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WAR AND PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN: THE PAKISTANI ROLE

Marvin G. Weinbaum

WITHOUT Pakistan there could have been no effective Afghan resistance movement and little prospect for its success against the Soviets. The sanctuary of Pakistan allowed the *mujahidin* (holy warriors) to organize military operations, and the Islamabad government became a conduit for multinational arms deliveries to those fighting in Afghanistan. It also helped the many resistance parties coalesce into something of a distinct political grouping. Pakistan was indispensable in drawing international attention to the mujahidin cause and led the condemnation of the Soviet armed intervention in international fora. In negotiations leading to the withdrawal of Soviet military forces, Pakistan assumed a pivotal role. Pakistan's open border enabled more than 3.2 million Afghans to find refuge and relief aid in camps and, unrestricted in their movement, to participate in the economy of Pakistan's cities.

When asked, many Pakistanis like to stress what they see as their obligation to the Afghan people for reasons of faith and history, but in contrast to public attitudes, the relationship between the two peoples' governments has never been cordial. Strains existed long before the communist coup in Kabul in April 1978, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, and Pakistan's subsequent support for the Afghan resistance. Over the years, national interests and, indeed, the very ethos of the two states have stood in some contrast: The ideal and rationale of the Pakistani state was an Islamic consensus expected to transcend geographic and ethnic divisions, whereas, traditionally, the Afghan state had found its legitimacy in satisfying and balancing the interests of competitive ethnic

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and tribal communities. Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, despite a steady interchange of people and goods, the two countries have been antagonistic toward each other. Most of their disagreements can be traced to the Durand Line, the colonial-fashioned border between the two countries, but economic resentments, provocations, and cross-border political agitation have helped sustain tensions. Whereas Pakistan viewed the Afghan state mainly as an irritant before the Soviet invasion, the stakes for Pakistan after 1979 were thought to involve threats to its national security and integrity.

PAKISTANI OBJECTIVES

Pakistan's championing of the Afghan resistance struggle and its embrace of refugees were motivated by geostrategic and domestic imperatives which led Pakistan's leaders to pursue several objectives during the course of the war. Much to Pakistan's disappointment and frustration, however, these goals were at times incompatible.

Worried about the possibility of facing a coordinated attack from Afghan and Soviet troops on one front and the Indian military on the other, the first goal of Pakistan's military planners was the removal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Even if an armed communist invasion of Pakistan was a remote possibility, intimidation was not. There was also deep concern within the Pakistani government that Moscow would instigate, through material support, ethnic separatist movements in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province.

Their second objective was the early return of refugees to Afghanistan. The government in Islamabad facilitated and supplemented the massive international aid program that sustained the refugee community, and a broad consensus held that the Afghans be allowed to stay until they could return with a sense of security. Managing the burden of refugees, however, left Pakistan dependent on the continued assistance of the international community. Increasingly, moreover, Pakistanis began to view Afghan exiles as having an undesirable impact on their economy and society. In a number of cases, the Afghan resistance groups and the community of refugees were held responsible for breakdowns of law and order in Pakistan, and economic dislocations.

Third, the Pakistani president, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, used the Afghanistan situation to help his martial law regime survive. Many doubted that Zia's government would have lasted so long without the war in Afghanistan and the international assistance it attracted, especially from the United States. In return for the risks and obligations Pakistan claimed to have incurred in its support of the Afghan resistance, the Islamabad government received generous financial and diplomatic backing. US assistance committed to Pakistan's military and economic budgets through the 1980s totaled more than \$7.2 billion. As the war dragged on, Pakistan's relationship with the resistance carried some political

liabilities, but it also provided material benefits that directly and indirectly strengthened the regime.

A fourth objective that evolved from the war was Zia's intention to use the war, and Pakistan's role as a front-line state, to project Pakistan as the defender of Islam against Soviet-sponsored communism. Indeed, at times it seemed that Zia would not be content with merely aiding Afghan Muslims, but was driven by a mission to extend the struggle across the Oxus to Soviet Central Asian republics.

The fifth, and perhaps paramount aim of Islamabad's policymakers, was to block the revival of Afghan nationalism and assure recognition of what Pakistan had always claimed was its international border, the Durand Line. Pakistan hoped to achieve this through the creation of a post-war Afghanistan that, if not a client state, would, at a minimum, offer a friendly northwestern frontier. Assuming a willing Iran, a cooperative Afghanistan would provide Pakistani military planners with strategic geopolitical depth in any future conflict with India.

Because the Afghan war was to Pakistan, above all, a national security issue, the military assumed a leading role. As such, the major responsibilities fell to Pakistan's military intelligence division, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate, known as ISI. The ISI's assignment to implement policy was understandable given the covert nature of the operation. Less predictable, however, was the decision to allow it to also design Afghan policy.

The Hands-On Approach

Pakistan's direct involvement in the war began with the April 1978 communist coup when it allowed those opposing the Kabul government to escape to Pakistan and freely admitted large numbers of refugees. From the outset Pakistan sought to orchestrate much of the conduct of the Afghan war and expected to be instrumental in determining the shape of an Afghan peace. Pakistani authorities worked to control virtually every aspect of the Afghan presence in Pakistan, as well as the direction of the war. The activities of resident Afghans and the results of their armed efforts were expected to coincide with the perceived interests of Pakistan; nothing was to occur without the knowledge and approval of Pakistani authorities. The operation involved close management of refugees and the direction and coordination of Afghan resistance parties based in Peshawar. The ISI's activities also included intelligence gathering and manipulation of Afghan political figures. Above all, the ISI's control over the supply of arms gave Pakistan its most direct influence over the course of the war.

Throughout the conflict, Islamabad refused to admit to providing arms or military training to the resistance and refused to acknowledge that it was allowing other countries or organizations to do so. In one sense, the Pakistan government was truthful. It provided none of its own military supplies to the Afghan mujahidin, but it permitted the funnelling of foreign arms to the fighters, an

activity that allowed military intelligence to exercise control over the nature of the weapons, their destination, and end use.

Arms reached Pakistan by both ship and aircraft and were then trucked under military supervision to the border areas. At the frontier, weapons were recorded as they entered Afghanistan.¹ Yet, during the first years of the conflict, and while taking foreign aid to secure its borders and accepting international kudos for its stand, Pakistan showed some restraint in its support of the resistance. Every effort was made to have the arms, carried by men and mules, move quickly across the border into Afghanistan. In those years, Pakistan is believed to have insisted that the quantity of weapons transferred through the country be limited to approximately two plane loads weekly.²

The mujahidin took delivery of weapons in Pakistan at small distribution centers under the control of individual parties.³ As a matter of policy, the Pakistani military laid claim to a share of the shipments, and weapons intended for use by the mujahidin also found their way into the bazaars, often with the connivance of the Afghan resistance groups. As the arms supplies became larger, depots were set up in Pakistan with some being located in Pakistani military installations.

The arms provided by the ISI were not always the heavier weapons the mujahidin sought nor was the intelligence guidance and logistical support the type requested.⁴ Pakistani officials appeared to believe that better-equipped mujahidin capable of escalating the level of fighting would increase greatly the number of refugees fleeing to Pakistan, adding to its economic burden. Pakistani planners thought that more effective mujahidin defenses against Soviet tanks and planes, as well as public acknowledgement of Islamabad's role in the arms supply network, might antagonize Moscow and lead to retaliation. Pakistan's leaders feared air strikes against mujahidin staging areas in Pakistan as well as having sophisticated Soviet arms reach nationalist separatists in ethnically divided Pakistan. Despite these concerns, Pakistani authorities never seriously inhibited the free movement of resistance forces across the border nor the recruitment and training of fighters.

Arms for the resistance came from a number of sources. The cost of the operation as late as 1983 was no more than \$50 million, with the United States

1. Edward Girardet, *Afghanistan: The Soviet War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 67.

2. Carl Bernstein, "Arms for Afghanistan," *New Republic*, July 18, 1981, pp. 8–10.

3. The Peshawar-based parties referred to here include four Islamist groups—Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar), Hizb-i Islami (Islamic Party led by Yunis Khalis), Jamiat-i Islami (Islamic Society led by Burhanuddin Rabbani), and Ittihad-i Islami (Islamic Union led by Abdul Sayyaf)—and, the three parties considered traditionalist—Mahaz-i Melli (National Islamic Front led by Sayyid Ahmad Gaylani), Jibh-i Nejat-i Milli (Afghanistan National Liberation Front led by Sibghatullah Mojaddidi), and Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami (Islamic Revolutionary Movement led by Muhammad Nabi Muhammadi). See Robert Canfield, "Afghanistan: The Trajectory of Internal Alignments," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 43, no. 2 (Autumn 1989), pp. 642–3.

4. Robert G. Wirsing, "Repatriation of Afghan Refugees," *Journal of South Asian and Middle East Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall 1988), p. 35.

financing about half and Saudi Arabia most of the rest.⁵ By the late 1980s, Washington was providing about \$300 million in support and the Saudis approximately the same; Washington's total contribution for the decade was roughly \$2 billion.⁶ In addition to Iran's assistance to Shi'i resistance groups, Egyptian, Saudi, and Chinese arms were placed in the hands of Pakistan's military for distribution as were those paid for by the United States. With Pakistan's approval, supplies from some Arab countries were routed to selected Sunni parties designated by those states.

Though their assistance was common knowledge throughout the war, Pakistani authorities continued, however, officially to deny active involvement, and mujahidin leaders insisted that they could carry on the fight without the Pakistanis. In fact, the ISI worked closely with the resistance in the more accessible border areas, planning and offering tactical advice and training; Pakistani officers acted in close cooperation with Afghan field commanders in a number of larger operations. Notwithstanding charges by the Kabul regime, the Islamabad government never authorized logistical support by regular Pakistani troops, though the authorities tolerated party-run training camps and the free movement of several thousand volunteers, including *jihad*-seeking Algerians, Libyans, Palestinians, Syrians, and Yemenis.⁷ The largest number, however, were Saudis and they joined Wahhabi-professing Afghan groups in two of Afghanistan's eastern provinces.

THE ISI AND EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

No doubt, Pakistan's military intelligence can claim some of the credit for the failure of the Soviets to attain their objectives in the war. To the extent that any cooperation was realized among the usually feuding resistance factions, the intelligence service could take much of the credit. Not surprisingly, then, the United States deferred to Pakistan in the policy realm with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employees cooperating in arms transfers determined by the ISI. CIA operatives and others came to depend heavily on Pakistani military intelligence not only in reference to supplies and its relationships with resistance groups but also for strategic assessments. The ISI was the United States' main source of information about the politics of the resistance groups.

The ISI was assumed, in Washington, to have a good understanding of the Afghans and invaluable contacts among the resistance parties. The United States' reliance on the Pakistanis for information sometimes led to its being misinformed on several counts, such as the extent of former king Zahir Shah's popularity

5. *New York Times*, May 4, 1983.

6. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1990.

7. Estimates of the number of foreign Muslims participating in the war vary considerably. Sheila Tefft in the *Christian Science Monitor*, June 20, 1990, claimed the presence of 4,000 young Muslims in mid-1990 representing virtually every Islamic country.

among the refugees and the lack of support among the rank and file for some of the more radical Islamic resistance groups. The CIA also relied heavily on often less-than-reliable Pakistani sources for information about the reception and use of arms across the border. The United States looked the other way when it received reports that elements of the Pakistani army and refugee administration were conniving with members of the Peshawar organizations in the sale of weapons and relief supplies to parties outside the conflict.⁸ The United States also tolerated the regular siphoning-off of aid intended to pass across the border into Afghanistan but which, instead, paid for the comfortable lifestyles of some of the resistance leaders in Peshawar.

Cooperation between some Pakistani military officials and mujahidin commanders in the drug trade has often been alleged. The clandestine trafficking of arms offers a natural lucrative pairing with drugs. With the patronage of high Pakistani officials, resistance commanders were supposedly afforded an alternative means of financing the war that also handsomely rewarded individual Afghans and Pakistanis. Some contended that the network that succeeded in smuggling drugs out of the North-West Frontier Province received the protection of the Pakistani military, specifically, the army's National Logistics Cell, the unit handling the shipment of arms to the border areas.⁹ The United States seemed to care little so long as the resistance forces were putting pressure on the Soviet military.¹⁰

Factions and Favoritism

To one extent or another, all of the resistance party leaders were cultivated by Pakistan and were propped up by either the government or an external power. Although previously there had been more than 80 resistance groups operating in Peshawar, by 1982 Pakistani authorities had forced them to coalesce into seven. Nearly all the party leaders had a following, though often narrow and based on respect for their religious scholarship, religious status, or experience as dissidents. With the exception of Yunis Khalis, leader of one of the Islamist parties in Peshawar, none of the party leaders had a territorial base inside Afghanistan, traditionally an important qualification for leadership. Permission to register refugees in the camps, an authorization given to all seven Peshawar-based parties, was critical to their survival. Even so, Pakistani officials discriminated in military and other forms of assistance in favor of the more radical Islamic resistance factions and cooperated in curtailing the activities of their more moderate

8. Edward Girardet, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 7, 1988.

9. Lawrence Lifshutz, correspondent for the *Far East Economic Review*, from a National Public Radio interview reported in the *Nation* (Lahore), February 15, 1990. James Rupert and Steve Coll contend in the *Washington Post*, May 13, 1990, that drug corruption could not have occurred without the awareness or cooperation of the ISI.

10. Rupert and Coll, *Washington Post*, May 13, 1990.

traditionalist competitors. The Shi'i parties and nonreligious-oriented Afghan national parties were, in effect, excluded from the Peshawar alliance.

The Hizb-i Islami, headed by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, evolved as the ISI's most favored party. Hikmatyar had been battling governments in Kabul since 1974, most of the time from exile in Pakistan. He received assistance first from Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and then the chief-of-staff who ousted Bhutto, Zia ul-Haq. Along with other Islamists, Hikmatyar championed an Islamic order in Afghanistan that would be imposed on the traditional society, replacing the authority of pre-war tribal and ethnic leadership.

Pakistan had a number of reasons for its bias in favor of the Islamists, particularly Hikmatyar. During the mid-1970s, he and his followers offered a logical way for Pakistan to counterbalance the irredentist policies of Muhammad Daoud who came to power in an overthrow of the Afghan monarchy in 1973. Daoud, prime minister under King Zahir Shah from 1953 to 1963, had promoted the concept of Pushtunistan which aimed to incorporate the Pushtun people of Afghanistan and Pakistan into a single nation. Hikmatyar had long opposed the secular idea of Pushtunistan.

After the 1978 communist coup and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the following year, Zia and his military government found in Hikmatyar an excellent instrument of policy to support an armed resistance. The choice was defensible on pragmatic as well as ideological grounds. Hikmatyar's Hizb-i Islami was considered the best organized and most disciplined of the Peshawar-based parties. As such, it was thought to be in a good position to fight the Soviets and the Kabul regime. Hikmatyar's close ties with the conservative Jamaat-i Islami of Pakistan, effectively a domestic political ally of General Zia, also justified assistance to the Hikmatyar's group. Additionally, Zia, a man of more than superficial Islamic piety, found in Hizb-i Islami a group that, in its authoritarian internationalist brand of Islam, shared with him an anti-communist zeal. Hikmatyar's party developed what Pakistani observer Mushahid Hussain referred to as "relations of trust and confidence with the military."¹¹ Above all, an ideologically compatible Afghan party was expected to provide the geopolitical assurances that Pakistan desperately sought. In the event that the refugees remained indefinitely in Pakistan, Hizb-i Islami, in stressing Islamic beliefs over nationalist aims, could help reduce the chances that the refugees would become involved in Pakistan's domestic politics. If the resistance succeeded in the war, Pakistan banked on the party's feeling a strong indebtedness to the Islamabad government.

Hizb-i Islami was also favored by the Pakistani refugee administration, especially so during the 1980–83 tenure of Commissioner Shaykh Abdullah Khan, who sympathized with the religious parties. Arriving refugees from Afghanistan were obliged, if they wanted to qualify for rations, to become affiliated with one of the resistance groups, and many camp officials provided easier registration and

11. Sheila Tefft, *Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1989.

earlier assistance if they identified with Hikmatyar's party; licenses for trucks owned by Afghan refugees were facilitated for those who joined Hizb-i Islami. United Nations-monitored funds were regularly diverted by Pakistani officials to Hizb-i Islami, enabling it to take more than its fair share of rations, tents, and other relief aid.¹² To please Hizb-i Islami and the other Islamist parties, and also to insure that Afghan nationalist notions were kept to a minimum, the Pakistanis gave the Islamists a strong voice in the educational programs in the camps and, later, in the cross-border transfer of educational materials and the establishment of schools.

Hizb-i Islami was also allowed to run its own security service, presumably to watch for Kabul-trained infiltrators but actually more to undermine competing Afghan resistance groups. Although the parties were intended to assume security arrangements in the camps, their apparatus carried over into urban areas as well. Beginning early in the war, Afghans arrested by Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies were often interrogated in the presence of Hizb-i Islami security personnel. Hikmatyar's followers were also widely believed to maintain their own jails, incarcerating and badly treating not only suspected communists but also followers of other parties.¹³

Although a number of the commanders within Afghanistan were intensely loyal to Hizb-i Islami, their forces were neither the largest nor the most effective. Oddly, ISI officials seemed more impressed with the ruthlessness of Hikmatyar's commanders than with the scope of their fighting or accomplishments against Soviet and Kabul government troops.¹⁴ Given Hizb-i Islami's limited popular base within Afghanistan, only with direct Pakistani support could it hope, after a resistance victory, to be a serious contender for power in Kabul.

The bias in favor of Hizb-i Islami and the corresponding disregard, and even bullying, of other parties was nowhere better seen than in the allocation of weapons among the mujahidin. Although Hikmatyar espoused an anti-Western and, particularly, an increasingly shrill anti-US rhetoric, his party was said to have received 20–25 percent of US-supplied arms during the late 1980s.¹⁵ Others insisted that during most of the decade, roughly half of the US-supplied weapons went to Hikmatyar. The three traditionalist parties claimed that 75 percent of the mostly military aid received by resistance parties went to the alliance's four Islamist groups.¹⁶ Periodically, the more moderate groups were cut off entirely in what they believed were attempts to weaken them in certain regions of Afghanistan. Even the parties dominated by the Islamists were liable to be denied

12. John Fullerton, "A Rift among Rebels," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 29, 1982, p. 20.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Based on author's interviews with Afghan analysts and US observers in Peshawar.

15. Sheila Tefft, *Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1989.

16. Interview with resistance leader Sibghatullah Mojadiddi in *Frontier Post* (Peshawar), March 8, 1988, as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report-Near East and South Asia* (NES), March 9, 1988, p. 53.

supplies from time to time when they objected to ISI manipulation.¹⁷ Unlike the traditionalist parties, a number of the Islamist groups found alternative backers among private Arab and governmental sources. In this way varying amounts of arms, money, and other support went to the Islamists, bypassing official Pakistani channels.

By contrast, the most publicized of the resistance forces inside Afghanistan, the estimated 12,000 men under the command of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, were not favored by either Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. Pakistanis, while admitting that Mas'ud had managed more than any other commander to create a regional governmental infrastructure in the country, argued that he had done so because his forces were less often militarily engaged. Mas'ud, whose network of commanders covered six northern provinces, had regularly criticized the Pakistanis and their US suppliers for ignoring his group. Pakistan's less than friendly policy toward Mas'ud was not unrelated to his refusal to accept ISI dictates. Pakistan, and to some extent the United States, was leery of Mas'ud for his seeming willingness to strike deals with the enemy and his unwillingness to be pushed into attacking major cities after the Soviet pullout. Another explanation for the ISI's bypassing of Mas'ud was that, as an ethnic Tajik, he was unacceptable to the ISI which was devoted to the idea that only a member of the Pushtun majority could rule Afghanistan.¹⁸

PAKISTAN AND AFGHAN POLITICS

The Afghan policies of Pakistan often seemed to play on the social changes and cleavages within Afghanistan that intensified during the war. A disunified resistance gave comfort to those Pakistanis, mainly in the military, who wanted a future Afghanistan to pose no threat to Pakistan. These divisions lessened the possibility of parties coalescing in opposition to political figures favored by the military intelligence. Repeated Pakistani attempts to create a common leadership structure produced just enough unity to ease the military's task of controlling the mujahidin. Thus, an alliance of the seven Peshawar-based parties formed in early 1988, in what Louis Dupree referred to as the ISI's "shot-gun marriage arrangement,"¹⁹ provided for a rotating leadership. This arrangement assured that no Afghan leader, including Hikmatyar, could monopolize power, and that the movement would therefore have to continue to look to Pakistan for guidance.

With the prospect of a Soviet withdrawal and expectations of a mujahidin-led state, however, other considerations came into play. A highly fragmented

17. *The Guardian* (Manchester), March 12, 1989.

18. There were reports that Pakistan's military intelligence, at one point, cooperated with resistance fighters loyal to Hikmatyar in organizing a 2,000-man force for the purpose of attacking Mas'ud's fighters. *Washington Times*, April 11, 1990.

19. Louis Dupree, "Post Withdrawal Afghanistan: Light at the End of the Tunnel," in *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, ed. Amin Saikal and William Maley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 33.

resistance movement would be unable to negotiate the kind of peace that might permit the refugees to leave Pakistan shortly after a settlement. In addition, a weak Afghanistan might become easy prey to outside influences, such as India, Iran, and the Soviet Union. Pakistan would be better served, authorities in Islamabad reasoned, by a more structured, cohesive alternative to the Kabul government, one that would improve chances for stability in a liberated Afghanistan, as well as one that would be pro-Pakistan. Priority was thus given to the creation of the broad-based organization that came to be called the "Afghan Interim Government" (AIG). Under the tutelage of the ISI head, General Hamid Gul, a *shura* was called in February 1989. Pressed by Gul, and after much haggling and confusion, the seven Peshawar-based party leaders agreed to a more clearly articulated division of powers and a council-elected leadership.

The ISI chief was also directly involved in the *shura* negotiations that attempted to bring the Iranian-based resistance parties into the interim government while it was being formed. It was in consultation with Gul that increased representation was offered to the Shi'i parties in order to persuade them to participate in the *shura*. Despite Gul's efforts, however, when Hikmatyar and several others in the Islamist camp refused to go along with the deal to provide additional seats for Shias, questions were raised as to whether the initiative had been a serious one at all.

Judging from the way Pakistani officials manipulated or sought to steer Afghan resistance politics, there is reason to question whether those concerned with Afghan policy fully understood the workings of Afghan institutions, such as the *shura*, and resistance politics. Limited understanding of Afghan traditions led Pakistan's policymakers to believe that a *shura* might serve as a decision-making conflict-resolving body, when, at best, it allowed for leaders' expressions of views and ratification of decisions essentially already made.²⁰ Similar misperceptions allowed Pakistan's leaders to conclude that once they helped install a friendly government in Kabul, their anointed group would feel beholden to Islamabad. It was probably only belatedly that the Pakistanis realized that the AIG structure, because it was viewed as a Pakistani creation, would always have a legitimacy problem.

THE END GAME

In the year following the February 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, there were strong indications of basic changes in Pakistan's Afghan policy. Any immediate threat to Pakistan's political integrity through outside military mea-

20. According to some observers, Pakistani stereotypes of Afghans affected their perceptions of the Afghan's political behavior. Many Pakistanis in decision-making positions tended to view Afghans the way they saw Pakistan's Pathans—as untrustworthy and a "swaggering, armed aggressive lot." Akbar Ahmed in a 1984 manuscript cited by Nancy Dupree in "Demographic Reporting on Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2 (1988), p. 243.

tures became remote. Only two months prior to the Soviet pullout, a democratically elected government headed by Benazir Bhutto was formed in Islamabad. Although during the election campaign her Pakistan People's Party's long-term criticism of Zia's unwavering support of the Afghan resistance was somewhat muted, Bhutto was widely expected to put her own stamp on Afghan policy, by attempting to move toward an early political solution and clipping the wings of the military.

The mujahidin leadership clearly had reason to worry. Zia had been steadfast in his support, but not only was his death in the August 1988 plane crash a cause for resistance concern, but so were the deaths of two others killed in the crash: Lieutenant General Mian Muhammad Afzal, head of the military intelligence's cross-border operations, and General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, Zia's former intelligence chief and an ardent advocate of continued military pressure on the Kabul government. The likelihood of some revision in arms policy seemed in the offing as a result of increasing complaints by US officials over the special treatment accorded Hikmatyar's Hizb-i Islami.

As prime minister, Bhutto, at the urging of Washington, also was expected to crack down on the military's involvement in the border-area drug trade. A greater inclination in the Bhutto government for distancing Pakistan from the more radical Afghan leaders was expected to give the government a freer hand in exploring peace formulas hitherto considered unacceptable to the four Islamist parties, including a political role for Zahir Shah.

The reality of Pakistan's post-Soviet withdrawal policy was far different from that anticipated. For some months after her election, Prime Minister Bhutto approved arrests in what promised to be a far-reaching campaign against official involvement in the drug trade, but the effort to expand the investigation ended abruptly when the trail led to additional major figures in the military and to individuals with strong ties to her own party.²¹ More than anything else, the tenuous parliamentary control by Bhutto forces during the prime minister's 20-month tenure—from December 1988 to August 1990—and the very fragility of Pakistan's democracy in part explains the absence of early substantial policy changes.

In the wake of defeat of the resistance's spring 1989 campaign for Jalalabad, the first military action following the Soviet's departure, embarrassed Pakistani military planners sat by while Bhutto dismissed General Gul from his ISI position. This decision, taken in May 1989, was hailed by many as an important move in terms of signaling a change in Pakistani foreign policy toward Afghanistan in the direction of a negotiated settlement. Gul's firing by Bhutto was seen as critical to the prime minister's efforts to consolidate her power domestically.²²

21. Lifshutz, *The Nation*, February 15, 1990.

22. John Kifner, *New York Times*, May 26, 1989.

The ouster of Gul did not, however, lead to the anticipated modifications of Pakistan's Afghan policies, largely because the military strongly resisted any diminution of the ISI's power. Although official rhetoric supporting a negotiated solution increased, the government failed to devise any fresh approaches toward a political solution. Rather than exert her will over the military, the prime minister found it necessary to placate the generals in an attempt to gain their neutrality in her domestic battles with the aggressive opposition party alliance. The military and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who often seemed to be its spokesman, exacted a price. Bhutto's choice as ISI chief, General Shamsur Rahman Kallu, never amounted to much more than a figurehead. In effect, control of ISI and Afghan policy was assumed directly by Pakistan's military head, General Aslam Beg. Mujahidin leaders in Peshawar, including Hikmatyar, were assured that there would be no important changes in policy. Indeed, Gul, after having been reassigned to a key command post, continued to be consulted by the intelligence service on important decisions.

Failure of the AIG

The AIG was a particular disappointment to its Pakistani handlers and became increasingly irrelevant to the war. Virtually none of the party leaders was willing to meld his organization entirely into the cooperative structure necessary for it to be effective. Increased fighting between the parties, particularly between commanders of the Jamiat-i Islami and Hizb-i Islami, contributed to the latter party's leaving the AIG. For all of Islamabad's efforts to have the AIG assume the responsibilities of a government-in-exile, it was unable to create an administrative apparatus capable of convincing anyone that it could succeed the Najibullah government in Kabul. Without the loyalty of major field commanders inside Afghanistan, and the inclusion of the Iranian-based Shi'i resistance parties, the AIG government had little claim to being representative. It also failed to conform to the realities of the larger refugee community with respect to giving a fuller voice to the supporters of Zahir Shah and non-Pushtun groups.

The basic difficulty was that the AIG was never meant to be a government-in-exile, a bureaucratic entity that would eventually take root in Afghanistan. It was a structure designed by Pakistan and its allies to be available to rush into Afghanistan when, as was expected at the time, the Kabul government was to fall after the Soviet military departure, and to last only until a viable power-sharing arrangement could be devised. When events did not occur as predicted, the AIG's sponsors were saddled with a body of officials who wanted to behave like a legitimate government. By funding ministerial trappings for the AIG, the United States supported, and publically appeared to believe in, the fiction that it was a viable entity. Pakistan, on its part, continued to perpetuate the illusion that the Afghan leadership it had installed could serve as the starting point for a more broad-based government in the future.

Events surrounding the failed March 1990 coup attempt in Kabul left no doubt that the ISI expected to play an active role in the end game and that its links with the Hizb-i Islami remained firm. In this particular attempt, Afghan defense minister Shahnawaz Tanay, and fellow members of the Khalq faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), launched a poorly executed attempt to oust President Najibullah. On one level the coup was the result of a long-festering intra-party struggle, but the available evidence also points to some involvement on the part of Pakistani intelligence, although the timing appeared to catch them by surprise. For some time it had been known that Hizb-i Islami had succeeded in penetrating the Kabul government's military and had spread money generously. Whatever the extent of Pakistan's involvement, several hours into the coup—and, after having failed in an air strike to kill Najibullah—the dissidents in the Afghan military found common cause with Hizb-i Islami and its partners in the ISI. Pakistani officials asked AIG leaders to join in a revolutionary council supportive of the coup, but they did not believe Tanay was sincere in his professed conversion to the Islamic cause. Tanay and his confederates were associated with the most hardline of the communists who had been in favor of a more vigorous pursuit of the war against the mujahidin. It was difficult to imagine how the communists and Islamists could be reconciled if the coup had succeeded. Both sides were apparently hopeful of prevailing in the almost certain power struggle to follow.

For their part, the Pakistanis and Hikmatyar's partisans grasped at what appeared to be a golden opportunity. Aside from their common desire to oust Najibullah, the Khalqis and Hizb-i Islami leaders appeared to share a similar fate in that they would almost certainly be left out of any internationally-sponsored political compromise that would favor more moderate elements. For Pakistan's military and civilian authorities, the coup offered a chance to short-circuit the war; it was an opportunity to return to a military solution made attractive by the lack of progress in finding a negotiated political settlement. Prime Minister Bhutto gave her endorsement, and, badly informed of the progress of the fighting, she also approved a media campaign intended to give momentum to, and save, the coup attempt. Pakistan's government-controlled television and radio participated along with ministry officials in the false reporting of events in Afghanistan, lending additional credence to accusations from Kabul that they had directed the affair.

Questions were again raised about the competence of the ISI and the gullibility of Pakistan's civilian leadership. Both had misread the strength of Najibullah and his domestic adversaries. Parties of the AIG had once again demonstrated that they could not unite when decisive action was necessary. The attempted coup reconfirmed the presence in the ISI of officials who, in their unbroken partnership with Hikmatyar, were, in effect, repositories of Zia's vision for Afghanistan. With the dismissal of Bhutto's government on August 6, 1990, and her party's resounding defeat in the 24 October National Assembly elections by an alliance including the conservative Muslim League and Jamaat-i Islami

parties, the military strengthened its legitimacy in national politics and gained a freer rein. The close links of the ruling government coalition, headed by Nawaz Sharif, to Pakistan's army and Afghan Islamists were well known, as was the military's advocacy of a more rigorous Afghan policy. In fact, ISI preparations for a new offensive, to be spearheaded by Hikmatyar's forces, were reportedly already in progress within weeks after Bhutto's removal from office in August.²³

An assault aimed at penetrating Kabul's defenses began in mid-October, and was preceded by new arms shipments to Hizb-i Islami, and revived attempts at internal subversion to depose the Afghan government. Without the participation of other field commanders, however, the campaign was doomed to fail. Meeting inside Afghanistan, some 40 commanders settled on a competing strategy which avoided a conventional assault on the capital—in part because of expected heavy civilian casualties—and instead concentrated on increasing coordinated attacks against provincial centers. Notwithstanding Mas'ud's visit soon thereafter to Islamabad, where he met Pakistani officials and resistance leaders including Hikmatyar, the ISI found that its immediate plans to end the war were effectively vetoed by the independent Afghan commanders' council. For the time being at least, the enhanced authority of the military intelligence could deliver neither reconciliation among traditional and Islamist elements nor a joint operation of the mujahidin.

PAKISTAN AND A FUTURE AFGHANISTAN

As stated previously, Pakistan expects, and probably will, have a major stake in the configuration of power, the economic policies, and the prevailing ideologies of a post-war Afghanistan. This requires Pakistan's leadership to face the issue of what kind of Afghanistan is reasonably in their country's best interest. Thinking along these lines has remained largely limited to installing an Islamic regime sympathetic or beholden to Pakistan after the fall of Najibullah. Pakistani officials are naturally anxious to avoid a revival of the controversies and disputes with Afghanistan that marked so much of the pre-1978 period. From a cynical perspective, the Zia regime opted for a disunified and decentralized Afghan state as the best insurance that no government antagonistic to Pakistan would emerge in the future. By the late 1980s, however, the idea of an unstable neighbor no longer seemed so clearly in Pakistan's interest. Indeed, civil disorder and the absence of a viable government in Kabul was seen by many in Pakistan as not only likely to delay the return of refugees, but also likely to create a vacuum inviting external intervention in Afghanistan and conceivably undermining Pakistan's own political stability. According to this view, Pakistan should attempt to promote a more neutral Afghanistan in exchange for a reassuring new set of bilateral relations.

23. Steve Coll and James Rupert, *Washington Post*, November 4, 1990.

There is little reason for Pakistan to be concerned about a revival of the cry for Pushtunistan any time soon. The dominant Islamic thrust of the resistance and the historic factionalism of Afghan society assures that nationalistic themes will have only a secondary role. Most of the familiar spokesmen for Pushtun nationalism are no longer on the scene, and the parties that once championed the cause are moribund. The Awami National Party, traditionally the most vocal party in Pakistan for the rights of Pushtuns, is, in its pro-Soviet proclivities, largely repugnant to the Pushtun-dominated refugee community in Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Islamists who had once been highly critical of ethnic nationalism have become leaders in the resistance seeking to create a sovereign Afghan state likely to be led by Pushtuns.

Just as the Pakistanis may have overestimated the Pushtunistan threat in the past, they misjudged the temperament of the Afghans. In thinking that Pakistan, through its support and hospitality, could help install a pliant regime in Kabul, the Islamabad government has too easily discounted the Afghans' traditional independence. Whatever the debt felt by Islamists and others, their desire for self-determination, free of external pressures, can be expected to far outweigh any sense of obligation to Pakistan. Thus, the strategies that Pakistani policy elites have followed are neither fully realizable nor, very probably, in Pakistan's long-term national interest.

More so in the future than before the war, Pakistan and Afghanistan will be closely linked. Political instability and economic stagnation in either Pakistan or Afghanistan will affect the other country. A politically troubled and economically prostrate Pakistan will retard the recovery of Afghanistan, and a delayed economic revival of Afghanistan can further weaken Pakistan's growth and stability. Each country is not, however, indispensable to the other—Iran and the Soviet Union are also natural trading partners—yet Pakistan remains the major link to the sea for an Afghan state and a principal market for its agricultural exports. Conceivably, Pakistan could become a customer for Afghanistan's hydroelectric power, and Pakistan can certainly play an instrumental role in the international community's rebuilding of the Afghan economy, by contributing expertise, commodities, and manufactured goods, and making available its more developed infrastructure.

It may be that Pakistan will have to settle in the end for a regime in Afghanistan that, if nothing else, is simply not anti-Pakistan. Further, if the post-Bhutto leadership in Pakistan insists on firm guarantees and major rewards for its decade of generosity, the result may be the revival of old antagonisms. There is much that Pakistan can do to assure that the pre-war relationship, which so often Afghans took to be patronizing and exploitative, does not return. If Pakistan is to feel secure that a future Afghanistan does not again see its national interests better served through ties to India, officials in Islamabad will have to be more sensitive than in the past to charges that they have behaved like a hegemonic neighbor.