

# IS534N — Geopolitics of Afghanistan

## MODULE 8 — COMPREHENSIVE Q&A DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Afghanistan's Regional Geopolitics: Pashtunistan, Strategic Depth,  
Pipelines & the Grand Bargain*

**SOURCE TEXTS:** Ahmad et al. (2022) — Rasanayagam Ch.3 — Rashid Chs.13–14  
— Rais (1993) — Rubin & Rashid (2008)

### REPOSITORY BOUNDARY

All evidence in this guide is drawn exclusively from the five uploaded Module 8 source texts.

No external knowledge has been introduced. All named figures, statistics, dates, and quotations are traceable to one of the five PDFs.

## QUESTION 1 OF 8 — RECALL / ANALYTICAL

**Q1. How did the concept of Pashtunistan function as a political construction rather than a natural territorial demand?**

### Contextual Framing

Pashtunistan is explicitly framed in the Ahmad et al. (2022) article as an 'imaginary entity' — not a pre-existing territorial reality but a political claim constructed by Afghan state elites whenever historical conditions supplied both opportunity and willingness. The article situates the claim within an interstate ethnic conflict framework drawing on Carment, James and Taydas (2006) and Most and Starr (1980), arguing that ethnic leaders pursue crises to expand domestic political influence. The framing question is therefore not 'where is Pashtunistan?' but 'why was Pashtunistan constructed, and by whom, and when?'

### Enriched Answer

**The Asymmetry of Ethnic Identity in Afghanistan and Pakistan.** The foundational construction rests on a demographic paradox. Because Pashtuns have historically ruled Afghanistan, Pashtun ethnic identity became the primary source of state-centric nationalism in Kabul. In Pakistan, however, the same Pashtun identity threatened the Islam-based nationalist narrative on which Pakistani statehood was founded. This asymmetry gave Afghan elites an inherent structural incentive to mobilise Pashtun nationalism externally, as a wedge against Pakistani territorial consolidation.

**Silence During British Rule — The Proof of Construction.** The most telling evidence that Pashtunistan was a strategic construction rather than an organic national

movement is the historical silence of all Afghan regimes during British rule. The Ahmad et al. article states explicitly that no Afghan government ever raised the Pashtunistan issue while the British were in India. The claim was activated only when Partition created the opportunity: the British departure, the emergence of Pakistan as a new and initially weak state, and Afghan rulers' hope of gaining sea access by annexing Pashtun and Baluch regions. Pashtunistan, in this reading, was the justification for territorial ambition, not the reverse.

### **The 1947 Conjecture — Opportunity Without Willingness Constrained.**

In 1947, the Afghan government protested the Partition terms immediately and demanded that the people of the North West Frontier Province be given the choice to join Afghanistan or form an independent Pashtun state. When both requests were refused, Afghanistan denounced the resulting referendum and tribal jirgas as null and void, arguing that the Pashtun areas — like the 562 self-governing princely states — should have been offered independence as a third option. Afghanistan was the only nation to vote against Pakistan's United Nations membership in September 1947, a move that poisoned bilateral relations for decades. The Afghan representative, Abdul Hussein Khan Aziz, stated that Afghanistan could not recognise the Northwest Frontier as part of Pakistan until its population had been given a truly free choice. Even so, Afghanistan retracted its negative vote on 20 October 1947 — demonstrating the strategic, rather than absolute, character of the commitment.

**The July 1949 Loya Jirga and the Exile Declaration.** The construction was institutionalised through two acts in 1949. First, a Loya Jirga convened in Kabul formally revoked all of Afghanistan's treaties with the United Kingdom regarding the Durand Line and the status of Pashtuns — a unilateral move with no precedent in Afghan-British diplomatic history. Second, at the behest of Afghanistan, Afridi and other tribes gathered at Tirah Bagh east of the Durand Line, proclaimed the establishment of Pashtunistan in exile in August 1949, adopted a flag, and declared a National Assembly. The Afghan government immediately announced full support and declared 31 August as Pashtunistan Day — a national holiday. These were state-manufactured acts, not grassroots movements.

**Internal Contradiction: The Plebiscite Logic.** The Rasanayagam chapter dismantles the claim's logical coherence: if ethnic affinity justified a plebiscite for Pakistani Pashtuns, that same logic would demand including Afghan Pashtuns. But Afghan Pashtuns were the very basis of the Afghan state — Kabul could never include them in any plebiscite. Rasanayagam also notes that the NWFP had been under British rule for over fifty years, that the Pashtun elite had reaped substantial benefits of modernisation — including Edwardes College and Ismailia College in Peshawar — and that Pakistani Pashtuns were well represented in the officer corps. The Rasanayagam text even quotes journalist George Arney to show that Pashtunistan 'meant different things to different people': spiritual regeneration for Ghaffar Khan; permanent anarchy for the wild tribesmen straddling the Durand Line; and the absorption of Pakistan's NWFP into the Afghan state for the rulers of Kabul.

**Post-Taliban Continuity — The Structural Persistence of the Claim.** The Ahmad et al. article shows that the construction was not merely a Cold War phenomenon.

The post-2001 Karzai government resumed the annual observance of Pashtunistan Day on 31 August. The Afghan Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs expressed solidarity with the Baloch communities in Pakistan after the killing of Akbar Bugti in 2006. The Ghani administration later supported the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement. And after August 2021, the new Taliban regime continued to enable or shield the TTP, using Pakistani Pashtun militancy as leverage over Islamabad. The claim, in other words, has survived every change of regime in Kabul because it serves persistent elite functions — diverting domestic attention and pressuring a vulnerable neighbour — regardless of ideological colouring.

#### ANALYTICAL INSIGHT — BLUE BOX

Pashtunistan is not a territory-node in any meaningful geographical sense. It is best modelled as a DISCURSIVE-CLAIM NODE — an elite narration that links Afghan state legitimacy to Pashtun identity and then weaponises that linkage against Pakistani sovereignty.

The critical diagnostic is chronological: the claim goes silent when Afghanistan has an external patron willing to intervene (e.g., the Soviet-backed PDPA era), and resurfaces whenever Afghanistan needs external pressure instruments against Pakistan.

#### Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
State	Afghanistan, Pakistan, British India
Ethno-political community	Pashtuns (Afghan side, Pakistani side)
Political construction	Pashtunistan — the 'imaginary entity'
Elite actor	Afghan rulers, ethnopolitical elites
Conflict form	Interstate ethnic conflict
Institutional act	1949 Loya Jirga, Exile Declaration, Pashtunistan Day
Demographic paradox	Pashtun = Afghan state identity vs. Pakistani threat

#### Event Chain

1. 1893 Durand Line separates Afghan and British spheres — Pashtun population divided.
2. No Afghan claim during British rule: opportunity absent, cost too high.
3. 1947 Partition creates new Pakistani state — Afghan elites identify fresh opportunity.
4. Referendum and tribal jirgas declared null and void by Kabul.
5. 1949 Loya Jirga formally revokes Durand Line treaties.
6. August 1949: Pashtunistan declared in exile; 31 August becomes Afghan national holiday.
7. Claim intensifies under Daoud 1953–63 and again 1973–78, subsides under Soviet-backed PDPA.

8. Post-2001 Karzai and Ghani regimes revive Pashtunistan Day and Baloch solidarity gestures.
9. Post-2021 Taliban use TTP as leverage — the claim persists in functional form.

### EXAM APPLICATION — GOLD BOX

For Section B: Frame your argument around the opportunity-willingness mechanism from the outset. The strongest answers will demonstrate that Pashtunistan was activated at key conjunctures (1947, 1949, 1953, 1973, 2001) and show WHY the claim was useful domestically and diplomatically at each moment.

Link to eigen-space: Pashtunistan is a spatial claim that attempts to re-map the produced space of the Afghan-Pakistani frontier. It is an elite attempt at spatial re-narration — not a transformation of rural eigen-space.

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## QUESTION 2 OF 8 — RECALL / ANALYTICAL

**Q2. What role did the Durand Line and the Partition of India play in the ongoing conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan?**

### Enriched Answer

**The 1893 Durand Line — A Frontier, Not a Border.** The Durand Line was signed on 12 November 1893 between Amir Abdul Rahman and Sir Mortimer Durand. Its stated purpose, as Rasanayagam explains, was both strategic and defensive: to delimit the respective spheres of influence of the Amir of Kabul and of the British over the unruly Pashtun tribes on either side, and to discourage armed incursions into British India. Crucially, the Line was never an 'international frontier' in the accepted sense. The Rasanayagam chapter notes that the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921 referred only to the mutual interest of the contracting parties in the tribes residing close to their respective boundaries — language that preserved deliberate ambiguity. The Simon Commission Report of 1930 went so far as to state that 'British India stops at the boundary of the administered area,' acknowledging that large tracts between the Indus and the Line were neither fully Afghan nor fully British-Indian.

**The NWFP's Dual Structure.** In 1901 the British created the North West Frontier Province, separating the Pashtun country west of the Indus from Punjab. The province was divided into two types of territory: 'Settled Districts' directly administered by the British, and five autonomous Tribal Agencies ruled by local khans or chiefs, with resident British political agents reporting directly to the Viceroy's government in Calcutta — not to the NWFP Governor. This dual structure meant that the Tribal Agencies occupied a constitutional ambiguity that Afghan governments would later exploit: the Agencies, like the princely states of British India, had never been directly administered and might therefore have been entitled to a third option at Partition.

**1947 Partition — The Conjunctural Opening.** The British withdrawal from India in 1947 transformed the Durand Line from an imperial boundary into a claimed international border without any bilateral treaty confirming this status. A referendum was held in the Settled Districts of the NWFP; the overwhelmingly Muslim population voted to join Pakistan. In the five autonomous Tribal Agencies, a British-sponsored jirga also opted for Pakistan. The Afghan government rejected both procedures: the Settled Districts referendum had not offered independence as an option, and the jirga had not given the tribes the same choices available to the 562 self-governing princely states. Afghanistan therefore formally declared that it did not recognise the NWFP and Tribal Agencies as part of Pakistan. This act was not merely rhetorical — it drove Afghanistan to cast the only negative vote against Pakistan’s United Nations membership application in September 1947.

**The Line as a Living Security Architecture.** Rubin and Rashid argue that the Durand Line is ‘more than a line.’ It was structured as part of the defences of British India, and on the Pakistani side the British and their Pakistani successors turned the difficulty of governing the tribes to their advantage by establishing what became the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Within the FATA, tribes — not the government — were responsible for security. The area was kept deliberately ‘underdeveloped and overarmed as a barrier against invaders.’ After the Cold War, Pakistan’s military transformed the FATA into a staging area for militants capable of conducting asymmetric warfare in both Afghanistan and Kashmir, exploiting the region’s special status for what Rubin and Rashid describe as ‘decreasingly plausible deniability.’ Pakistan’s strategy for external security thus structurally undermined its internal security — a contradiction at the heart of every Afghan-Pakistani crisis from the 1950s to the present.

**The Unresolved Legitimacy Problem.** Rubin and Rashid state plainly that Pakistan ‘does not have border agreements with either India, into which Islamabad contests the incorporation of Kashmir, or Afghanistan, which has never explicitly recognised the Durand Line as an interstate border.’ This means Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty on both its most strategic frontiers lacks the legal certainty enjoyed by other states. The Ahmad et al. article confirms that even the Taliban during their 1996–2001 rule did not recognise the Durand Line as an international border, ‘because they believed it would reflect poorly on their nation’ — and this from a regime Pakistan had helped install precisely because it was expected to be more accommodating.

**CRITICAL ANALYTICAL POINT — RED BOX**

The Durand Line should be treated analytically as a HIGH-CENTRALITY BOUNDARY NODE — not simply a cartographic line. It is simultaneously:

1. A colonial inheritance (1893 imperial agreement, never ratified by any Afghan-Pakistani treaty)
2. An ethnic divider (cleaves Pashtun communities between two states)
3. A security buffer (the FATA system built on its Pakistani flank)
4. An unsettled legitimacy problem (no Afghan government has formally recognised it)

Its ambiguity is not accidental — it is constitutive of the conflict.

**Knowledge-Graph Typology**

<b>NODE TYPES</b>	<b>EDGE TYPES</b>
Boundary	Durand Line — 1893 Anglo-Afghan demarcation
Imperial arrangement	NWFP / Settled Districts / Tribal Agencies
State-formation event	Partition of India 1947
Governance zone	FATA — tribes not government hold security
Legal ambiguity	No Afghan-Pakistani border treaty exists
Institutional act	1949 Loya Jirga revokes all Durand treaties

**Event Chain**

1. 1893: Durand Line signed — ambiguous imperial boundary, not a full international frontier.
2. 1901: NWFP created — dual structure of Settled Districts and autonomous Tribal Agencies.
3. 1930: Simon Commission acknowledges 'British India stops at the boundary of the administered area.'
4. 1947: Partition referendum held in Settled Districts; jirga process in Tribal Agencies — both opt for Pakistan.
5. Afghanistan rejects both procedures, votes against Pakistan's UN membership, declares NWFP and Agencies unrecognised.
6. 1949: Loya Jirga revokes all treaties; Pashtunistan exile state declared.
7. Post-1947: FATA institutionalised as a frontier buffer — tribes responsible for own security.
8. Post-Cold War: FATA transformed into militant staging area for asymmetric warfare.

9. 1996–2001 and post-2021 Taliban: still refuse to recognise the Durand Line.

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## QUESTION 3 OF 8 — ANALYTICAL / EXAM APPLICATION

**Q3. How did Daoud Khan intertwine Afghanistan's domestic modernisation with its foreign policy on Pashtunistan?**

### Enriched Answer

**Daoud's Character and the Modernisation Imperative.** In September 1953 the king's cousin and brother-in-law, formerly minister of defence and commander of the central forces in Kabul, assumed the prime ministership. Rasanayagam describes Daoud as 'an autocrat who had no patience with liberal expressions of opinion' but simultaneously 'a fervent nationalist and a modernizer frustrated by the slow pace of economic development under his predecessors.' This combination — authoritarian temperament, nationalist conviction, and modernisation urgency — made Daoud a uniquely volatile actor. His programme required external military and economic assistance; his nationalism demanded the resolution of Pashtunistan on Afghan terms. These two imperatives fed directly into each other.

**The US Refusal and Its Strategic Consequences.** Afghanistan was in dire need of external economic and military assistance when Daoud came to power, and the United States was in a position to help. But the Afghan minister of national economy, Abdul Majid Zabuli, had already visited Washington in December 1948 with a well-conceived development plan and had been shunted off to the US Import-Export Bank; the US response to military requests was negative. In October 1954 Mohamed Naim, the foreign minister and Daoud's brother, made a further appeal in Washington. The reply of Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles arrived three months later: 'After careful consideration, extending military aid to Afghanistan would create problems not offset by the strength it would generate. Instead of asking for arms, Afghanistan should settle the Pashtunistan dispute with Pakistan.' Dulles then compounded the insult by sending a copy of his reply to the Pakistani government — what Rasanayagam calls 'a serious breach of diplomatic etiquette.' In Dulles's Manichaean worldview, Afghan neutrality meant 'non-alignment' — a status without value when he was building SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. Pakistan had joined SEATO in September 1954. Afghanistan was dispensable. Daoud, outraged, turned immediately to the Soviet Union.

**Soviet Entry and the First Phase of Economic Penetration (1954–55).** The Soviets had already moved. In early 1954, some months after Daoud took office, they loaned the equivalent of US\$3.5 million for construction of grain silos in Kabul and Pul-i-Kumri, and a flour mill and bakery in Kabul — the first Soviet loan to a neutral country in the Third World. Subsequent infrastructure loans followed rapidly: \$1.2 million for an oil pipeline across the Amu Darya; \$2 million for road-building equipment; \$2.1 million for an asphalt factory; and the construction of the Salang Tunnel through the Hindu

Kush — a 'spectacular feat of engineering' that for the first time in history pierced the mountain range. Rasanayagam notes the long shadow of this decision: 'The road network and the airports would prove to be of immeasurable value to the Soviets in easing the logistics of their 1979 invasion.'

**The One Unit Plan Crisis (1955) — Pashtunistan as Casus Belli.** The Afghan-Pakistani confrontations over Pashtunistan intensified dramatically in March 1955 when Pakistan announced the One Unit Plan, merging all provinces of West Pakistan into a single unit. For Daoud, this was a provocation — an attempt to treat the Durand Line as the official frontier and to absorb the Tribal Agencies into Pakistan's administrative order. Though the Agencies were not formally included in the plan, their self-governing khans feared eventual integration. In Afghanistan, mobs staged violent demonstrations at the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul and attacked consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad. The country prepared for war. On 29 March 1955 Daoud criticised Pakistan's actions on Radio Kabul; demonstrators tore down Pakistan's flag and raised the Pashtunistan flag atop the Pakistan Embassy's chancery. Pakistan responded by closing consulates and sealing trade routes. A five-month crisis was resolved only through the mediation of Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia — at enormous economic cost to Afghanistan.

**The Bulganin–Khrushchev Visit (December 1955) — The Decisive Pivot.** In December 1955, after their famous tour of India, Bulganin and Khrushchev visited Afghanistan — what Rasanayagam calls 'an unprecedented gesture towards a small and seemingly insignificant country.' They offered to train and equip the Afghan army and air force, and to grant economic assistance on a large scale — the first such Soviet programme in the so-called Third World. The financial package included a US\$100 million long-term development loan at 2% interest repayable over 30 years. Critically, the Soviets also publicly announced support for Afghanistan's position on Pashtunistan. At a banquet on 16 December 1955, Bulganin stated: 'We sympathise with Afghanistan's policy on the question of Pashtunistan. The Soviet Union stands for an equitable solution to Pashtunistan's problems which cannot be settled without taking into account the vital interests of the peoples of Pashtunistan.' Reporting to the Supreme Soviet on 29 December 1955, Bulganin added that the demands of Afghanistan to give the population of 'bordering Pashtunistan' the opportunity to express their will freely 'are justified and grounded.' This Soviet endorsement gave Afghanistan a veto shield: as the Ahmad et al. article explains, a Soviet veto would prevent Pakistan from bringing the Afghan-Pakistani dispute to the UN Security Council.

**The Scale of Soviet Penetration (1956–1978).** Between 1956 and the communist coup in 1978, Afghanistan received a total of \$1,265 million in Soviet economic assistance, mostly in the form of loans, and an additional \$110 million from the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Over the same period, Afghanistan received the equivalent of \$1,240 million in Soviet military aid, mostly in credits. By 1978, 3,725 Afghan military personnel had been trained in the Soviet Union. In contrast, Afghan officers had taken a total of only 487 courses in the United States. The US embassy noted in 1971 that 'there is no effective organization within the military to counter or even catalog the long-term possibly subversive effects of the training of the many military officers who go to the USSR for stints as long as six years.'

**The 1961–63 Border Closure — Modernisation Self-Defeated.** Daoud’s realistic modernisation programme was ultimately destroyed by his Pashtunistan obsession. In September 1960 a local quarrel between rival tribal chiefs in Bajaur erupted into a confrontation, with Afghan irregulars and ‘army troops disguised as tribesmen’ crossing into Pakistan. Pakistan used US-supplied aircraft and weapons. In September 1961 Daoud took what Rasanayagam calls ‘the extreme measure of breaking off diplomatic relations with Pakistan and sealing off the border — the irrational move of a self-deluded autocrat, explicable only by Daoud’s irredentist obsession with Pashtunistan.’ Customs duties accounted for some 40 per cent of Afghan government revenues; these were lost during the 1961–63 closure. Ministry budgets were slashed by 20 per cent. US aid projects were threatened; wheat lay rotting in Peshawar warehouses; the Kabul University construction was curtailed. By 1963 it appeared that the servicing of Afghanistan’s debt to the USSR would exceed the total value of Afghan exports to that country. On 9 March 1963, Daoud resigned.

**Social Modernisation — A Cautious Parallel Track.** While the Pashtunistan drama dominated foreign policy, Daoud pursued cautious social reform. He had legal advisers — scholars trained at both Al-Azhar and Western universities — scrutinise each reform to ensure it did not violate sharia. When they concluded that purdah and the veil had no absolute justification in Islamic law, Daoud acted ‘unofficially.’ At the 40th anniversary of Afghan independence in August 1959, the wives and daughters of the royal family and high-ranking officials appeared unveiled on the reviewing stand. When religious leaders called on Daoud to condemn the public unveiling, he challenged them to provide Islamic justification or accept the change. When mullahs began preaching against the regime, ringleaders were arrested and charged with treason and heresy. Rasanayagam notes the new element: unlike Amanullah, who had no army, ‘Daoud had a trained army behind him, and a feared secret police.’

#### ANALYTICAL INSIGHT — BLUE BOX

Daoud functions as a BRIDGE NODE in the Module 8 knowledge graph. The pathway runs: Modernisation ambition → Military need → US refusal → Pashtunistan escalation → Pakistani retaliation → Soviet entry → Soviet economic/military penetration → Loss of neutrality → Soviet invasion (1979). The critical analytical point is that Pashtunistan was not merely a foreign policy irritant running alongside modernisation; it was the ACCELERANT that made Soviet dependency structurally irreversible.

## Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
Leader	Mohammad Daoud — PM 1953–63, President 1973–78
Domestic policy cluster	Modernisation, army-building, infrastructure, women’s unveiling
External patron (sought)	United States — economic/military aid refused
External patron (obtained)	USSR — \$1,265M economic + \$1,240M military aid
Constraint event	1955 One Unit Plan; 1961–63 border closure
Infrastructure legacy	Salang Tunnel — later used by Soviet invaders (1979)
Social reform node	Women’s unveiling August 1959 — cautious, backed by army

## Event Chain

1. September 1953: Daoud assumes the prime ministership.
2. December 1948 / October 1954: Afghan requests for US arms twice refused; Dulles tells Kabul to settle Pashtunistan first.
3. March 1955: Pakistan’s One Unit Plan provokes Kabul demonstrations; Pashtunistan flag raised over Pakistani Embassy.
4. December 1955: Bulganin and Khrushchev visit Kabul — \$100M development loan, Soviet military aid agreed, public endorsement of Pashtunistan claim.
5. 1956–1978: \$1,265M in Soviet economic assistance; \$1,240M in Soviet military aid; Salang Tunnel built.
6. September 1960 – August 1961: Bajaur incursion; Pakistan closes consulates; Daoud seals the border entirely.
7. 1961–63: 40% revenue loss; 20% budget cuts; US aid projects freeze; Afghan debt to USSR exceeds export value.
8. March 9, 1963: Daoud resigns; King Zahir Shah accepts.
9. 1973: Daoud returns as president — Pashtunistan issue immediately heightened again.
10. April 1978: PDPA coup overthrows Daoud; Soviet invasion follows December 1979, aided by Salang infrastructure Daoud commissioned.

## QUESTION 4 OF 8 — ANALYTICAL / EXAM APPLICATION

**Q4. How did Pakistan respond to the threat of Pashtunistan, and what were the consequences of its 'strategic depth' doctrine?**

### Enriched Answer

**The Origins of Pakistani Insecurity — The Pashtunistan-Border Complex.** Rashid's Chapter 14 roots Pakistan's security neurosis in a very specific territorial grievance: Afghan territorial claims on parts of the NWFP and Baluchistan, reinforced by border clashes in the 1950s and 1960s. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed twice — in 1955 and 1962 — as Kabul advocated a 'Greater Pashtunistan' supported by left-wing Pakistani Pashtuns. Rais confirms the same trajectory from the Pakistani standpoint: a Soviet consolidation in Afghanistan 'would have posed a major threat to Pakistan's security,' as Moscow had historically supported Afghanistan's position on the Pushtunistan issue, recognised India's occupation of Kashmir, and showed strong indications of encouraging secessionist movements inside Pakistan. Pakistani policymakers therefore confronted what Rais describes as an acute awareness of the 'long-term impact of a Soviet-dominated Afghanistan on its border security, ethnic nationalism, and eventually domestic politics.'

**Strategic Depth — Concept and Origins.** The concept of strategic depth emerged from Pakistani military doctrine as a response to Pakistan's elongated geography. Pakistan lacks the space, depth, and hinterland to fight a prolonged conventional war with India. A friendly Afghanistan would give the Pakistani army a buffer zone and rear base — in theory. The Zia regime therefore saw the Afghan jihad of the 1980s as a dual opportunity: to expel Soviet forces and to ensure that a pliable pro-Pakistan Pashtun Mujahideen government came to power in Kabul, permanently ending the Pashtunistan claim. Rashid's Chapter 14 confirms that 'the attainment of strategic depth has been a prime objective of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy since General Zia ul Haq.' From the 1990s onward, an additional rationale was added: a friendly Afghanistan would give Kashmiri militants a base from which they could be trained, funded, and armed.

**The Internal Critique of the Doctrine.** Pakistani scholar Eqbal Ahmad — cited by Rashid — demolished the concept in a single paragraph: 'In military thought it is a non-concept, unless one is referring to a hard-to-reach place where a defeated army might safely cocoon.' Ahmad argued that genuine national security derived from 'political stability at home, economic development, wider literacy and friendly relations with neighbours' — not from imaginary strategic depth in Afghan mountains. He predicted that 'far from improving it, a Taliban victory is likely to augment Pakistan's political and strategic predicament.' Both Rashid and Rubin and Rashid confirm this was exactly what happened.

**Pakistan's Material Support for the Taliban — Scale and Mechanism.** The material dimension of strategic depth was staggering. In June 1998, Pakistan's Finance Ministry authorised 300 million rupees — equivalent to approximately US\$6 million — specifically for the Taliban administration's salaries in Kabul. For the financial year

1997/8, Rashid calculates Pakistan's total estimated aid to the Taliban at US\$30 million, encompassing 600,000 tons of wheat, diesel, petroleum and kerosene partly paid for by Saudi Arabia; arms and ammunition; aerial bombs; maintenance and spare parts for Soviet-era tanks and artillery; repairs and maintenance of the Taliban's air force; road building; electricity supply in Kandahar; and salaries. Beyond direct state funding, Pakistan 'civilianized' support through Benazir Bhutto's Interior Minister General Naseerullah Babar, who created an Afghan Trade Development Cell in the Interior Ministry. Pakistan Telecommunications set up a telephone network for the Taliban — Kandahar could be dialled from anywhere in Pakistan as a domestic call using the prefix 081, the same as Quetta's prefix. PIA and the Civil Aviation Authority repaired Kandahar airport and captured fighter jets. Radio Pakistan provided technical support to Radio Afghanistan, renamed Radio Shariat. Engineers from Pakistan's Public Works Department built roads and supplied electricity to Kandahar city.

**The ISI — Instrument and Victim of Its Own Doctrine.** The CIA provided the ISI with the latest surveillance technology during the 1980s, including equipment to monitor every telephone call in Pakistan. By 1989, Rashid states, the ISI had become 'the most powerful political and foreign policy force in Pakistan,' repeatedly overriding civilian governments in areas it considered critical — primarily India and Afghanistan. Through the 1990s the ISI's field operatives in Afghanistan were predominantly Pashtun officers with strong Islamic fundamentalist leanings. Working closely first with Hikmetyar and then with the Taliban, this Pashtun cadre developed its own agenda aimed at furthering Pashtun power and radical Islam at the expense of ethnic minorities and moderate Islam. In the words of one retired ISI officer cited by Rashid: 'these officers became more Taliban than the Taliban.' The ISI's analysis of the anti-Taliban alliance and pipeline politics consequently became 'deeply flawed, riddled with rigidity, clichés and false assumptions.'

**Rubin and Rashid's Structural Diagnosis.** Writing in 2008, Rubin and Rashid diagnose the structural bind that strategic depth created: Pakistan's security establishment believes it faces both a US-Indian-Afghan alliance and a separate Iranian-Russian alliance, each aimed at undermining Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and even dismembering the Pakistani state. This siege mentality — in their words — makes 'pressuring Pakistan' fundamentally flawed as a US strategy: 'No state can be successfully pressured into acts it considers suicidal.' They note that 84% of the materiel for US forces in Afghanistan goes through Pakistan, and the ISI remains 'nearly the sole source of intelligence about international terrorist acts prepared by al Qaeda and its affiliates in Pakistan' — giving Pakistan structural leverage that makes compellence strategies self-defeating.

**CRITICAL ANALYTICAL POINT — RED BOX**

Strategic depth converted a border dispute into a proxy-war architecture. The doctrine promised external security against India but produced exactly what it sought to prevent:

- The Taliban did not recognise the Durand Line.
- The Taliban fostered Pashtun nationalism in Islamic form — affecting Pakistani Pashtuns.
- The Taliban armed the most violent Sunni sectarian groups inside Pakistan.
- The ATT (Afghan Transit Trade) devastated Pakistani revenue — from 3.5 billion rupees lost in 1992/3 to 30 billion (US\$600 million) in 1997/8.

As Olivier Roy predicted in 1997: 'The triumph of the Taliban has virtually eliminated the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.'

**Knowledge-Graph Typology**

<b>NODE TYPES</b>	<b>EDGE TYPES</b>
Security doctrine	Strategic depth — Afghan buffer against India
State institution	Pakistani military / ISI
Buffer zone	FATA — deliberately underdeveloped and overarmed
Proxy infrastructure	Taliban / Kashmiri militants / Afghan jihad network
Material support node	US\$30M in 1997/8; 300M rupees salary authorisation June 1998
Expectation cluster	Durand recognition / Pashtunistan suppression / Kashmir base
Blowback vector	Talibanisation / sectarian violence / ATT revenue losses

**Event Chain**

1. Afghan Pashtunistan claims and border clashes (1950s–60s) generate Pakistani security deficit.
2. Zia regime frames the Afghan jihad as permanent solution — install pliable Kabul, end Pashtunistan claim.
3. CIA-ISI partnership: ISI expanded with US technology; becomes dominant domestic power by 1989.
4. Post-Soviet: ISI backs Hikmetyar, then Taliban, seeking a compliant Kabul.
5. Pakistan 'civilianises' Taliban support through state corporations and ministries (ATDC, PIA, Radio Pakistan).
6. By 1997/8 Pakistan provides US\$30M in aid; Finance Ministry authorises Taliban salary payments from ministerial budgets.
7. Taliban reject ALL key Pakistani assumptions: refuse Durand recognition, foment Pashtun nationalism, arm sectarian extremists.

8. ATT decimates Pakistani customs revenue — 3.5 billion rupees lost in 1992/3 rising to 30 billion in 1997/8.
  9. ISI field cadre becomes 'more Taliban than the Taliban' — agency loses analytical objectivity.
  10. Pakistan becomes 'victim' not 'master' of the Taliban — Rashid's central thesis, confirmed by TTP dynamic post-2021.
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## QUESTION 5 OF 8 — ANALYTICAL / EXAM APPLICATION

**Q5. In what ways did the Taliban evolve from an instrument of Pakistan's policy to a source of blowback?**

### Enriched Answer

**Origin — Social Embeddedness, Not Pure ISI Creation.** Rashid is careful to distinguish the Taliban from a simple ISI creation. The Taliban were, he insists, 'born in Pakistani refugee camps, educated in Pakistani madrassas and learnt their fighting skills from Mujaheddin parties based in Pakistan. Their families carried Pakistani identity cards.' They had deeper connections to Pakistani state institutions, political parties, Islamic groups, the madrassa network, the drugs mafia, and business and transport groups than any Mujaheddin party before them had achieved. It was precisely this social embeddedness — not ISI orders — that made them powerful. And it was this same embeddedness that made them uncontrollable.

**'Civilianisation' of Support — The State Corporation Network.** The scale of Pakistani state infrastructure deployed in support of the Taliban was remarkable. Pakistan Telecommunications set up a telephone network for the Taliban, with Kandahar accessible from anywhere in Pakistan as a domestic call using the prefix 081 — identical to Quetta's prefix. The paramilitary Frontier Corps helped set up an internal wireless network for Taliban commanders. Pakistan International Airlines and the Civil Aviation Authority sent technicians to repair Kandahar airport and the Taliban's captured fighter jets and helicopters. Radio Pakistan provided technical support to Radio Afghanistan, renamed Radio Shariat. Engineers from the Public Works Department and the Water and Power Development Authority built roads and supplied electricity to Kandahar. In January 1996, the Director General of the Afghan Trade Development Cell travelled by road from Quetta to Turkmenistan accompanied by officials from Civil Aviation, Pakistan Telecom, PIA, Pakistan Railways, Radio Pakistan, and the National Bank of Pakistan.

**The Taliban's Multi-Lobby Strategy — Autonomy Through Fragmentation.** The Taliban's unprecedented access to multiple Pakistani lobbies — the ISI, provincial governments of Baluchistan and NWFP, the Quetta transport mafia, drug barons, Islamic parties, and government ministers — gave them a capacity for manoeuvre no earlier Afghan group had possessed. Whereas in the 1980s Mujaheddin leaders had exclusive

relationships with the ISI and the Jamaat-e-Islami, with no other political or economic connections, the Taliban could play one lobby against another. At times they would defy the ISI by enlisting government ministers. At other times they would defy the federal government by gaining support from provincial authorities. As Rashid observes, 'it became increasingly unclear as to who was driving whom. Pakistan, rather than being the master of the Taliban, was instead becoming its victim.'

**Failed Expectations — The Three Assumptions Pakistan Got Wrong.** Pakistan had backed the Taliban on three core assumptions, all of which proved wrong. First, the Taliban would recognise the Durand Line — they refused, 'because they believed it would reflect poorly on their nation' (Ahmad et al.). Second, the Taliban would suppress Pashtun nationalism in the NWFP — instead they fostered an Islamicised form of it. Third, the Taliban would provide an outlet for Pakistan's Islamic radicals, forestalling an Islamic revolution at home — instead they gave sanctuary and arms to the most violent Sunni extremist groups in Pakistan, who killed hundreds of Pakistani Shias between 1996 and 1999 and whose sectarian bloodshed, Rashid argues, 'is now fuelling a much wider rift between Pakistan's Sunni majority and Shia minority.'

**Talibanisation of Pakistan — The Internal Blowback.** By the late 1990s the repercussions of the Taliban relationship were pervasive. Tribal groups imitating the Taliban sprang up across the Pashtun belt of the NWFP and Baluchistan. In December 1998, the Tehrik-i-Tuleba (Movement of Taliban) in Orakzai Agency publicly executed a murderer in front of 2,000 spectators, defying the legal process and promising to implement Taliban-style justice across the Pashtun belt. Other pro-Taliban groups in Quetta burned cinema houses, shot video shop owners, smashed satellite dishes, and drove women from the streets. Over 80,000 Pakistani Islamic militants had trained and fought with the Taliban since 1994 — a hardcore Rashid describes as 'ever ready to carry out a similar Taliban-style Islamic revolution in Pakistan.' Olivier Roy predicted in 1997 that 'Pashtun tribes are slipping towards fundamentalism and becoming increasingly implicated in drug trafficking' and that 'the de facto absorption of Afghanistan will accentuate centrifugal tendencies within Pakistan.'

**The Afghan Transit Trade — Economic Blowback.** The ATT constituted the economic dimension of blowback. The Central Board of Revenue estimated Pakistan lost 3.5 billion rupees in customs revenue in 1992/3, 11 billion rupees in 1993/4, 20 billion rupees in 1994/5, and 30 billion rupees (US\$600 million) in 1997/8. The smuggling trade stripped Afghanistan bare — timber felled wholesale, factories stripped of machinery for scrap, 65,000 vehicles stolen from Karachi alone between 1992 and 1998, ending up in Afghanistan with changed number plates. According to an academic study cited by Rashid, Pakistan's underground economy snowballed from 15 billion rupees in 1973 to 1,115 billion rupees in 1996, with its share of GDP increasing from 20% to 51%.

**Post-2001 and Post-2021 — The Structural Continuation.** The Ahmad et al. article extends the blowback arc forward. In the post-2001 era, Pakistan accepted the Taliban government because it believed the religious regime would delegitimise the Pashtunistan issue and recognise the Durand Line — but the Taliban refused both. In the post-2021 period, the New Taliban regime continued to support or shield the TTP, using it as leverage over Islamabad: 'The Afghan Taliban are using the TTP to pressure

Pakistan to continue funding the Taliban regime, as no other nation has recognised it and it receives no international funding.’ The relationship that Pakistan designed as a tool of strategic depth had inverted completely — Pakistan was now a resource base for a movement it nominally hosted but could not control.

### ANALYTICAL INSIGHT — BLUE BOX

In a knowledge graph, the Taliban should NOT be modelled as a simple one-directional proxy node FROM Pakistan.

The Taliban must be modelled as a RECIPROCAL INFLUENCE HUB connecting:

- Pakistan state institutions (ISI, ministries, state corporations)
- Pakistani religious networks (madrassas, Jamaat, Deobandi parties)
- Pashtun borderland societies (refugees, drug mafia, transport networks)
- Kashmir militancy (bases in Khost from 1996)
- Sectarian violence (Sunni extremists arming against Pakistani Shias)
- TTP (post-2001 structural continuation of the blowback dynamic)

### Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
Proxy actor	Taliban — socially embedded, not ISI-created
State sponsor	Pakistan — ISI, ATDC, state corporations
Social network	Madrassas, refugee camps, transport mafia, drug networks
Domestic spillover	TTP, sectarian militancy, Talibanisation of NWFP/Baluchistan
Economic damage node	ATT — US\$600M revenue loss in 1997/8 alone
Failed expectation	Durand recognition / Pashtunistan suppression / Islamic radical outlet

### Event Chain

1. Taliban emerge from Pakistani refugee camps and madrassas — socially embedded from the start.
2. Pakistan 'civilianises' support: state corporations, ATDC, PIA, Telecom, Radio Pakistan — all deployed.
3. Taliban access multiple Pakistani lobbies: ISI, provincial governments, transport mafia, drug barons, Islamic parties.
4. Multi-lobby access → Taliban play lobbies against each other → structural autonomy increases.
5. Taliban refuse to recognise Durand Line; foment Pashtun nationalism; arm Sunni sectarian extremists.
6. ATT revenue losses: 3.5B rupees (1992/3) → 30B rupees / US\$600M (1997/8).

7. Over 80,000 Pakistani militants trained with Taliban — structural Talibanisation of Pashtun belt.
  8. Post-2001: Karzai regime blames Pakistan for Taliban support; ISI uses Taliban as hedge against India-allied Kabul.
  9. Post-2021: New Taliban enable TTP as leverage over Pakistan — complete inversion of the proxy relationship.
- 

## QUESTION 6 OF 8 — RECALL / ANALYTICAL

**Q6. How does Afghanistan serve as a chessboard for regional and global powers?**

### Enriched Answer

**Rais's Trijunction Thesis (1993).** Rasul Bakhsh Rais opens his 1993 Asian Survey article with a precise geographic statement: 'Afghanistan's location at the trijunction of the three strategic regions of South, Southwest, and Central Asia both raises its importance for its neighbors and makes it vulnerable to their adverse influences.' The central argument that follows is equally precise: 'external intrusions into Afghanistan are rooted in the internal confrontations among the Afghan groups who are divided along ethnic, religious, and regional lines.' The quest for power compels Afghans of all political orientations to seek foreign support — but never entirely on their own terms, always at the cost of some freedom to act independently. The Marxist regime invited in the Soviet troops. The Mujahideen took up arms against the regime but could not defeat it without Pakistani, American, and Saudi support. Whatever the rationalisation for foreign connections, they are never divorced from the interests of the suppliers of weapons and money.

**Pakistan — Front-Line State and Power Broker.** Among the regional states, Pakistan has been most affected by Afghan conflict and most deeply embedded in Afghan politics. Rais explains Pakistan's dilemma lucidly: acceptance of Soviet occupation would have compromised Pakistan's security links with Gulf states and the West; confrontation carried the risk of Soviet military retaliation. Pakistan chose confrontation. The ISI, Rais notes, 'did an effective job in planning and implementing insurgency operations against the Soviet forces' — though the distribution of arms remained controversial, with the US favouring direct supply to field commanders and Pakistan preferring to route everything through Peshawar-based political parties to maintain control. The Geneva Accords of 1988 were a face-saver for the Soviet Union; they left unresolved the crucial question of replacing the Marxist regime in Kabul. Pakistan then attempted to shape the post-Soviet political settlement through the Peshawar Accord (April 1992) and the Islamabad Accord (March 1993), with Iran and Saudi Arabia as co-guarantors.

**India — Proxy Support and Strategic Opposition.** India had given special attention to Afghanistan as part of its effort to block Pakistan among Islamic countries. Because of its rivalry with Pakistan, India gave political support to Afghanistan, encouraging Kabul to pursue a confrontational strategy with Islamabad. India was, Rais states, 'the only country outside of the Warsaw Pact bloc that maintained normal relations with the Afghan puppet regimes' — recognising all of the Soviet-backed governments, inviting their leaders, extending economic assistance, and allegedly stationing advisers to help man sensitive military installations. India's primary concern was preventing the revitalisation of Washington's security links with Pakistan. Post-1992, Rais identifies three Indian concerns: the intensification of the Kashmir insurgency inspired by the Afghan resistance example; the threat from transnational Islamic movements; and the fear that Pakistan might forge an Islamic alliance among Central Asian states that would give Islamabad military access to facilities across the region.

**Iran — Cultural Proximity and Shiite Patronage.** Iran's relationship with Afghanistan is rooted in deep cultural affinity: 'the dominant elite culture of Afghanistan is an extension of Persian culture. Afghanistan's official language, Dari, is a close variant of Farsi, and Iran's civilisational influences, although extending to a large part of Central Asia, are much deeper in Afghanistan.' During the Soviet war, Iran initially condemned the aggression, opened its borders to refugees, and extended material support to Shiite resistance groups. The Iranian revolution profoundly influenced the Shiite Hazara population of the Hazarajat region. In March 1990, Iran achieved a major consolidation when eight Shiite parties met in Tehran for the first time, forming an alliance under the Hizb-i-Wahdat (Unity Party). Iran sent military advisers from its revolutionary guards to train Shiite guerrillas, though this role diminished as Soviet forces concentrated on the eastern provinces. After the fall of Najibullah, Iran became 'an important backstage player in the formation of Mujahideen coalition governments in Kabul,' using power-sharing negotiations to obtain better representation for Shiite groups.

**Central Asian States — New Actors with Fragile Identities.** The independence of the Islamic Central Asian republics added a new factor to Afghan security after 1991. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan share borders with Afghanistan and have ethnic, cultural, and religious affinities with Afghan populations. But their elites perceive Islamist movements as highly destabilising at a time when they are still constructing new political identities. The conflict in Tajikistan developed along ethnic and tribal lines that threatened to spread across borders — some 70,000 Tajik refugees crossed into northern Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Masud, himself a Tajik, was accused of sending arms into Tajikistan. Rais notes the structural tension: if Pashtuns reestablished their dominance in Kabul or denied autonomy to ethnic regions, Afghan Uzbeks and Tajiks might look toward their ethnic kin across the border.

**Rubin and Rashid — The Great Game Upgraded to Buzkashi.** Writing in 2008, Rubin and Rashid update the chessboard metaphor with a more violent Afghan image: 'The game has become too deadly and has attracted too many players; it now resembles less a chess match than the Afghan game of buzkashi, with Afghanistan playing the role of the goat carcass fought over by innumerable teams.' The number of players has exploded; those living on the chessboard are now fully involved; and the intensity of the violence and the threats it produces affect the entire globe. They add a key quantitative

dimension: 84% of the materiel for US forces in Afghanistan goes through Pakistan — a figure that gives Pakistan structural leverage over every US policy option and makes the 'pressure Pakistan' strategy fundamentally incoherent.

### GEOPOLITICAL READING — TEAL BOX

Afghanistan should be modelled as a MULTI-SCALAR ARENA NODE, not simply a country-node.

It connects simultaneously:

- Local militias and commanders (Masud, Hikmetyar, Dostam)
- Neighbouring states with overlapping interests (Pakistan, Iran, India, Central Asian republics)
- Global powers with competing strategic agendas (US, USSR/Russia, China)
- Transnational networks (al Qaeda, drug traffickers, ATT transport mafia)
- Infrastructure fantasies (pipelines, roads, the Salang Tunnel)

The chessboard metaphor understates the problem because chess has rules. Afghanistan's multi-party conflict has none.

### Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
Structural position	Trijunction of South / Southwest / Central Asia
Regional state (Islamic)	Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia
Regional state (other)	India, Central Asian republics
Global power	US, USSR/Russia, China
Internal actor	Afghan factions, Taliban, al Qaeda, warlords
Mediating institution	ISI, UN, Peshawar Accord, Islamabad Accord
Proxy alliance	Hizb-i-Wahdat (Iran-backed Shiite coalition, 1990)

### Event Chain

1. 1979: Soviet invasion transforms Afghan internal conflict into a global Cold War theatre.
2. Pakistan becomes front-line state; ISI orchestrates Mujahideen war with CIA/Saudi funding.
3. India backs Soviet-aligned Kabul — the only non-Warsaw Pact state to do so.
4. Iran supports Shiite Hazara resistance; Hizb-i-Wahdat formed March 1990.
5. Central Asian states gain independence (1991) — add new ethnic/political dimension to Afghan conflict.
6. Soviet withdrawal (1989) → Najibullah falls (1992) → Mujahideen civil war → Pakistan brokers Peshawar and Islamabad Accords.

7. Taliban emerge (1994) → three powers (Pakistan, Saudi, UAE) recognise; all others oppose.
  8. Post-2001: US-led coalition replaces one patron network with another; India, Iran, Russia back Northern Alliance.
  9. By 2008: Rubin & Rashid identify no multilateral framework — Afghanistan remains a buzkashi carcass contested by innumerable teams.
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## QUESTION 7 OF 8 — ANALYTICAL / RECALL

**Q7. What does the history of pipeline negotiations in the 1990s reveal about the geopolitics of Afghanistan?**

### Enriched Answer

**The Corridor Fantasy — Afghanistan as Transit Space.** The pipeline story illustrates the recurring tendency to imagine Afghanistan as a corridor-state whose geo-economic potential could be unlocked if only one could establish a sufficiently stable central authority. The Central Asian gas corridor vision — moving Turkmenistan’s gas through Afghanistan and Pakistan to South Asian markets — required a recognised, stable government in Kabul willing to sign a binding transit agreement. Instead, the 1990s produced a sequence of commercial fantasies colliding with geopolitical realities.

**The Two Competitors — Bidas and Unocal.** Two companies competed for the pipeline concession. The Argentine company Bidas opened an office in Kabul in March 1997 and negotiated a 150-page contract with 12 Taliban mullahs over weeks of painstaking work that summer. The mullahs had no oil and gas experts and few who spoke adequate English — the contract had to be translated into Dari. The only technical expert among the Taliban delegation was an engineering graduate who had never practised engineering. Unocal, the American company, declined to negotiate a contract until there was a recognised government in Kabul. Unocal had instead invested US\$900,000 in the Centre of Afghanistan Studies at the University of Omaha, Nebraska, establishing a school in Kandahar that trained approximately 400 Afghan teachers, electricians, carpenters, and pipe-fitters. By its own account, Unocal spent approximately US\$15–20 million on the CentGas project in total.

**The Diplomatic Carnival — Taliban in Buenos Aires, Washington, and Houston.** The pipeline competition produced a surreal series of encounters. A Taliban delegation visited Buenos Aires in February 1997 — requiring the mini-skirted Argentine secretaries at Bidas headquarters to cover up in long dresses and long-sleeved blouses. Simultaneously, another Taliban delegation was in Washington meeting with State Department officials and Unocal, lobbying for US recognition. On their way home both delegations stopped in Saudi Arabia, visiting Mecca and meeting with Saudi Intelligence chief Prince Turki. In November 1997 a Taliban delegation headed by the one-eyed Mullah Mohammed Ghaus arrived in Houston to meet Unocal, was put up in a five-star

hotel, visited the zoo, supermarkets, and the NASA Space Centre, and had dinner at the home of Unocal Vice-President Marty Miller, admiring his swimming pool and large comfortable house.

**The Structural Obstacles — War, Recognition, and Rival Routes.** Despite this diplomatic courtship, the project kept collapsing against structural obstacles. In May 1997 at an Ashkhabad summit, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Unocal signed an agreement committing Unocal to reach financial closure by December 1997. Two weeks later the Taliban were driven out of Mazar-e-Sharif with heavy casualties — the ISI's analysis that they were on the verge of capturing the north had been badly wrong. Marty Miller told a press conference on 5 June 1997: 'It's uncertain when this project will start. It depends on peace in Afghanistan and a government we can work with.' In July 1997 the US dramatically reversed course, announcing it would not object to a Turkmenistan-Turkey pipeline crossing Iran — directly undermining the argument for the Afghan route. Sheila Heslin, the energy expert at the NSC, made the underlying US strategic logic explicit: US policy was to promote rapid development of Caspian energy 'specifically to promote the independence of these oil-rich countries, to in essence break Russia's monopoly control over the transportation of oil from that region.'

**Russia — Refusing the Corridor.** Russia's position was unambiguous. Gazprom, the Russian gas giant, refused to join the CentGas consortium. Its chief executive Rem Vyakhirev stated: 'To give up one's market... would be, at the very least, a crime before Russia.' The structural reason was clear: Russia had every incentive to keep Central Asian energy dependent on Russian pipelines, and every incentive to keep the region unstable enough that US pipeline alternatives could not be financed or built. As Rashid notes, 'it was in the interests of Iran and Russia to keep the region unstable by arming the anti-Taliban alliance, so that US pipeline plans could never succeed.'

**US Policy — A Cluster of Confusions.** Rashid's assessment of US policy during this period is unsparing, drawing on multiple observers. Paul Starobin described US strategy in Central Asia as 'a cluster of confusions.' Martha Brill Olcott called it 'arrogant, muddled, naive and dangerous.' Robert Kaplan described the region as 'a frontier of anarchy.' The core problem was that until July 1997, when Strobe Talbott made his Washington speech, the US had no strategic plan for accessing Central Asian energy. US oil companies were faced with what they could not do rather than what they could do — forbidden from pipelines through Iran and Russia — without any coherent alternative framework. Between 1994 and 1996 the US had supported the Taliban politically through its allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, 'essentially because Washington viewed the Taliban as anti-Iranian, anti-Shia and pro-Western,' while 'conveniently ignoring the Taliban's own Islamic fundamentalist agenda, its suppression of women and the consternation they created in Central Asia.'

**Feminist Pressure and the Final Withdrawal.** The US policy reversal from late 1997 was driven in part by an effective domestic campaign. Afghan women activists such as Zieba Shorish-Shamley persuaded the Feminist Majority to spearhead a signature campaign against the Taliban. Three hundred women's groups, trade unions, and human rights groups signed up. Mavis Leno, wife of comedian Jay Leno, pledged US\$100,000

and testified before Congress that 'the US bears some responsibility for the conditions of women in Afghanistan. For years our country provided weapons to the Mujahideen groups to fight the Soviets.' Hollywood involvement followed — 'Tibet is out. Afghanistan is in,' wrote the Washington Post. Hillary Clinton added public condemnations. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called the Taliban 'despicable' on the steps of Pakistan's Foreign Office in November 1997. Following the US bombing of Bin Laden's camps in August 1998, Unocal pulled out its staff from Pakistan and Kandahar, and in December 1998 formally withdrew from the CentGas consortium.

### GEOPOLITICAL READING — TEAL BOX

The pipeline story teaches a structural lesson that applies to every corridor fantasy involving Afghanistan:

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE CANNOT OUTFRAN SOVEREIGNTY AND WAR.**

The corridor vision requires: (1) a recognised, stable government; (2) a settled security environment; (3) regional consensus on the route; (4) commercial viability without rival alternatives.

In the 1990s, Afghanistan had none of these. The Taliban provided a semblance of order but not international recognition. Pakistan and the ISI provided political backing but not the security closure that commercial financing required.

The deeper lesson: Afghanistan's corridor potential has always been asymmetric — it is geopolitically valuable enough to attract investment fantasies, but politically unstable enough to defeat them.

### Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
Corporation	Unocal (US), Bidas (Argentina), Gazprom (Russian)
Transit state	Afghanistan — corridor fantasy
Resource origin	Turkmenistan / Central Asian gas
Armed authority	Taliban — no recognised government
Competing corridor	Iran route (Turkmenistan-Turkey), Iran-Pakistan BHP
Blocking power	Russia / Gazprom / anti-Taliban alliance
Domestic lobbies (US)	Feminist Majority, Hollywood, Hillary Clinton

### Event Chain

1. Post-Soviet: Central Asian energy + Afghan corridor vision → Unocal and Bidas compete for CentGas concession.
2. February 1997: Taliban delegations in Buenos Aires (Bidas) and Washington (Unocal) simultaneously.
3. May 1997: ISI assessment that Taliban will take Mazar — two weeks later Taliban driven out with heavy casualties.
4. July 1997: US reverses, allows Turkmenistan-Turkey pipeline through Iran — Afghan route marginalised.

5. October 1997: Taliban given 15 cents per 1,000 cubic feet transit fee — they demand more; were not consulted.
  6. Unocal faces growing feminist pressure (Feminist Majority), shareholder objections, and Bin Laden bombing fallout.
  7. December 1998: Unocal formally withdraws from CentGas.
  8. April 1999: Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Taliban try to revive project — no investor willing to touch it.
  9. Lesson: commercial confidence in Afghanistan cannot survive political uncertainty — the corridor requires peace, not just a map.
- 

## QUESTION 8 OF 8 — EXAM APPLICATION / SYNTHESIS

**Q8. Why is a regional 'grand bargain' deemed necessary to stabilise Afghanistan, and is it achievable?**

### Enriched Answer

**The Security Gap — Why Military Solutions Fail on Their Own.** Rubin and Rashid open their 2008 Foreign Affairs article with a stark structural diagnosis: the Afghan and Pakistani security forces lack 'the numbers, skills, equipment, and motivation' to confront growing insurgencies or to uproot al Qaeda from its new base in the FATA along the Afghan-Pakistani border. The numbers make the point sharply. By mid-2008 the Afghan National Army had reached 66,000 troops — already requiring a plan to expand to 122,000. Add 82,000 police and the total Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) would reach 204,000. Estimated annual cost: approximately US\$2.5 billion for the army and US\$1 billion for the police. Against this, the Afghan government collected about 7% of a licit GDP estimated at US\$9.6 billion — total revenue of approximately US\$670 million per year. Even under the most optimistic projections — uninterrupted real growth of 9% annually, revenue extraction nearly doubling to 12% of GDP — total domestic revenue in ten years would be about US\$2.5 billion. 'In short, the army and the police alone would cost significantly more than Afghanistan's total revenue.' Long-term international subsidies for ANSF were politically and institutionally untenable — decisions would be taken by the US Congress and other foreign legislatures, not the Afghan National Assembly. A long-term foreign troop presence was equally untenable: 'no government in the region around Afghanistan supports a long-term US or NATO presence there.'

**The Paralysis of War-on-Terror Rhetoric.** Rubin and Rashid argue that US diplomacy has been paralysed by the binary rhetoric of the 'war on terror,' in which all opponents are assimilated into a homogeneous 'terrorist' enemy. This rhetoric 'thwarts sound strategic thinking' because it prevents distinguishing between local or national insurgents

with specific political grievances and global terrorist organisations like al Qaeda. Two Taliban spokespeople separately told The New York Times that their movement had broken with al Qaeda since 9/11. In November 2006, Maulana Fazlur Rahman — one of the Taliban's leading supporters in Pakistan — publicly stated in Peshawar that the Taliban could participate as a party in elections in Afghanistan, just as his party did in Pakistan, 'so long as they were not labelled as terrorists.' Such statements could not simply be taken at face value, but they could not simply be dismissed either. A political solution required separating local insurgents from global terrorists — precisely what war-on-terror rhetoric refused to do.

**Pakistan's Siege Mentality — The Core Obstacle.** The grand bargain's central target is Pakistan's siege mentality. Rubin and Rashid identify the structural problem directly: 'The Pakistani security establishment believes that it faces both a US-Indian-Afghan alliance and a separate Iranian-Russian alliance, each aimed at undermining Pakistani influence in Afghanistan and even dismembering the Pakistani state.' On 19 September 2001, President Musharraf publicly stated that the overriding reason for supporting the US-led intervention in Afghanistan was 'to save Pakistan by preventing the United States from allying with India.' In return, he wanted concessions on Pakistan's security interests — concessions that were not delivered. Pakistan does not have border agreements with either India or Afghanistan. It considers Afghanistan within its security perimeter. The concept of 'pressuring' Pakistan is therefore 'flawed': 'no state can be successfully pressured into acts it considers suicidal.' Until Pakistan's sense of siege is addressed through political reassurance rather than military coercion, its support for insurgents will continue because that support is not irrational by Pakistani strategic logic — it is the cheapest available hedge.

**The Architecture of the Grand Bargain.** The proposed solution is a high-level diplomatic initiative — initially a contact group on the region authorised by the UN Security Council — encompassing the five permanent members plus NATO and Saudi Arabia. The contact group's agenda would be comprehensive. It would promote dialogue between India and Pakistan about their respective interests in Afghanistan and about finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute. It would seek a long-term political vision for the future of the FATA, 'perhaps one involving integrating the FATA into Pakistan's provinces, as proposed by several Pakistani political parties.' It would move Afghanistan and Pakistan toward discussions on the Durand Line and other frontier issues. It would involve Moscow in the region's stabilisation so that Afghanistan 'does not become a test of wills between the United States and Russia, as Georgia has become.' It would provide guarantees to Tehran that the US-NATO commitment to Afghanistan is not a threat to Iran — recalling that Washington and Tehran had maintained exactly such a dialogue until around 2004. It would ensure that China's interests and role are brought to bear in international discussions: China was already committed to a US\$3.5 billion stake in the Aynak copper mine south of Kabul.

**The Economic Dimension — Regional Integration, Not Just Aid.** The diplomatic framework would need to be backed by a multiyear international development aid package for regional economic integration, targeting 'the most affected regions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, particularly the border regions.' At the time of writing, the US was proposing to provide US\$750 million in aid to the FATA 'but without

having any political framework to deliver the aid' — a perfect example of the piecemeal approach that Rubin and Rashid diagnose as inadequate. China's role is identified as potentially transformative: with its development of mineral resources and access roads in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the financial support for the port of Gwadar, and its expansion of the Karakoram Highway linking China to northern Pakistan, Beijing had a major interest in regional stability through which goods could flow from Xinjiang to Arabian Sea ports and energy pipelines could carry oil and gas from the Persian Gulf and Iran to western China.

**Rais's Complementary Framing (1993).** Rais offers a complementary structural point: 'there is hardly an internal institution based on consensus in the country that could mediate the conflicts of interest among the warring Afghan factions.' This role has fallen upon neighbouring powers — but 'a foreign role in negotiating accords and promoting consensus among groups involved in a power struggle, though valuable, has limitations. And prolonged foreign involvement, even in a mediatory role, may backfire as the groups who feel left out or inadequately represented in any power arrangement turn hostile.' The Peshawar Accord (April 1992) and the Islamabad Accord (March 1993) both illustrated this dynamic: they were brokered by Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, signed by Mujahideen parties, but rejected by internal commanders and Shiite groups not party to the negotiations. The grand bargain's legitimacy problem is therefore not merely external — it is also internal to Afghan political culture.

#### ANALYTICAL INSIGHT — BLUE BOX

The grand bargain is necessary because the Afghan war is NOT a single-country problem. It is a REGIONAL SECURITY FORMATION sustained by:

- Unresolved borders (Durand Line, Kashmir)
- Rival patronage systems (US-India-Afghanistan vs. Pakistan-Saudi-Taliban)
- Competing threat perceptions (Pakistan's siege mentality vs. Afghan fear of Pakistani interference)
- Economic extraction and destruction (ATT, opium, resource competition)
- Absent legitimacy frameworks (no Afghan political institution capable of sustaining national consensus)

Military escalation addresses symptoms. Only the grand bargain addresses structure.

## Knowledge-Graph Typology

NODE TYPES	EDGE TYPES
Diplomatic framework	Grand bargain / UN Security Council contact group
Security gap	ANSF costs exceed total Afghan revenue indefinitely
Core obstacle	Pakistan's siege mentality — US-Indian-Afghan encirclement fear
Regional issue cluster	Kashmir, Durand Line, FATA integration, Iran guarantees, Russia reassurance
Economic lever	China investment — Aynak (\$3.5B), Gwadar, Karakoram Highway
Political opening	Taliban-al Qaeda separation; Taliban electoral participation (Fazlur Rahman)
Mediating institution	UN Security Council contact group + bilateral intelligence dialogue (ISI-RA)

## Event Chain

1. By 2008: military-first strategy produces escalating insurgency on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border.
2. ANSF sustainability gap identified: costs exceed all conceivable Afghan domestic revenue — long-term foreign subsidies institutionally incoherent.
3. Pakistan's strategic calculus unchanged: Afghan Taliban as hedge against India-allied Kabul; ISI retains Taliban as leverage.
4. War-on-terror framing prevents distinguishing local insurgents from global terrorists — blocks political settlement.
5. Rubin & Rashid propose UN Security Council contact group: US, UK, France, Russia, China + NATO + Saudi Arabia.
6. Contact group agenda: Kashmir dialogue; FATA provincial integration; Durand Line discussions; Iran guarantees; Russia reassurance; China investment framework.
7. Taliban overtures acknowledged: two spokespeople told NYT movement broke with al Qaeda since 9/11; Fazlur Rahman signals electoral participation possible.
8. Conditions for any settlement: Taliban disavowal of al Qaeda + guarantee Afghan territory not used for international attacks.
9. Without such audacity, Rubin & Rashid conclude: 'there is little hope for Afghanistan, for Pakistan, or for the region as a whole.'

**EXAM APPLICATION — GOLD BOX**

For Section B synthesis: The grand bargain question is the MODULE 8 MASTER SYNTHESIS QUESTION. The strongest answers will:

1. Begin with the security gap (Rubin-Rashid) to show why military solutions are structurally insufficient.
2. Use the siege mentality analysis (Pakistan's unresolved borders with both India and Afghanistan) to show why pressure strategies fail.
3. Draw on Rais (1993) to show the long pattern of external mediation failing when internal legitimacy is absent.
4. Use the pipeline failure (Rashid chs.13-14) to show that economic integration also requires political settlement first.
5. Conclude with the Daoud-to-grand-bargain arc: every Afghan crisis from 1953 to 2008 resulted from the same structural problem — external actors imposing frameworks on an internally fragmented state whose neighbours cannot agree on a regional order.

## MODULE 8 — CONDENSED MASTER KNOWLEDGE-GRAPH MAP

### Core Node Clusters

#### BOUNDARY CLUSTER

Durand Line (1893) — NWFP — Tribal Agencies — FATA — Partition of India (1947)

Key edges: divides\_Pashtun\_population → produces\_frontier\_ambiguity → enables\_irredentist\_claim → institutionalises\_FATA\_buffer

#### IDENTITY CLUSTER

Pashtun identity — Afghan state nationalism — Pakistan Islam-based nationalism — Pashtunistan (discursive-claim node)

Key edges: mobilises\_identity\_for → interstate\_pressure → threatens\_national\_narrative → justifies\_Islamic\_counter-ideology

#### STATE-STRATEGY CLUSTER

Mohammad Daoud (PM 1953-63, President 1973-78) — Pakistani military — ISI — Strategic depth doctrine

Key edges: links\_modernisation\_to → Pashtunistan\_escalation → Soviet\_entry → neutrality\_lost — strategic\_depth → proxy\_war → blowback

**PROXY CLUSTER**

Taliban — Kashmiri militants — TTP — Sectarian extremist groups — Mujahideen parties

Key edges: supported\_by → Pakistan — resists\_control\_by → Pakistan — generates\_blowback\_in → NWFP / Baluchistan / Pakistani economy

**REGIONAL-POWER CLUSTER**

US — USSR/Russia — India — Iran — China — Saudi Arabia — Central Asian states

Key edges: each\_intervenes\_via → own\_client\_network — zero-sum\_competition\_sustains → Afghan\_fragmentation — corridor\_fantasies\_blocked\_by → war\_and\_rival\_routes

**GEO-ECONOMIC CLUSTER**

Central Asian gas (Turkmenistan) — CentGas consortium — Unocal / Bidas — Afghan Transit Trade — Aynak copper mine (\$3.5B China) — Salang Tunnel

Key edges: corridor\_vision\_requires → sovereign\_stable\_authority — collapses\_without → peace — ATT\_destroys → Pakistani\_customs\_revenue

**SETTLEMENT CLUSTER**

UN Security Council contact group — Political inclusion of local insurgents — FATA provincial integration — India-Pakistan Kashmir dialogue — Iran / Russia / China reassurance

Key edges: grand\_bargain\_addresses → structural\_causes — military\_escalation\_addresses → symptoms\_only

**Master Causal Sequence — Module 8 Arc**

The following sequence is grounded in all five Module 8 source texts:

1. **Partition / Durand ambiguity** → Pashtunistan claim constructed by Afghan elites
2. **Pashtunistan escalation** → Pakistani insecurity deepens
3. **Pakistani insecurity** → Strategic depth doctrine adopted (Zia era)
4. **Strategic depth** → Taliban supported as Kabul proxy
5. **Taliban support** → Proxy autonomy increases; all Pakistani assumptions fail
6. **Proxy autonomy + blowback** → Talibanisation / ATT / sectarian violence in Pakistan
7. **Regionalization of conflict** → All neighbours drawn in; no consensus possible
8. **Failed corridor fantasies** → Pipeline dreams collapse without peace (Unocal, 1998)

**9. Structural impasse** → Grand bargain becomes the only coherent framework

**REPOSITORY BOUNDARY**

All evidence, statistics, dates, quotations, and analytical claims in this document are drawn exclusively from the five uploaded Module 8 source texts. No outside knowledge has been introduced.