Prospects for the Afghan Interim Government

Zalmay Khalilzad
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PREFACE

This report assesses the prospects for the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) formed by the Pakistan-based mujahedin leaders in February 1989 after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. In particular, it seeks to focus on the following questions:

- Is the AIG an asset, a liability, or of no importance in the conflict between the mujahedin and the Kabul regime?
- What is the attitude of key commanders, the Afghan leaders based in Pakistan, and other important Afghan personalities living in exile toward the AIG, and how do they perceive its effect on the conduct of the war?
- What are the prospects for broadening the AIG? How likely is it that it can reach power-sharing arrangements with Iran-based or other Afghan Shiite groups?
- What are the alternatives proposed by the important Afghans—the AIG leaders, resistance commanders, and the former king—on how the AIG should be broadened or replaced?
- What are the implications if the AIG is not broadened?
- What are the alternatives to the current AIG?

This report provides some answers to these questions. The analysis is based on existing published literature and extensive interviews with some key Afghan participants. In October and November of 1989 the author spent more than two weeks in Pakistan to interview Pakistan-based Afghan resistance leaders and AIG officials. The individuals interviewed included: AIG President Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, Interior Minister Maulavi Yunis Khalis, Minister for National Security Haji Din Mohammad, Foreign Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Minister for Reconstruction Burhanuddin Rabbani, Minister of Communication Ahmad Shah, Chief Justice Ahmad Gailani, Minister of Finance Hedayat Amin-Arsala, Minister of Education Farouq Azam, Minister of Defense Muhammad Nabi, and Minister of Information Najibullah Lfraei.

The author also talked with several major commanders of the mujahedin, including Abdul Haq, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and Amin Wardak; representatives of Ahmad Shah Massoud; and a number of minor commanders from the Logar, Baghlan and Jalalabad areas. Also interviewed were a number of Pakistan-based Western and Afghan observers of the war in Afghanistan. Pakistan, of course, has
developed a close relationship with the Pakistan-based Afghan resistance leadership and plays a vital role in the political and military developments in Afghanistan. The Pakistani officials interviewed for this study included General (retired) Kallue, the head of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate, which is responsible for distributing foreign military assistance to the mujahedin; General Assad Durraní, head of Army Intelligence, and the person who took over as the new head of the Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate after Prime Minister Bhutto was dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan; Ashraf Qazi, Additional Secretary for Afghanistan in the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Iqbal Akhund, Prime Minister Bhutto's National Security Advisor; and Akbar Zeb, Director for Afghanistan in the Foreign Ministry.

In November 1989 and January 1990, the author interviewed Afghanistan's former king, Mohammad Zahir, in Rome, and former Prime Minister Mohammad Yousuf and former Deputy Prime Minister Samad Hamid in Germany.

The study was conducted in the International Security and Defense Policy program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It should be of interest to U.S. government officials and others concerned with the conflict in Afghanistan and its impact on Southwest Asia and Soviet Central Asia.
SUMMARY

With the departure of the Soviet troops—which was completed by February 15, 1989—there was widespread expectation that the Najib regime left behind in Kabul by the Soviets could collapse within twelve months. This expectation was based on several assumptions:

- The regime was fragile and likely to fragment without the protective shield of the Soviet forces.
- The Soviet withdrawal would change the balance of power decisively in favor of the mujahedin, resulting in increasing military successes against the regime.
- The Soviet Union would seek only a “decent interval” between its troop withdrawal and the overthrow of the Najib government, and therefore would not provide significant assistance for the regime to prevent its ultimate overthrow.

To facilitate political cohesion among the mujahedin and get them ready to take over the government in Kabul, the Pakistan-based Alliance of Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahedin convened a shura (council) on February 10, 1989, to form an interim government. The alliance itself had been formed in May 1985 and consisted of the seven mujahedin parties based in Pakistan. The parties were Hezbi-Islami (HIG), headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; Hezbi-Islami (HIK), headed by Maulavi Yunis Khalis; Jamiat-Islami, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani; Ittehad-Islami, led by Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf; Harakati-Inqilabi-Islami, headed by Muhammad Ahmed Nabi; Mahazi-Milli-Islami, headed by Ahmad Gaillani; and Jabhali-Nijati-Milli-Afghanistan, headed by Sebghatullah Mojaddedi.

Although the shura succeeded in establishing the Afghan Interim Government (AIG), its prospects are not good. It has failed to achieve its objective, and its relative importance, never great, has declined; in its present state it is most unlikely to dominate postwar Afghanistan. What ultimately will happen to the AIG is uncertain. It might fragment or be replaced. But more important than the AIG is the evolution of the military conflict in Afghanistan and how it is ultimately resolved. The outcome will determine not only the AIG’s fate but also the future of Afghanistan and its role in the region, which is in turn influenced by the policies of Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the Soviet Union.
When the AIG was formed, it was assumed that it would play a positive role in hastening the overthrow of the regime in Kabul. But that was not to be. Surprisingly, 18 months after the Soviet pullout the Najib regime is still in power, even though it was badly shaken by the attempted coup led by Defense Minister Shah Nawaz Tanai, and the situation in the country remains fluid. Instead of developing greater cohesion among the mujahedin, the AIG has intensified the political power struggle among noncommunist Afghans and therefore has had a negative effect on the struggle between the mujahedin and the regime. The shura that established it was not representative: of the five major noncommunist power centers—the Pakistan-based parties, the commanders, the supporters of the former king, traditional tribal leaders, and the Shiites—only the Pakistan-based parties had a major role in the shura and the resulting AIG.

Since its formation, the AIG has failed to develop a cohesive program with broad appeal. In addition:

- Continued major internal divisions and power struggles have resulted in unwillingness or inability of those in the AIG to cooperate with each other. Divisions within the AIG and its ineffectiveness are what the military commanders complain about most.
- The AIG has been unwilling or unable to broaden its base by including other nonregime Afghans—the Iran-based Shiite parties and the former king—in the AIG. Not surprisingly, those Afghans outside the AIG criticize it for not being representative enough. With the departure of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, AIG's base in effect has narrowed even further.
- To broaden the base of the AIG, its leaders would have to share power with others. A main reason for their unwillingness to do so was their belief that they did not need to do so, since the regime was likely to collapse quickly.
- AIG's lack of a coherent program with broad appeal has worked to Najib's advantage. The urban population and important ele-
• In terms of command and control of the war, the AIG has not had a significant role. Operationally, the war has been conducted (a) by mujahedin commanders inside Afghanistan acting on their own calculations, (b) by the parties, especially the well organized ones, and (c) by the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate, which "subcontracts" with Afghan rebel units to carry out a significant number of military operations.

Several other factors are important in explaining why the Najib regime has done better than expected during the past year:

• The regime was underestimated. It has performed much better in a defensive posture, adopted after the Soviet departure. Its important institutions—the state security police WAD (popularly known as KHAD), the armed forces, and the Interior Ministry Police, the Sarandoy, held together for much longer than anticipated. However, the March 1990 coup attempt by Defense Minister Tanai indicates the serious potential for fragmentation within the regime security apparatus.

• The Soviets provided the regime with much greater assistance than was expected. That assistance includes large numbers of SCUD-B missiles with a range of 300 kilometers carrying a 1,100-pound warhead. During the first year after the Soviet withdrawal, more than 1,200 SCUDs were fired by the regime against the mujahedin—more than in any other conflict since World War II. (In contrast, in the last four years of the Iran-Iraq war only 875 missiles were fired by both countries.)

• The mujahedin had hardware shortages during the first few months after the Soviet departure.

• The mujahedin have had a hard time adjusting to the change in the style of war. They have had to adopt a more offensive posture for gaining control of cities in a short time, requiring coordination and cooperation among various groups. Traditionally, in part because of the tribal nature of their society, Afghans have had a hard time cooperating with each other. This factor and the decentralized nature of Afghanistan was a better fit for guerrilla warfare, which the mujahedin conducted extremely well.

• In the period immediately after the Soviet withdrawal, the mujahedin made mistakes in their dealings with those who defected to them and in their treatment of regime officials in areas that came under their control. The killing of several defectors and regime officials in liberated areas discouraged
defection and encouraged those in the regime to stay together and fight on—in the hope of saving their lives.

- The lack of political and military success against the regime has resulted in frustration and increased infighting among the mujahedin.
- Many mujahedin commanders were apparently husbanding their resources for a power showdown after the fall of Kabul.
- The mujahedin resentment against foreign manipulation by outside powers—Pakistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Iran—has increased.

During the Soviet occupation, the mujahedin leaders and their outside supporters did not plan for the post-Soviet withdrawal military situation. For the first several years it was assumed that the Soviets would not leave Afghanistan, and therefore it made no sense to plan for their withdrawal. The Soviet agreement to withdraw came as a surprise to both the mujahedin leaders and Pakistan. Neither used the nine-month timetable for Soviet withdrawal to produce greater cooperation and coordination. Unprepared, they simply hoped that the regime would disintegrate quickly from within.

The shura that produced the AIG was unrepresentative. The groups excluded or underrepresented in the shura and the AIG have become more assertive as the AIG's difficulties have increased. The increased public hostility from commanders, the supporters of the former king, tribal leaders, and the minorities, especially Shiites, have undermined the AIG's legitimacy and have diminished its standing among Afghans.

At least in the near term, the most important group among the other power centers is the commanders—they are armed and they control territory and people inside Afghanistan. The attitude of those commanders towards the AIG is mixed. Nine of the top twenty-three major regional military commanders participated in the shura that formed the AIG. But because the shura was dominated by Pakistan-based party officials, it only increased the tensions between the two groups. The majority of commanders believe that their interests and values are not adequately represented in the AIG. Most have avoided public criticism of the AIG because they fear that doing so might jeopardize the external assistance channeled to them through Pakistan or the Pakistan-based leaders. But while muted in their public criticism, in effect they are taking matters into their own hands. Their actions and decisions are based on their own calculations, not on AIG preferences.

A majority of AIG leaders agree that the organization needs to be broadened—especially as the prospects for a quick military victory have
dimmed. But there are considerable differences on how this should be achieved, and they have been unable to reach a decision on the issue and implement it. The AIG is committed to convene another, more representative, shura. Recently they have announced plans to do so. There is widespread skepticism among Afghans that the AIG would convene a truly representative council, because such a council might well take much of the leadership role from its current holders. But if the AIG does not hold another shura, it might fragment further, be dissolved as a result of a political settlement, or become increasingly irrelevant.

The establishment of the AIG and the way it has evolved have been decisively influenced by regional rivalries involving Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The three have considerable interests at stake in Afghanistan’s political future and each has a certain influence over different Afghan groupings. Iran wants the Afghan Shiites in the AIG and has sought a disproportionately large role for them. The Saudis have opposed the extension of Iranian influence and favor the domination of Afghanistan by the groups in the current AIG, which they have supported generously and some of whose members have adopted the Saudi brand of Islam (Wahhabism). Pakistan is the most influential regional power in affecting developments among the mujahedin. It played a vital role in helping the mujahedin resist the Soviet occupation. In return, it wants a friendly government in Kabul responsive to Pakistani security interests. It has been suspicious of the former king and his supporters because of their past support for separatist Pashtuns in Pakistan. Islamabad has favored the domination of Afghanistan by the Islamic parties that it has supported in the past ten years.

It is unlikely that the AIG as currently configured will dominate the postwar government in Afghanistan. Lack of victory on the battlefield and continued internal divisions within the AIG have weakened its relative position. The AIG—and Afghanistan—faces three possible futures: First, the AIG shares power with other antiregime elements—the commanders, the supporters of the former king, and the Iran-based parties. This can happen through negotiations among these forces or through the convening of a representative council. But for any council convened by the AIG to be taken seriously by others, there must be prior agreement among the various forces on the process for convening it. This will not be easy, given that the issues involved center around power, and up to now the AIG has demonstrated that it is unwilling to share power with others. It will also require an understanding among external powers interested in the mujahedin. Should an agreement be reached among antiregime elements, it would dramatically weaken the relative position of the Najib regime. Such a development will
facilitate a “political settlement” and a transitional process dominated and managed by the antiregime forces that will exclude the current leaders in Kabul. This would be the best outcome for Afghanistan and the region. But it is highly unlikely.

Second, the regime disintegrates. This might happen if the Soviets decrease support for the regime or elements in the regime carry out a coup against Najib. As the Tanai coup attempt indicates, there are many tensions within the government. Should a coup take place, the new rulers are likely to reach out to some elements in the resistance. Such a development could facilitate a political settlement or spark even sharper divisions among the mujahedin.

Third, the AIG remains weak and ineffective. This will accelerate steps for a political settlement, including negative symmetry—a cut-off of military assistance to all Afghans. The Soviets are more interested in a political settlement than is the regime. A political settlement acceptable to both the regime and the mujahedin will be very difficult to achieve but is the most likely outcome of the current conflict in Afghanistan. Without a political settlement, or if one is tried and it fails, the war in Afghanistan will continue, perhaps for years. The commanders inside Afghanistan will continue to take matters into their own hands and further ignore the AIG. Many elements—from the regime and the mujahedin—are likely to make deals with each other and form new coalitions. Afghanistan will face uncertain prospects, and instability in Pakistan will increase.

A political settlement based on Afghan self-determination serves U.S. interests. The task for the United States will be to decide what final political settlement is both reasonable and possible. There are several scenarios for achieving such an objective. The most desirable option would be a transfer of power from Najib and the AIG to a neutral interim government, leading to elections for a new Afghan-wide assembly that can decide on a new political system for Afghanistan. Failure of a political settlement—before or after an agreement—cannot be ruled out. But the possibility of failure should not deter the United States from working to seek a reasonable outcome for the long war in Afghanistan—a war in which it played a vital role.
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I. INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE AFGHAN INTERIM GOVERNMENT

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, it was generally assumed that they would prevail. The only question was whether the Soviet push was limited to Afghanistan or part of a larger regional design. This assumption—which was widespread in both academic and official circles—was not unreasonable at the time. The balance of power seemed to be overwhelmingly in Moscow's favor. Certainly no one believed that Moscow would ever accept defeat on its own border, especially at a time when the USSR was perceived to be "on a roll." The model most often cited in discussing the ultimate outcome for the Afghans was the defeat of the resistance in the Islamic Republics of Soviet Central Asia.

The early assumptions about the outcome of the conflict in Afghanistan affected the attitudes and decisions of the Afghan mujahedin leaders and their outside supporters. The Afghan resistance had begun shortly after the two factions of the pro-Soviet Afghan Communist Party carried out a military coup and took over the government in 1978. The resistance was decentralized and spontaneous. After the Soviet invasion the resistance grew—and international support for the mujahedin increased dramatically. Even before the Soviet invasion several Afghans—some leading organized groups and others relying on their position in traditional Afghan society—were opening offices in Pakistan. They wanted to speak on behalf of the resistance forces inside the country, generate outside support for them, and use that help to expand their support at home.

Concerned that the number of groups was getting too large, Pakistan "recognized" the seven largest ones and required the others to close up shop or join the recognized groups. Pakistan feared both loss of control over the mujahedin and the development of the so-called "PLO syndrome"—a state within a state. Even though it acted as something of a consolidating force by taking steps to reduce the number of parties, Pakistan did not want a strong and united Afghan resistance leadership on its territory. It worried that the rest of the world would seek to deal directly with the Afghans and thereby diminish its own role as the channel for distributing assistance. Also, believing that the Soviets were unlikely to leave Afghanistan, Pakistan was determined to retain flexibility on the terms on which to end its involvement in the conflict. A strong and united mujahedin leadership could have reduced that flexibility.
But even without Pakistani concerns, divisions among the Afghans would have made it very difficult for a single united leadership to emerge. The seven parties differed in their orientation, base of support, and capabilities, and they competed for resources and power. The war of resistance against the Soviets was thus crossed by internal conflicts. Pakistan sustained all seven parties, but did so unequally, based on its assessment of each one's relative role in the struggle inside Afghanistan.

In 1985, with U.S., Saudi, and Pakistani encouragement, the seven parties formed an alliance called the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahedin, with a Supreme Council composed of the seven leaders. The alliance had a "spokesman," a position that rotated every three months among the seven leaders. It also had a 49-member shura (council) composed of seven delegates from each party, a joint military committee, and six nonmilitary bodies. The principal purpose of the alliance was to increase the international political profile of the resistance. Another purpose of the alliance was to foster greater political and military cooperation among the parties. But although the military committee was active, it had no single overall military command or joint planning center. Much of the fighting in Afghanistan was still carried out independently by individual commanders or parties. Moreover, after the establishment of the alliance—perhaps because of a fear of loss of control—Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) began subcontracting directly with mujahedin commanders for specific military operations, allowing Pakistan to increase its direct control over military operations. The alliance also took no responsibility for dividing arms among the parties. This control remained with ISI.

The seven-party alliance made some small progress on the political front. In October 1987, Maulavi Yunis Khalis was selected for an 18-month term as the spokesman of the alliance, replacing the three-month rotation system. But because of disagreements with Pakistan on the terms for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, he was forced to resign after only five months. The three-month rotation system was restored. The alliance also established a secretariat and education, health, and transportation committees, and began operating modest joint programs. These efforts received the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, which was authorized by the U.S. Congress to provide humanitarian assistance to war-affected Afghans. At the international level, too, the alliance had some limited political

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success. It sent several delegations to various conferences. It wanted to challenge the Najib regime at the UN and other international forums and to occupy Afghanistan's seat in these organizations, but did not succeed. Still, the formation of the alliance did increase the international political standing of the mujahedin, and its leaders were received by several heads of state.

As the Soviet withdrawal began, the seven leaders agreed to form an interim government headed by Ahmad Shah—deputy leader of the Ittihadi-Islami party led by Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf—in June 1988. The alliance also declared that it would hold elections within 90 days in liberated areas of Afghanistan and in the refugee camps. The elections were not held, and Ahmad Shah's government remained ineffective and unrecognized by any of the mujahedin's supporters.

Before the completion of the Soviet withdrawal, the Soviets, the UN, and the Pakistani Foreign Ministry all expressed great interest in finding a political settlement to the government question in Afghanistan. The Najib regime proposed the formation of a "government of national reconciliation." It was generally assumed that neither the Ahmad Shah or Najib governments had the necessary credibility to bring about a political settlement. The Najib government was tainted because of its cooperation with the Soviet occupation, and the Ahmad Shah group had not been the product of a broad-based process. To place the mujahedin in a better position to dominate a possible future political settlement, and to buy time for them to gain increased military successes, the alliance (with encouragement from the United States and Pakistan) began to discuss convening a democratically elected shura.

At first, the alliance leaders indicated a willingness to hold elections in the refugee camps and in liberated areas of Afghanistan to elect delegates to the shura. But ultimately a shura was convened with members selected by the seven leaders. That February 1989 shura rejected the Ahmad Shah government and elected the current AIG.

This study discusses the prospects for the AIG, its evolution since its formation, its impact on the military struggle in Afghanistan, and its difficulties in broadening itself. It also deals with the troublesome issue of relations between the Afghanistan-based commanders—who control people and territory—and the political leaders based in Pakistan. It explores the role of Pakistan in the changing Afghan situation. Prospects for the current AIG plans to hold another shura—this time elected—are also discussed. Soviet policy and dilemmas are analyzed—especially in the light of increased instability in Soviet Central Asia. The report concludes with a look at the factors that will continue to affect events in Afghanistan and draws some conclusions about the likely ultimate outcome there.
II. THE FORMATION OF THE AIG

THE FEBRUARY 1989 SHURA IN RAWALPINDI

The February 10th shura that convened near Rawalpindi in Pakistan, with the goal of establishing a political structure that could assume power in Kabul, took place against the backdrop of the last days of the Soviet withdrawal (which was completed on February 15th) and the expectation that the Najib regime might well collapse quickly. Not surprisingly, the mood among the mujahedin leaders was triumphant. The belief that the Najib government would soon fall had a number of implications for the environment in which the shura was convened.

- It affected the timing: the shura was to take place as soon as possible—and before the Soviet troop departure was completed.
- It reduced the incentive of the Pakistan-based leaders to share power and instead focused their attention on how they could consolidate their position at the expense of others. This limited the role of the commanders, who the leaders feared might become more powerful in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal. And it left no role at all for the Shiites and only a small one for the supporters of Afghanistan’s former king and traditional tribal leaders.
- It intensified competition among regional rivals—Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—for influence in post-Soviet Afghanistan.
- It meant that the members of the shura were selected by the leaders instead of elected by the refugees and Afghans living in the liberated areas, which were dominated by the commanders. This was the key to the domination of the shura by the Pakistan-based leaders.

These factors already existed, but the assumption of a likely quick overthrow of the Najib government magnified them. For example, on the issue of sharing power, the seven leaders had been talking among themselves and to the other centers of power—the Shiite parties based in Iran, the commanders, the supporters of the former king, and even “good Muslims” from Kabul—when a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan began to be considered more seriously. During this period, the mujahedin leaders were also considering alternatives for a transitional
regime as a possible basis for an agreement on a government in Kabul that, together with Soviet withdrawal, could form the two tracks of a comprehensive Afghan settlement.

The Soviets, too, were linking their withdrawal to the resolution of the government issue. As early as September 1987, during a meeting in Washington, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze informed his U.S. counterpart that the Soviets had decided to leave Afghanistan. However, Shevardnadze wanted a cease-fire and discussions among Afghans leading to a coalition government that included the resistance and the Najib regime. The United States welcomed the Soviet decision to withdraw and offered to help implement the decision. But U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz rejected the linkage of withdrawal to the resolution of the government issue. Washington argued that it would be desirable to have an interim government acceptable to the Afghans, noting that the present regime was not. It suggested that a neutral interim government and neutrality for Afghanistan might be possible and should be explored but maintained that the Soviet withdrawal was the most important step. Shevardnadze insisted on the Najib regime's participation in the interim government, saying he could not presume to tell the present government to disappear. Many in Washington took seriously the Soviet statement of intent to withdraw. Others interpreted the linkage of withdrawal to the government issue as indicating (a) a lack of Soviet seriousness on withdrawal, (b) a desire to divert international attention away from the withdrawal issue and focus it instead on the nature of a postwithdrawal government based on an unworkable formula, or (c) an effort to use the Soviet presence to gain a greater role for the communists than would be the case after the Soviets were gone. But while rejecting a formal linkage between withdrawal and the government issue, the United States was not opposed to efforts exploring possible arrangements for a new government. Soviet insistence on Najib regime participation and the recognition that the mujahedin would not go along with this blocked any progress. Washington also believed that an agreement on withdrawal would weaken the relative position of the regime in any serious discussions of the government issue, and that the Soviets might change their insistence on Najib's inclusion in a settlement of the government issue.

In December 1977, without changing their stand on the desirability of regime participation, the Soviets nevertheless agreed to unlink their withdrawal from the government issue. That agreement removed all doubts about the Soviet intention to withdraw from Afghanistan. It encouraged many to believe that Moscow would withdraw its troops regardless of what happened in Afghanistan, and to some it implied
Soviet acceptance of the overthrow of the existing government. Soviet acquiescence to “positive symmetry”—that if they provided arms to Najib after their withdrawal had begun the United States would have the right to provide arms to the mujahedin—was taken as another indication of Soviet acceptance of the fall of Kabul. The agreement on positive symmetry was a last-minute modification in the original accords, which would in effect have required an end to outside support for the mujahedin on the day Soviet withdrawal began.\footnote{Moscow believed that the agreement on positive symmetry did not cover Pakistan, which was a signatory to the accords. When Pakistan continued to provide assistance to the mujahedin after the Soviet withdrawal began, Moscow accused it of violating the accords. On U.S. support of the mujahedin, however, Moscow took a different stand. Although on occasion the Soviets accused the United States of violating the accords, they accepted that as the two guarantors of the agreement, the United States and the Soviet Union had equal rights and obligations, i.e., that Washington had the right to provide arms to the mujahedin if Moscow provided them to Najib.}

The perception that Moscow was abandoning the regime to its inevitable downfall encouraged the Pakistan-based alliance to resist sharing power with others. For example, some of those leaders, especially Maulavi Yunis Khalis, had always been against any inclusion of Shiite groups. Two other leaders, Sayyaf and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, were sympathetic to this point of view. Nevertheless, the Pakistan-based alliance decided to seek an agreement with the Iran-based Shiites for participation in the shura. Two factors brought about this decision. The first was the internal politics of the alliance. Ideologically, three of the seven Pakistan parties (headed by Gailani, Mojaddedi, and Nabi) were traditionalists who wanted to reconstitute Afghanistan’s precommunist social and political institutions. The other four have generally been categorized as fundamentalists, seeking to establish a new Islamic Republic based on the application of Shari’a—Islamic law—and weakening of traditional institutions. The traditionalists were therefore a minority in the alliance and believed that including the Shiite parties in the shura would swing the balance of power to their advantage. One fundamentalist leader, Rabbani, also favored the participation of the Iran-based parties. His reasons were ethnic: of the seven Pakistan-based leaders, he was the only Persian-speaking Tajik, and his relations with Iran had been quite good. He believed that the inclusion of the Iran-based parties would improve his relative position. The second factor that drove discussions to bring the Iran-based groups to the shura was pragmatism. The three fundamentalist parties unsympathetic to the inclusion of the Shiites went along because they believed that their inclusion was necessary to win the war against Najib.
The Pakistan-based alliance and the Iran-based groups met a number of times in late 1988 and early 1989. Mojaddedi, the spokesman of the Pakistan-based alliance, visited Iran in January 1989 and reached an agreement that gave the Shiite groups 120 delegates (equal to two Pakistan-based parties) to the shura. This agreement, if implemented, would have tilted the balance of power against the fundamentalists. But it was not implemented, because the Pakistan-based alliance rejected it. One major reason for this was that it would have given more than 22 percent of the shura membership to the Iran-based Shiite parties. Estimates of the number of Shiites in Afghanistan run from 10 to 15 percent of the population. The fundamentalists who were reluctant to bring the Iran-based parties into the shura to begin with attacked the agreement as “unfair over-representation.” They were supported in this by some of the traditionalist parties, who suspected that Mojaddedi might have reached an understanding with the Iranian parties that in exchange for their “over-representation” they would support him in the shura.

Regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia also played a key part in the rejection of the Mojaddedi agreement. Each country was suspicious of the other’s role in the region and in Afghanistan, and each was anxious to limit the other’s influence in post-Soviet Afghanistan. This rivalry produced a paradox in the relations between the Afghan mujahedin parties based in Iran and Pakistan. Although the Iran-based alliance was dominated by Shiite fundamentalist parties, it opposed the majority of the Pakistan-based fundamentalists because of their close ties with Iran’s rival Saudi Arabia. According to several accounts, the Saudis believed that the Mojaddedi agreement gave too much to Iran and used their influence with the other Pakistan-based parties to oppose it. Iran which had brokered the Mojaddedi agreement, wanted it honored. But in the end the Saudi view prevailed. This was not a surprising development, given that Saudi Arabia continued to be the key financial supporter of the Pakistan-based parties. This factor influenced the position of the Pakistani alliance, which in effect came down on the side of Saudi Arabia. Also, the assumption that the Najib regime was brittle and likely to collapse quickly after Soviet abandonment played an important role in keeping the Shiites out. It convinced the Pakistan-based parties that they did not need the support of the Iran-based groups to win the war against Najib. This belief, along with Saudi pressure to prevent or minimize Shiite participation and the Iranian demand for “over-representation,”

convinced enough of the traditionalists to tip the balance against the Mojaddedi agreement.

The assumption of a quick regime collapse also affected the participation of the commanders in the shura. It changed the method for choosing delegates to the shura—from election to selection by the leaders. In any of the various election schemes under consideration, the commanders would have had a substantial if not dominant voice in the shura, because they control people and territory inside the country. Several of the parties had been against elections in the refugee camps and liberated areas inside the country. They feared Pakistani manipulation of elections in the refugee camps in favor of Hekmatyar—who they believed had closer ties to Pakistan—and they also feared the domination by commanders in the liberated areas. The widespread belief about quick regime collapse undermined the prospects for elections. The shura had to be held quickly and elections would have taken much longer than if the leaders selected delegates to the shura. This change worked to the disadvantage of the commanders. Even those commanders who came to the shura were there only because it was the decision of the party leaders.

The former king, Zahir Shah, (who had reigned 1933–1973) and his supporters were also left out of the shura. The alliance had been split on the issue of a possible role for Zahir even before the Soviet withdrawal had begun. The four fundamentalist leaders—Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, Khalis, and Rabbani—were opposed to any role for him in the shura or Afghanistan’s political future. They charged him with facilitating the communist penetration of Afghanistan during his reign, and also with hostility to the Islamic parties and indifference to the suffering of the Afghan people during the Soviet occupation, which he spent in exile in Rome. On the other hand, the three traditionalists—Gailani, Mojaddedi, and Nabi—favored a role for the former king. They had supported his earlier proposal for a National Front and argued now that he had substantial support among the people and that his reign had been substantially better compared to what followed. They blamed Pakistan’s refusal to grant visas to him and his immediate relatives for the lack of his direct participation in the struggle against the Soviets. They cited Zahir’s interviews, statements, and proposal for a National Front in 1983 as indicators of his desire to play a positive role. Elections might well have shed light on the extent of popular support for the king.

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4 Interviews in Pakistan.
In 1987, among the options considered by the alliance was the possibility of Zahir's participating in a *jirgah* (elected council) or heading a neutral technocrat-dominated transitional government that would take over from Najib and prepare for elections. Even Pakistan, which had been suspicious of Zahir because Afghanistan during his reign had not always pursued friendly relations, was looking more favorably to a role for him. But several factors intervened to turn this promising situation against the former king. First, the fundamentalists hardened in their opposition, once they decided that the Soviets would leave without the resolution of the government issue and that Najib was likely to fall shortly thereafter. Second, fearing the collapse of the regime and hoping to retain influence with other forces, the Indian foreign minister paid a visit to Zahir in Rome. This event was most damaging to Pakistan's attitude toward the former king, since it feared that India might seek to gain influence in Afghanistan through him after the Soviet departure. The chill in the Pakistani attitude encouraged the fundamentalists to stand firm against a role for the former king in the *shura*. Third, Pakistan's ambitions grew. Like many others, Islamabad initially believed that the Soviets were unlikely to leave Afghanistan. Later (1983–1986) it expressed a willingness to accept—at least in theory—a communist government in Kabul in exchange for Soviet withdrawal. This was indicated in its acceptance of the framework of Afghan accords being negotiated by the UN. In 1987 and before the signing of the Geneva Accords on Afghanistan early in 1988, Pakistan began putting forward ideas on power sharing between the Kabul government, the *mujahedin*, and the émigré supporters of the former king on an equal thirds basis. After the Soviet withdrawal started, Islamabad began envisaging seriously the possibility that it might fill the vacuum created in Afghanistan after the Soviet departure. This was to be achieved through the establishment of a government closely aligned with Pakistan. This development influenced the composition of the *shura* and the AIG.

In the end, the *shura* was convened without the presence of any delegates from the Iran-based parties. Although the seven leaders had agreed to assign 14 seats to “good Muslims” from Kabul, there was no agreement on who the 14 would be and therefore not one was selected. Former king Zahir was not invited, and he was not included in the discussions on how to choose the delegates. However, some of his prominent supporters with good ties to the resistance leaders, such as Samad Hamid and Abdul Sattar Sirat, were included in the *shura*. A number of commanders were also given seats. Below we look more closely at the final distribution of *shura* delegates.
THE COMPOSITION OF THE SHURA

The shura was composed of some 420 members. Each of the seven Pakistan-based leaders nominated 60 members, and a joint screening committee had to certify that the nominees were “good Muslims.” Each of the seven parties was to distribute its 60 delegates among commanders, party officials, and refugees. In terms of military power, the commanders were very important inside Afghanistan, but they did not dominate the shura. That role was taken by the Pakistani-based party leaders and officials, the largest group. Holding fewer than 50 of the 420 seats, commanders constituted less than 12 percent of the delegates. Of the top 23 regional commanders, 9 were present at the shura (see Table 1). The participation of 9 major commanders and more than 40 minor ones was significant. But the number was still small compared to the total number of commanders (estimated at more than 800) and given their actual power in the country. The commanders who participated were mostly from areas close to the Pakistani border, resulting in an overrepresentation of the Pashtuns, the country’s largest ethnic group. Those further away, such as Massoud of Panjsher or Ismail Khan of Herat, were not consulted on the delegate selection for the shura and did not participate. According to Massoud, he received his invitation to the shura on the 9th of February, the day before it convened; given the distance between Panjsher and Rawalpindi and the available means of transportation, it would have taken him about a week to get there. Therefore, he did not regard the invitation as serious. But surprisingly, of the major commanders who came to the shura, the largest number—three—came from the Jamiat party, although its superstars Massoud and Ismail Khan were not there. Jamiat was followed by Hezbi-Islami Khalis, which had two of its major commanders in the shura. One of those, Abdul Haq, left early, unhappy about the way it was being conducted, but the other, Haqqani, played a key role in developing the procedure used to choose the AIG. There were no major commanders from NIFA or Ittihadi-Islami, but the other three major parties had one each. In the case of ANLF, its major commander present in the shura, Mohammad Bilal, subsequently defected to Hekmatyar’s Hezbi-Islami.

Clearly, the commanders did better than the Shiites and the Iran-based parties, which were not represented at all. It is unclear, however, how the various non-Shiite Afghan ethnic and tribal groups fared. The available lists of participants do not provide ethnic and tribal affiliations of the delegates. The dominant ideology of the Afghan opposition has been Islam and Afghan nationalism. All the seven Pakistan-
Table 1

MAJOR REGIONAL COMMANDERS AND THE SHURA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party Affiliation*</th>
<th>Did Not Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faqir Ahmad</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Anwar</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozamel Anvari</td>
<td>HIA</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Arif Khan</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Bilal</td>
<td>ANLF (now HIG)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manur Ghayur</td>
<td>HIG</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Hai</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Hasq</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalaluddin Haqqani</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ismail Khan</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haji Abdul Latif</td>
<td>NIFA (now dead)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullah Mallang</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Manaf</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Shah Massoud</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Karim</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullah Naqib</td>
<td>JI</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Nasim Akhundzada</td>
<td>HII (killed)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atta Mohammad</td>
<td>HIG</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmud Shirzaman</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amin Wardak</td>
<td>HIK</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Zarin Izmaei</td>
<td>ANLF</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nek Mohammad</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haji Gul</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Key to party names (leader in parentheses)

Fundamentalists
- HIG = Hezbi-Islami (Hekmatyar)
- HIK = Hezbi-Islami (Khalis)
- JI = Jamaati-Islami (Rabbani)
- II = Ittehadi-Islami (Sayyaf)

Traditionalists
- ANLF = Jabhant-Nijati-Milli-Afghanistan (Mojaddedi)
- HII = Harakati-Inqilabi-Islami (Nabi)
- NIFA = Mahadi-Milli-Islami (Gailani)

Other
- HIA = Harakati-Islami (Mohseni)
based leaders reject tribal and ethnic affiliations as the bases for their ideology, membership, and decisionmaking. Each of the seven parties has members from various ethnic groups. But some parties are more ethnic than others in orientation and base of support.\(^5\)

Based on secondary sources, it appears that the minorities other than Shites also did not do well. The same is true for traditional Pashtun tribal leaders, especially those from the Durrani tribal federation. These considerations have had a real impact on the politics of the mujahedin.\(^6\) For example, only one party—Rabbani’s Jamaati-Islami—has its main supporters among the non-Pashtuns. Rabbani himself is a Tajik—the second-largest Afghan ethnic group and some 30 percent of the population. Yet Rabbani’s party constituted only one-seventh of the shura. Pashtuns constitute some 50 percent of the Afghan population and are divided into several tribes.\(^7\) Traditionally, the tribal leaders were politically dominant in their areas. During the war of resistance, however, the traditional tribal leaders lost relative power to commanders. Of the various Pashtun tribes, the Ghilzais—rivals of the Durransis, to which the former king and much of the precommunist Afghan elite belonged—dominated the Pakistan-based leadership. Of the remaining six Pakistan-based leaders, three are Ghilzai Pashtuns (Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, and Khalis), two are traditional religious leaders and claim Arab ancestry (Gailani and Mojaddedi), and one, Nabi, is a Pashtun but is neither Ghilzai nor Durrani. Durrani leaders resent their exclusion from the leadership and support the former king (also a Durrani) for a leading role in resolving the Afghan conflict. They were also angered by their exclusion from the shura. It is likely that the Durransis were underrepresented while the Ghilzais were overrepresented.\(^8\)

\(^5\) Similar tribal and ethnic tensions have been a major source of conflict within the Najib regime. For example, the Khalq faction of the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) is dominated by rural Pashtuns, especially Ghilzais. The Perchani faction, on the other hand, consists of urban Pashtuns, Durransis, and Tajiks. See Anthony Arnold, Afghanistan’s Two Party Communism: Percham and Khalq, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1983.

\(^6\)Olivier Roy, “Afghanistan: Back to Tribalism or on to Lebanon?” Third World Quarterly, October 1989, pp. 70–82.


Although the *shura* was dominated by the seven parties, some of the leaders were unhappy that all the parties had the same number of delegates. The seven parties are not equally strong in military terms (see Table 2). The numbers in the table are not universally accepted. Some argue that Rabbani’s Jamiat is larger than Hekmatyar’s Hezb. Moreover, those two leaders have argued that they were underrepresented compared to the smaller parties.

The *shura* was more a joint convention of the seven parties than a representative council of Afghanistan. Despite significant disagreements, all the parties had a common interest: to ensure a role for themselves in post-Soviet Afghanistan. But they also had some conflict of interest: each wanted to do better than the others. They did not believe they needed to involve other forces in order to win the war against the regime in Kabul.

### Table 2

THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE *MUJAHEDIN* PARTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party (Leader)</th>
<th>Number of <em>Mujahedin</em> (fighting strength)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hezbi-Islami (Hekmatyar)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiati-Islami (Rabbani)</td>
<td>50,000–60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezbi-Islami (Khalis)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ittehadi-Islami (Sayyaf)</td>
<td>40,000–50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harakati-Inqilabi-Islami (Nabi)</td>
<td>30,000–40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahazi-Milli-Islami (Gailani)</td>
<td>30,000–40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabhaz-Nijati-Milli-Afghanistan (Mojaddedi)</td>
<td>20,000–30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. A REBELLION AT THE SHURA

Although the shura membership was selected by the seven leaders, who also chose its officers (Nabi as the chairman and Sayyaf as the spokesman) and served jointly as a type of presidium, it acted remarkably independently. The majority of the leaders—the four fundamentalists—wanted the shura to confirm and approve Ahmad Shah’s government, which had been formed the year before, and to designate the Pakistan-based seven-party alliance as Afghanistan’s Leadership Council. This course of action was supported by the Pakistani ISI, which was responsible for security at the shura, where, according to several participants, its officers mingled freely among the delegates. It was also supported by Arab “observers” present at the shura who did not represent any Arab government but were associated with Islamic movements in the Arab world, especially in Saudi Arabia.1 But the shura refused to go along. As the majority of the leaders persisted, the delegates became more adamant. On the third day of the shura, the chairman lost control of the meeting; some delegates left the hall, others announced that they would not return. There was a great deal of confusion: The official spokesman announced (incorrectly) that the shura had approved both a president and a prime minister for the Afghan interim government. Others declared that the shura had been dissolved. Finally, the shura was suspended.

The rejection of the Ahmad Shah government was based on several considerations, but the most important was the rising Afghan nationalism. Ahmad Shah was perceived by many delegates to be under the influence of Wahhabi Arabs from Saudi Arabia, and thus unacceptable to lead Afghanistan’s interim government. The perception was not unreasonable: Ahmad Shah was Sayyaf’s deputy; Sayyaf, who spoke fluent Arabic, had developed close ties with Saudi government and religious groups. Among many Afghans, he and his party were regarded as having adopted Saudi Wahhabism. (Although the Wahhabis have a separate party of their own in Afghanistan, led by Jamil ur-Rahman, it is not one of the seven recognized parties.) There were charges that the Arabs might have given money to some delegates to gain their support for Ahmad Shah.2 If the Arabs did in fact try this tactic, it did not work.

2Cronin, “Afghanistan After the Soviet Withdrawal.”
Confronted with a rebellion in the shura, the seven leaders, the ISI, and the Arabs backed down on the Ahmad Shah government. They sought a way to prevent a total breakdown and loss of control. The seven leaders agreed to appoint a 70-member committee to present a proposal to the shura on how to proceed on the government issue. Subsequently, that number was reduced to 14—two members from each party. One of the key members was Commander Haqqani of the Hezbi-Islami party led by Khalis. According to Haqqani, the committee was isolated from the shura and had no contact with any of the leaders during its deliberations.3 The “committee of 14” came up with a formula for establishing the AIG by dividing the posts in it among the seven parties based on elections in the shura. Each delegate was allowed to vote for two of the seven leaders. The one with the highest vote would become the president of the interim government, followed by the prime minister, head of the Supreme Court, minister of defense, head of state security, and so on. Based on the shura vote, Seghatullah Mojaddedi, a traditionalist, became the president of the AIG and Sayyaf, a fundamentalist, became the prime minister. Based on the vote and some subsequent bargaining among the leaders, a cabinet was formed (see Table 3).

One surprising outcome of the shura vote was the poor performance of Jamiatu-Islami, which came in last. By all accounts it is the largest or second-largest mujahedin party. The low vote for Rabbani, a Tajik, intensified ethnic resentment among the non-Pashtuns, as they believed that the Pashtuns had stuck together against him. The Tajiks had played an important role in the war against the Soviets, organizing some of the largest fronts, such as the one in Panjsher. On the ground in Afghanistan, the war changed the balance of power against the Pashtuns, as the minorities became armed and organized. This change was not reflected in the shura or the outcome of the vote.

Given the rebellion against Ahmad Shah, the selection of Sayyaf as AIG’s prime minister was also a surprise. Ahmad Shah was Sayyaf’s deputy in Ittehadu-Islami and, like him, was believed to have close ties with Wahhabi of Saudi Arabia. Afghans hostile to Sayyaf attribute the vote for him to substantial expenditures of money by the Saudis to “in effect buy votes for their candidate.”4

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3Interviews in Pakistan.
4Interviews in Pakistan.
## Table 3
THE COMPOSITION OF THE AIG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. President</td>
<td>Mojadde (ANLF)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Prime Minister</td>
<td>Sayyaf (II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Defense Minister</td>
<td>Nabi (HII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Foreign Minister</td>
<td>Hekmatyar (HIG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interior Minister</td>
<td>Khalis (HIK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chief Justice</td>
<td>Gailani (NIFA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reconstruction Minister</td>
<td>Rabbani (JI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Health Minister</td>
<td>S. Mohammad Nadir (ANLF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Communication Minister</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah (II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Science Minister</td>
<td>M. Shah Fazii (HII)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Parliamentary Affairs</td>
<td>Q. Najibullah (HIG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. National Security</td>
<td>H. Din Mohammad (HIK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Education</td>
<td>Farouq-Azam (NIFA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Natural Resources</td>
<td>Eshan Jan (JI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tribes/Nationalities</td>
<td>Ali Ansari (HIG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Haji and Auqaf</td>
<td>Abdul Razig (HIK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Information/Broadcast</td>
<td>Najibullah (JI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Hedayat Amin-Arasa (NIFA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aSee Table 1 for a key to abbreviated party names.

NOTE: Nabi got the third highest number of votes and was to become the chief justice; Rabbani was to become the foreign minister, and Gailani the minister for reconstruction. According to the procedure proposed by the committee of 14, anyone could take any post lower on the list than the one he had won. Rather than become the chief justice, Nabi asked for the Defense Ministry. Hekmatyar, who was to become the defense minister, did not want to go along. After several days of negotiations, finally with Pakistani ISI involvement and mediation, Hekmatyar took the Foreign Ministry, Gailani took the Supreme Court, and Rabbani became the minister for reconstruction. (Source: interviews in Pakistan.)
IV. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AIG

With the departure of the Soviet troops and the expectation of the collapse of the Kabul government, competition intensified among Afghans for the domination of post-Najib Afghanistan. This increased power struggle influenced how the AIG was established and how it was viewed by the various Afghan power centers after its formation. The main nonregime power centers in Afghanistan consist of the seven parties based in Pakistan, the commanders, the supporters of the former king and traditional tribal leaders, and the Shiite groups, including those based in Iran. There is some overlap between these groups: some commanders are close to their party leaders, some traditional tribal leaders are also commanders, some party leaders support the former king, and there are differences among the Shiite parties. Despite the overlaps, however, there are enough differences to justify this four-way grouping.

THE SEVEN PARTIES AND THE AIG

Although the Pakistan-based parties dominated the shura and the resulting AIG, the power struggle among them goes on. Three of the seven—including the two largest—have been hostile to the AIG. That hostility undermined AIG’s effectiveness and prospects from the beginning. Jamiat and NIFA, which did badly in the shura, have stayed in the AIG but have not been very supportive of it. Hekmatyar, who initially supported it, has left.

Hekmatyar has, in fact, been the most vocal and forceful in his opposition to the AIG. He and his immediate staff believe that the AIG was ineffective, lacked unity, and had had a negative impact on the struggle against Najib. Initially, Hekmatyar had participated in the AIG as its foreign minister but was unhappy about serving under AIG President Mojaddedi. Mojaddedi’s disagreement with him over his ambassadorial and other appointments only increased his displeasure. His staff claim that Hekmatyar’s military commanders were unhappy that he was serving under Mojaddedi. However, there are deeper reasons for Hekmatyar’s unhappiness with the AIG. He believed that his party was the largest and should have dominated the government. He wanted the relative size of various parties reflected in the positions they held in the AIG.
Hekmatyar left the AIG after the Parkhar incident, in which one of his commanders, Said Jamal, was accused of killing a number of commanders from Jamiat. When he was criticized by Mojaddedi for the incident, he accused the AIG of taking sides in the conflict and suspended his participation. Some within his party opposed his departure from the AIG, fearing becoming isolated and cut off from external sources of support. In November 1989, Hekmatyar said that he regarded the AIG as dissolved because it had failed in its commitment to hold elections within six months after its formation.

Rabbani of Jamiat-Islami was lukewarm in his support for the AIG. He and his supporters were very disappointed by the outcome of the shura. He had expected to get the second-largest number of votes and become AIG's prime minister. Feeling unjustly treated, he accepted the post of minister for reconstruction but has not taken it seriously and has continued to focus on his party responsibilities. His immediate staff has a similar attitude. Like Hekmatyar, Rabbani was unhappy about the equal representation of parties in the shura. But unlike Hekmatyar, he rejected elections in the liberated areas and the refugee camps as the mechanism for choosing shura members, arguing that elections inside Afghanistan were unrealistic because of the fighting. He feared that Pakistan might manipulate elections in the refugee camps in favor of his rival Hekmatyar.

Gailani's position on the AIG is similar to Rabbani's. He is in it but does not really support it. In his organization, NIFA, there is widespread hostility to the AIG. Like Hekmatyar, he had favored elections as the mechanism for choosing members of the shura. As AIG's chief justice, he is tasked with finding a formula for the next shura, which was expected to take place from six months to a year after the formation of the AIG. He continues to favor elections.

The remaining four party leaders still favor the AIG. Support for the AIG is strongest in Sayyaf's Ittehadi-Islami. In the other three parties there are important party functionaries who consider the AIG flawed and unlikely to succeed.

THE COMMANDERS

Assessing the attitude of the commanders toward the AIG is both important and difficult. More than any other power center, the commanders are likely to have a significant role in determining Afghanistan's future. Since commanders are generally inside Afghanistan, they are not as accessible as the party leaders or AIG officials for interviews and discussions. Some are in Pakistan, however, and a
number of others have representatives there through whom one can ascertain the views of commanders such as Ahmad Shah Massoud or even get in touch with them directly.

In the period just after the formation of the AIG, the commanders, like the parties, were divided in their attitude toward it. Support for the AIG was strong among some of those who participated in the shura—such as Commander Haqqani of Pakiya—and among some of those whose party affiliates did well in the shura elections—such as Mohammad Niram of ANLF. The commanders who support the AIG want it recognized by other countries and would like all international assistance channeled through it.

Those unhappy with the AIG are not vocal in their opposition, fearing that outright hostility might jeopardize foreign assistance to them and might play into the hands of Najib. But although their language is diplomatic, they have expressed their displeasure. Initially, many argued that it would have been better if AIG had not been formed. A number of commanders made clear their desire for the AIG to recognize their role and power and to deal with them directly. For example, Massoud expressed his willingness to cooperate with the AIG as long as it recognized the independence of his control of his area and dealt with his region through him.1 Similarly, Kabul commander Sayed Hussein Anwari, who belongs to Moheeni’s Shi’ite Harakati-Islami party, argued that those excluded from the AIG must be brought into it if they are to take AIG seriously.2

Over time, commander opposition to the AIG has increased, due largely to its ineffectiveness, its inability to reach out to those excluded, and its continual infighting. The result is that more and more commanders are taking matters into their own hands and not paying much attention to the AIG. They want the future balance of power in Afghanistan to favor them and would like to remain dominant in their own regions. In general, they favor a weak government in Kabul. Their dissatisfaction with the AIG has resulted in some improvement in their attitudes about the former king. There is a marked decrease in expressions of hostility toward him, and some commanders have established direct contact and dialogue with him. The commanders also favor the establishment of local shuras and better coordination with each other. Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Haq proposed the establishment of a commanders’ council that can decide on military strategy and weapons distribution. The AIG did not favor

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1In Mujahed Wolles, September 23, 1989 (newspaper published by the Mujahed Information Center, Oslo, Norway).
2Mujahed Wolles, October 18, 1989.
such an approach, nor did Pakistan's ISI, which controls weapons distribution.

THE FORMER KING

The AIG's main difficulty—the perception that it is ineffective—is to Zahir's advantage. He refused to support the AIG when it was formed, arguing that it was not representative enough of the Afghan people and was too much under foreign influence. But he has been cautious in his public statements and has avoided direct attacks against the AIG, although those close to him are more vocal in their criticism. The king has been willing to open a dialogue with the AIG to discuss the possibility of mutual cooperation. He suggested that Samad Hamid and Abdul Sattar Sirat, who have his confidence as well as good ties with the Pakistan-based leaders, can begin the dialogue on his behalf. Although some in the AIG would have liked to begin such a dialogue, the AIG as a whole has not reacted positively.

Former senior Afghan officials who support the king have different views of the AIG. Some are hostile to the AIG and see it as an impediment to Afghan self-determination; others would like to move closer. Former Prime Minister Yousuf and Sultan Ghazi are among the more hostile to the AIG, while Samad Hamid and Sirat are more favorable to improving relations between it and the former king. But, over time, hostility to the AIG has increased in Zahir's camp.

THE SHIITE PARTIES

The Shiite parties—the Iran-based alliance and the traditionalist Shiite group Harakati-Islami, led by Mohammad Asef Mohseni—have been hostile to the AIG. The Iran-based groups have called it a Sunni or Pashtun government. But even they have showed some willingness to reach an agreement with the AIG. The Iran-based groups have met with the AIG, but their interest in joining with it has declined as AIG's status has worsened. The attitudes of the Iran-based groups are also influenced by the policies of Iran—which regards the AIG as dominated by its rival Saudi Arabia. Iran does not want the AIG strengthened. The Iranian Foreign Ministry has opened a dialogue with the former king, whose return the Saudis have opposed. Iran also has started discussions with the Najib regime and hopes to play a major role in a "political settlement" of the Afghan conflict. The Soviets have also encouraged Iran in this regard.
V. THE IMPACT OF THE AIG

THE MILITARY IMPACT

No Afghan, including AIG supporters, argues that the AIG has had a positive impact on the military struggle against the Najib regime. Afghans are divided on whether the effect of the AIG has been neutral or negative.

Those unhappy with the AIG—that is, the parties that did poorly at the shura, the excluded Iran-based parties, and the supporters of the former king—assess its impact as negative. Some go so far as to call it a major error. They argue that the AIG undermined the motivation of commanders to fight against Najib. The commanders who were excluded from the shura—or whose parties did poorly—felt that the Pakistan-based leaders had taken them for granted, and indicated their displeasure by decreasing their military activity against Kabul. The critics also claim that the AIG actually kept the Najib regime from disintegrating. It was generally assumed that following the Soviet withdrawal the regime would increasingly fall apart. This assumption was at the base of many of the predictions of a quick mujahedin victory. Many AIG opponents believe that many from the regime were willing to defect to the mujahedin right after February 15th. But the failure of the shura to produce a broad-based government in which they could have confidence, and the extremely bad treatment given to those who had worked with the regime in areas taken over by the mujahedin parties and their allies the Wahhabis, made them feel that their backs were to the wall and that they might be better off by resisting a mujahedin takeover.

Those who support the AIG—AIG’s president and prime minister and some of those associated with Khals and Nabi—assess the AIG impact on the war as neutral. But they deny that it has had a negative impact. They blame their lack of progress on the battlefield over the past year on inadequate outside military and political support for the AIG. They also blame massive Soviet support for Najib, including continued direct Soviet involvement in military operations in support of the regime. The military impact of the AIG can be analyzed at three levels.

Impact on the motivation of commanders to fight. Although the accusation that the AIG has had a negative effect on commander motivation appears reasonable, it is a difficult charge to confirm. It is quite impossible for an outsider to gain access to a representative
sample of the over 800 commanders who conducted the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets. Although it is clear that the commanders are divided in their attitude toward the AIG, those who have spoken out, even those unhappy with the AIG, will not say that they have refrained from carrying out some military operations because of their dissatisfaction with the AIG. The commanders do complain, however, about a number of issues: AIG’s failure to produce the necessary cooperation and coordination for the new phase of the war, ISI’s policies and their own exclusion from the process for developing a strategy for the conflict, and inadequate supplies.

**Impact on the cohesion of the regime.** Here the AIG has done very badly and has had a negative effect. Najib has clearly been helped by the AIG’s failure to reach out to elements of the regime or give them assurances that they would be dealt with fairly. Had the shura produced a broad-based government, it might well have helped to fragment the regime. Even more damaging to the AIG has been the treatment given to officials of the regime in areas that came under the control of the seven parties and their allies during the last phase of Soviet withdrawal and immediately thereafter. According to several eyewitness reports, in Kunar, Kunduz, and Taloqan after the mujahedin takeover there was arbitrary killing of people associated with the regime. In Kunar, the Wahhabis led by Jamil ur-Rahman, especially his Arab volunteers, declared the regime-controlled areas of Afghanistan to be non-Muslim territory—meaning that when those areas were conquered, the “liberators” were allowed to execute the men and marry or enslave the women and children. The Arabs executed many regime militiamen in Kunar and married off the wives of those killed. The conquered territories were plundered.1 The killings of some 74 defecting regime soldiers in November 1988, and more later in the battle for Jalalabad, convinced those in the regime that “only the guillotine awaits them if they cede any power.”2 The regime officials felt that it was safer for them to fight on than to defect or surrender to the mujahedin. The AIG was not responsible for the excesses that have taken place—some occurred before it was even formed—but its prospects have nonetheless been dampened by these actions, since they helped solidify the Najib regime.

**Command and control.** In terms of command and control of the war, the AIG has had very little to no role. The war has been

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conducted by three separate units: local commanders inside Afghanistan; some of the party leaders, especially Hekmatyar, based in Pakistan; and by the Pakistani ISI, which channels outside support to the mujahedín. Since 1986, ISI has sought to gain greater operational control of the war. Its means for doing this has been to subcontract—in effect, to hire commanders to carry out very specific military operations in exchange for money and supplies. If one commander, whether major or minor, refuses the ISI simply looks for another who is willing to cooperate with its program. A number of commanders are. In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal, ISI’s subcontracting approach has had several negative consequences:

- Many commanders resent it. Afghan nationalism has been on the rise since the Soviet departure, and some of the key commanders are displeased that they have no role in developing the military strategy for the war. In the climate of rising nationalism, charges of manipulation by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been damaging to the AIG.

- The major commanders are greatly angered by the ISI’s practice of going to minor subordinate commanders when they are rebuffed above. That anger ultimately decreases their motivation to fight. And if they do not fight in cooperation with the ISI, they do not receive military supplies. The cut-off of supplies encourages the commanders to conserve their resources, which means less fighting against Najib.\(^3\)

- Subcontracting decreases the cooperation among commanders and provides opportunities for Najib. When a minor commander receives supplies and money from ISI it affects the local balance of power, with rival commanders vulnerable to offers of money and weapons from Najib. In fact, Najib’s offer is the more attractive one: while ISI wants its clients to fight and risk their lives, Najib is willing to pay if the commanders agree not to fight.

The AIG has not been able to provide coordination among the three centers of military decisionmaking. For example, in the all-important attack against Jalalabad, which took place shortly after the AIG was formed, it did not have much of a role, even though the attack was aimed at capturing the city as a temporary seat for the AIG. That lack of role tarnished the AIG’s image right from the start, giving the impression of its subordination to ISI. This impression was bolstered

\(^3\)Consolidating Victory In Afghanistan. The Heritage Foundation, No. 754, February 20, 1990.
by press stories asserting that no Afghan had been present in the meeting that decided on the attack against Jalalabad. Several AIG leaders support these reports and deny that they were consulted on the wisdom of an all-out attack against Jalalabad. When the attack took place, the commanders in other areas did not move against Kabul, indicating a lack of coordination. It was ISI that had organized the attack. The mujahedin suffered heavy losses in Jalalabad, while the regime enjoyed a boost in morale.

At the end of 1989, disappointed in the performance of the AIG, the government of Pakistan authorized its Chief of the Army, General Beg, to help the AIG solve its problems. General Beg encouraged the establishment of a Joint Operations Planning Cell in the AIG Ministry of Defense. This cell was expected to: plan military operations, preview military plans and strategy, and plan and distribute military hardware; conduct joint military operations; and encourage military coups against the regime. AIG’s Defense Ministry did establish a Joint Operations Planning Cell. But there is no evidence that it brought about any significant change in the conduct of military operations. The three decisionmaking centers continue to operate independent of the AIG. In Pakistan, party leader Hekmatyar continues to regard the AIG as dissolved and is not cooperating with it. Nor are the key commanders involved in the operation of the new cell. There is widespread doubt about the ability of the current Defense Ministry to perform the role envisaged by the Beg plan.

THE POLITICAL IMPACT

When the February 1989 shura met, it had three choices: (a) confirm and support the Ahmad Shah government, (b) reject the Ahmad Shah government without forming another government, or (c) form a new interim government. The shura in effect rejected the Ahmad Shah government; but unless it formed a new government or other political institution in its place, it would most likely have been considered a failure. Such a vacuum might also have led to a number of different governments formed by various mujahedin parties, a development that would have had a damaging effect on both the political and military struggles. Several shura members raised the possibility of forming something other than an interim government. For example, Samad Hamid and Sattar Sirat, two prominent Afghan exiles who have close ties with the mujahedin leaders, told the shura that if a broad-based interim government could not be formed, then none should be established at all. Instead, they proposed the formation of a Supreme
Council of the mujahedin consisting of the seven Pakistan-based leaders, a number of religious and tribal leaders, key mujahedin commanders, representatives of Iran-based groups, and political personalities from the exile community. They suggested that the February shura elect the members of the Supreme Council. This proposal was ignored by the Pakistan-based leaders. Such a council, or a more broad-based AIG, would have helped the mujahedin in their struggle against Najib. Keeping the Ahmad Shah government would probably have done more damage than the current AIG.

The political impact of the AIG has been negative. It has intensified the power struggle among the antiregime forces, leaving them in greater disarray than ever. These tensions have provided opportunities for Najib, who has turned out to be much more effective than his predecessors. The regime has sought to take advantage of the growing tensions among the opposition. Najib has been very clever in his approach and has done a better job of holding his regime together than either the United States or the mujahedin leaders expected. The AIG's weaknesses have made it vulnerable to an effective propaganda campaign. Najib has appealed to Afghan nationalism by portraying the Pakistan-based leaders as instruments of Pakistan and the United States. Similarly, he has tapped into the war-weariness of the population and presented himself as wanting peace and a broad-based government. He has accused the mujahedin leaders of seeking to continue the war indefinitely—a war in which only Afghans are getting killed. He has sought to reach agreement with those Afghans dissatisfied with the AIG or at least encourage their neutrality in the war. He has even spoken positively about the former king, arguing that he can play a role in bringing peace to Afghanistan, inviting him to come to Kabul, and even going so far as to hint that he himself might resign in favor of the former king. Najib knows that Zahir is unwilling to share power with him. But by speaking positively about the former king he seeks to achieve two objectives: First, he hopes to increase opposition to the former king among the fundamentalist parties based in Pakistan by reinforcing their belief that Zahir has ties to the communists and that he is their candidate. Second, he wants to indicate to Zahir's supporters inside Afghanistan that he is in favor of a role for the former king whereas the fundamentalists are not, and is therefore more worthy of their support.

Najib has also reached out to the Shiites. He has made a veteran Shiite communist, Kishmtand, the country's virtual prime minister. He has sought improved relations with Iran and has offered local autonomy to the Shiite region of Hazarajat. Najib has taken a similar stand toward the commanders. He has declared to them that they
have won the war, that the time has come for Afghans to stop killing each other. He has offered commanders local autonomy. At times, he has declared cities such as Kandahar “open cities,” where mujahedin can enter and leave at will, provided they check their weapons at designated areas and collect them when they leave. Najib has also sought to portray himself as a nationalist seeking to protect Afghanistan’s interests against Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, and in this he has had some success.

In all, the problems of the AIG have strengthened Najib’s hold on power in Kabul. His major success has been that his regime has not fallen apart entirely—although the recent coup attempt by his defense minister indicates that it continues to suffer major divisions and factionalism. He has not won over any major player from the opposition side. The former king, the major commanders, and party leaders continue to call for replacement of the Najib government.

BROADENING THE AIG

Since the AIG was not representative of the Afghan people, or even all the mujahedin, many Afghans as well as the U.S. and Pakistani governments declared that it needed to broaden itself. The relative importance of this issue grew as the mujahedin difficulties—few military successes and AIG ineffectiveness—increased. But rather than broadening, it has narrowed. One of the seven parties that constituted the AIG, Hekmatyar’s Hezbi-Islami, has left the AIG, and no new major force has come into it. Prospects for broadening the AIG are not good.

The expectation was that the AIG would reach out to the other power centers: the Shiite parties, commanders, and the supporters of the former king and tribal leaders. At first this was expected to occur through negotiations. During 1989, negotiations with the Iran-based Shiite groups produced no positive results. Both sides were reluctant negotiators: Sayyaf and Khalis were unwilling to bring the Shiites in, and the Iranian-based groups continued to demand a disproportionate representation in the government. Also, Iran and Saudi Arabia continued to push the mujahedin in opposite directions—the Saudis do not want the Iran-based groups in, and Iran wants a large role for them. The AIG had one significant success with the commanders. Abdul Haq, the Kabul-area commander who had participated in the shura but had not been happy about its management and outcome, agreed to become the AIG’s chief of police in the Ministry of Interior. He did so because of his frustration with ISI’s lack of support for his operations
near Kabul. He accepted the AIG position reluctantly and regards the AIG as being too narrow both in the values that guide it and in its support among the Afghan people.

As far as the tribal leaders are concerned, many Durrani Pashtuns support the return of the former king. The AIG is dominated by their rivals, the Ghilzais. They have not reached an agreement.

The main reason that significant broadening has not occurred is the reluctance of the majority within the AIG to share power with others. AIG Prime Minister Sayyaf has stated on several occasions that the AIG is broad-based enough. He has been opposed to opening it up to the Iran-based groups and is more adamant than the other five leaders in his opposition to including the former king and his supporters. Others in the AIG have said that broadening would be desirable but in practice have not been able to take meaningful steps. Khalis rejects apportioning seats in the AIG based on sectarian representation and therefore has opposed sharing power with the Iranian-based groups. He has been ambivalent about the role of the former king and his supporters. At times he has been very positive about the idea—even offering to go to Rome himself to meet with the former king—but at other times he has rejected any role for Zahir. Rabbani is very favorable to including Shiite parties but, like Khalis, is ambivalent about the former king. He has said that some of the king’s lieutenants should be included in the AIG. He favored discussions with Zahir through Samad Hamid and Sattar Sirat, but nothing has happened. Before his election to the AIG presidency, Mojaddedi favored a substantial role for the former king. In 1983 he had suggested that the Afghan people “want Zahir Shah because they do not have high regards for the Pakistan-based leaders. None of the Pakistan-based leaders would obey the other.” After he became AIG president his support for Zahir decreased, since he saw the former king as a threat to his own presidency. He favors the inclusion of Zahir’s supporters in the AIG. However, many in his organization believe that Mojaddedi would ultimately be happy as a minister in a government led by the former king. Mojaddedi has been active in trying to bring in the Iranian groups but has not been able to convince all his colleagues. Gailani and Nabi both favor the inclusion of the former king and his supporters. But both fear that the Pakistanis, the Saudis, and even the Americans oppose a role for the former king. Without a change in the position of the outside supporters, they believe the AIG will not be able to make a decision on broadening.

Having failed to do anything through negotiations, in March 1990 the AIG leaders announced plans to convene a jirgah of some 2,500 people before summer. The jirgah was supposed to consist of ten representatives from each of Afghanistan's 216 districts (which were established in Afghanistan's last parliamentary elections under Zahir Shah). Several hundred other delegates were to be chosen by the AIG leaders and Afghan refugees in other countries. A delegation went to Iran to discuss the initial plan. The reaction from the Iran-based parties, Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami, and a number of other smaller groups was negative. The former king also refused to endorse the proposed plan, saying that he would wait and see whether the AIG will in fact convene a representative jirgah. There is widespread skepticism among Afghans that the current AIG will be able to do that, because such a council might well reduce the roles of those who now hold the top spots. For the time being the plan appears dead. Some mujahedin leaders are discussing the possibility of convening another jirgah or shura composed of members selected by the seven leaders. This is unlikely to produce a broad-based AIG and might further fragment the current one.\footnote{A jirgah is a traditional Pashtun institution in which local leaders get together to resolve disputes. On important occasions, such as the ratification of a new constitution, Afghan rulers have convened a koya jirgah or grand assembly with delegates partially selected by the ruler and partially by the people. A shura, by contrast, puts greater emphasis on an assembly whose members have been chosen by the people.}

\footnote{For details see Afghan Information Center Monthly Bulletin (Peshawar, Pakistan), No. 107, February 1990.}
VI. ALTERNATIVES TO THE AIG

The situation in Afghanistan is very fluid. The main power centers on the opposition side remain divided, and internal tensions continue to plague the Najib regime, which remains critically dependent on substantial Soviet assistance. Given its own problems at home and elsewhere, it is uncertain how long Moscow will continue to support Najib at current levels. There is also a decline in political support in the United States for continued assistance to the mujahedin. The Afghans' divisions are influenced not only by what the United States and the Soviets do but also by the policies of the regional powers—Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

NEAR-TERM OPTIONS

The AIG was a reflection of many of Afghanistan's tensions and problems, but it failed to overcome or reduce and contain them. Its weakness and ineffectiveness reduced its relative importance to the point that it is unlikely to dominate the postwar government in Afghanistan. The six leaders who participated in it suffered a loss in standing because of their inability to cooperate, even among themselves. In the near future, the AIG faces four alternatives: (a) share power with other noncommunists, (b) share power with communists, (c) continue the current posture, or (d) dissolve itself as part of a political settlement. We examine each of these options below.

Share power with other noncommunists. This is the option that was favored by the United States for much of the past year. But so far a majority in the AIG prefer not to share power with others, only to make minor adjustments. Most do not yet think that they confront a choice between sharing power with communists or others. Should that choice arise, Mojaddedi, Gailani, Rabbani, Nabi, and Khalis are likely to prefer sharing power with noncommunists to sharing with communists. Of course there are differences among the five on who should be approached first. Khalis does not want to share power with Shiites but Rabbani would like to; Gailani wants elections and would like to reach an agreement with the former king. As the relative standing of the AIG declines, the other power centers have become less willing to join forces with the AIG—or at least their price for doing so has increased.
The United States hoped and expected that a new jirgha could produce a new and broad-based AIG consisting of all or most of the anti-communist powers in Afghanistan. This has become unlikely. It might have taken place if the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia together had pressed the AIG leaders to convene a representative jirgha. The seven leaders are vitally dependent on these countries. But this too is becoming more uncertain.

Pakistan's Afghan policies have been going in different directions. In November 1989, the weakness of the Bhutto government resulted in the turnover of the Afghan policy to its General Beg. He did not appear to be serious about a representative jirgha and focused more on a coup in Kabul. Beg worked more closely with Hekmatyar than with the AIG. Beg's approach was not popular with the Pakistani Foreign Ministry. Before Prime Minister Bhutto's dismissal there was yet another change in the Pakistani management of its Afghan policy. The president, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, took control. This was the result of one or some combination of the following three factors: First, there was unhappiness with the lack of a military victory against the Najib government. Second, there was a greater Pakistani desire to seek a political settlement. This change in attitude was influenced by (a) Pakistani uncertainty on whether U.S. assistance to the mujahedin would continue beyond the current fiscal year, and (b) the deterioration in Indo-Pakistani relations over Kashmir. Third, increased tensions with India forced General Beg to focus his attentions on a possible conflict there, thus allowing little time to manage Pakistan's Afghan policy.

Since Bhutto's dismissal, the new Pakistani government is following a more activist policy and has moved on two tracks: It has sought to make the AIG more effective by either expanding it to include Hekmatyar or holding another shura. On the military front, Pakistan's new government has sought to encourage the mujahedin to intensify their war against Najib's forces. The prospects for Pakistan's new strategy are uncertain.

Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Saudis followed a two-track approach. They supported the AIG by recognizing it and providing it with assistance. But at the same time they continued separate support for their two favorite parties, Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami and Sayyaf's Ittihadi-Islami. The Saudi objective has been to limit Iranian influence and ensure Saudi influence over as many centers of power among the mujahedin as possible. Two factors have been important in choosing the parties to support. One has been the working relationship between Saudi Intelligence, headed by Prince Turki, and Pakistan's ISI. As the two organizations work closely together, ISI's preference—
namely, support for Hekmatyar—has influenced the Saudis. The other factor has been the influence of the Saudi internal Islamic movement on government policy. Sayyaf has had strong ties with Saudi religious leaders, such as Sheikh Ben Baz. This relationship has influenced Saudi attitudes toward Sayyaf. Lack of success on the political and military front might well lead Saudi Arabia to reconsider its policy, but it is unlikely to change direction without coordinating with Pakistan and the United States.

The 1990 crisis in the Persian Gulf will have mixed effects on the Saudi policy toward Afghanistan. The improvement in Saudi Arabia’s relations with Washington and Moscow will increase its desire for a political settlement in Afghanistan. But the crisis has also raised questions about Saudi Arabia’s Islamic credentials, since it invited the American troops into the area. It is therefore unlikely that the Saudis would readily accept a settlement that might be considered a “sell-out” of Sayyaf and Hekmatyar. In general, however, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has decreased the relative importance of Afghanistan to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi role in Afghanistan is likely to decline.

The United States could have taken the lead in seeking a consensus among these three interested powers in support of a representative jirga. This is what happened in 1985 when the alliance was established. At the time it was generally agreed that the Afghan parties were too divided to form an alliance. Once the Americans, the Pakistanis, and the Saudis all agreed on the importance of establishing an alliance for increasing the Afghan opposition’s international political profile, the seven leaders were persuaded. As in 1985, it may be that only active U.S. involvement and Saudi and Pakistani support can bring about power sharing among anticomunist Afghans. A united anticomunist political alliance will weaken the relative position of the Najib government and might well fragment it.

Share power with communists. Even before their withdrawal, the Soviets wanted the Kabul government, the mujahedin, and the former king to form a coalition transitional government. Since their departure, the Soviets have supplied the Najib regime with large amounts of military equipment and other forms of support. The ability of the regime to hold together has reinforced the Soviet view that the Najib regime must be included in the settlement of the Afghan conflict.

At present both the mujahedin—the major commanders, the Iran-based groups, and the Pakistan-based leaders—and the former king refuse to open formal negotiations for power sharing with the Najib government. They reject Najib as having participated in a brutal war against his own people in collusion with the Soviet troops. But the Tanai incident indicates that some mujahedin leaders would be willing to share power with very senior members of the Najib government in
order to overthrow Najib. Most Afghan opposition leaders, including the former king, are willing to enter into open discussions and arrive at arrangements for a new government with current government officials, as long as the discussions do not include Najib and some of his immediate subordinates. Different figures have been given by the opposition as to the number of current Kabul leaders unacceptable as partners in discussions for a political settlement—they range from several dozen to several hundred. Most are willing to negotiate with members of the National Salvation Front formed in Kabul in September 1989. Should Najib and his most senior associates be overthrown in a coup or leave the government as part of a political settlement, the likelihood of some arrangement between elements in the resistance and those in Kabul, whether in the current regime or in the Salvation Front, would increase.

**Continue the current posture.** Without a representative council, the AIG might either continue as it is, with some minor changes, or fragment. In either case, the commanders are likely to take matters into their own hands and further ignore the AIG. Many elements are likely to make deals with each other. New coalitions might well be formed with elements in the AIG and some commanders and even some elements in the regime plotting together to carry out military coups against Najib. The Tanai coup attempt and Hekmatyar’s support for it will encourage others to explore similar options. Whether such efforts at coup making can succeed remains uncertain.

The Kabul regime in turn is likely to increase its efforts to try to make deals with commanders and the supporters of the former king, at the expense of the majority of the Pakistan-based leadership. Should it succeed, it can reduce the fighting in the country. In the near term this is an unlikely prospect—especially if Najib remains in power.

**Agree to a political settlement and dissolve the AIG.** Lack of political and military success has led many Afghans and their supporters to begin looking seriously at a “political settlement” of the conflict, which might require that the AIG and the Najib government give way to a broadly acceptable interim government in Kabul. We shall now explore this possibility in some detail.

**A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT**

Pressure in the United States for a political settlement is growing. There are many proposals put forward by different players. Some deal with the future government issue, others with the external involvement in Afghanistan. They are briefly described below.
The Cordovez Proposal. In July 1988 Diego Cordovez, the UN official who negotiated the Afghan Accords that brought about Soviet withdrawal, proposed a plan consisting of (a) a cease-fire, (b) resignation of the Najib government, (c) replacement of the Najib government with a "neutral interim government," and (d) convening of a grand Afghan assembly (loya jirgah) or nationwide elections by the interim government to determine Afghanistan's future political system. The Cordovez plan did not have UN endorsement and was a "personal" suggestion. The problem with it was that the mujahedin were unwilling to accept a cease-fire and Najib was unwilling to step down in favor of a neutral government.

The Yaqub Plan. In September 1988 Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub proposed to Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze a plan consisting of (a) replacement of Najib by a neutral figure acceptable to all Afghans, (b) a prime minister nominated by the Pakistan-based alliance but not from the alliance (now the AIG), and (c) a cabinet in which all groups participated in "acceptable" proportions. The plan was not made public. The Soviets and Najib did not accept it. Najib has refused to step down before a settlement is reached.

The Beg Plan. In September 1989, before he took charge of Pakistan's Afghan policy, General Beg favored talks between the AIG and the Soviets leading to the removal of Najib and followed by discussions between the PDPA and the AIG on a new interim government for Afghanistan. While he was in charge of Afghan policy, he took similar stands. Although expressing willingness to talk to various Afghan groups, the Soviets have rejected Najib's removal as a precondition for opening discussions. The Soviets also do not accept the AIG as the only opposition party. They emphasize the importance of other centers of power, especially the former king, who they believe could be a moderating influence. Moscow has held separate discussions with parties that are in the AIG. It also has talked with parties outside the AIG, such as Hekmatyar's Hezbi-Islami. Tani's defection to Hekmatyar can facilitate a dialogue between Hekmatyar and the Soviets.

Former King Zahir's Plan. Zahir's plan set forth these steps in 1989: (a) there is inter-Afghan dialogue, (b) a small council is convened in which all Afghans—the mujahedin, commanders, and some people from Kabul (but not Najib)—can participate, (c) that council approves an interim government that includes everyone, including some from PDPA, (d) this interim government replaces the Najib regime, and (e) the interim government proposes a new constitution and election laws and convenes a loya jirgah to ratify the new constitution. Zahir is willing to play a major role in (i.e., to lead) such an interim government. Neither the AIG nor the Najib regime has
endorsed the king’s proposal. It is possible that the Soviets would drop Najib if the king’s approach were adopted by the mujahedin.

The UN Plan. The UN’s plan, discussed confidentially in the summer and fall of 1989 with the United States, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and the various Afghan groups, consists of a three-step process. The first step is to reach an “international consensus” on an Afghan settlement between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan’s regional neighbors. The UN would seek to bring the antiregime Afghans together—through facilitating an inter-Afghan dialogue—which can lead to what it calls a “structured Afghan delegation.” The UN then would want negotiations between this delegation and probably the representatives of the present regime for the creation of an interim government, which could supervise elections to determine Afghanistan’s ultimate political system.

The U.S. Plan. In February 1990 a proposal was put forward by Secretary of State Baker in discussions with the Soviet foreign minister. It consisted of three stages: First, the AIG convenes a representative council that decides on a broad-based AIG or new resistance leadership. Second, the new leadership talks to the representatives of groups not included in the first council—this means from areas under the control of the regime and might include the PDPA on a new council in which all Afghans, including those in the regime-controlled areas, participate. Third, the all-Afghan council decides on a self-determination process. Najib would leave the scene no later than the end of the second stage. This plan signaled a modification in U.S. tactics—a willingness to begin negotiations on a political settlement even before Najib’s departure. While welcoming this change, the Soviets did not accept the plan. They countered with a plan of their own.

The Soviet Plan. In reaction to the U.S. plan, on February 15, 1990, the Soviets publicly presented a plan that elaborates on the Najib plan of August 1989 and Gorbachev’s December 1988 proposal at the UN. First, it proposes a broad inter-Afghan dialogue with UN involvement; there would be a “pause” and “suspension” in the fighting inside Afghanistan to facilitate the dialogue (Moscow has avoided the term “cease-fire”). The Soviets suggested that the dialogue could take the form of an all-Afghan peace conference but are willing to consider other suggestions. Second, during the transitional period, the opposing Afghan sides would remain in charge of their own territories, and a unified administration and armed forces would not be established until a broad-based Afghan government is established through elections. All Afghans would be asked to pledge to accept the election results and not to challenge them by force of arms. The Soviets favor international
supervision of elections to give the process credibility. Third, Iran, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and the United States would reach an understanding on an Afghan settlement. The Soviets want an international conference consisting of the four and the UN. Fourth, the Soviets propose an international consensus on an end to all arms shipments to all Afghans—mujahedin and the Kabul regime—and simultaneous announcement of a pause or halt in military operations. Ultimately there would be a demilitarization of the country, removing existing stockpiles of weapons and establishment of Afghanistan's neutrality.1

Near-Term Prospects for a Settlement

The American and Soviet plans have some common features. Like a number of other plans they envisage (a) the replacement of the Najib government, (b) the establishment of a transitional administration to take power from Najib, and (c) the organization of a representative council with international supervision by the interim government to determine Afghanistan's ultimate political system. But there are important differences on the process leading to and the composition of the interim government. The Soviets want the Najib government to dominate the transition process and therefore the transitional administration. The United States would like the AIG or the mujahedin to do so. The Soviets would like negotiation between the Najib government and the opposition. The mujahedin continue to refuse on this point and in the near term are unlikely to change their attitude.

Najib must fear Soviet abandonment. The Soviets have greater interest than he does in seeking a settlement. The continuing war in Afghanistan is costly to them; estimates of costs to the Soviets range from 200 to 400 million dollars per month. Although the exact figures are not known, this involvement is clearly a burden on the Soviet Union, especially given the poor state of its economy. The Soviets must be interested in removing this cost. But there are strong pressures on the Soviet government not to abandon Najib. At party meetings in early 1990, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were attacked by critics for having "lost" Eastern Europe and damaged Soviet security. They therefore are probably eager to avoid another highly visible setback. Moreover, the Soviet military, in which veterans of the Afghan war occupy numerous important posts, has grown more assertive in recent months and probably would be especially opposed to a sell-out

of the Najib regime. Najib is probably counting on Soviet domestic politics to ensure his own support.

Gorbachev appears willing to acquiesce to Najib’s removal—not as a result of a military defeat at the hands of the mujahedin or Soviet abandonment, but by a process similar to what occurred in Nicaragua and Namibia: a popular decision in which the communists participated but lost. Foreign Minister Shevardnadze referred to these examples in his April 1990 news conference in Washington. Moscow would like Soviet policies of worldwide reconciliation to replace a U.S.-supported military victory as the way out in Afghanistan. But the mujahedin are yet unwilling to accept the East European and Nicaraguan models.

In the near term, the current conflict in Afghanistan might become resolved in one of three ways. First, the regime might fragment if mujahedin military pressure increases. It is more vulnerable to this type of development than the mujahedin, since it is more fragile than the resistance as well as more centralized and thus more vulnerable to actions such as coups. Although mujahedin decentralization has so far hampered their success, it also helps them avoid defeat, at least in the short term. For the mujahedin to increase their chances of victory they would need to overcome their political and military problems. The key to success is better cooperation among the mujahedin commanders. A council of commanders to coordinate military and political programs could help change the military balance against the Najib government. That might not happen, or it might take a long time.

Second, the war may continue without a mujahedin victory. In such an event the commanders will take matters into their own hands. Already some commanders are exploring ways to increase political cooperation among themselves, with uncertain prospects. Many elements—from the regime and the mujahedin—would be likely to make deals with each other and establish new coalitions. Afghanistan would remain fragmented for some time to come.

Third, more likely than a military victory and the best near-term hope for Afghanistan is a political settlement that bridges the differences between the Soviet and American plans and allows for Afghan self-determination. There are many ways that this could be achieved. The key requirement is for the Soviets to give up their insistence that the present regime dominate the transition process. Given the widespread hatred in Afghanistan for Najib, it is unrealistic to expect that his regime would be allowed to take this role. Similarly, the United States will have to change its attitude on AIG domination: AIG’s weaknesses make it too an unlikely candidate.

Elections are the best mechanism for bridging the various plans for a political settlement of the Afghan conflict based on Afghan self-
determination. But the key issue is how the elections are to be organized in the current Afghan environment.

Organizing Elections in Afghanistan

There are three possible frameworks for organizing elections. The first option is to hold simultaneous or sequential elections in the government-held and mujahedin-held areas of Afghanistan and refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran for delegates to an all-Afghan jirgah, shura, or assembly that will select an interim government. The UN and other international groups, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, can play an important role in organizing and monitoring the elections. The all-Afghan convention can meet in Afghanistan or in another country that does not have a special interest of its own in Afghanistan. The selection of a new interim government by the all-Afghan convention can be followed by a number of steps:

- The Najib government and the AIG simultaneously resign in favor of the new interim government.
- The new interim government takes over in Kabul.
- The new government is recognized by the United States and the Soviet Union and others.
- Military assistance to all Afghan groups ceases.
- International economic and humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan is channeled through the new interim government.
- The new interim government reorganizes Afghanistan’s security organizations—the defense forces; KHAD, the secret police force; and Sarandoy, the interior police force—and integrates some mujahedin groups into the reorganized bodies.

There are several problems with having an election while the Najib regime is in power, although Najib is likely to be more favorable to this approach than the mujahedin. Several mujahedin groups are opposed to elections while the Najib government rules Kabul and other Afghan cities. Only very substantial joint pressure by the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia might persuade them, although such pressure might fragment the mujahedin further.

The regime is likely to use this framework as an avenue to seek direct and authoritative negotiations with the mujahedin to work out the details of the procedure for how elections are held. Negotiations might be held indirectly and at low levels between the regime and the mujahedin and other centers of power in Afghanistan. These negotiations are likely to be protracted, as they would deal with a number of difficult problems. They might not produce agreement. There are
many thorny issues involved, such as how many delegates will be assigned to different regions that are controlled by different forces.

Even if these problems are overcome and elections are held, the outcome may not reflect the will of the Afghan people exercised freely. In the current environment, it is likely that in the mujahedin-held areas, the mujahedin would "win," while in the regime-held areas the regime would "win." In any area, the ones who have such resources as guns and money are the ones who control important institutions. Also, internal conflicts among various mujahedin groups in the areas they control cannot be ruled out. Such conflicts could threaten the elections.

A second option is to retain Najib as president during the transition while effective power is transferred to a broadly acceptable figure. Reportedly, this plan has been proposed by Moscow's UN ambassador Yuli Vorontsov. There was a period of uncertainty in June and July of 1990 as to whether Vorontsov's plan was authoritative, reflecting the Soviet government's view. However, during the August ministerial meeting between Secretary of State Baker and Foreign Minister Shevardnaze, the Soviets endorsed the Vorontsov formula. Although there are significant uncertainties on how the transition administration is to be selected, the Soviets would like the UN to play a key role in negotiating the process for choosing the transition team.

It will be difficult to sell such a plan to a large number of mujahedin commanders and leaders. The same is likely to be true of other nonregime power centers in Afghanistan. Hatred for Najib is widespread in Afghanistan. He is personally identified with many of the horrendous human rights abuses and with the Soviet occupation in which some one million Afghans lost their lives. Given the Afghan sentiments against Najib, only substantial and united pressure by the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia might persuade a majority of the leaders to support such a formula. The supporters of the former king and most of the commanders would remain opposed. The practical result would be further fragmentation of the Afghan resistance and continued limited fighting in Afghanistan. If a majority of Afghan mujahedin reject such an approach, it could lead to U.S. disengagement from the Afghan conflict. The mujahedin rejection of a U.S.-Soviet plan would make continued U.S. military and economic assistance politically unsustainable. Even with U.S. disengagement, the Soviets and regional players—Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—are likely to continue to remain involved.

A third option that can better facilitate free and fair elections is to have, first, a transfer of power from the Najib government to a new interim government in Kabul. This interim government could be
either neutral or one composed of all the elements in the Afghan power structure. This government would in turn organize national elections with UN supervision and monitoring. The tricky issue in this approach is the process for determining the composition of the interim administration. This could be achieved by indirect discussions and an exchange of lists among the Afghan centers of power, namely, the Pakistan-based leaders, the key commanders, the tribal leaders, the supporters of the former king, and the Iran-based parties. Once an agreement is reached, it might then be ratified by a broadly representative group of Afghans assembled by the UN or some other international institution. In the three-stage U.S. plan, such a council constituted the third stage.

Such a process is likely to produce an interim government that is not dominated by either the Pakistan-based parties or the PDPA. It may well be composed mostly of technocrats but might include commanders and military officers who are broadly acceptable. In addition, a framework to give the agreement balance—a necessary condition to facilitate Soviet and mujahedin agreement—could consist of two stages. The first stage would include the following steps:

- The simultaneous dissolution of the Najib regime and the AIG.
- The takeover by the agreed interim administration in Kabul.
- The disbanding of KHAD, the hated security police, and the decapitation and reorganization of the armed forces and the interior police force (the Sarandoy).
- The establishment of a judicial process for dealing with those charged with war crimes.
- An end to military assistance to all Afghans.
- The drafting of a new constitution.
- The establishment of a program for returning refugees.

In the second stage, the interim administration would hold elections for a parliament or a loya jirgah with UN help and supervision. This could take place some six months to a year after the formation of the interim administration. All Afghans could participate in the elections, and the resulting parliament or jirgah would decide on a more permanent government for Afghanistan.

The third option is preferred by some mujahedin leaders. Several mujahedin leaders were favorable to such an approach before the Soviet withdrawal; after the Soviets left, however, the assumption that Kabul was likely to fall quickly brought about a change in their attitude. The difficulties they are facing today might encourage them to look favorably at such an approach. This will be even more likely if
the party leaders—who are very dependent on foreign sources of support—felt that assistance would cease without a settlement. The Pakistani policy will be critically important here. Islamabad is very divided, and it will require American leadership to gain its support.

How will option three for elections be received among the power holders in Afghanistan? Again, many commanders are likely to favor such an approach. They like elections, and a weak government such as the one envisaged in this plan will provide them with maximum autonomy. The former king and his supporters are also likely to be very favorable. Many technocrats have good ties with Zahir, and they have done badly in the AIG. The attitude of the Iran-based groups will depend on Iran’s stand. Iranian hostility to the AIG has been in part due to a perception that it was dominated by Saudi Arabia and excluded the Shiiites.

The Soviets are in a strong position to deliver the cooperation of Najib, who is critically dependent on Soviet help. A political settlement offers a face-saving way out for both Najib and the Soviets. In addition, it saves Moscow resources that it badly needs for other purposes and allows a more orderly change of regime on its border. The instability in Soviet Central Asia should encourage it further to accept a political settlement. But these factors might not be sufficient to produce the required changes in Soviet policy. More pressure on the battlefield and in the discussions with Moscow might be needed to produce the necessary flexibility.
VII. CONCLUSION

When the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, nearly all participants and observers expected a mujahedin military victory. That did not happen. Although the situation in Afghanistan is fluid, a political settlement is now the most likely outcome. A military victory would be very satisfactory for the mujahedin, who have paid a very high price in their decade-long struggle, and for those who have supported them, but it is unlikely in the foreseeable future. Some of the reasons for this are:

- The weakness of the AIG.
- The lack of progress in the war.
- The unhappiness of the many Afghans within and outside the resistance with the political leaders.
- The rise of Afghan nationalism.
- The changes in the international environment, especially in U.S.-Soviet relations, which decreased Western interest in a protracted Afghan war.
- Soviet interest in a political settlement, as the Najib regime remains weak and a burden on Moscow.
- Increased international pressure for a political settlement.

There are important practical and psychological problems that must be overcome to reach a reasonable political settlement that allows Afghan self-determination. But these problems are not unmanageable, especially if the Americans and Soviets cooperate. Whether there is a political settlement or not, the prospects for the AIG are not good. It has failed to achieve its objective, and its relative importance has declined. It is unlikely to dominate postwar Afghanistan. Lack of victory on the battlefield and continued internal division within the AIG has weakened its relative position. Ultimately it is likely to fragment or be replaced.

Without a political settlement, or if one is tried and it fails, the war in Afghanistan will continue—perhaps for years to come. The commanders will take matters into their own hands. Many elements from the regime and the mujahedin are likely to make deals with each other and form new coalitions. Afghanistan will face uncertain prospects and Pakistani instability will increase.
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