Afghan government that will allow it to use Afghan territory for strategic depth in the event of war with India. Furthermore, Pakistan favors a radical pan-Islamic regime in Kabul that will downplay Pushtun nationalism and help escalate the Muslim separatist insurgency in Kashmir—driving India out of Kashmir just as Pakistan helped to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup>

The United States must play hardball to convince Islamabad to drop its high-risk strategy of using the Taliban to weaken India and consolidate its influence in Afghanistan. Washington has little direct influence with Islamabad since eliminating its foreign aid program in 1990 because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. The U.S. can enhance its leverage by exploiting Pakistan's preoccupation with arch-rival India. Washington should make clear that if Pakistan continues to support terrorism in Afghanistan and Kashmir, the United States will tilt toward India, which is eager to expand military ties. This threat will have significant resonance among the Pakistani military elite, who are the backbone of the state.

The United States should also exploit Pakistan's disastrous economic situation and grow-

ing international isolation. General Pervez Musharraf's regime, which seized power in a bloodless military coup in October 1999, has few friends abroad. Yet Pakistan requires a huge influx of foreign loans to refinance its burdensome \$38 billion national debt. Absent generous foreign help, Pakistan is likely to default on existing loans early next year.<sup>51</sup> Washington should agree to use its influence with the International Monetary Fund to help Pakistan only if Islamabad ends its dangerous experiment with the Taliban and throws its support behind alternative Afghan leaders who do not pose a grave threat to their neighbors or their own people. If Islamabad continues its support of the Taliban, Washington should block further IMF loans to Pakistan.

Finally, Washington should make the Taliban less attractive to Pakistan as an ally. By helping to defuse tensions with India and by brokering a compromise settlement on the thorny Kashmir dispute, the United States would encourage Pakistan to see Afghanistan less in terms of strategic depth against India and more as a conduit for trade to Central Asia. American support for Afghan opposition groups could preclude a Taliban military victory and help convince Pakistan that the Taliban will become an increasing drain on Pakistan's limited economic resources, as well as a long-term foreign policy liability. Once Washington has firmly made clear that it is serious about ousting the Taliban, it can appeal to the Musharraf regime's own self-interest. It can point to the economic, strategic, and political benefits Pakistan stands to gain by helping to build a non-radical Afghanistan.

- **Provide military, diplomatic, and economic support to the Taliban opposition.** Throughout most of the 1990s, the United States abstained

50. Militant Muslims from Kashmir are trained in Afghan training camps, including bin Laden's camps. The Pakistanis also have recruited Afghans to fight in Kashmir. By one estimate, approximately 40 percent of the insurgents fighting in Kashmir now come from outside Kashmir, primarily from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, "As a Conflict Intensifies, It's India's Move," *The New York Times*, March 15, 2000, p. A29.

51. A moratorium on the repayment of \$3.6 billion in short-term debt to the Paris Club, and on Pakistan's commercial debt, expires on January 1, 2001. Ahmed Rashid, "Day of Reckoning," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 18, 2000, p. 52.

from supporting one Afghan faction over another and hoped for a power-sharing agreement that would end the fighting. It has become clear, however, that the Taliban's arrogant self-righteousness makes power sharing unrealistic. Moreover, as long as the Taliban dominates Afghanistan, there will be no peace inside the country or on its borders.

The United States should cooperate with Russia, Turkey, and Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbors in supporting the Northern Alliance, the chief obstacle to the Taliban's total victory. Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Tajik leader who is the Taliban's chief nemesis, is particularly deserving of support. But Washington should identify, approach, and support any Afghan group that opposes terrorism and cooperates to build a stable, tolerant Afghanistan that does not pose a threat to its neighbors. If possible, aid should be channeled through Massoud's effective organization to strengthen the coordination within the anti-Taliban alliance and prevent corruption.

Massoud's battle-hardened forces need anti-tank weapons, light artillery, mortars, and anti-aircraft guns. Transport also is scarce. The United States should provide trucks to help move men and supplies, as well as transport helicopters capable of operating over rugged mountain terrain. Financial aid is also needed to help Massoud's forces purchase local supplies in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The goal of such support should not be total victory over the Taliban forces, for victory by the Northern Alliance over the Taliban's much larger forces is not realistic in the foreseeable future. Instead the goal should be to wear down the Taliban, encourage defections, and set the stage for a negotiated settlement that most factions and their foreign sponsors will have an interest in sustaining.

- **Forge a regional coalition to support anti-Taliban opposition and an Afghan peace settlement.** The conflict in Afghanistan is a transnational one, not a purely internal conflict. Various ethnic and religious groups strad-

dle Afghanistan's borders. While Pakistan has tried to mobilize Afghanistan's Pushtuns, Uzbekistan has supported militias drawn from northern Afghanistan's more than 1 million Uzbeks. Iran has cobbled together a coalition of Hazaras in central Afghanistan who share its Shiite faith. Russia, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan all have funneled aid to various elements of the Northern Alliance to prevent the Taliban from consolidating its control over Afghanistan. The United States should cooperate with this incipient coalition and encourage China and Turkey, both of which are concerned about Taliban meddling in their internal affairs, to add their weight to this group. The short-term goal should be to strengthen resistance to the Taliban inside Afghanistan and encourage the emergence of a more moderate Pushtun leadership.

The long-term goal should be to prepare for an internal Afghan peace settlement that will protect the interests of all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups and ease the security concerns of Afghanistan's neighbors. Afghanistan should be reconstructed as a neutral buffer state similar to Austria. The United States, Russia, and Afghanistan's six neighbors should negotiate a treaty similar to the 1955 State Treaty that set the ground rules for Austrian neutrality. All of these countries, and the new Afghan government, should pledge not to use Afghan territory as a base for military attack, terrorism, or subversion against one another.

Pakistan, which retains hope that it can cement its hegemony over Afghanistan through the Taliban, is likely to be the immediate obstacle to such a settlement. The United States should work closely with Pakistani allies China and Saudi Arabia to convince Pakistan of the benefits of a compromise solution. It also should cooperate with the other members of the anti-Taliban coalition to support the Afghan opposition and convince Islamabad that a Taliban military victory is unlikely.

- **Build an internal Afghan consensus for peace.** A stable Afghan settlement requires cooperation from external powers, but those powers

cannot merely impose a settlement. A settlement must be based on genuine Afghan self-determination. The United States should promote an inclusive political dialogue between representatives of the warring Afghan factions and all ethnic, religious, and political groups. Afghans traditionally have convened a *loya jirga* (grand council) in times of crisis to forge a consensus on vital issues. Such a council could help determine the leadership and structure of the future Afghan government. King Zahir Shah, who has been in exile since a 1973 coup, could play a role in convening a *loya jirga* and in facilitating a national reconciliation. All factions, except the Taliban, have indicated they would consider participating in a *loya jirga*.

- **Designate the Taliban as a terrorist organization.** Because the United States does not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, it should not place Afghanistan on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. Washington instead should designate the Taliban as a terrorist organization under the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-132). This would empower U.S. financial institutions to freeze Taliban assets, block fund-raising activities inside the United States, and deny visas to Taliban officials. It also would set the stage for declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism if it stubbornly continues to support the Taliban.
- **Provide humanitarian aid.** Afghanistan has suffered one of the most severe and sustained humanitarian crises in world history. The Soviet war and subsequent civil war have left up to 2 million dead, 700,000 widows and orphans, and 2.6 million refugees still camped in Pakistan and Iran.<sup>52</sup> A recent visitor to northern Afghanistan reports that "A humanitarian disaster was narrowly averted in the non-Taliban areas due to a relatively mild winter."<sup>53</sup> This allowed convoys carrying food to traverse the high mountain passes that usually

are snowed in. The weather may not be so favorable next winter.

The United States should revive its cross-border aid program, in effect from 1985 to 1994, but base it in Tajikistan rather than Pakistan. The program should provide aid to non-Taliban areas to reduce the threat of Taliban interference and to increase the incentives of local leaders to defect from the Taliban. This would help ease the humanitarian crisis and rebuild Afghanistan's shattered civil society. The United States currently provides about \$80 million annually in humanitarian aid through the United Nations. Most of this multilateral aid should be shifted to the bilateral cross-border aid program to help counter the perception that the United States has abandoned the Afghan people.

- **Appoint a special envoy for Afghanistan.** The American embassy in Kabul has been closed since 1989 because of security considerations. This has forced the State Department to depend on the embassy in Islamabad, which often has reflected the Pakistani viewpoint on Afghan affairs. The lack of high-level attention paid to Afghanistan has contributed to policy drift and shifting priorities—containing the Soviet Union, containing Iran, building pipelines to Central Asia, women's rights, and capturing Osama bin Laden—that have hampered the effectiveness of U.S. policy.

The President should appoint a high-ranking special envoy, with direct access to the Secretary of State, to coordinate Afghanistan policy. This official, with the rank of Ambassador at Large, should interact with the whole spectrum of Afghan groups and formulate a coherent strategy for building a stable, tolerant, and peaceful Afghanistan. The envoy should coordinate the implementation of Afghanistan policy by the executive branch, help shape public opinion through the media,

52. Katzman, "Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns," p. 10.

53. Sirrs, "Afghanistan: Update of the Situation in the Non-Taliban Areas," p. 1.

and coordinate with foreign governments on Afghanistan-related issues.

- **Allow the Northern Alliance to reopen the Afghan embassy.** The operations of the Afghan embassy in Washington were suspended in August 1997 as a result of a power struggle within the embassy between supporters of the Rabbani government and the Taliban. Washington should recognize the Northern Alliance as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and should allow an ambassador from the Northern Alliance to reopen Afghanistan's embassy in Washington. This would facilitate cooperation with the opposition and symbolize a renewed U.S. commitment to address Afghan issues.
- **Revive bipartisan congressional activism on Afghanistan.** The U.S. Congress played a critical role in shaping U.S. policy toward Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. Congress often prompted the Reagan Administration to increase its efforts to support the Afghan resistance. It can play a similar role in prompting the Clinton Administration and future administrations to support the Afghan resistance to the Taliban. Congress can hold hearings to educate the American people on the situation in Afghanistan, examine the U.S. interests at stake there, and debate options for protecting those interests.

## CONCLUSION

Washington's neglect of Afghanistan's festering problems has allowed the Taliban to dominate Afghanistan and export terrorism, revolution, and opium. Through disengagement, America squandered its influence in the region and left itself with few options besides hurling cruise missiles at Osama bin Laden's easily replaceable training camps and bracing for further terrorist attacks.

This "chuck and duck" approach is doomed to failure. Even if the United States were fortunate enough to eliminate bin Laden by military means, other Islamic radicals will continue to threaten American security and American allies from Afghan bases as long as the Taliban prevails there.

Rather than focusing narrowly on bin Laden, the United States should focus on uprooting the Taliban regime that sustains him and others like him. Washington should develop a regional strategy to halt Pakistan's support of the Taliban, build up Afghan opposition to the Taliban, and encourage defections from its ranks. The ultimate U.S. goal should be a stable, tolerant, inclusive Afghan government that poses no threats to its neighbors or to its own ethnic and religious minorities. To accomplish this, Washington should cooperate with the broad anti-Taliban coalition that surrounds Afghanistan and help to forge a broad anti-Taliban coalition inside Afghanistan.

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