Islamic Fundamentalism in Afghanistan

Its Character and Prospects

Graham E. Fuller

RAND | NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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PREFACE

This report is one of a five-part series consisting of four reports analyzing Islamic fundamentalism in the Northern Tier countries (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) and a fifth integrative study that seeks to establish common patterns and characteristics in the experience of all those states with fundamentalism.

The series includes:

- *Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan: Its Character and Prospects*, by Graham E. Fuller (R-3964-USDP).
- Forthcoming research by Sabri Sayari and Nikola Schahgaldian on fundamentalism in Turkey and Iran.
- *Islamic Fundamentalism in the Northern Tier Countries: An Integrative View*, by Graham E. Fuller (R-3966-USDP).
- This report.

The purpose of the studies is to examine the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism: its origins, its historical basis, and its relation to the political, economic, and social institutions of each country. The studies attempt to elucidate the likely character of fundamentalist policies in those countries—excluding Iran, which is already a fundamentalist regime—were Islamic radicals to come to power. The role of Iran's influence in each of these countries is also examined. Finally, the studies examine the implications for U.S. policy and the possible options the United States might exercise in shaping its relations with those countries in the future.

Although this study limits its scope to Northern Tier countries, its conclusions are of relevance to other countries in the Muslim world.

The research was conducted within the International Security and Defense Strategy program of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. It was prepared for the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and should be of interest to members of the U.S. defense and foreign policy communities concerned with the Middle East, U.S. relations with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, U.S. support for the Afghan mujahidin, and the future of Islamic radicalism in the Islamic world in general.

SUMMARY

The Afghan fundamentalist (Islamist) movement, which has been active in Afghan politics since the late 1960s, has been powerfully reinforced by the Soviet invasion and, subsequently, by the mujahidin's sensational victory over the Red Army. In the absence of such a struggle, Afghan fundamentalism would have remained a distinct but politically marginal force in Afghan politics.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIST STRENGTH

The strength of the Islamist movement in Afghanistan today rests largely on its military capabilities and on the strength of its political organization. The movement is not, in other words, a popular one, although it does command widespread respect for its role in the liberation of the country from Soviet occupation. It derives particular legitimacy from having provided the ideological spearhead for that struggle, radical Islam, which transcends mere nationalism. The Islamist movement, however, had actively opposed communist influence in Afghanistan nearly five years before the communist coup and takeover began. The movement thus occupies a central place in Afghan politics today.

That all Afghan mujahidin parties today have a religious basis was underscored during the anti-Soviet jihad, or holy war—a conflict that helped define the Islamic orientation of contemporary Afghan politics. Hence, there is a strong likelihood that the political removal or fall of Najibullah's People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) will be followed by the establishment of some type of Islamic republic—one that is committed in some measure to the implementation of Islamic law (the Shari'a). Possible Islamic models from which Afghanistan might draw include the Islamic governments of Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The actual character of the new Afghan government, however, could vary considerably, depending on who dominates it and on the nature of specific policies and methods of implementation.

Of the seven Sunni mujahidin parties in Afghanistan today, four are fundamentalist-ideological-Islamist in character, and two of these four are radical in their beliefs and operating style. Together, these four parties have played a far more integral role in the Soviet conflict than have the more traditional parties. Indeed, a key contributor to

the Islamists' strength has been the large measure of support that the radical Islamist parties have derived from Pakistan by virtue of their military performance and zeal. Such support was bolstered by former Pakistani President Mohammed Zia ul-Haqq, who found the politics of the Afghan Islamist parties in consonance with his own Islamization campaign in Pakistan. The Afghan Islamists, for their part, enjoyed the backing of Pakistani religious parties, who in turn were strong pillars of support for Zia. Zia also understood that the ideological orientation of the Islamist parties would largely inhibit them from encouraging Pashtun ethnic separatism in Pakistan—an Afghan policy of nearly 30 years' standing that had engendered considerable tension between the two countries. Islamists disapprove of narrow ethnic orientation as a basis for the state and instead support broader political groupings based on a common Islamic outlook.

The close cooperation between Pakistan and the Afghan mujahidin against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan had one important and immediate consequence: the long-standing hostility between Pakistan and Afghanistan has abated considerably. Benazir Bhutto's brief term as Prime Minister following Zia's death, despite her more secular policies, did not significantly weaken Pakistan's ties with the Afghan mujahidin. Fundamentalist parties in Pakistan will continue to support Afghan fundamentalist groups, regardless of the policies of Islamabad in the future.

WILL THE FUNDAMENTALISTS COME TO POWER?

Ironically, the removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan has weakened one of the principal sources of Islamist strength in Afghanistan—for while all mujahidin parties may agree on the desirability of an Islamic government, consensus on power sharing is an entirely different matter. There are in fact deep rifts among the parties, not only between traditionalists and Islamists but also among Islamists themselves. These divisions, which reflect ideological, regional, and ethnic differences as well as conflicts between personalities, are not likely to be readily resolved in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal.

The strength of the Islamist parties rests on other factors as well. For example:

- Pakistani and Saudi preferences with respect to the distribution of aid among the mujahidin have served to strengthen the Islamists by providing them with greater opportunity to distribute their financial and military largess and hence to attract

a broader following—including support among the military commanders.

- The mujahidin's use of Pakistan as a political base of operations—a factor that has skewed the true three-way power relationships inside Afghanistan among the parties, their local mujahidin commanders, and the populace at large—has worked to the Islamists' advantage.

WEAKNESSES OF THE ISLAMIST PARTIES

While the Islamists are still the single strongest element in Afghanistan's political equation today, some of their strength derives from the location of their political base in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, where Pakistan's own political influence over the mujahidin can be maximized. As the struggle moves out of the anti-Soviet, anticommunist phase and into a phase of civil war, the influence of the special political climate of Peshawar will diminish, and with it, the influence of Pakistan itself over the struggle. Other factors that may contribute to the possible weakening of Islamist influence are as follows:

- The Islamists lack a charismatic national figure—like, for example, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini—who will serve as a natural leader.
- If financial support to specific mujahidin parties is severed in pursuit of a political solution in Kabul, it is unclear how much strength the Islamist parties would retain. While the Islamists' ideological and organizational strengths remain significant in Peshawar, an internal power struggle inside Afghanistan would present a new set of variables that would affect the ultimate success of one party over another.
- The Islamist parties are by no means united within themselves.
- Because tribalism and regional loyalties in Afghanistan were largely subordinated in the decade-long effort of all national elements to expel the Soviet Union, a permanently enhanced sense of national unity may now exist. On the other hand, the expulsion of the Soviet enemy may refocus Afghan politics on older and more parochial issues. Tribalism and regionalism are already reasserting themselves, essentially working against the radical Islamist parties.
- Mujahidin commanders inside the country maintain only tenuous ties with the Peshawar parties. Hence they may not fully

share the political views of these parties and may be increasingly inclined to act independently or to pursue their own agendas if alternative sources of aid weaken the party hold.

- The highly disproportionate representation of ethnic Pashtuns among the refugee population in Pakistan skews our understanding of the political preferences of the broader population as a whole inside Afghanistan—especially when Pakistani refugee camps are used as a basis for public opinion findings, press coverage, straw polls, and identification of political attitudes. Current Islamist strength in the Peshawar environment might well weaken once politics shift inside the country.

The Islamists are therefore likely to come to power only by military means. The moderate parties in particular are concerned that the most radical Islamist faction, Hizb-e-Islami (the Islamic Party), led by Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, may attempt to use Leninist tactics to eliminate other mujahidin leaders by assassination in order to secure power—a fear that is based more on the personality of Gulbuddin than on the character of his Islamic ideology per se. While such an attempt cannot be ruled out, it is highly unlikely that a minority radical Islamist party could rule Afghanistan over the long term; the past decade has demonstrated the immense problems facing a minority ideological party attempting to do just that. Any radical Islamic leadership that sought to rule successfully would have to come to terms with the other political and ideological elements within the country.

WHAT WOULD A RADICAL ISLAMIST LEADERSHIP MEAN FOR U.S. INTERESTS?

Any Islamist regime in Afghanistan, were it to come to power, would differ sharply from Iran's Islamist regime in many important respects. First, such a regime would be firmly Sunni rather than Shi'ite in character, suggesting a greater ability to work with elements of secular state power as well as a less apocalyptic, oppression- and martyr-oriented outlook. Afghan Islamists, furthermore, lack the depth of hostility toward the United States that has characterized Iranian politics. The Afghan Islamists in fact have almost no formal grievances against any past U.S. role in Afghanistan; to the contrary, however much they may dislike U.S. culture, the Islamists are well aware that the United States played a pivotal role in the anti-Soviet struggle. Afghan political culture as a whole also tends to be far less xenophobic than that of Iran—simply because Afghanistan has never

been dominated and manipulated by foreign powers as consistently as was Iran throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nonetheless, Afghan Islamists share with other Islamist world movements the same concerns over the threat to the Islamic way of life posed by Western—and especially American—culture. Essentially, the Islamists perceive the United States as representing secularism, permissiveness, hedonism, individualism, social decadence, moral relativism, and cultural imperialism—all of which they see as deeply corrosive to the establishment of the virtuous Islamic society. Any Islamic Afghan regime will thus oppose such influences inside Afghanistan and will limit Afghan contact with American cultural influences.

In addition, any Islamist regime in Kabul will gravitate strongly toward nonalignment and exclusion of Western as well as Soviet influence in the region. Such a regime would therefore oppose a U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf states, in Pakistan, or anywhere else in the Muslim world. Similarly, it would be likely to support the cause of Islamic minorities in regions such as India and the USSR. As an example, major ethnic elements in Afghanistan, such as Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen, are heavily represented in the USSR—a phenomenon that the Soviets have attempted to exploit in efforts to draw Afghanistan closer to the USSR. Yet such tactics have not assisted Soviet policy and in fact have likely backfired; ties between ethnic elements on both sides of the Soviet border are more likely to draw these populations closer together, resulting in an effort to diminish Moscow's influence and to broaden the options of the Muslim populations of the USSR.

Finally, an Islamist Afghan regime will be strongly conscious of "Western imperialism" and will be a strong advocate of the "have-nots" in "North vs. South" issues.

Despite these positions, however, an Islamist Afghanistan will have limited opportunity or reason to directly attack U.S. interests, since such interests in Afghanistan will be highly limited in their scope. Afghan Islamists would unquestionably support the cause of fundamentalist parties in Pakistan, which could bring them into conflict with U.S. policies there. Unlike pre-1978 Afghan governments, however, Afghan Islamists are unlikely to support ethnic separatism in Pakistan.

An Islamist Afghanistan will share some philosophical interests with Iran, but it would not be likely to cooperate closely with Iran on anything other than broad international Islamic issues. Sunni funda-

mentalists will in fact resent Iran's support of the Afghan Shi'a, who will represent Iran's chief instrument of influence in Afghanistan, and there is likely to be some degree of rivalry between a Sunni and a Shi'ite Islamic republic. Iran's bid for influence in Afghanistan has nonetheless risen dramatically since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and it perceives itself as a major player in future Afghan politics. Part of Iran's goal here is to thwart Saudi interests.

Afghan radical Islamists have never employed assassination against the USSR abroad during its entire nine-year struggle, and there is little reason to believe that this will be an element of Afghan policy in the future. One salient exception might be in Pakistani internal politics, where the communist PDPA, through its own secret service (KHAD and WAD), has set a precedent for carrying out terrorist acts inside Pakistan. Islamist political infighting between Afghanistan and Pakistan might, as in the past, tend to recognize no borders here, and hence such policies may continue.

SCENARIOS FOR CHANGE IN THE AFGHAN REGIME

The specific means by which the PDPA government in Kabul comes to an end, be it by political compromise or by collapse (now a less likely scenario), will have a decisive bearing on who comes to power and on many future power relationships. One of the following scenarios is most plausible:

- A broad mujahidin political alliance might bring about the fall of Kabul by political and military means. This scenario would bode well for the future of a quasi-representative government in Kabul that would embrace most Afghan mujahidin political factions. Such unity, however, has thus far lain beyond the grasp of the political parties. Hence, as various parties and military commanders jockey for a dominant position in an eventual political compromise, the situation will be more likely to revert to an internal power struggle in which local military power would prove decisive.
- The mujahidin might fail to maintain a united front over the coming year and thus prove unable to bring about the PDPA's collapse. Under these circumstances, both the United States and Pakistan will ultimately feel compelled to seek a political solution—probably in conjunction with the USSR, which places a premium on almost any negotiated, as opposed to military, resolution. While the traditional mujahidin parties would probably accept some limited PDPA participation, the Islamists

will almost certainly reject any hint of communist participation and would thus be likely to carry on the struggle against a communist presence in Kabul. (A possible exception is Gulbuddin Hikmetyar's Hizb-e-Islami, which could conceivably seek a position in a compromise government, even with communists, in efforts to carry on the struggle from within.)

If the external powers and the other parties successfully excluded the Islamists from a coalition, considerable long-range instability, if not continued fighting, would probably result. The Islamists are best moderated over the longer run through inclusion and cooption into the political process—as is gradually taking place in Egypt. Prolonged failure by the Peshawar leadership to dislodge the PDPA and to organize a meaningful and effective interim political regime, however, will sharply weaken the overall role of the mujahidin parties and will threaten to render them an almost marginal element in Afghan politics as power reverts to the military commanders. Two scenarios might then ensue:

- The PDPA might strike a compromise with selected local mujahidin commanders, resulting in a de facto political coalition that excludes the Peshawar leadership. The total exclusion of the Peshawar party leadership would leave in its wake a broadly unstable situation. Many of the parties, especially the Islamists, would continue the armed struggle under these circumstances, albeit with presumably dwindling resources. Pakistan would, in addition, be unlikely to support such a struggle if some accommodation had been reached inside Afghanistan; Pakistan places high priority on the return of the refugees.
- An internal coup within the Kabul regime might occur, with a new leadership inviting many of the mujahidin leaders to join them. Specifically which parties would join would depend heavily on the character of the coup group in Kabul. Again, failure to include the Islamists would lead to the instability described above.

In short, the Islamists' prominence in Afghan politics owes much to the particular circumstances of the communist takeover, the Soviet invasion, ideological leadership, and the strong support of Pakistan. The Islamists have established a "permanent" place in Afghan politics. Yet their position is likely to change as a new, postcommunist phase begins in Afghanistan.

Although the probability that radical Islamists will exercise exclusive power in Afghanistan is slight, they will always be a factor in Afghan

politics, and their exclusion from governance could be the root of prolonged civil conflict. And while radical Islamists will remain distinctly cool to the United States, they are unlikely to vehemently oppose it under any circumstances. The interrelationship between Islamist parties in Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, could breed renewed conflict between these two countries in the future.

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1. AFGHAN FUNDAMENTALISM: ITS CHARACTER AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

ISLAM IN THE SUBCONTINENT: A SEPARATE TRADITION

Islam and fundamentalism in Afghanistan cannot be fully understood outside the context of Islam in Pakistan and in the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, this region of the world represents something of an Islamic unit, with its individual national expressions forming part of a cohesive whole. Islam also took root in Afghanistan and India somewhat later than was the case in the Arab world, doing so by means of the Sufi mystical tradition, which helped render the region more susceptible to Islam despite the firm hold, to that point, of Buddhism and Hinduism.

Islam in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan (which, of course, did not come into existence until 1947) also shared the common experience of having been cut off physically from mainstream Sunni tradition in the Middle East. This occurred when the Shi'ite Safavids seized power in Iran in 1500 and established Iran's first major Shi'ite dynasty—thus severing the entire Muslim world east of Iran from direct contact with the chief centers of Islam in the Arab world. This isolation was not without its advantages, however; Indian Muslims were thereby forced to develop their own centers of Islamic education and training, which soon began to command a regional authority that has endured to this day. "Indic Islam" has a long and venerable tradition, exerting a profound influence on present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan; indeed, we cannot speak of the Islamic movement in Afghanistan today without making reference to Pakistan's Islamic politics and parties.

Finally, it is important that we define what we mean by the term *Islamist*—which is to be sharply distinguished from the idea of traditional Islam or from the Shi'ite clerical regime in Tehran. This study uses *Islamist* or *radical Islam* in preference to the more common (and misleading) word *fundamentalist* because Islamists in many ways represent a profoundly modernist movement. Theirs is not a simple desire to return to the early days of Islamic society, but instead represents an effort to reinterpret the basic meaning of the Islamic message for contemporary society. Islamists consider that traditional Islam—with its formalistic training of the clergy and its tradition of clerical subservience and compromise with the nonvirtuous Islamic

state—has failed to preserve the essential meaning of Islam in life and society. Hence they deem it necessary to restore this meaning and mission in order for the truly virtuous Islamic life to be properly maintained in the context of modern Muslim societies—free of what is perceived as the corrupting influence of a secular, individualistic, hedonistic, and permissive Western culture.

At the same time, Islamists perceive Islam as wholly compatible with modern technology and secular education; the majority of contemporary Islamists emanate not from the madrasah—the traditional center of Islamic learning—but from secular universities, most with training in technical subjects such as medicine and engineering. Their vision is thus religious in its goals but profoundly political in its methods. In fact, many Islamists, such as Gulbuddin Hikmetyar of Hizb-e-Islami (the Islamic Party), deliberately use the non-Islamic term *party*—a term best known in the region as applied to the communists—to reflect a new, nontraditional approach to Islam. Islamists similarly speak of their party and movement as an ideology and not a religion; the state, and not the clergy, is their reference point and their means of implementing their ideal.[1]

The appendix provides a detailed examination of the various mujahidin parties, their leadership, and their characteristics. In more general terms, it is fair to say that *all* the significant mujahidin parties are essentially religious, and all espouse an Islamic republic as an end goal. Islam has been the primary ideology and unifying factor among all these parties in the course of the struggle against the Soviet occupation; secular parties have attracted no significant following, especially the Left, which was discredited by the communist takeover. Within the spectrum of Islam, however, these parties differ significantly in their makeup and approach. Traditional analysis has divided the seven Sunni parties into four "Islamist" and three "traditional" parties:[2]

Islamist

- *Hizb-e-Islami* (the Islamic Party), led by Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, primarily Pashtun in membership and radical in character.

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[1]See O. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1986, pp. 4–7.

[2]This breakdown draws heavily on the scheme set forth by Roy, p. 219.

- *Hizb-e-Islami* (the Islamic Party), led by Yunis Khalis (a break-away group from Hikmetyar), primarily Pashtun in membership but more moderate in character.
- *Ittihad-e-Islami* (the Islamic Union), led by Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, mainly Pashtun and radical in character as well as Saudi-oriented.
- *Jam'iyyat-e-Islami* (the Islamic Association), led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, with membership mainly drawn from northern Afghanistan (non-Pashtun) and more moderate in character.

Traditionalist

- *Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami* (Islamic Revolutionary Movement), led by Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, primarily Pashtun in membership and drawing more on traditional clergy.
- *Jabha-ye-Nejat-e-Milli* (National Salvation Front), led by Sebghatullah Mujaddidi, mainly Pashtun in membership and Sufi oriented.
- *Mahaz-e-Islami* (the Islamic Front), led by Ahmad Gailani, mainly Pashtun and Sufi oriented as well as pro-royalist.

In addition, there are a variety of Shi'ite parties—as many as ten at present, but with only a few having substantial political clout. Eight of these Shi'ite parties are religious and oriented toward Iran but are not necessarily firm in their support of the political line of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Two Shi'ite parties are not affiliated with Iran.

2. AFGHAN FUNDAMENTALISM: ITS ROOTS OF LEGITIMACY

The Afghan fundamentalist, or Islamist, movement enjoys a powerful base of legitimacy in Afghan politics owing to three key factors: (1) the historic role of Afghanistan as "defender of the faith" in the Indian subcontinent; (2) the Islamists' opposition to communism in Afghanistan in the early 1970s, which forced many Afghan leaders to work from Pakistan against communist influence (the 1978 communist coup in Afghanistan overwhelmingly vindicated the Islamists' initial fear of communist influence and intentions); and (3) the preeminent role of Islamist and religious parties in the struggle against Soviet occupation.

AFGHANISTAN'S ROLE OF DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

Afghanistan has had a unique and long-established tradition as defender of Islam in the subcontinent. In the 19th century, for example, India (including present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh) was under the rule of the British Raj, the Turkish Ottoman Empire controlled vast portions of the Arab world, and Iran was helpless in the face of Russian and British domination—but Afghanistan was one of a handful of truly independent Muslim countries in the world. Afghanistan alone had maintained its own independence from foreign control since 1747, and it thus enjoyed respect and recognition throughout the Muslim world. Afghanistan's Durrani Empire in the 19th century was actually the second largest Muslim empire in the world at that time, ceding first place only to the Ottomans.[1] In the 19th century, Kabul helped foment Islamic political uprisings in India and was itself seen as one of the few places of refuge for those Muslims in British India who felt it was religiously untenable to live in a "godless" (British-run) state. Kabul also struck several severe blows against British power in the region, most notably by repelling what turned out to be a disastrous invasion of Afghanistan by the British army in 1842.[2]

[1]L. Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1973, p. 334.

[2]Ibid. p. 400.

As early as the 18th and 19th centuries, then, Afghanistan was an independent Muslim power to be feared and respected—a factor that greatly strengthened its sense of mission in conducting jihad (or holy war) against nonbelievers.

With the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the spread of Soviet power to the Islamic regions of Soviet Central Asia, a Muslim conflict (the so-called Basmachi rebellion) broke out against Moscow in the early 1920s. Soviet troops waged a decade-long struggle against these forces, many of whom took refuge in Afghanistan. That struggle, coupled with Afghanistan's longer-term role as a refuge for rebellious Muslims in British India, further secured Afghanistan's reputation as a haven for Islamic political activists in the region.[3]

OPPOSITION TO COMMUNISM IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER DAOUD (1973–1978)

Afghan religious activists, who at that time were using the Egyptian-inspired name of Muslim Brotherhood, staked out early opposition to communist activity within Afghanistan—opposition that would powerfully serve their interests following the Soviet invasion. These religious parties were deeply concerned with the growing influence of the pro-Soviet Parcham (communist) party—and with the critical role that this party had played in the coup of Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud, who overthrew the monarchy in 1973 and came to power as president.[4] They were also dismayed by the increasing growth in the power of the state at the expense of Islamic institutions. Yet even the Islamists' darkest visions were not likely to have foreseen that these same communists, by April 1978, would actually be capable of organizing their own successful coup d'état, imposing brutal repression and Marxist "reforms" and eventually inviting the Red Army to invade the country. When the unthinkable happened, however, the Islamists had clear claim to a decade or more of anticommunist activism—which vindicated them in their struggle and helped them ascend to the leadership of the anticommunist cause.

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[3]See E. Naby, "The Changing Role of Islam as a Unifying Force in Afghanistan," in A. Banuazizi and M. Weiner (eds.), *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1986, p. 126.

[4]See A. Rashid, "The Afghan Resistance: Its Background, Its Nature, and the Problem of Unity," in R. Klass (ed.), *The Great Game Revisited*, Freedom House, New York, 1987, p. 209.

Many of these Islamist leaders paid a price for such agitation against the communists and President Daoud himself. Some, for example, were arrested, forced underground, or compelled to work against Daoud from Pakistan.[5] The Pakistani government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was happy to support these anti-Daoud Islamists as a form of counterpressure against Daoud's support of an independent state of Pashtunistan in Pakistan.

LEADERSHIP OF THE SUCCESSFUL ANTI-SOVIET JIHAD

Ultimately it was the Soviet invasion that breathed real political life into the Afghan fundamentalist movement—for it was only through this supreme challenge, which placed the very independence of the country at stake, that Islamist forces emerged at the helm of the resistance movement.

In fact, precommunist Afghanistan had had few other political parties; tribalism, regionalism, and ethnicity had dominated the political scene at that time. The political spectrum ran only to extremes, with political parties in the last decade of Afghan independence consisting primarily of communists—both pro-Soviet and Maoist—and of fiercely anticommunist religious parties that were essentially both underground and illegal. More moderate reformists had no alternative vehicles through which to operate.

The very character of the enemy also contributed to the legitimization of the Islamist struggle. For this was no longer just a civil war; the Red Army as a symbol of an ideology espousing international atheism constituted a critical threat to Afghanistan. Hence the proclamation of a jihad—initially sparked by gross communist excesses in the first year of the new regime—gained renewed impetus as it came to be directed against Soviet communist nonbelievers; this was no mere political hyperbole but now a fully justified call to repel Soviet power.[6]

The Soviet invasion served as a catalyst in yet another respect: it heightened the role of Islamic politics in Pakistan. Although links between the two groups had been strong since the early 1970s, Pakistani Islamic politics were now more directly interjected into Afghan Islamic politics than ever before; indeed, Pakistan's religious parties were among the main supporters of the mujahidin in

[5]See E. Naby, "Islam Within the Afghan Resistance," *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 10, No. 2., April 1988, p. 793.

[6]He who conducts a *jihad* is a *mujahid* (plural: *mujahidin).*

Pakistan. The Afghan mujahidin, for their part, found both a sanctuary and a base of operations in Pakistan; Islamabad served as a conduit and referee for all military and financial support from the outside. And the Pakistani Islamists—who lent enthusiastic backing to Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haqq's anti-Soviet, pro-Islamic policies—became important political allies for Zia's regime. Islam was now the central ideological focus of Afghan politics—a development that could not fail to have critical implications for the future.

3. MODERNIZATION AND THE FATE OF ISLAM

Afghan Islam as a distinct phenomenon did not really emerge until the late 18th or early 19th century. Before 1747, a distinct state of Afghanistan had not yet come into being. It was largely the opening created by the deteriorating power of Afghanistan's former overlords—the Safavids in Iran and the Moghul Empire in India—that enabled an independent Afghan state to emerge. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, Afghan rulers began to involve the clergy in their efforts to gain power over the country at large; in the process, the clergy inevitably came to be drawn into national politics.[1] Clerical involvement in national politics, however, naturally impelled Afghanistan's rulers to attempt to use Islam to their own political ends—an enduring trend that has consistently troubled Islamists in recent decades.

Since Afghanistan is a multinational state—albeit one historically dominated by the Pashtuns[2]—its rulers clearly perceived that Islam was an important unifying ideology for the country. Hence, the founder of the modern Afghan state, Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1881–1901), declared himself to be head of an Islamic state and arrogated to himself the right to be the sole interpreter of Islam.[3] Abdur Rahman's assertion of his religious authority was not the only blow to the authority and independence of the clergy, however; the religious scholars ('ulama) as a whole were enveloped in the state apparatus, rendering them virtual employees of the state. Their independent religious land endowments (awqaf) were taken over by the state, as was the entire system of religious education. The development of centralized state power begun by Abdur Rahman moved forward under vari-

[1]M. N. Shahrani, "State Building and Social Fragmentation in Afghanistan: A Historical Perspective," in A. Banuazizi and M. Weiner (eds.), *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York, 1986, p. 34.

[2]According to 1978 figures, the Pashtuns represented the largest ethnic element in the country, with some 39 percent of the population, followed by the Tajiks (Persian speakers) at 26 percent, the Hazaras (Shi'a) at 10 percent, the Uzbeks at 10 percent, the Turkmen at 3 percent, and others at 12 percent. Pashtun domination has not been based simply on numerical predominance, however; they also represent the most "martial," tribally oriented element within Afghanistan that has militarily and politically dominated most of the country for many hundreds of years. For population figures, see M. Sliwinski, "Afghanistan: The Decimation of a People," *Orbis*, Winter 1989, p. 46.

[3]See Shahrani, p. 38.

ous rulers with occasional fits and starts, culminating in the disastrous attempt by the Afghan communists to impose, through Marxist-Leninist ideology, the greatest centralized control the country had ever seen.

The status and influence of Islam in Afghanistan also weakened in the 19th century with the isolation and decline of Afghan Islamic educational institutions, which had served as a key source of Islamic authority. Afghanistan was simply no longer producing religious leaders who could forcefully oppose the state apparatus that was gradually extending its reach over the country as a whole.[4]

Islamists have therefore been long concerned with the gradual erosion of Islam in Afghanistan over the past 100 years. But it was not until Afghan communism sparked an anticommunist jihad that Islamist elements found the unique circumstances which, for a period, promised to provide them with a chance to attain national power. Following the Soviet withdrawal, however, the anarchy of traditional Afghan politics seems to have thwarted even this singular opportunity for an Islamist victory on the battlefield.

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[4]See E. Naby, "The Changing Role of Islam as a Unifying Force in Afghanistan," in Banuazizi and Weiner, p. 128.

4. FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON AFGHAN FUNDAMENTALISM

Foreign Islamic links have exerted considerable influence on Afghan Islamic politics and will continue to do so owing to the international religious ties of Afghan Islamists. Chief among these influences are Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, although Egypt has held sway as well—not as a result of any government policy but rather because of the intellectual and ideological influence of the Muslim Brotherhood movement there.

PAKISTANI INFLUENCE

The decade-long jihad against the USSR may have transformed 30 years of conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan into a relationship of newfound cordiality. The prominent role of Afghan Islamist forces in the anti-Soviet struggle and their predicted role in an eventual compromise government should have a direct impact on the historically fractious issue of Pashtunistan—the source of tension that has dominated Afghan-Pakistani relations since the initial establishment of the Pakistani state in 1947.[1]

This sea change in Afghan-Pakistani relations owes its origins in part to President Zia's courageous and unwavering support of the mujahidin movement. Zia's policies entailed not only the generous acceptance onto Pakistani soil of over three million Afghan refugees during the course of the war, but also the willingness—at considerable risk to Pakistan—to facilitate the passage of international monies and arms support to mujahidin groups, much to the ire of the USSR.

[1]Under the British Raj in India in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Pashtun-dominated independent Afghan state constantly sought to support the cause of fellow Pashtuns inside the borders of British India (now Pakistan) and even to include them within the borders of the Afghan state. When the Muslim state of Pakistan came into being, Afghanistan's interests in the Pashtun population in no way diminished, even if in theory the new Muslim neighbor should have facilitated handling of the issue. (Additional tensions also included provision of arms to Pakistan by the United States but not to Afghanistan and constant Afghanistan interest in the problems of landlocked nations, which Pakistan saw as a veiled threat to its own territorial integrity. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see A. Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider's Account*, London, Pergamon-Brassey, 1988, p. 80.)

Throughout the anti-Soviet struggle, Zia showed a distinct preference for the more Islamist-oriented mujahidin groups—but this was not merely a reflection of Zia's own commitment to Islamic policies inside Pakistan. Rather, Zia understood that Pashtunistan, as an ethnic separatist movement, was ideologically anathema to the Islamists, for whom statehood must be based on common religion rather than ethnicity. Thus, Zia knew that if the Islamists were ever to hold positions of power in a future Afghan regime, the divisive Pashtunistan issue would be far less likely to resurface.[2] Hence, while the root of the Pashtunistan conflict is not likely to recede—it is a geopolitical reality reflecting de facto division of the Pashtuns across two states—the political inclination in Afghanistan to exploit that issue may well decline, especially if an Islamically oriented regime prevails.

A second factor that is likely to reduce the salience of the Pashtunistan issue is the considerably diminished influence in Afghanistan of left-wing parties, which historically had been among the chief advocates of Pashtun independence. The Pashtunistan cause has been much discredited by the generally pro-Soviet role most of its chief proponents have played.

Pakistan will unquestionably wield greater external influence upon the future of Islam in Afghanistan than any other state for the following reasons:

- Pakistan is strategically Afghanistan's most important neighbor. Kabul and Islamabad are geographically far closer to each other than are Kabul and Tehran. Afghanistan basically looks to the east rather than to the west in its geopolitical orientation, and its major concentrations of population lie close to Pakistan rather than to Iran.
- Pakistan is in a position to interfere in Afghan politics—especially religious politics—more effectively than is any other state.[3]
- Pakistan has historically served as a place of refuge for most Islamist refugees from Afghanistan owing both to its proximity

[2]Indeed, the Islamist mujahidin perceive the Pashtunistan issue as the creation of the Afghan communists supported by the Soviet Union as a policy designed to destabilize Islamic Pakistan.

[3]Pakistan already has an established history of such intervention with its support since 1973 for Islamist mujahidin leader Gulbuddin Hikmetyar—including deliberate sponsorship of Hikmetyar's religiously based uprising in Panjshir Valley near Kabul in 1975 as a pressure point against Kabul's anti-Pakistani policies.

and, to an even greater extent, to its strong Sunni Islamic orientation (as contrasted with Iran's Shi'ite orientation).

- The Islamist Jama'at-i-Islami-i-Pakistan (JIP) party of Pakistan is the intellectual progenitor of much of Islamist thinking among Afghan mujahidin today.[4] The JIP will undoubtedly remain in close contact with Afghan Islamists and will support their cause from Pakistan. Such support was particularly strong under General Zia, when Zia-JIP relations ran high.

Under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, relations between Pakistan and the Afghan fundamentalist parties came under slight strain. Bhutto and her secularist party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), were less sympathetic to the Afghan fundamentalists. She was reluctant, however, to interfere significantly in the support the Pakistani Army and intelligence services were rendering to the mujahidin, and no significant shift in policy occurred. With Bhutto's own defeat in elections in 1990, the new Pakistani government will be more inclined to view the Afghan fundamentalists with basic sympathy, even though the JIP does not have major influence in government policies.

Pakistan's influence in Afghan politics currently finds its chief conduit in close links between the JIP and Hikmetyar's radical Islamist Hizb-e-Islami. The JIP also has ideological ties with Rabbani's moderate fundamentalist party, Jam'iyyat-e-Islami, but to a much lesser extent. Over the long run, however, the Jam'iyyat's greater moderation and primarily northern Afghan (non-Pashtun) makeup should make that party ideologically sympathetic to Pakistan, thus diminishing the possibility that it will intervene in Pakistan's internal politics.[5]

Pakistan has played a careful balancing role between the competing influences of Saudi Arabia and Iran in Afghanistan. Specifically, Pakistan must remain sensitive to the considerable Saudi financial assistance it receives as well as to the Saudis' financial support of the mujahidin—as indeed it must also be solicitous of U.S. interests on the Afghan issue. At the same time, however, Pakistan does not wish to offend Iran, as it must recognize the importance of the Shi'a population in Afghanistan and remain aware that the Shi'a will not have

[4]The founder and chief spiritual guide of the JIP for several decades was Mawlana Abul-A'la Mawdudi, one of the key Islamic thinkers of the 20th century and a leader in formulating many of the basic tenets of modern Islamist ideology today. His party remains the major religious party in Pakistan. Afghan Islamists have been deeply influenced by Mawdudi's works and ideas and maintain close contact with the JIP.

[5]See S. R. Galster and J. Hippler, "Report from Afghanistan," *Middle East Report*, May–June 1989, p. 42.

territorial designs on Pakistan. Islamabad is also interested in the long-term benefits of the Economic Cooperation Organization (composed of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan) as well as a steadily improving military relationship. Indeed, Pakistan has been so adamant in preserving its Iranian ties that it has yet to recognize the Afghan provisional government more than one year after its proclamation—primarily because the provisional government has thus far excluded the Shi'a, Iran's chief interest.

A hostile Pakistani government could severely damage Afghanistan's economy by cutting off cross-border trade with Pakistan (including access to the key Indian Ocean port of Karachi), severing transit trade to India. In the event of severe hostility between the two countries, Pakistan is also capable of exacerbating ethnic and tribal politics within Afghanistan. Historical experience would indicate, however, that Afghanistan could probably foment Pakistani ethnic troubles in equal measure.

No Pakistani government will oppose in principle the presence of an Islamist government in Kabul, as long as that government does not seek to interfere in Pakistani internal affairs and policies. But such interference would be a distinct possibility, as we note below, because an Afghan Islamist regime would embrace the ideological goal of bringing Islamic elements to the fore in neighboring countries where possible. Pakistan's own Islamist parties opposed former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and they contributed to her eventual electoral defeat in 1990.

A right-wing coalition government in Pakistan that included Pakistani Islamist parties would be tempted to strengthen fundamentalist groups in Afghanistan as natural allies. If the fundamentalists were not in power in Kabul, such Pakistani support to Afghan fundamentalists would also be resented by Kabul as external interference.

IRANIAN INFLUENCE

Iran has strong interests in the evolution of Afghanistan, which is, after all, a neighbor, which is home to a great many people who speak a form of Persian and share deeply in Persian culture, and whose geopolitics have direct bearing upon Iran. As examples:

- Historically, Afghanistan has been an integral part of several Persian empires over long periods of time. It was the Afghans, for example, that dealt the death blow to Iran's first major

Shi'ite dynasty in 1722, leading to the eventual establishment of an independent Afghan state in 1747. Iranians still resent that strategic Afghan invasion, seeing it as a blow that led to Iran's ultimate vulnerability to the West.

- Geopolitically, Afghanistan remains important to Iran as its eastern neighbor. Foreign influences, especially by great powers, can exert a direct influence on Iran from Afghanistan, as has been the case with the British, the Russians, and the Americans. Iran also shares with Afghanistan—along with Pakistan—a large segment of the Baluch population, which has periodically harbored potential separatist tendencies in both Iran and Pakistan.

Iran was deeply troubled by the implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The most immediate impact of that invasion was a flow of refugees out of Afghanistan into Iran; by the spring of 1983, the Iranian government claimed that the Afghan refugees in Iran numbered 1.5 million.[6] The presence of this refugee population imposed a severe financial, social, and logistical burden on Iran, particularly as that country was then waging a war for its existence against Iraq while simultaneously coping with extensive dissatisfaction on the part of the Iranian public (which was widely perceived as having been exacerbated by the Afghan refugees).[7]

For both ideological and geopolitical reasons, Iran decided to actively support the mujahidin in their struggle to expel the Soviets. Although initially very little help was forthcoming given Iran's near-total preoccupation with the Iraqi invasion, Iran in 1982 announced a plan to unite all mujahidin groups—Sunni as well as Shi'a—into a common anti-American Islamic front. With the exception of some of the tractable Shi'a groups, however, most mujahidin groups showed little interest in such a coalition.[8] Eventually, Iranian manipulation of aid alienated most Sunni groups from close cooperation with Iran.

In the past, Iran has shown little ability to successfully manipulate the Sunni mujahidin.[9] Although some of its failure in this regard can be attributed to its preoccupation with the Iran-Iraq War, others have

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[6]*Kayhan*, Air Edition, March 9, 1983, as cited by Khosrow Shakeri in a RAND-commissioned study, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Afghan Question: Evolution of a Policy." Shakeri cites *Middle East International*, April 2, 1988, p. 12, as providing a refugee figure by spring 1988 of two and one-half million Afghans.

[7]See Shakeri, p. 4.

[8]J. B. Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Occupation*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., 1986, pp. 213–214 and 358–361.

[9]See Rashid, p. 218.

suggested that Iran has deliberately emphasized the political rather than the military aspects of its relationship with the Afghan Shi'a with the goal of using the Shi'a as a key instrument of Iranian influence in Afghan politics following a Soviet withdrawal.[10] In any case, Iran's aid to pro-Khomeini Shi'a groups only has been narrowly sectarian, short-sighted, and divisive in its ultimate effect, pitting pro-Khomeini against other factions. These policies have, in the end, produced eight different Afghan Shi'ite parties; personality is the primary distinguishing feature among them, and nearly all of them look toward Iran. Indeed, these eight parties (plus two not affiliated with Iran, one of which has been a significant fighting force) represent a population that is estimated to represent less than 20 percent of all of Afghanistan. The largest part of the Afghan Shi'a, the Hazaras, have been of limited political importance in modern Afghan politics and are generally looked down upon by the rest of the population.[11] Iran's preeminent interest has been to weaken or sever ties between the Afghan mujahidin and their U.S. and Saudi patrons.

Iranian policy toward Afghanistan has been much invigorated since mid-1988—particularly since the ending of the Iran-Iraq War, the death of Pakistani President Zia, the emergence of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In this changing political climate, Tehran has sensed a new opportunity to increase its role in post-Soviet Afghanistan. While it undeniably has an ideological interest in furthering Islamic revolution in the region, Iran's primary goal has been geopolitical: to ensure the preeminence of Iranian influence and interests in Afghanistan over those of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Tehran has repeatedly emphasized that only an Islamic form of government in Kabul can ensure a strong, independent, nonaligned Afghanistan, and it has also tried to advocate this point of view to the USSR as a way Moscow might foil American influence in post-Soviet Afghanistan.[12]

Tehran has sought to promote the Afghan Shi'a as Iran's primary means of influencing Afghan politics, especially as the mujahidin have moved toward establishing an interim Afghan government. Tehran has therefore sought to maximize Shi'a representation in mu-

[10]See Shakeri, p. 30.

[11]See Amstutz, pp. 358–361.

[12]See Shakeri, p. 30. Iran has consistently emphasized to the USSR over the past few years that Iran is the power to be reckoned with in the region, including the determination of the future of Afghanistan, and that Iran can assist Soviet interests through its policies of excluding American influence from any future Afghan regime.

jahidin coalitions and, through a series of conferences and meetings in Tehran attended by nearly all mujahidin leaders, has pushed for unity of Shi'a and Sunni Afghan forces. At the key conference—held in January 1989 and described as the most representative conference of Afghans held since the Soviet invasion—President Khamene'i emphasized again the need for Shi'a-Sunni unity. This conference built on the successful December 1988 agreement orchestrated in Tehran between the seven Sunni and eight Shi'ite mujahidin parties, in which a short-lived agreement was reached on an approach to a future resistance policy.[13] Together, these meetings have helped secure Iranian influence in any final Afghan solution and have improved Iranian-Pakistani coordination of Afghan affairs—with Tehran's key goal remaining the minimization of any Saudi or U.S. influence.

Iran's strong backing of the Shi'a, despite all its calls for unity, in fact poses a basic dilemma for Iranian policy in most countries, since the mere existence of a Shi'ite minority compromises the universal claim of Iran's Islamic vision. Similarly, Iran's support for the Shi'a in Afghanistan has in part weakened Iran's overall influence—although nearly all mujahidin groups find Iran's participation in Afghan politics useful as a means of keeping mujahidin options open and sparing them the problem of exclusive reliance on any one patron. No mujahidin leader has therefore been willing to break ties with Iran, even while differing on many aspects of Iran's policies and goals.

If Iran's internal politics remain reasonably stable in the post-Khomeini period, it will undoubtedly devote considerable effort to influencing the outcome of the Afghan civil war. Tehran may in fact be able to exert considerable influence on events as an alternative pole of political support if Pakistan or the United States begins to limit aid to the mujahidin or proceeds to move in political directions in which the mujahidin are unwilling to go. If, for example, a new coalition government is established in Kabul that excludes several of the more radical Sunni Islamic groups (such as that of Hikmetyar), some of these groups will likely cast about for alternative sources of support—sources that would include Saudi Arabia or Iran. Iran, however, is unlikely at this point to fund small radical groups of Sunni Islamists as long as Tehran can maintain its influence with a Kabul coalition. In this respect, Iran's policies are increasingly based on national interests and on state-to-state relations in Afghanistan rather than on ideology. While Iran can never hope to compete with Saudi Arabia in

[13]See M. Hussain, "Iran Forges New Links," *Middle East International*, No. 344, February 17, 1989, p. 17. See also Shakeri, pp. 34–36.

terms of the funds it can disburse abroad, the end of the Iran-Iraq War has given Iran greater flexibility than before.

Over the longer run, however, Iran will remain limited in the range of instruments at its disposal for politico-religious influence in Afghanistan.

- Iran's role may largely be limited to that of defender of Shi'ite rights in Afghanistan. While aspiring to a greater role, Tehran has not been successful in garnering broad support from any groups except the Shi'a community. Indeed, Iran's strong support for the Shi'a will probably be perceived negatively by Sunni religious leaders, who do not welcome foreign influence in Afghanistan, do not sympathize with Iran's Shi'ite approach to the Islamic state, and do not wish to see the position of the Afghan Shi'a strengthened in Afghanistan.
- Islamist elements in any future Kabul government could view Tehran as a rival as much as an ally. (See further discussion on this below.)
- If a secular or nationalist regime emerges in Kabul, it will oppose Iranian influence and goals in Afghanistan.
- Now that the anti-Soviet jihad is successfully completed, the Iranian model for Islamic revolution in Afghanistan will be less relevant to Afghan religious leaders intent on building a Sunni state.
- The Iranian model of revolution will take on relevance for Afghanistan only if a secular Afghan regime becomes highly oppressive. Conditions in Afghanistan do not remotely resemble those that brought about the Iranian revolution and are not likely to alter in the future.
- Non-Islamist, traditionalist religious parties in Afghanistan (such as those of Ahmad Gailani, Sebghatullah Mujaddidi, and Muhammad Nabi) would not turn to Iran if they lost to the Islamists in a power struggle in Kabul (nor would Iran probably want them). It is conceivable, however, that the Islamist parties themselves might accept Iran's support if they were denied significant power in Kabul.[14] (See above.)

[14]Of the Islamists, Hikmetyar has maintained good ties with Iran—unlike the non-Islamist religious parties, who were denied permanent representation in Iran several years ago. See Z. Khalilzad, "The Iranian Revolution and the Afghan Resistance," in M. Kramer (ed.), *Shiism, Resistance, and Revolution*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1987, p. 268. Nonetheless, in recent years traditionalist leader Mujaddidi,

- Tehran will always find its role in Afghanistan partially preempted by Pakistan's influence and in competition with Saudi influence as well (primarily through money).

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is determined to extend its influence to Afghanistan for several reasons:

- Extension of its religious influence throughout the Muslim world has been a key feature of Saudi policy for several decades.[15]
- Saudi Arabia has always been concerned with the spread of communist influence in the Muslim world and shares that goal with the United States; hence its initial foray into support for the mujahidin.
- The Saudis have always rendered security assistance to Pakistan and were on the front line against the USSR in Afghanistan.
- Riyadh, as a rival to Iran in the region, is determined to limit Iranian influence in Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia therefore generously supported the anti-Soviet mujahidin movement, particularly by funding pro-Saudi "Wahhabi" austere fundamentalist elements—most notably Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, currently head of the Ittihad (Union) party of mujahidin and prime minister of the newly established "coalition government" of the seven Sunni religious parties based in Peshawar.

Saudi influence can be gauged in two ways: as a political/economic power and as a religious power with a specific fundamentalist (Wahhabi) agenda. As a political/economic power, Saudi Arabia will exert considerable influence in Afghanistan in the future. Its financial support for the reconstruction of the country will probably be considerable, and any Islamist-oriented government in Afghanistan will welcome it as a counterbalance to Iran. Saudi Arabia's moderate po-

for example, has been quite attentive to Iran's interests and, like all other mujahidin leaders, has not hesitated to use Tehran to strengthen his own cause where possible.

[15]While Saudi Arabia, as protector of the holy places of Mecca and Medina, has always held claim to fostering an "Islamic" foreign policy, it was not until the prime ministership of Faysal Bin 'Abd-al-'Aziz (later King Faysal) that a formal Islamic policy was adopted by Saudi Arabia. These policies were seen as a means of extending Saudi influence throughout the Muslim world. For details see J. P. Piscatori, "Islamic Values and National Interest: The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia," in A. Dawisha (ed.), *Islam in Foreign Policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1983, p. 41.

litical agenda will not be seen as threatening to Afghan policies in the region, although Saudi Arabia would not countenance any major anti-Pakistan moves by Kabul should such policies arise.

On a religious level, Saudi Arabia has supported the creation of a "Wahhabi party" (Sayyaf's Ittihad and splinter groups of Arab volunteers) but is probably not deeply interested in the promulgation of Wahhabi views per se inside Afghanistan.[16] Nor are these views particularly attractive to Afghans; a distinguishing feature of Wahhabism is its intolerance for Sufi (mystical) Islam, a basic element in the thinking of nearly all traditional Afghan religious groups, including, to some extent, the Islamists.[17]

The religious (Wahhabi) influence of Saudi Arabia is not likely to be enduring in Afghanistan, since it has been based primarily on Realpolitik (with Sayyaf's party in particular). Generous Saudi funding can exert considerable influence, especially in time of war, when the dispensation of largess has attracted many eager followers. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has limited historical ties with Afghanistan. As the role of the political parties in Afghanistan diminishes and a new central government emerges, Saudi Arabia will probably find it less efficacious to exert its influence through any particular party but will instead direct its financial support to the new government as a whole. This Saudi economic influence can remain strong but will represent the political interests of the Saudi state rather than a special proselytizing goal attached to Wahhabism. Saudi Arabia has fared reasonably well in competing with Iranian influence over the mujahidin parties. Riyadh has been a strong backer

[16]While Wahhabism, as a fundamentalist, extremely austere form of Islam, is a basic part of the Saudi religious outlook, the term is rarely used anymore by Saudis officially. "Pure" Wahhabi views, in fact, can even be seen as a fundamentalist challenge to the legitimacy of the Saudi ruling family, which extremely zealous Wahhabis would see as far from sufficiently austere and pious. Saudi Arabia as a state is actually less concerned with furthering its unique, purely Wahhabi views as it is in the extension of conservative Islamic influence as a whole, thereby also serving as a vehicle of influence for Saudi Arabia.

[17]Wahhabism offends Afghan religious tradition sharply in its vehement rejection of Sufism. Sufism's role is central in the conversion of much of South Asia to Islam and has been a central feature of great Indian Islamic religious schools such as Barelvis and Deobandis, which are dominant among the religious scholars ('ulama) of Afghanistan. Sufism lies at the heart of the more traditional religious parties, such as Mujaddidi's Jabha (National Salvation Front) as well as Gailani's Mahaz (Islamic Front), both of whom are key Sufi leaders. The moderate Islamist party of Rabbani (Jam'iyyat) also draws heavily on Sufi support from the non-Pashtun elements of the north. These key leaders, then, will basically oppose Wahhabi influence in Afghanistan despite current cooperation on the united political front. This opposition is only in the ideological sense; they are not otherwise opposed to Saudi Arabia as a moderate Sunni Islamist power. For some details, see Roy, pp. 32–33.

of the Afghan Interim Government (which so far has excluded the Shi'a parties) and has recognized that government formally, even though Riyadh has been able to persuade few others in the Muslim world to do so—including Iran and Pakistan, both of whom want to see the government include the Shi'a. Saudi influence has also been strong in the selection of Sayyaf as prime minister of the new government, much in excess of his real backing among mujahidin groups.

Saudi Arabia thus plays a key role as one of the three triangular regional forces on Afghanistan. While generally hostile to Iran's interests, the Saudis enjoy good ties with Pakistan, and their financial influence in Pakistan forces the Pakistanis to play a careful intermediary role between the other two powers.

5. LIKELY POLICIES OF AN ISLAMIST AFGHAN REGIME

DOMESTIC POLICIES

If an Islamist regime were to come to power in Afghanistan, what would be its distinguishing characteristics? This question was less theoretical after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, when most analysts anticipated that the communist regime in Kabul would fall, giving the Islamists a critical opportunity to march into Kabul and establish an Islamist government. While the collapse of the mujahidin as a united military force against Kabul has virtually eliminated any chance for an Islamist takeover by force in Kabul, individual Islamic parties and commanders will still retain considerable importance. Hence a major Islamist role cannot be ruled out in the future.

Indeed, no one can determine precisely what combination of Afghan religious parties might dominate Kabul over the long run. All the mujahidin parties call for an Islamic republic, although there would be considerable disagreement among them over the specific policies that such a republic should pursue (see below for major variables in the future evolution of Afghan politics). Whatever coalition eventually emerges in Kabul, however, it is probable that the Islamist parties will play a major role. Indeed, Islam will be one of the guiding philosophical/religious principles of the new postcommunist Afghan state—to the exclusion of most leftist, socialist, secularist, or narrowly ethnic principles. But Iran is hardly the sole model for such policies; Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are also Islamic states under heavy fundamentalist influence. There is much room, therefore, for political difference even within an "Islamic spectrum." In the unlikely event that the Afghan government came to be dominated by radical Islamist forces, what types of government policies might come into play on a number of key issues?

Return of Afghan Refugees

One of the most pressing questions for the outside world lies in the prospects for the return of the Afghan refugees, who now number over five million in neighboring countries and in the West. The existence of an Islamist regime in Kabul per se is not likely to play a decisive

role in the decision of most Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan. The following factors will play a far more critical role:

- *Stability:* If there is widespread fighting among mujahidin forces, rendering life in the major cities and countryside both unstable and dangerous, many refugees will be strongly disinclined to return to Afghanistan until long-term stability has been restored. Indeed, fighting, in the spring of 1989 between the Afghan government and mujahidin forces in the Jalalabad area increased the flow of refugees to Pakistan even after the Soviet withdrawal.
- *Political repression:* However strict the policies of an Islamist government in Kabul might be, it is unlikely that such policies would represent a sharp departure from the religious austerities that have historically characterized life in rural Afghanistan, both in the Muslim as well as in the tribal codes of conduct—especially among Pashtuns. Austerity in itself is thus not likely to deter the return of most refugees, but uncontrolled bloodshed and executions outside the norm of previous authoritarian Kabul governments would not be viewed as acceptable. An additional key factor would lie in the degree of influence and power that will be exerted by Kabul over the provinces. Harsh policies limited largely to Kabul and to a few key cities might not affect those returning to the countryside.
- *Impact on intellectuals and professionals:* Intellectuals and professional groups are most inclined to be wary of an Islamist regime in Kabul, as they are most likely to want to know how such a regime would affect intellectual and academic life, freedom of speech, and freedom of political activity. Such groups will also be concerned about the impact of such a regime on the lives of Afghan women, especially those from educated families. These considerations will play a pivotal role in the decision to return regardless of what government is in power in Kabul—as will the need to weigh such factors against the relative merit of staying where the refugees are and their degree of integration into Pakistani or Western society.
- *Economic factors:* An Islamist Afghanistan will undoubtedly pursue policies similar to those of Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, with emphasis on "Islamic banking" (the banning of interest), use of Islamic taxation models, and a concern for "social justice" and for the position of the poor and downtrodden. Free enterprise and the role of private capital and private ownership would almost surely be upheld.

- *The likely future:* The decision of refugees to return to Afghanistan will also turn in part on the economic conditions that will prevail in the country. Will farming return to the old levels of production? Will irrigation systems be restored and mines cleared from the fields? Will transportation systems and markets exist as before? Will the government facilitate reconstruction or be caught up in internecine struggles? Will normal commercial life be permitted in the larger towns and cities? What will the new role of the bureaucracy be?

In the end, the answers to these questions will not be highly relevant to most refugees, who simply will have no realistic alternative but to return. Only those refugees who have found a comfortable niche in neighboring countries will have any serious options before them. This would be a very small group indeed; one study estimates that 90 percent of the refugees in Pakistan are from rural areas.[1]

It should be noted, however, that no matter how small the group of refugees well adapted to life in exile may be, it is nonetheless a critical group in social terms, for most of the intellectual, managerial, and senior bureaucratic talent falls into this category.

The elements of social revolution implicit in the national jihad against the Russians has furthermore brought new social elements into positions of prominence inside the mujahidin leadership—especially among the Islamists. Many of these elements, however, may be lacking in traditional leadership and bureaucratic skills.[2] They may not, in addition, entirely welcome a return of the old elite, which would once again seek positions of power and authority. The likeli-

[1]N. H. Dupree, "The Afghan Refugee Family Abroad: A Focus on Pakistan," *Afghanistan Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1988, p. 34. This same study also points out the great degree of social, economic and psychological damage that refugee status has imposed upon the Afghan family; only very few would willingly choose to perpetuate that status except under the most intolerable security conditions back in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, refugee camp life has also created a new leadership level that differs sharply from the old. Former headmen, or "maliks," rested authority primarily on tribal position; in the camps, a new breed of "ration maliks" has emerged whose skills lie in mastering the art of dealing with the Pakistani bureaucracy for refugee welfare benefits. This group actually has a vested interest in nonreturn and in the perpetuation of camp-life status quo. Some other Afghans who have fallen prey to the "welfare syndrome" known to the West might also have some ambivalence about return, especially to the hard, unknown conditions of shattered traditional rural life. See G. M. Farr, "The Effect of the Afghan Refugees on Pakistan," in C. Baxter (ed.), *Zia's Pakistan: Politics and Stability in a Frontline State*, Westview Special Studies on South and Southeast Asia, Boulder, Colorado, 1985, pp. 101–102.

[2]For aspects of the social revolution among the Shi'ite mujahidin, see G. M. Farr, "The Rise and Fall of an Indigenous Resistance Group: The Shura of the Hazarajat," *Afghanistan Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1988, p. 34.

hood of a return of the older elite and the probability that it will play a major role in the new Islamic society will thus remain unresolved issues.

Any government that comes to power in Afghanistan, however, will be burdened with the need to provide a vastly greater array of social services to returning refugees than has any past government in Kabul. Not only will the entire infrastructure of the country require rebuilding, but the refugees themselves will be accustomed to a far higher level of social services from their long sojourn in Pakistan or Iran. An Islamist government in power will thus have to attend to these needs. But social welfare programs are indeed an integral part of the Islamist agenda.

FOREIGN POLICY

In foreign policy, a new Afghan Islamist state will be nonaligned and relatively cool toward both East and West. It will seek the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan with Western, and possibly some Soviet, assistance. At the same time, it will seek to limit the extent of Western—and especially American—cultural influence inside the country in order to keep Islamic values as pure as possible. It will not, however, reject relations with any state simply on the basis of its politics and culture—with the probable exception of Israel. It will seek solidarity with other Muslim nations of the world and will probably assume a more active role in international Islamic politics and organizations than has traditionally been the case.

Beyond these general principles, geopolitics will strongly influence Afghanistan's policies toward key neighbors. Here an Islamic Afghan regime will blend geopolitical Realpolitik with more newly adopted Islamic principles.

The Policies of an Islamist Afghanistan Toward Iran

An Afghan Islamist regime would not be likely to develop a cordial relationship with Iran, as Tehran's Shi'ite regime will continue to harbor a sense of rivalry toward a Sunni Islamist government in Kabul—especially one that is based on an Islamist mujahidin movement legitimized by its stunning victory over the Red Army in

Afghanistan.[3] Tehran will continue to support and protect the rights of the Afghan Shi'a minority—most of whom still look to Tehran as their religious center to this day.[4] But the use of the Shi'a community by Iran as an instrument of influence in Afghanistan will doubtless alienate a Sunni-oriented Afghan regime, as it has in the past.[5]

It is similarly unlikely that Afghanistan and Iran will cooperate in or coordinate their foreign policy. They would, however, be likely to adopt common positions on a variety of international issues if such issues did not directly affect bilateral Afghan-Iranian relations or relations with key allies. Such positions could include opposition to Western military influence in the region—including Pakistan and the Persian Gulf—or support for the adoption of Islamic policies in Muslim states where such policies are weak.[6] Both states might also advocate greater Muslim rights in places such as India and the USSR, and both might support Muslim political activism there with both materials and funds—but even so, elements of rivalry would remain.

- In Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan would tend to vie for influence in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Afghanistan would have the edge, given its own Tajik population (which is larger than Tajikistan's), its one million Uzbek population, its Sunni as opposed to Shi'ite faith, and its contiguity with both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Iran's chief drawing card would be its more advanced political, cultural, and economic character.
- India has both Shi'ite and Sunni populations within its borders, and Iran has already lent support to Shi'a there. An Islamist Afghanistan would turn its attention to the Indian Sunni community.
- Where geopolitics impinge, an Islamic Afghanistan would probably remain close to Sunni states such as Saudi Arabia despite—or even because of—Iran's hostility to the latter. Saudi Arabia

[3]Historically, some feeling of rivalry has existed between the two countries in any case as each has sought to dominate the other at various periods of time—with Iran generally the more dominant element.

[4]See Farr, "The Rise and Fall of an Indigenous Resistance Group," p. 49.

[5]Indeed, previous Afghan regimes have been suspicious of Iranian support for the Shi'a minority in Afghanistan—long before the establishment of the Iranian Islamic republic. See Khalilzad, pp. 268–269.

[6]Iran, in effect, has rarely enjoyed close ties with other Islamic states on a religious basis. It has been vehemently anti-Saudi, for example, on geopolitical grounds, and has enjoyed no other close Arab ally except Syria—the antithesis of Tehran's religious policies in most respects, except as an ally against Iraq and as a means of access to the Shi'a population of Lebanon.

would be viewed as a key source of development aid. It is unlikely that an Afghan Islamist regime would oppose Saudi Arabia—as does Iran—on grounds of religious illegitimacy, although radical Saudi elements have joined the mujahidin movement on an individual basis.[7]

In short, there would not be a natural alliance between an Islamic Afghanistan and Iran; instead, friction over the Shi'a issue would persist, and the two states would remain rivals. Outright hostility or war would be unlikely, however; by the time of the 1978 communist coup in Kabul, Iran, and Afghanistan had largely resolved most of their outstanding bilateral issues. Yet a legacy of suspicion and fear of Iranian heavy-handedness and imperial operating styles persists in Afghanistan. Islamist policies in both countries would generally seek to avoid ethnically based politics; geopolitical friction between the two states has never been of a high order in the 20th century.

The Policies of an Islamist Afghanistan Toward Pakistan

As noted above, Pakistan is in a position to damage Afghanistan through economic means (via border closures) and through military means, given its vastly superior armed forces. In terms of exploitation of ethnic problems, however, Pakistan is probably the slightly more vulnerable state.[8] But the rapprochement between Afghanistan and Pakistan engendered by the war may persist for many years, since an Islamist Afghanistan will share with Pakistan a concern for Soviet power in the region. In principle, too, Pakistan will find Islamist policies in Kabul the best guarantee that Kabul will not pursue the Pashtunistan separatist issue.

Pakistan's interests are now less clear, however, especially since the death of General Zia. Zia found strong domestic political allies in Pakistan among the Pakistani Islamist parties—who supported both the anti-Soviet struggle in Afghanistan and the establishment of an

[7]See E. Girardet, "Arab Extremists Exploit Afghan 'Jihad,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, February 23, 1989. Many of these Saudi Wahhabis are probably in opposition to the Saudi regime itself, perceiving it as falling short in its devotion to true Islam and in consorting with the United States.

[8]Each possesses vulnerabilities of a different order. Lack of tribal loyalty and a weak central government have long plagued Afghanistan, whereas ethnic issues in Pakistan are probably more volatile precisely because there is a strong central government in Islamabad capable of deeply affecting the lives and welfare of Pakistan's large ethnic communities and congested urban life. Potential ethnic breakaway states are more coherent and better established as individual entities already than they are in Afghanistan—i.e., Sind, Baluchistan, and Pashtunistan.

Islamic government in Pakistan. Specifically, there is a distinct possibility that an Islamist regime in Kabul will lend support to the Pakistani religious parties. And while such direct support is unlikely to have critical effect on the relative standing of Pakistan's religious parties, Kabul could help destabilize the political situation in Pakistan more broadly.

- Kabul is in a position, as in the past, to influence Pashtun politics in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). While Afghan Islamists are unlikely to reopen the Pashtunistan issue, they are in a position to strengthen Islamists in the NWFP and to encourage an anti-Bhutto stance. Pashtuns in the NWFP might also appeal to Kabul if they felt that their interests were being ignored.
- If Kabul decided to play rougher politics, it would be in a position to accuse non-Islamist leaders of Pakistan of abandoning Islam and to encourage riots and demonstrations against them. Kabul could even help foment ethnic problems in the ethnically tension-ridden city of Karachi, where Pashtuns play a large role in the city's underground activities—especially in the drug trade and gun running.[9] Spontaneous violence in Karachi has already been serious; Kabul could increase it.
- Mujahidin groups now possess a high degree of experience in guerrilla warfare and in the use of weapons as well as an ability to train Pakistani renegade elements. In power in Kabul, a mujahidin-based central government could probably prove militarily more destabilizing to Pakistan than ever before.
- Kabul could also place pressure on Pakistan to diminish its security ties with the United States. Such pressure would not find strong support in Pakistan, however, since Pakistan's own perception of its security problems—be they from India, the USSR, Iran, or Afghanistan itself—will be the primary factor determining its willingness to accept U.S. security assistance.

[9]See M. Fineman, "Anguished Prayers Follow Killing Spree in Pakistan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1988; also see S. Tefft, "Karachi Slum: A Pakistani Flash Point," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 1988.

The Policies of an Islamic Afghanistan Toward India

An Islamist government in Kabul bodes ill for India, as that country has long sustained an unspoken but viscerally negative attitude toward Islam.

- It was Islam that led to the breakup of India in 1947 and to the creation of the new state of Pakistan.
- Indian Muslims have always been fearful of being overtaken by Hinduism and have not been easily absorbed into a fundamentally Hindu India; India remains concerned about the potential "fifth column" role into which Indian Muslims might be drawn by foreign Muslim states.
- India's chief military rival, Pakistan, has heavily stressed its Islamic character and has based its defense policies to a large extent on "Islamic solidarity" with the rest of the Muslim world.
- India consistently enjoyed cordial relations with the Daoud government, was willing to acquiesce to the existence of a communist regime in Kabul, and maintained good relations with the communist PDPA throughout the anti-Soviet struggle—a policy deeply resented by the mujahidin. While the PDPA was not India's choice of government in Kabul, Delhi clearly found it vastly preferable to any potential Islamic-oriented regime there. Thus, India strongly opposes the establishment of an Islamic government in Afghanistan now. Under the rule of almost any mujahidin party, Kabul will move conspicuously out of its traditional anti-Pakistani, pro-Indian position and into the pro-Pakistani, anti-Indian column—representing a clear net loss for Delhi. Given the latent geopolitical tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, however, it is uncertain how long an Islamic Kabul might maintain a strong anti-Indian policy.
- Unless India moves dramatically to establish cordial relations with a post-PDPA government in Kabul, there is a distinct possibility that an Islamic regime in Kabul will be tempted to lend greater support to the Islamic cause in India. With such a policy, Afghanistan would really be reverting to its position as defender of Islam on the subcontinent, as it did when India was under the British Raj.[10] Ironically, a strong pro-Islamist policy

[10]As Olivier Roy notes, "The first to think of pan-Islamism in political terms were the Afghan sovereigns. For them . . . pan-Islamism consolidated the naissant state and was a factor in its foreign policy which gave Afghanistan an enhanced role in the region" (p. 62).

toward India could render the Islamic bastion of Pakistan slightly more sympathetic to secular India.

Under any circumstances, the radical shift in the character of the Kabul regime—from leftist secular under Daoud to communist under the PDPA, to Islamist under the mujahidin—will bring about a possible realignment of the traditional configuration of the Afghan-Pakistani-Indian triangle. The geopolitics of this area of South Asia may be more fluid, at least for a period. Over the longer run, however, the major geopolitical fact of life is Pakistan's fear of the Indian behemoth and its search for support against it. Less certain is how durable the change in Pakistani-Afghan relations will be. Only a severe regional problem with the NWFP Pashtuns is likely to reverse Kabul's newfound cordiality with Pakistan.

The Policies of an Islamic Afghanistan Toward the USSR

As noted earlier, Afghanistan has been intimately familiar with the character of the USSR and with its anti-Islamic policies over the past seven decades. Not only did Afghanistan witness the long and brutal Soviet repression of the Muslim Basmachi rebellion in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, but it also gave refuge to large numbers of Soviet Muslims who then fled to Afghanistan. These former refugees from the USSR have long played a significant role in fostering anti-communist, anti-Russian attitudes among the Afghan populations.

The Soviet Union could well be the country most directly threatened by an activist Islamist foreign policy in Kabul. An Islamist regime in Kabul will harbor bitterness toward Moscow as a result of the incredible destruction and loss of life visited upon Afghanistan by the Soviet invasion, and it will also have direct interest in spreading the faith among Soviet Muslims. As has been noted, at least three major Soviet Muslim nationalities are represented in Afghanistan as well: Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen, as well as some Kirghiz. Serious regional turmoil in the Soviet Union will provide openings for foreign Islamic activism in Soviet Central Asia. Indeed, there is already Soviet concern about the infiltration of Afghan religious propagandists into Tajikistan—now a highly porous border with an increasingly restive Tajik population in the USSR.[11]

[11]For a broader discussion of this problem and its geopolitical ramifications in the region see G. E. Fuller, "The Emergence of Central Asia," *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1990.

Indeed, in its attempts to tie Afghanistan closer to the USSR even before the pullout, Soviet policies have been playing with fire by encouraging direct contact and formal relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Muslim republics. Several Soviet Muslim republics, especially Tajikistan, have already established direct republic-to-state ties with Afghanistan.[12] These ties, which will inevitably grow as power devolves from the center under further reforms, will take on an increasingly ethnic and Islamic character over time as both sides recognize a commonality of religious and cultural ties—all implicitly bearing anti-Russian overtones. Soviet Muslim populations will likely grow increasingly susceptible to Islamist influence from Afghanistan—far more than from any other Muslim state, such as Shi'ite Iran or secular Turkey.

These feelings of cultural and ethnic solidarity have been encouraged by past Soviet policy in the hope that the Russian-controlled Muslim republics would prove a stronger and more reliable magnet with which to draw the Northern Tier states northward. Yet that assumption is open to question—for however economically advanced Soviet Muslim republics may be in comparison to Afghanistan, the latter possesses the vital trait of long-held independence, including a successful war of liberation against the USSR. Increasing solidarity will thus tend to draw these states together into a common Central Asian bloc—thereby reverting more to the medieval political-cultural unity of the region broken by the 19th century Russian conquest. And while such a bloc need not be automatically hostile to Russia, Moscow will have to exercise considerable sensitivity in its attempts to overcome its neocolonial legacy of the past century or more. The attraction of this broad regional Islamic entity finds adherents as far away as Pakistan, where one research center on Central Asia, has spoken of the creation of a vast "Islamistan" composed of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran (a concept designed to strike fear deep in the heart of every Hindu).

In the interim, the USSR will of course devote considerable effort to normalizing its relations with the next Afghan regime. For defensive purposes, it will wish to keep Afghanistan out of unfriendly foreign hands—although the "new thinking" of Soviet foreign policies under Gorbachev does not perceive Western influences on its southern borders in the same zero-sum terms that characterized past regimes. The Soviet Union will be hard put to weaken or bring down an

[12]Indeed, as of February 1988, some 29 republics and regions of the Soviet Union had signed direct cooperation agreements with the 29 provinces of Afghanistan. See N. Rizvi, "Sovietization of Afghan Society," *Strategic Studies*, Autumn 1988, pp. 87–88.

Afghan Islamist regime, however, simply because nearly all of its former assets will have been largely eliminated or utterly discredited. At the same time, Moscow will make every effort to use economic "carrots and sticks" on Kabul in attempts to influence its policies. Moscow will be especially interested in attempting to block any joint Iranian-Afghan policy aimed at the exportation of the Islamic revolution.

The Policies of an Islamist Afghanistan Toward the United States

As noted above, an Islamist regime will insist on nonalignment, will oppose Western and especially American cultural influences in the country, and will probably pursue austere domestic Islamic policies on issues such as alcohol, criminal punishment, circumscribed social freedoms for women, Islamic emphasis on the cultural content of education and the media, an Islamic banking system, and family legal codes in accordance with Islamic law (Shari'a). This pattern of Islamic practice will undoubtedly resemble those practiced in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan today.

An Islamist government in Afghanistan would likely lack the intense paranoia that has characterized the Iranian Shi'ite vision of Islam under Khomeini. Afghanistan, after all, has not suffered at the hands of international imperialist forces as has Iran, and it is thus less likely to lash out defensively against its neighbors and the West. It also realizes that the West—even if for its own anti-Soviet reasons—was a prime source of support during the jihad. Anti-Sovietism will always temper any latent anti-Western aspects of an Afghan Islamist regime as well. Finally, tribalism in Afghanistan will serve to limit the power that a Kabul regime can exercise; Islamic "totalitarian" approaches to polity would be far more difficult to implement. Such approaches have not been prevalent even in Islamic Iran except for the early few years; considerable openness of political discourse has been permitted.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. INTERESTS

For several years, the United States has confronted a dilemma in its attempts to balance a number of partially contradictory goals regarding support of the mujahidin:

- *Military effectiveness:* The United States has been willing to support the Islamist mujahidin parties as long as these groups have been effective in their struggle against the Soviet presence and the PDPA regime. Many have in fact been quite effective—notably Rabbani's Jam'iyyat, Hikmetyar's Hizb, and Khalis's Hizb.
- *U.S. support to Pakistan:* In allocating aid to the various mujahidin groups, former President Zia ul-Haqq exhibited a clear political preference for the radical Islamist parties. The United States had been reluctant to second-guess him on this issue in view of Zia's strong commitment to the anti-Soviet struggle.
- *Concern for fundamentalism:* The United States would clearly prefer not to have a hostile or ideological Islamic regime in power in Kabul, as such a regime would oppose U.S. interests in the region and possibly serve as a destabilizing force in the future.

For the United States, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been an overriding geopolitical fact of life. The introduction of the Red Army into a country outside the Soviet bloc carried immense strategic implications, requiring that the United States subordinate many of its other political concerns in the region. Indeed, the Soviet invasion could have presaged a broader Soviet move into the region. The precise political character of the mujahidin groups was therefore not a central issue; instead the chief goal of the United States was to support Pakistan in its efforts to weather Soviet pressure and intimidation. This strategic imperative led both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government to be as lenient as possible in their assessment of the strong likelihood that Pakistan was working on the development of a nuclear weapon; the existence of such a weapon, by U.S. law, would have mandated immediate cutoff of all U.S. assistance to Pakistan.

With the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan—a stunning move reflecting a profound reversal of Soviet Third World policy and ideology—U.S. priorities in the region have shifted. Still, there has re-

mained a desire to see Moscow's puppet, the PDPA regime, collapse. The PDPA has shown itself to be astonishingly enduring despite the Soviet pullout. At the same time, given the continued weakening of mujahidin unity in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, along with concern among Afghanistan's urban population over the mujahidin's intentions, the mujahidin no longer represent a unified force capable of overthrowing Kabul. Indeed, a negotiated compromise solution—one in which some elements of the PDPA regime would remain, at least until more formal elections could be held to select a new national government—would now seem to be the only viable solution. In any case, the primary strategic requirement of the United States—the withdrawal of Soviet forces—has already been fulfilled. The character of the regime that replaces the PDPA is vastly less important to U.S. interests and must therefore be measured in a regional context.

Of the four Northern Tier countries, Afghanistan is the least important in terms of its size, location, influence, and strategic location. Its geopolitical importance to the United States was bestowed upon it by the Soviet presence. Thus, humanitarian interests aside, the key U.S. strategic interest now is to encourage the emergence of a moderate, stable regime in Afghanistan—one that will neither destabilize its neighbors nor act in a fashion hostile to U.S. allies and interests in the region. Ideally, then, the future rulers of Kabul should be neither radical left nor radical Islamist. If either of those extremes should emerge, the region will need to contain the problem—with or without U.S. help.

The ascendance of a radical leftist regime is, of course, a highly unlikely eventuality; the Left has been deeply discredited over the past decade of communist rule in Afghanistan, and it thus commands little authority or respect. Leftist/communist parties clearly visited catastrophe upon Afghanistan during their period of stewardship over the country. The USSR, furthermore, will have little interest in seeing—much less stimulating—the emergence of yet another regionally provocative leftist regime that in the end is of marginal value to the Soviets. Instead, the chief interest of the Soviets is to prevent the United States from either scoring a military victory over a Soviet ally—at a time when Gorbachev has been urging political solutions for the world's trouble spots—or establishing a foothold in Afghanistan from which to promulgate policies hostile to the USSR. That is not a U.S. goal in the region in any case, and the Soviet Union understands that.

In the end, Afghanistan must be seen in the broader context of the region and U.S. interests there. As noted above, U.S. interests in

Afghanistan are inherently modest and are defined largely by that country's impact on other regional states. If, for example, Pakistan should determine that an Islamist regime in Kabul is in its own interests, then Pakistan's needs—and its importance to the United States—will outweigh U.S. preferences regarding the political composition of the Kabul regime.

Regardless of the type of leadership that may emerge in Kabul in the future, however, the United States may actually be afforded an opportunity to establish a working relationship with an Islamist regime—one that could affect the future relationship between the United States and other Islamist regimes in the Muslim world. All Islamic parties recognize the role that the United States played in supporting the anti-Soviet jihad; hence, few if any will be predisposed to immediate hostility toward the United States.[1]

U.S. aid projects to Afghanistan will be welcomed and should serve as the primary vehicle of U.S. relations—but U.S. military aid or training to Afghanistan should probably remain extremely limited, if it is offered at all. As in the past, Afghan military force would probably be directed against Pakistan in the long run. This might engender concern within the USSR, reaping very little gain for the United States unless the world should revert to the Cold War.

- There is good reason for the United States not to challenge newly emerging Soviet Third World policies by appearing to seek a military foothold in Afghanistan. Indeed, this was not the goal of the United States before the Soviet invasion.
- As in the past, Afghan military strength is most likely to be used against Pakistan.
- Afghanistan is not likely to be militarily threatened by the USSR in the near future, although any Afghan efforts at a destabilizing export of the Islamic revolution to Soviet Central Asia could well cause Soviet saber rattling toward Afghanistan.

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[1]Nonetheless, at least two of the more radical Islamist parties, Hikmetyar's Hizb and Sayyaf's Ittihad, have spoken only begrudgingly about U.S. assistance to the mujahidin. A spokesman for Sayyaf said in an October 1988 interview, "The history of the jihad . . . began with empty hands. The mujahidin had nothing. They began to equip themselves from captured booty. . . . The first, second, third and fourth years passed before there was any aid from the United States or any other state [*sic*]. The United States saw that the mujahidin would succeed. . . . When they pay Pakistan $20, $200, or $2,000 million it is because they want to defend their interests. They are paying now so that they can make gains or avoid losses tomorrow." FBIS-NES, October 19, 1988, quoting Ahmad Shah (spokesman for Sayyaf) in London's *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, October 16, 1988.

Afghan military power will never be of an order that will seriously threaten any of its neighbors, even if that unlikely intent should emerge. Even if Afghanistan were to adopt a regional posture strongly hostile to the United States and its allies, however, U.S. assistance to Pakistan is generally sufficient to ensure that Pakistan could handle the Afghan military challenge. The Afghan subversive and propaganda challenge might or might not be severe, depending on the wisdom and skill of Islamabad's policies.

Unless Afghanistan were to actively promote terrorism as an act of state policy, it is unlikely to pose a direct threat to U.S. interests—except as it affects Pakistan. The use of terror abroad has never been part of the arsenal of any of the mujahidin to date—not even against the USSR—and it is therefore unlikely to emerge as a weapon of state against less threatening enemies now. In the highly unlikely event that an Afghan Islamist regime should espouse terrorism against the United States, however, the United States would need to adopt policies that would discourage such action. But as noted above, Afghan Islamists maintain no distinct and outstanding grievance that is likely to lead to such an attack on U.S. interests—in notable contrast to the political grievances nurtured by Iran, Libya, or even Syria. Afghanistan is, in addition, far removed from the mainstream of the Middle East and from the Arab-Israeli issue and is therefore unlikely to become involved in that calculus. Hostility toward the United States is more likely to result from a deterioration of Afghan-Pakistani relations in which the United States was clearly seen as the prime source of support to Pakistan and engaged in stimulating Pakistani action against Afghanistan.

A hostile regime in Kabul might be unlikely to cooperate with the United States in trying to stop the spread of opium and heroin production from the country as a key source of the West's supply. Indeed, in the course of the Afghan war, the production of opium burgeoned in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. An Islamist regime, however, would also have little tolerance for the use of narcotics within the country itself, although it might not be able to extend its writ successfully to this area.

U.S. interests might be most directly affected in campaigns by an Islamist regime in Kabul to reduce or eliminate a U.S. military presence in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf states. Afghanistan's views on this subject would have only a modest impact on those states—especially in the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan could, however, support Iran's hand in this regard.

7. KEY VARIABLES IN THE FUTURE OF AFGHAN RADICAL ISLAM

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FIELD COMMANDERS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Now that the Soviets are gone and the Afghan interim government is in disarray, many field commanders are choosing to pursue a line of greater independence from their supporting political parties. Indeed, some commanders have agendas that differ politically from those of their parties by having a more pragmatic basis or by reflecting personal ambitions. If the Islamist political parties continue to weaken, the regional commanders will be concomitantly stronger and may not support their party leadership. Naturally, the situation will differ from commander to commander, but it is unlikely that many are deeply attached to their parties, inasmuch as the selection of parties was often governed principally by issues reflecting regional, political, tactical, financial, and logistical considerations as well as ideological ones.

The role of the regional commanders remains a critical issue. There are numerous signs that the political parties do not in fact maintain substantive control over the actions of the commanders. Possessed of real power on the ground, how far will they prove willing to lend their armed strength to the will of the particular political party that has supported them in the past, once those parties become less critical to the commanders' own local power? How many of them possess their own private political visions or agendas? Could major armed internal conflict spring from such a situation? Is a military leadership of Afghanistan one alternative for the future? Secular military rule would concern Pakistan, which would be fearful that such a military leader would likely be Pashtun and, in the absence of the Islamic element, might inevitably return to earlier nationalist policies that encourage Pashtun separatism in Pakistan.

THE LONG-TERM STRENGTH OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The distinction between "traditional" and "Islamist" parties usually refers to the ideological character of such parties or to the lack thereof. This distinction may also have a bearing on the long-term survival of these parties.

The Islamist Parties

The Islamist parties possess the strength that ideology imparts—an Islamic vision that raises them above the narrower bases of region, tribe, clan, class, or ethnicity. At the same time, it was the unique circumstances of the communist coup in 1978, the subsequent jihad, and Afghanistan's ultimate victory over the Soviet Union and its neutralization of communism that lent weight to the Islamists' cause. Had the communist takeover not occurred, it is extremely unlikely that the Islamists would have gained national prominence or assumed the leadership role that they exercise today. But the Islamist parties' ability to dispose of vast sums of money and weapons from the outside has also contributed immeasurably to their following. As these funds begin to diminish, the more opportunistic followers may drop away. The same holds true of the other parties as well.

From one perspective, then, the Islamists' victory over the Red Army, which led to the Soviet withdrawal and to the virtual neutralization of the PDPA regime, has been a major accomplishment; the national jihad rallied greater support to the Islamist cause than any other single factor could ever have done. Yet the end of the anti-Soviet struggle and the beginning of a more complex political struggle against the PDPA will probably herald some diminution of the rallying cry of Islam. Indeed, the more radical Islamist parties may fare poorly in this new phase of the struggle and may not be as closely identified with any collapse of the PDPA as may the regional commanders.

Yet even if the Islamist political parties do play a lesser role in the ensuing stage of Afghanistan's internal political struggle, one cannot discount their influence and determination. The Islamist point of view, after all, holds that Islam's task is just beginning. Hence, as important as the defeat of the infidel aggressor was to the Islamist vision, it will still rank below the Islamists' ultimate calling: that of building the just society of God on earth.

However much the Islamist parties have used funds and arms as a means of attracting a following, the power of their ideology remains a certain irreducible core that will not vanish even when these economic incentives diminish. As we have noted earlier, the Islamist movement goes back at least two decades—at least as far as any other political movement in Afghanistan—and reflects patterns of Islamist thinking similar to those in other Muslim countries. Thus, even if they are defeated or politically excluded in the end, the Islamists will remain a permanent element in the Afghan body politic. Each of the Islamist parties also retains some ethnic or regional orientation—

mainly Pashtun versus non-Pashtun—that renders the Islamic vision more concrete. In sum, while the Islamist parties may cede their unusual central role and lose a portion of their following in the new post-Soviet and postcommunist era, they will always lay claim to having provided the essential spark of the anticommunist movement and will thus be emboldened to demand a voice in the future governance of the country.

Most of the radical Islamist political parties rely on specific external sources of support for military and financial aid. This is especially true of Sayyaf's party (Ittihad), with its intimate links with Saudi Arabia, and Hikmetyar's party (Hizb), which is closely supported by Pakistan. Both of these parties are strongly Islamist, and both support Islamic ideologies that are not broadly representative of Afghan thinking—especially Sayyaf's, with its Wahhabi leanings. Yet as the military struggle against Kabul declines into a stalemate to be resolved either politically or through some kind of internal coup, this external aid will start to diminish. It is less clear how much political support these Islamist parties will enjoy within Afghanistan once they are deprived of strong financial and logistical backing from abroad.

In addition, many nonideological elements of Afghan society—probably the preponderant group—will not see the building of the future society in quite the same ideological terms as do the Islamists; they will instead think more in terms of participation in the power of the state and in the fruits of society's production. Enthusiasm for the Islamist cause will inevitably diminish here.

Thus, the material resources that the Islamist parties will have at their disposal over the long run will play an important role in determining their strength. Should they by some chance gain control of most instruments of state, they will of course dispose of more material resources, thereby building a larger following. Radical Islamist groups like those of Sayyaf and Hikmetyar, however, will ultimately lose much of their current ground unless they are able to gain undisputed military power in Kabul. Rabbani's Jam'iyyat party, which is less zealous in its message and founded on the realities of a northern power base, may thus emerge as a much stronger contender for power.

In the end, the Islamist parties, whose ideology far transcends their external support, cannot be counted out. Those more strongly at odds with Afghan tradition—especially Sayyaf's—will fare less well in the leaner days ahead. But the other parties will maintain their movement in one fashion or another, perhaps as abiding albeit marginal

political forces representing an irreducible element in the Afghan political equation.

The Traditionalist Parties

The traditional parties reflect the weakness of their own parochialisms, be they regional, tribal, sectarian, or ethnic. Their memberships largely define the parameters of their appeal and strengths. Yet these qualities of parochialism also imply some endurance precisely because they are based to such an extent on specific, concrete interests. Over the much longer run, these common interests will probably give way to the process of nation building, which works to deemphasize regionalism, sectarianism, and ethnicity in politics. But that phase is nowhere on the horizon at present; the Islamists, indeed, are the first sign that a broader "national" vision is beginning to supersede parochial interests.

MILITARY POWER

In principle, the seven allied parties based in Peshawar share a common approach to the transition to power. When the plum of Kabul falls from the tree, however, it is probable that the strongest military group—and the one that is able to seize power in Kabul first—will have a critical effect on the future politics of the country. Military power alone will not suffice, however, if it lacks a popular base and if it pursues an unpopular agenda. The experience of the PDPA demonstrates the limitations of military strength in a country where centralized rule has almost never existed.

Military power, furthermore, will not be the monopoly of any one party; indeed, it may not be strongly linked to any political party if the regional commanders continue to gain autonomy as both the political parties and the Afghan Interim Government founder. Even a "nonpolitical" military commander, however, may reap some political benefit from an alliance with the more "legitimate" features of a political party, if only to mask the more military character of the future regime.

Any effort to exercise absolute political power by one party or commander will most likely be strongly opposed by other military groups, leading to the prospect of civil war and to the potential for a military rather than political resolution of a power struggle among various parties and commanders.

ETHNIC AND REGIONAL POWER

The government that ultimately takes power in Kabul will find it almost impossible to rest on a narrow ethnic base. This is obviously true for the non-Pashtuns, who have seldom wielded ultimate power in Kabul; they must have the support of the Pashtun tribes if they are to succeed. Nor can the Pashtuns alone rule the country; ten years of jihad have greatly strengthened the bases of strength of other ethnic groups.[1]

- Key non-Pashtun commanders such as Masoud and Abdul Haqq represent commanding figures within the alliance.
- The once-lowly Shi'ite Hazara population has enjoyed some ten years of near-total independence in the central fastnesses of the country, and they are not now about to accede to arbitrary power exercised from Kabul by groups that do not take their interests into account. As a result of their de facto autonomy and their development of military prowess long forbidden to them by Kabul, the Shi'ite Hazaras are likely to figure much more prominently in national politics.
- The only unifying ideology of the struggle was the nonethnic universal ideology of Islam.

The war has also wrought profound and unanticipated ethnographic changes upon the Afghan population. Whereas the Pashtuns represented some 39 percent of the population in 1978, they were also the ethnic element most directly affected by the war, owing especially to their location around the periphery of the country—particularly in the key combat zones of the southeast and south. Among the three-million-plus Afghan refugee population in Pakistan, a remarkably disproportionate 85 percent of the refugees were Pashtun in 1987. Assuming that the ethnic proportionality of Afghan refugees in Iran is roughly comparable (although there will be more Shi'ites in Iran), the proportional representation of Pashtuns inside Afghanistan dropped from 39 percent to 22 percent by 1987, while the Tajik population correspondingly rose from 26 percent of the population in 1978 to 34 percent by 1987.[2]

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[1]This point runs counter to the position taken by Robert Canfield, who states that the Pashtuns actually gained influence in relation to the other ethnic groups in the country during the jihad. (See R. Canfield, "Afghanistan: The Trajectory of Internal Alignments," *Middle East Journal,* Autumn 1989, p. 647.) I find this hard to believe, for the reasons stated below.

[2]See Sliwinski, p. 46.

This shift to Tajik numerical superiority is probably only temporary, since a large proportion of these refugees and their families will undoubtedly return to Afghanistan after the fighting diminishes. As we have discussed elsewhere, however, the return involves many uncertainties. The absence of a large number of Pashtuns from the country during a critical phase of national history, for example, is bound to affect that group's ability to return to the status quo ante, in which it once wielded power relatively easily. Pashtun political dominance will instead come under increasing challenge. And now that the Tajiks are numerically superior for the first time within Afghanistan, it is unclear whether they will assert themselves to a greater extent as a result of having faced the war from within the country.

The extreme ethnic imbalance among the refugee population will also affect the character of political consensus based on refugee preferences. As long as Afghanistan remains racked by civil war, any election or referendum that is held to establish the character of a new government or parliament will rest primarily on the exiles, who are vastly dominated by Pashtuns. Other ethnic elements are well aware of this imbalance and have thus resisted referenda that will inevitably favor the Pashtun.

Indeed, after the jihad and the emergence of a more comprehensive sense of national spirit, it will be difficult for any group to dominate Afghan politics as broadly as had been the case in the past—for in the end, ethnic strength tends to weaken Islamic strength. And the regional basis of most Afghan political parties—even those strongly oriented toward Islam—have tended to weaken their Islamic character. As one mujahid mentioned, "Some political [religious] parties simply smell Pashtun when you visit them in their offices."[3] Ethnicity is an almost inescapable factor when one is dealing with specific political (religious) parties.

The Pashtun, of course, are further subdivided into clans and tribes that also maintain tenacious ties cutting across political and even ideological lines. Tribalism has reemerged with a vengeance following the Soviet withdrawal, raising legitimate questions about how much its overall influence may have receded as a result of the decade-long national struggle. Hikmetyar, for example, a Ghilzai Pathan, has established contacts with the Khalq branch of the PDPA, which is strongly Ghilzai oriented. Indeed, it was this coalition that attempted a coup in Kabul in early 1990 despite the drastically polarized political ideologies it represented. Gailani, leader of the National Islamic

[3]Based on the author's interviews with numerous mujahidin in March 1989.

Front of mujahidin, has been in contact with Najibullah: both are from the Durrani Pathan tribe, the chief rival of the Ghilzais.[4]

RIVALRY BETWEEN LOCAL POLITICAL AND LOCAL RELIGIOUS POWER

Local religious power, particularly among the Pashtun, maintains an uneasy relationship with Pashtun tradition. In the first place, at least one scholar suggests that the Pashtuns' view of their pre-Islamic origins—as mythical descendants of the lost tribe of Israel—implies that they are a special Islamic community by their very existence; thus the Pashtun tribal entity implicitly contains within it the very character of Islam. The nature of the powerful Pashtun tribal code, the Pashtunwali, in the Pashtun mind carries some association of an Islamic character as well, even if it is not so recognized by any Islamic authority. The two codes, Pashtun and Islamic, are seen as able to coexist with relative ease, and the Pashtuns do not believe they must necessarily turn to Islamic authority to gain approval for their adherence to tribal code.[5]

Among Pashtuns, the role of the local mullah is not seen as conducive to clan compromise and reconciliation but is perceived instead as characterized by rigidity to Islam, even at the expense of Pashtun unity, and as often promulgated in the interests of the mullahs themselves. The Shari'a as a basis of law is therefore not viewed as essential to Pashtun life but is rather taken as a code of conduct and faith standing almost outside the Pashtun tribal context, more appropriately regulating among Muslims on an inter-ethnic basis.[6]

Secular authority, particularly among the Pashtun tribes, usually dominates in times of relative peace, in which circumstances the local mullahs must defer to tribal power (maliks) in the direct administration of tribal rule.[7] With the ending of the jihad, there is less justification for the exercise of political power by local mullahs.

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[4]See A. Rashid, "The Tug of Tribalism," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* August 24, 1989.

[5]J. W. Anderson, "How Afghans Define Themselves in Relation to Islam," in M. Nazif Shahrani and R. L. Canfield (eds.), *Revolution and Rebellion in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives,* Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 266, 274, and 276–277.

[6]See Anderson, pp. 270 and 277–278.

[7]See Roy, p. 36.

Among the Pashtuns, then, local secular power is not likely to be subordinated to local Islamic leadership, even under an Islamic republic. It will thus be difficult for a central religious leadership to impose itself successfully and broadly on the tribal structure of Pashtun life. This imposes an important practical limitation on the potential authoritarian powers of an Islamic state.

CONFLICT BETWEEN ISLAMIST AND TRADITIONAL LOCAL MUSLIM OFFICIALS (MULLAHS)

The Islamist groupings represent a direct threat to traditional local Islamic power by virtue of their comprehensive vision of an Islamic society—one that is quite pointedly not based on traditional education or on the application of religious law on the local level. Specifically, the Islamists fully support modern—especially technical—education in the belief that all modern technical trappings of society must lie at the full disposal of the state. Hence an Islamic republic, the common goal of all Islamists, would inevitably exercise power from its center at the expense of local traditional mullahs and 'ulama.

The central task of the Islamists, should they come to power, will be to create new mechanisms for ideologically based centralized control over the country—mechanisms that not only have never existed before but also run counter to the Afghan political tradition of fragmented authority and decentralized power centers. Islamists thus face the doubly daunting task not only of imposing their own ideology on the country but of establishing new mechanisms to implement that ideology as well.

The establishment of any powerful central mechanism invokes fear on the part of many within the society who have previously profited from the more relaxed hold of Kabul rule; local tribal chiefs, khans, and traditionalist mullahs all fear the power of any strong centralized state, be it secular or Islamist. Diverse ethnic elements also fear the domination of any one ethnic element over all others—especially the traditional power of the Pashtuns. And the Islamists fear the imposition of a secular state that could lead to the same growth of anti-Islamic impulses on the Left which led to the catastrophic 1978 communist coup.

SCENARIOS FOR KABUL'S COLLAPSE

The scenario for Kabul's ultimate collapse is a critical variable in determining the power relationships among contending groups.

The PDPA Collapses

The predicted collapse of Kabul from within owing to desertion—a long-held scenario—has not materialized as most observers had anticipated. The political unity and élan of the political parties have also foundered in the interim, nearly bringing any promise of a coherent military effort to an end. The outright collapse of the PDPA is thus unlikely. Nonetheless, the PDPA is not a popular regime; rather, it is one that maintains itself largely by evoking anxiety on the part of the populace over further prolonged military struggle as well as by encouraging the perception that the mujahidin might be no better than the now-moderated PDPA.

In the event of a PDPA collapse resulting from infighting and subversion, the ability of the political parties both to preserve their alliance and to maintain control over their field commanders will be obvious prerequisites to a relatively peaceful, democratic approach to the formation of a new government. If the parties cannot cohere when confronted with the spoils of power, however—or if individual commanders seize early individual initiative and move without their parties' consent—the ingredients for civil war would be in place. Civil war would obviously favor those parties that are strongest militarily—i.e., those that are currently dominated by the Islamist groups.

The PDPA Reaches a Political Solution

The longer the PDPA manages to maintain power in Kabul and in other major cities, the more the pressures for a political solution will build from various sources. The PDPA has already shown itself to be adept at exploiting the foreign press corps in Kabul by portraying itself as a moderate regime that has sought political accommodation only to have its civilian population ravaged by ruthless mujahidin sustained by foreign powers in search of a military solution. U.S. public opinion is gradually becoming susceptible to these arguments as fighting drags on ineffectually and continues to inflict a high death toll on the civilian population; Congress has already shown early signs of questioning a policy seeking military victory. Public opinion elsewhere in the world also supports political settlement. Continuing moderation and reform in the Soviet Union also diminish concern over the long-term nature of the PDPA regime, however unattractive it may be.

Pakistan's support of an indefinite military struggle also began to diminish under Benazir Bhutto. Pakistan's own Islamist and fundamentalist parties have consistently rendered strong support to the

mujahidin and will seek an Islamist victory there. But Bhutto did not wish to strengthen the hand of her political opponents and—like most Pakistanis—sought the earliest possible return home of the Afghan refugees now in Pakistan. If a political settlement can facilitate their return, Pakistan will join the United States in seeking a political solution and a cutoff of military aid.

Pakistan itself still cannot welcome a call for national reconciliation from the PDPA regime in Kabul if that call does not satisfy most of the mujahidin. Yet the alternative—civil war among the mujahidin—will be destabilizing for Pakistan as well.

If the PDPA can move forward toward striking a political bargain, it will divide the mujahidin in the process, probably deeming the traditionalist parties more acceptable partners than the Islamists. The traditionalist parties may prove more willing than the Islamist parties to strike a deal with the PDPA in the face of a long-term unsuccessful military struggle against Kabul—and also out of fear of the power of the Islamists. If some do strike a deal, will they then be willing to use military strength, as part of the new government, to eliminate the hold-out parties? Such a scenario would pit the traditionalists and PDPA remnants against the Islamists, who most assuredly will not give up the fight.

The Islamists, however—most notably Hikmetyar—exhibited a surprising degree of opportunism in their apparent willingness to cooperate with the radical Marxist PDPA Chief of Staff General Tanay in his unsuccessful coup attempt against Najibullah in 1990. Hikmetyar in particular expressed willingness to talk with General Tanay regarding anti-Kabul cooperation even after Tanay fled Afghanistan in the spring of 1990. Nonetheless, Hikmetyar's opportunism was just that—a willingness to employ any instrument in an effort to bring about the collapse of the PDPA. It is unlikely that Hikmetyar will ultimately abandon his fundamental beliefs and Islamic principles, regardless of the coalitions that he might be willing to build.

For this very reason, the radical Islamist parties are not likely to support any peace process or reconciliation that may be structured to their disadvantage. Indeed, both the United States and the Soviet Union are likely to see it to their mutual advantage to exclude Hikmetyar and other radicals. The radicals' strength is more military and financial than popular. If these groups and their followers are refused a role in power, there is no question that the hard core will survive and fight over the very long term. The Islamist movement has not come this far for over two decades to give up at this point. It will seek support from foreign sources—certainly from the Islamist

parties in Pakistan, from Saudi Arabia, and perhaps, if they can do so, from Iran as well.

The existence of a dedicated, armed, experienced, and motivated element fighting against a new post-PDPA Kabul regime presents a serious destabilizing element—especially in future Afghan-Pakistani relations. The radical Islamists are far more easily moderated in their views through participation in the ruling process with other religious parties of more moderate outlook. Thus, in the final analysis, a "political solution" is not as simple and straightforward as it might appear.

8. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

In the end, Islam remains one of the few unifying factors in the country—a fact that has embodied one of the greatest strengths of the Islamists throughout their struggle for national liberation. With the Soviet withdrawal, the need for a national rallying cry may thus diminish, as historically occurs when moments of national crisis pass. Islam as a powerful and driving ideology may therefore diminish as well, as internal political struggles move into the fore. To be sure, Islam will still be recognized by all as providing a critical element of national unity, but major differences will arise about how Islamic power should be exercised and about how the fruits of that power should be allocated. Most significantly, there is no single charismatic Islamist leader who would naturally assume the leadership of a future Islamic government.

Thus, the farther Islam moves away from the role of traditional symbolism and practice into the realm of concrete principles of central governance, the more controversial Islamist politics will become. Yet it is almost certain that the Islamist vision will have a profound impact on future Afghan governments; after all, Islam has been the rallying cry for a decade of national struggle against the Soviets. Indeed, nearly all Afghans have become more oriented toward Islamist thought as a consequence of this national ordeal. As future political changes evolve in Afghanistan, bringing with them new political, social, and economic factors stemming directly from the war, Afghan politics will be conducted within an Islamic context as regions, ethnic groups, and tribes vie for influence over the division of the power and the fruits of the national economy. The jihad has been perhaps the most profound national experience since the founding of the Afghan national state in the 18th century, and hence its symbolism, attainments, and consequences will be felt forever. Islam is now central to the Afghan national experience in a way that it has never been before.

Appendix

MAJOR MUJAHIDIN PARTIES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS[1]

I. Islamist Parties

A. *Hizb-e-Islami* (Islamic Party/Hikmetyar). Radical Islamist in character. Led by Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, a strong Islamist who was a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Kabul in the early 1970s, but who fled from Afghanistan after Daoud took power in 1973 with the help of the communists. Both Hikmetyar and the majority of his Islamist followers have received secular education and graduated from various technical faculties of Kabul University. In Pakistan, Hikmetyar maintained an Islamic opposition movement against the Daoud regime, including leadership of the major insurrection in the Panjshir Valley in 1975 near Kabul; this guerrilla action was sponsored by the Pakistani government in response to Daoud's strong support of the Pashtunistan (breakaway) movement inside Pakistan.

Hikmetyar is highly controversial and has used his military strength to weaken other mujahidin parties as well as to fight the Soviets. He is considered by many to be both ambitious and ruthless. He is also a tactical opportunist, as demonstrated by his willingness to make tactical common cause in the spring of 1990 with the PDPA's radical Marxist chief of staff, Tanay, in a move against Najibullah. His party has been described by Roy as "Leninist" in structure, centrally organized, and with a full panoply of "ministries" operating within the party. (Even the use of the term *party* makes a strong political statement, for it suggests the militant organized politics of a secular party—such as the communist party.[2]) The Hizb-e-Islami runs the most extensive public information offices of any party, both in Pakistan and abroad, and is considered skilled in the use of media. Hizb-e-Islami was strongly supported by Zia during the anti-Soviet campaign and has close ties to the Pakistani Islamist party Jama'at-i-Islami-i-Pakistan.

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[1]This section is drawn heavily from Olivier Roy's definitive *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* and is augmented from other sources, especially Robert Canfield's "Afghanistan: The Trajectory of Internal Alignments," *Middle East Journal*, Autumn 1989.

[2]See Roy, p. 78.

In power, Hikmetyar's group would be one of the two most ideologically oriented and uncompromising parties among the mujahidin. It is largely Pashtun in membership but profoundly antitribal in outlook.

B. *Hizb-e-Islami* (Islamic Party/Khalis). Led by Mawlawi Yunis Khalis. Moderate Islamist, in many ways close to Rabbani's Jam'iyyat. Khalis is considered well organized and fields some of the best military commanders on the scene (such as Abdul Haqq and Jallaluddin Haqani). He concentrates primarily on the key Kabul-Jalalabad route—primarily a Pashtun area—but exercises important influence near Kabul, a fact possibly of critical importance if Kabul collapses. Khalis is of traditional 'ulama (clerical) background but later joined the Islamists; in a sense he bridges both camps, seeking a middle ground between modern parties and traditional life.[3] Khalis has translated works of a prominent Egyptian Muslim Brother, Sayyid Qutb. His party broke away from Hikmetyar's party in 1979, since Khalis was less radical in his political outlook and more activist than Hikmetyar. His party is primarily Pashtun in membership. Khalis himself is considered more radical than most of the party, which tends toward support by 'ulama, who are more traditional by definition. Khalis enjoys close relations with Burhanuddin Rabbani of the Jam'iyyat.

C. *Jam'iyyat-e-Islami* (Islamic Association), led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. Moderate Islamist. Particularly distinct because of its basically northern (non-Pashtun) membership, especially Tajiks but also including many Uzbeks. Much Sufi (mystical Islamic) orientation. Membership is of both secular and traditional religious education.

Rabbani was born in 1940 in northern Afghanistan and is a Tajik. He is highly respected as fielding some of the most effective commanders in the jihad, notably Ahmad Shah Masoud and Isma'il Khan. Rabbani studied in government schools and then studied abroad in Ankara and is a graduate of Al Azhar, the premier school of Islamic studies in Cairo. He became a professor at Kabul University, at which time he became very active in Islamic politics. In 1972, he became the president of an underground section of the Organization of Muslim Youth (Sazman-e Javanan-e Musulman) and published a law review that gave considerable space to Islamist thinking.

Hikmetyar was one of the students in Rabbani's organization. In the 1970s, the students became interested in spreading their message be-

[3]See Roy, p. 138.

yond university circles and began to visit the countryside, preach, and become involved in social progressivism from an Islamic point of view. Rabbani fled Kabul after the 1973 coup in which Daoud overthrew the monarchy with the help of the communists; Daoud's arrests of Islamist elements had made his powerful hostility to the Islamic movement quite clear. Rabbani did not attain fame until he was attacked by the PDPA and escaped to Pakistan.

Rabbani is considered to embody a broad background of classical culture, spiritual orthodoxy, and political Islamism. He is ideologically liberal in terms of his willingness to work with diverse groups, including liberal intellectual circles; he aims at creating a mass movement for his Islamic ideals rather than a tight elitist party. After he and his erstwhile student Hikmetyar worked together for a time in Pakistan, Hikmetyar broke with Rabbani in 1976–1977 to found his own more politicized party. The Islamists thus split into two groups: "the professors," who were more willing to work with the traditional 'ulama, and the "students," who were strongly opposed to traditionalist Islam as represented by the 'ulama.

Although they head separate organizations, Rabbani is close in his views to Yunis Khalis (who broke away from Hikmetyar).

The Jam'iyyat attracts Afghans from the northern and northwestern parts of the country, usually Persian or Turkic speakers. Those with Sufi backgrounds as well as graduates from the government religious schools (madrasah) who are non-Pashtun tend to be Jam'iyyat members. Non-Pashtuns from the northeast with secular educational backgrounds also join Jam'iyyat.

D. *Ittihad-e-Islami* (Islamic Union) of Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf. The Ittihad draws its strength primarily from its close ties with Saudi Arabia, its chief supporter. For this reason Sayyaf has earned the name "Wahhabi"—a vague term on the one hand signifying an extremely austere, anti-Sufi religious outlook and on the other hand indicating a sympathy to Saudi Wahhabi Islam. Sayyaf himself denies that he is a Wahhabi, nor does the description do him much good in Afghan society. There is little support for austere, ascetic Islam in Afghanistan except among Nuristanis.

Sayyaf was an early activist in university Islamist circles in the 1970s but received a traditional Islamic education in a madrasah, Kabul University's Faculty of Theology. He also studied in Cairo and Saudi Arabia and speaks excellent Arabic—a fact that facilitated his ties with the Saudis. Sayyaf was deputy to Rabbani in the 1972 "council" (Shura) that led the Islamist movement. Later he was chosen to head

the 1980 alliance of mujahidin. Roy describes him as "ambitious and not troubled by too many scruples"—an individual who has manipulated and seriously damaged the unity of the mujahidin movement through the use of Saudi-provided financial instruments.[4] Distribution of largess has thus been one of Sayyaf's chief strengths. The 1980 alliance failed by 1981. He was named prime minister of the new Afghan provisional government, proclaimed in February 1989.

II. Traditionalist Parties

A. *Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami* (Islamic Revolutionary Movement), led by Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi, a former member of the Afghan National Assembly and a religious teacher. His party, mainly southern Pashtun in membership, is unusual in that it draws its strength from graduates of traditional madrasahs and the clergy. It was viewed as highly reactionary and violent in its early years, when its student members often launched indiscriminate attacks against Westernized Afghans who were viewed as "anti-Islamic." As the anti-Soviet struggle developed, however, because of its powerful component of traditional mainstream clergy ('ulama), Muhammadi's party was viewed as possessing a strong, loosely structured, centrist political influence devoid of Islamist ideology. It maintains good relations with both sides of the mujahidin political spectrum.

B. *Jabha-ye-Nejat-e-Milli* (National Salvation Front), led by Sebghatullah Mujaddidi. Strongly Sufi-based owing to Mujaddidi's leadership of the Naqshibandi Sufi order, the Front is supported primarily by Pashtun tribes and by the establishment of the old social order. Mujaddidi's family, which originally came from India, has had a long and distinguished role in Afghan Islam for over a century and has been at the forefront of opposing efforts by the state to limit the writ of Islam in the country. Mujaddidi's family also suffered immense losses at the hands of the communist regime soon after the coup in 1978, giving him a strong claim to moral leadership. This is one reason he has been a natural figure for president of the new Afghan government in exile.

Mujaddidi was on poor terms with the Daoud regime and joined the religious opposition movement in the early 1970s, leading to his arrest and exile. His party's organizational strength has been limited primarily to traditional Sufi networks and it has not been a major

[4]See Roy, p. 123.

recipient of Pakistani arms distribution, nor has it played a major military role in the resistance. As a Sufi-oriented (mystical) order, the party is strongly opposed to radical Islamist ideology.

Roy describes "contradictory influences" at work in the Mujaddidi family: "They are linked to the royalist establishment but view the westernization of the country's customs and legislation with distaste; they are wealthy, but stand outside the capitalist forms of development; they occupy official posts, but they form part of the political opposition; they are conservative, but are also linked to certain radical currents (political Islamism) within Islam."[5]

C. *Mahaz-e-Islami* (Islamic Front), led by Sayyid Ahmad Gailani. Like Mujaddidi, Gailani is the leader of an important Sufi order, the prominent Qadiris. His party, too, is Pashtun-dominated and conservative, and it has strong royalist leanings and ties to the old social order. It also is opposed to radical Islamic ideology and is particularly anathema to the Islamists because of its royalist preferences. The family origins are from Iraq and then India. The party had limited military influence until around 1987, when it developed considerable military prowess. Its followers have remained largely unchanged during the anti-Soviet struggle.

Shi'ite Mujahidin Organizations

Much less is known about the (currently) ten Afghan Shi'ite mujahidin groups, eight of which are based in Iran. These pro-Iranian groups have few important distinctions among them and are largely beholden to Tehran.

Roy describes Hazara society as "marked by an absence of egalitarianism and by the harshness of social relations."[6]

The most important of the Shi'ite mujahidin parties are:

A. *Nasr* (Victory), founded in 1978, recruited from young Hazara educated in Iran. It is radical in outlook, the closest group to the line of Ayatollah Khomeini and probably the most effective political group among the Shi'a. It developed its strength from among the Hazara, who went to Iran after the communist takeover in Afghanistan. Intellectually oriented with collective leadership, its most notable figure is Shaykh Abdul Karim Khalili from Behsud.

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[5]See Roy, p. 43.

[6]See Roy, p. 139.

B. *Harakat-e-Islami* (Islamic Movement), moderate Islamist under the leadership of Shaykh (Ayatollah) Asaf Mohseni. It is the most effective fighting organization among the Shi'a. It draws its recruits from within Afghanistan, not abroad; they are drawn from among educated Shi'a from all ethnic groups. While close to the Iranian clergy in general, it is not especially close to those who follow the Khomeini line, preferring instead the authority of Ayatollah Kho'i in Iraq.

Most of the other current Iranian parties are of marginal military or political importance. They have included Ansar al-Mahdi (the Helpers of the Mahdi), Jabha-ye Mottahed-e Inqilab-e Islami (the United Front of the Islamic Revolution), Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami (Guards of the Islamic Jihad), Jam'iyat-e Islami (the Islamic Society), Hizbollah-e Herat (the Hizbollah of Herat), Jam'iyat-e Ulama-ye Pirawbi (the Society of Pirawbi Ulama), and Harekat-e Inqilab-e Islami (the Islamic Revolutionary Movement).[7] Many of these have merged with or broken away from others. Yet other pro-Iranian parties include Hizb-e Islami-ye Rad-e Afghanistan (Party of Islamic Thunder of Afghanistan), Da'wat-e Ittihad-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (the Call of the Afghan Islamic Union), and the Niru-ye Islami-ye Afghanistan (the Islamic Forces of Afghanistan).

Two Shi'ite parties not supported by Iran, and also not included in the Afghan Interim Government, are the prominent Shura-ye Inqilab-e Ittifaq-e Islami (the Council of the Revolutionary Islamic Alliance), led by Sayyed Beheshti, and Sazman-e Mujahidin-e Mustaz'afin-e Afghanistan (the Organization of the Mujahidin of the Oppressed of Afghanistan), with more secular and leftist leanings.

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[7]See Shakeri, p. 26.

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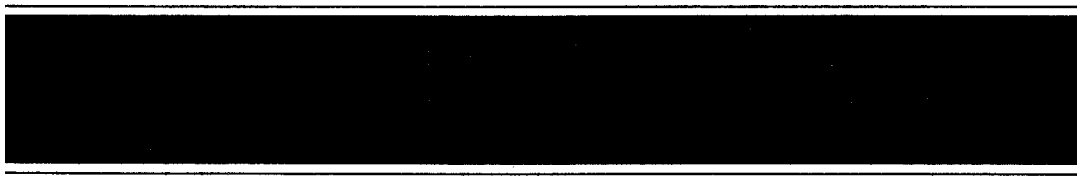
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