NUMBER 172

PROSPECTS FOR AFGHANISTAN

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Prepared for Kennan Institute/USIA Conference on
Soviet Foreign Policy, The Wilson Center, Washington, D.C.,
March 15, 1984

Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies,
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Prospects for Afghanistan

More than four years have passed since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the war continues---with no end in sight. Initial expectations on the part of many Wetern analysts that the Soviets would soon win the war against the disorganized and poorly equipped Afghans have proven premature. Equally hasty have been the intermittent expectations of an imminent "political solution" resulting from UN sponsored mediation. A pullout of Soviet troops from Afghanistan is not imminent and it is extremely unlikely that in the near future a political compromise can be found between the two principal parties to the conflict: the Soviet Union and the Afghan partisans.

What are the impediments to an agreement between the Afghan resistance and the Soviets? Why has the UN-sponsored approach to bring about an Afghan settlement stalled? And given the absence of a settlement in the near future what policy dilemmas do the Western powers, especially the United States, face towards the Afghan conflict?

Impediments to a Settlement

The major impediment to a political settlement of the Afghan conflict is that neither side is willing to accept what is acceptable to the other side. Both the partisans and the Soviets believe that time is on their side. This assessment is based on a recognition of a paradoxical development: each is better off than it was compared to the period immediately after the invasion. At least in part because of this, the Afghans are demanding what amounts to an unconditional Soviet withdrawal. While Moscow finds anything short of a satellite Afghanistan unacceptable.

The general impression in the West is that the Soviets are "bogged down" in the Afghan "guagmire". Many believe that the situation for the

Soviets in Afghanistan has not improved since the 1979 invasion. Western reports have generally focused on Soviet difficulties. A few analysts go as far as portraying Moscow desperate for a "face saving" way out of Afghanistan. In my view these analyses are highly exaggerated. In fact, Moscow could point to a number of successes in its Afghan policies. These positive developments strengthen the position of those in the Soviet leadership who might favor a hard line policy in Afghanistan, arguing that a compromise acceptable to the Afghans would undermine Soviet prestige and might even cause difficulties elsewhere.

An important success for the Soviets has been the establishment of a large Afghan state security service called KHAD. This organization is reported to have more than 20,000 members. Trained by the East Germans and the Soviet KGB, it not only watches the activities of the state apparatus but also seeks to infiltrate the resistance in order to gather intelligence and promote internal difficulties among the partisans. KHAD also seeks to manipulate the many rivalries among the Afghan ethnic groups and win supporters by offering money, command posts and other privileges to local leaders. The Soviets have also established two other small security organizations. One it the Sepahi Ingilab (revolutionary guards). We do not know how many members this group has, but it is likely to be several thousand. It is largely used in cities. Another organization established for use against the partisans in the rural areas is the militia, which consists of local population, including tribal groups, paid handsomely by the government.

Although significant difficulties and rivalries persist between the two factions of the Communist Party--Perchan and Khalg--overall party membership has increased significantly. It has been generally believed

that party membership at the time of the 1978 coup was between 5,000 and 10,000. Afghan government officials now claim more than 90,000 members, while Western estimates of the number of card holders have ranged between 30,000 and 60,000.

Despite the fact that the Soviets and their local allies do not control all of Afghanistan, Moscow has made progress in the Sovietization of the country, changing the country's political, economic, social and cultural system. The Soviet domination of the Afghan economy has increased. More than sixty percent of Afghan trade is with the Soviets and their allies. Although Soviet oil and natural gas specialists have been active in Afghanistan for some time, since the invasion Soviet efforts in this area have increased. Moscow has remained secretive about what it might have discovered. Afghan natural gas reserves known before the Soviet invasion were estimated at 120 billion cubic meters. Moscow has been importing this gas paying substantially less than international prices. Afghan gas is almost totally taken to the USSR, and the Afghans do not even know for sure how much gas is exported because the meters recording the amount are located on the Soviet side. Moscow also takes an unknown quantity of oil from Afghanistan.

The Soviets have also increased Afghanistan's infrastructural links with their own country. They have completed a road and rail bridge across the Amu Darya, the river separating the two countries. Moscow has also established permanent communication facilities in Afghanistan linked to Moscow. These include the deployment of a satellite communication ground station in Kabul. At the educational and cultural levels, there has also been significant changes. In fact, today large numbers of Afghans receive higher education only in the Soviet Union and Eastern

bloc countries. There are estimates that as many as 9,000 civilian students--of all ages--are studying in the USSR.[1] The number for military is reported to be around 5,000.[2] In Afghanistan itself, although a large part of the country's educational institutions have been disrupted or destroyed (50% according to Kabul government's figures)[3] those that remain are used for indoctrination. The Soviets have introduced structual changes in the Afghan school syllabus, including the mandatory learning of Russian. A rewritten history of Afghanistan is taught in schools and the literacy campaign, still funded by UNESCO, is used to gain converts in rural Afghanistan. Moscow is hoping to create a new cadre of Afghans to protect and run a Soviet-oriented state.

The military level has been the most problematic for the Soviets, but even here a degree of success can be detected. For one thing, the Soviet tactics have pushed a large number of Afghan civilians out of the countryside. Although there is some uncertainty about the total number of Afghan refugees abroad, three million in Iran and Pakistan is the generally agreed upon number. Besides, over a million have migrated internally, moving from rural areas to bigger cities, especially Kabul, which is under Soviet control. Therefore, some one-fifth of the Afghan population has had to leave the country, negatively affecting resistance prospects and creating a problem for those who support the partisans, in particular Pakistan. The Soviets have also inflicted much higher costs on the Afghans than they have sustained themselves. As many as half a million Afghans are thought to have been killed since the Communist takeover in 1978. Soviet aerial bombardments, ground offensives, anti-personnel mines, chemical weapons and occasional deliberate massacres have inflicted high losses on Afghan civilians. As far as massacres are concerned, in one

incident in Shamali region in 1982, Soviet-controlled forces machine-gunned hundreds of men, women and children.There have been recent reports of massacres in Istalif and Godel near the city of Ghazni.

As far as the military costs to the Soviets are concerned, while they may be higher than they expected, they nevertheless have been rather low, especially when compared to the Afghans. Although accurate figures are not available, on the average it appears that no more than 3,000 Soviets are killed each year. Moscow has had some success in turning the war into an Afghan-Afghan war, by making use of the Afghan soldiers and militia forces. Although Moscow has had substantial difficulty in building a very large Afghan military force, they use the available Afghan military units and militias as cannon fodder in its battles against the resistance. The Afghan armed forces numbered 100,000 men before the 1978 coup. Since the invasion the number has fallen to around 30,000. The number has remained at this level over the past three years.Fatalities have been very high among forces, probably five to six times the number of Soviets killed.

Soviet pacification policy has aimed at minimizing Soviet loss of life. Moscow's strategy appears to consist of holding on to the major cities, highways and military facilities, while applying force intermittently against the areas of resistance in the countryside. Recently Soviet tactics--especially attacks against civilian target and some areas of sustained resistance--have become more brutal. For example, on January 16, 1984, in retaliation for an attack against the Kandahar airport, they bombarded the nearby village of Zaka Shariff. According to the resistance source in January, alone in the Kandahar region the Malajat, Dand and Arghandab, Pash and Zabhur areas were heavily bombed. Many civilians were killed.[4] Earlier in December the villagea of Sangdan and Godel outside the

city of Ghazni were "razed to the ground."[5] Resistance forces and civilians also suffered heavy casualties in the Mazari-Sharid Province in Northern Afghanistan when planes based in Soviet Central Asia carried out extensive bombing of Diwardmaidan and Chaharsang villages.[6] Moscow appears to believe that in time these tactics and the costs they impose on the Afghans will either discourage the population from supporting the resistance or force it out of the country.

The war is also providing Moscow with extensive combat experience that could be useful in future conflicts in other theatres. Moscow has learned that some of its plans and tactics were inadequate for the barren and mountainous Afghan terrain. They have lacked sufficient responsiveness and integration of ground with air forces and tactical flexibility. They have learned about the difficulties of operating fixed wing aircraft in mountainous terrain. These problems have been recognized and extensively discussed in Soviet military publications.[7] The new lessons in the use of helicopters, in fighting in the mountains and in counter insurgency warfare could have relevance for possible wars involving Soviet forces in Southwest Asia and Europe.

At the international level, although Afghanistan remains a source of embarrassment, the world is increasingly forgetting about the issue. Moscow's efforts to isolate Afghanistan from other issues and to get the world to forget about it have had significant success. The Reagan administration ended the grain embargo imposed by President Carter against the Soviets because of their invasion of Afghanistan. No significant international agreement with the Soviets is being delayed or prevented becasue of the continued war in Afghanistan. It could be said that it

took a Soviet invasion to put Afghanistan on the international media map. Before that Afghanistan was at best a synonym for obscurity. It appears that this situation is slowly being restored.

Given these factors it is extremely unlikely that Moscow would offer conditions for a settlement of the Afghan issue that would be acceptable to the partisans. The Soviets can argue that time is on their side and that they are better off now than they were at the beginning of the post-invasion period. They have explored ways to gain legitimacy for a Soviet-dominated government in Afghanistan. They have declared ambiguously that they might withdraw their forces should such an agreement be accepted by the opposition forces. To the partisans who fought the Soviet-oriented government in Kabul before the invasion, when they were few in number and much weaker, the Soviet conditions are unacceptable. Besides, many do believe that the Soviets would in fact withdraw. To the Soviets, the favorable changes and absence of substantial costs reinforce the position of those who take a hawkish position on the Afghan issue. They could argue that withdrawal would encourage similar opposition in other satellite countries.

Like the Soviets, the Afghan partisans too believe that time is on their side, even though they appear to have more problems than the Soviets. They are much stronger today than thay were before or immediately after the invasion.

The Soviet invasion gave greater legitimacy to the opposition, bringing more supporters to these groups. In part due to external support and in part because of the capture of weapons from Soviet or Karmal government forces, the resistance is better armed than before. They have

also become more proficient in the use of weapons and have learned from past mistakes.

The Partisans (Mujahedeen)

The key variable causing Moscow's difficulties in Afghanistan has been the Afghan resistance against the occupation of their country. Despite many problems, the partisan forces (known as Mujahedeen or Holy Warriors) have resisted the Soviets with determination and courage, continuing their resistance longer than many analysts expected.

There are numerous groups involved in the struggle against Moscow. The best known ones are Islamically oriented and are headquartered in Pakistan and Iran. At present, two Islamic alliances are headquartered in Pakistan. One of these can be broadly characterized as fundamentalist and consists of seven members: Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, Nassrullah Mansour's Harakati-Engelab Islami, Mohammed Mir's National Liberation Front, Rafi-ullah Mousin's Harakat-i-Engelab Islami, Rasoul Sayaf's Islamic Alliance for Liberation of Afghanistan, and Yunis Khali's Hezb-i Islami Afghanistan. The alliance has a 60-member supreme council. Many of its leaders have agitated against secularism and Marxist ideologies for decades. In the 1960s, they had organized the Jawanani Musalman (Young Muslims). They have strong ties with Muslim brotherhood movements in other Islamic states. The Pakistani fundamentalist party Jamaati-Islami is closely associated with this alliance, and this organization generates funds and other assistance for the Afghan group.

The other alliance can be broadly classified as traditionalist. This alliance consists of three groups. One is Mahazi Malli-ye Islami,

headed by Ahmad Gailani, the second is Jabbe-ye Najate Melli Afghanistan, led by Sebghatullah Mujadedi, and Mohammed Nabi's Harakat-e Ingilabi-Islami.

These alliances--despite their common antipathy towards the Soviet Union and sympathy for Islam--have failed to form a united front. There are conflicts not only between the two alliances but also within each alliance and even within some of the important groups. At times serious serious fighting has occurred between the two largest fundamentalist parties, the Jamiati Islami and the Hizbi Islami. Hikmatyar's forces have also been involved in fighting against those of another fundamentalist group headed by Sayaf. According to a local commander in the Maiden area, "the fight between these two groups lasted two months and 17 days, some 487 men have been killed from both sides."[8] Many other groups have accused the Hizbis, who are the most radically fundamentalist, of undermining the resistance.

While the Pakistan-based group receives considerable coverage in the international press most of the fighting in Afghanistan has been conducted by local commanders numbering in the hundreds with considerable autonomy but nevertheless affiliated with Peshawar-based leaders. Most receive or buy weapons and other materials from Pakistan-based groups but maintain only loose ties with Peshawar leaders. A number of popular local commanders have emerged. Some of these commanders such as Panshir's Ahmad Shah Massoud have organized more effectively than the Peshawar groups. Many of these field commanders have demonstrated their willingness to cooperate across group and alliance lines. The improvement in tactical coordination has manifested itself in areas such as Panshir, Badakhshan and Kabul. For example in the Kabul operation there have been

many reports of cooperation between Mohammad Nabi's Harakate Ingilabi-Islami and the Hizbi-Islami headed by Khalis, even though in Peshawar the two organizations belong to two different alliances. In fact the inability of the Peshawar-based groups to unite has damanged their standing with the Afghan population. There has been considerable pressure on popular commanders to move towards greater independence from the Peshawar group and even to establish an alternate leadership.

Although the Peshawar-based Islamic groups are the largest Afghan partisan group, there are a number of others. The Shiites in Afghanistan have established their own organization with representation in Iran. These are the shura-ye Ettefag, NASR, and Harakati-Islami. Of these, NASR at present appears currently to be in greatest favor in Iran's Islamic Republic.

The fragmentation of the resistance has reduced the political costs of the occupation to the Soviets. A united movement would have received greater international recognition and support. It could have challenged the legitimacy of the Karmal regime in the international forum such as the UN. However, militarily the partisans have held their own against Soviet forces and have had many important victories. They have prevented a Soviet military victory so far. If the Soviets expected to conduct a quick and surgical thrust into Afghanistan eliminating President Hafizullah Amin and his regime and turning over power to more servile elements with a pacified Afghanistan, they made an error. The partisans have frustated many Soviet efforts to extend the government control to many parts of Afghanistan.Substantial areas of the country remain outside government control.In fact, in at least one instance, in Panshir Valley, the Soviets signed a ceasefire agreement with the local commander Ahmad Shah Massoud

in 1983 for a six-month period. The ceasefire was made at the request of the Soviets, after several of their efforts to gain control of the region failed. Although in part this gesture might have been motivated by a desire to cause conflict and dissention among the partisans, its effect was to further increase Massoud's stature.

Despite the relative growth in the power of the resistance forces, they are not in a position to dislodge the Soviets from major cities, especially Kabul. They have been unable to prevent favorable change in relative Soviet position from taking place. They hope to increase the cost of occupation to the Soviets and increase their incentive to accept a compromise compatible with Afghanistan's sovereignty. Thus far they have been unable to bring this about.

The UN and Peace in Afghanistan

During 1983 a number of analysts believed that Moscow's dispatch of the Karmal government representative to Geneva for UN sponsored talks with Pakistan was an indicator of a genuine Soviet desire to reach a political settlement consistent with Afghan sovereignty. This was a mistaken viewpoint. During these talks Moscow did not want to agree to anything that would appear like a failure of its Afghan policy. It wanted a Soviet-oriented government accepted in Afghansitan and access to Afghan military facilities insured. At the same time Moscow was unwilling to provide a date for the completion of the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan. It wanted to increase Pakistani incentive to accommodate to Soviet wishes, by being willing to be receptive to repatriation of Afghan refugees and offers of non-interference in Pakistani affairs, including acceptance of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the legitimacy of which has been at times questioned by Afghan governments. The talks

did not directly include the principal forces involved in the conflict: the Soviet Union and the Afghan partisans. They were conducted by the Soviet installed government and Pakistan. To the Soviets and the Karmal government, this in itself was a small victory, as they saw it as representing a tacit Pakistani recognition of the Kabul government. No one could expect the regime in Kabul to negotiate its own demise. The partisans resented the talks because of their own exclusion and fear that Islamabad might agree to a "compromise" unacceptable to the Afghan fighters. In discussions with resistance leaders in Peshawar last year, one frequent complaint was that the Pakistanis did not coordinate their negotiating strategy with them.

What might have happened if the Pakistanis had agreed to a "settlement" unacceptable to the Afghans? This could have led to the elimination of Pakistani support for the Afghan resistance. Even with such a change in Pakistani policy, the war inside Afghanistan will continue. The effectiveness of the resistance would decline over time without Pakistani assistance, but resistance will not cease. The main source of partisan weapons is, in any case, the Afghan and Soviet armies. Iran, which might oppose a formula unacceptable to the partisans, might provide some of the assistance now provided by Pakistan. Even without much assistance, the resistance could go on for some time. This could provide the pretext for the Soviets to argue that external support has continued, requiring a substantial Soviet presence. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in the first place because a Communist dominated government was unable to survive on its own. Without the Soviet presence and with the added increase in partisan capability, a Communist regime would be even less viable now than before. For Pakistan and others acquiescence in such a government would therefore almost

necessarily mean acquiescence in a Soviet presence for the foreseeable future.

Two concepts have been proposed as possible means to deal with the gap between the Soviet goals and those of the Afghan resistance. One formula proposed includes a Soviet commitment to withdrawal during a specified period of time along with a parallel Pakistani commitment to the elimination of support for the Afghan resistance, and the establishment of a coalition government in Kabul. The coalition government would be dominated by pro-Soviet Communists but would also include some non-Communist Afghans. Hints of a possible Soviet acceptance of such an idea were taken as an indication of a genuine Soviet willingness to compromise.It seems far more likely, however, that it reflected only a change in Soviet tactics, along a line that Moscow used in Eastern Europe in the 1940s.

Although I recognize that the Afghan situation is not identical to that of Eastern Europe after the War, I believe Moscow's use of coalition tactics there may have instructive lessons for the Afghan case. Therefore, an examination of this problem by those involved in the negotiation about the future of Afghanistan and our own government could be extremely valuable.

After the Second World War, the Soviets came to dominate Eastern Europe. However, the establishment of Soviet-style governments did not come about immediately. Initially, Moscow used the tactics of coalition politics to achieve monopoly of power, even though the pattern of communsit takeover varied from country to country. In Romania, when the communist government was imposed by force (order of Vishinsky), still a coalition government was established. Noncommunist groups were compelled to accept

government positions and join election tickets with the communists. In Hungary, too, from late 1944 to late 1947, the country was ruled by the Soviet forces and a Moscow selected "coalition government." In Yalta, Stalin agreed to broaden the composition of the Lublin government in Poland. Moscow characterized these coalitions as a novel and unique form of democracy.

However, soon these coalitions were replaced by what in fact amounted to one-party communsit dictatorships. Unlike many of the other participants in these coalitions, the communists and the Soviets did not see coalitions as part of an enduring order and from the beginning were committed to the subversion of the coalition arrangement in favor of communist hegemony. As a tactical measure, the coalition phase served the purpose of providing legitimacy to the communist party's participation in government, especially when they lacked the necessary support to rule alone, or when forceful subjunction of the opposition appeared too costly. In Eastern Europe coalition governments were part of Moscow's flexible and diversionary strategy.

In pursuing this method, the Soviets and their allies have followed a recognizable pattern. First, they want the members of the coalition to commit themselves to a "common cause." In the case of Eastern Europe, the intended cause at first was the struggle against the Nazis. Over time, they redefined the common cause to mean struggle against "imperialism" and "reaction." Second, once a coalition was formed, the Soviets and their allies pressured the other members to compromise on their goals in the name of unity. Third, the communists pushed for control of agencies that had the means to exercise coercion and to affect basic structures (interior, police, army, justice, and agriculture). Fourth, once their

position in government had become legitimized, the communists moved to destroy their rivals. This process usually began by attacks against some or all of the other major groups as "reactionary" and "violating their agreements." Attempts were made to discredit the leaders of rival groups personally. They encouraged some groups to merge with communists and give up autonomous organizations. Given the East European pattern, a Soviet willingness to accept such an arrangement in Afghanistan is likely to be aimed at gaining legitimacy for pro-Soviet groups in the Kabul government, a goal they have failed to reach by other means. The Soviets have indicated that they regard the 1978 pro-Soviet coup as irreversible and that they intend to keep Afghanistan in the Soviet sphere. In keeping with these considerations, Moscow is likely to seek a dominant role for the pro-Soviet groups, while accepting others as part of the government if unavoidable. Even if some non-Communist groups participate in a coalition, the Communists are likely to make a sustained effort to eliminate them. It is not surprising that the partisans reject the coalition concept. Given absence of this attitude by the resistance, a political solution involving the acceptance of coalition government would necessitate forceful Pakistani disarmament of the resistance.Apart from other considerations this is not likely to be easy.

Another concept under discussion in connection with UN sponsored talks has a decentralized Afghanistan. According to this approach, what might emerge inside Afghanistan is a Soviet-oriented center with the rural areas controlled by resistance and local leaders. Already, as we have seen, Kabul's ability to control much of the rural areas has been minimal.Trying to change its weakness to an advantage, the Karmal government has offered to grant virtual exemption from taxation to rural areas in exchange for a cessation of hostility by the partisan groups. Such an

arrangement cannot work in the long term since both the Communist regime and many partisan groups are committed to a strong center. Conflict between the two sides will be inevitable.

A mutually agreeable solution of the Afghanistan dispute appears unlikely in the near future. So long as the Soviets define their interest in Afghanistan in terms of having a Communist-dominated government in Kabul there can be no political solution to the problem unless the resistance is defeated. However, should the Soviets see their interest in Afghanistan only in defensive military terms and recognize the right of the Afghans to determine their own political system, the prospect for a political settlement would increase. Moscow's security requirement could be met by permanent military neutralization of Afghanistan. This can be done in an international conference including all the major powers. Moscow, which initially claimed that it came to protect Afghanistan from becoming an American base, could claim that it has prevented that possibility.What this, however, in fact would mean is an admission by Moscow that its policy in Afghanistan failed. This, I believe, they are unlikely to do in the near future. For Afghanistan in the foreseeable future the prospects appear as more of the same: the continuation of the tragic war.

Western Dilemmas

What policy dilemmas does the on-going conflict in Afghanistan pose for the West, especially the United States? The best frame-work for analyzing these policy dilemmas is to focus on what benefits would accrue to the West from a political settlement of the Afghan conflict and then to analyze what policy might improve the prospects for a settlement. Will a political settlement of the Afghan conflict involving total withdrawal

of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan be beneficial for the West? There has ben considerable confusion about the military implications of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan for the West. Some analysts have argued that the Soviet invasion had farreaching implications for the security of Southwest Asia and the Gulf, increasing significantly the relative Soviet ability massively to threaten Western interests there. The invasion occured after a number of developements in or near the region negatively affecting Western intersts had already taken place. These included the 1978 coups in South Yemen and Afghanistan, the revolution in Iran and the frustrating hostage crisis. The invasion reinforced Washington's growing sense of threat to its interests in the region. The Carter administration feared that the Gulf states and Pakistan might "accommodate to the rising wave of Soviet influence and power before they themselves were swept away."[9]

Others have argued that the Soviet move into Afghanistan had no significant effect on relative Soviet ability for power-projection to the Gulf. These analysts believe that bases in the Soviet Union's own territory, the Transcaucasus, are closer to the Gulf than existing or potential bases in Afghanistan. They have dismissed the possibility that strategic consideration vis-a-vis the Gulf played any role in Soviet calculations in invading Afghanistan.

There have been many speculations about the reason for the Soviet invasion. It is possible that those Soviet leaders participating in the decision favored intervention for varying reasons. Whatever the Soviet motives, it is incorrect to argue that the occupation had no effect on relative Soviet capability for power-projection in the Arabian Sea and in the Persian Gulf region, although the effect in not uniform.

The invasion has not changed the relative Soviet power capability as far as the upper Gulf is concerned. Bases in Soviet Transcaucasus are closer to the upper Gulf (Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia) than existing or potential bases in Afghanistan. However, as Table I illustrates, bases in Afghanistan have improved Moscow's ability for projecting power to the Arabian Sea, the Straits of Hormuz, and parts of Iran and the whole of Pakistan.

Combat Radii of Aircraft in Soviet and Soviet Allies Services (in kilometers).

MiG 21	370-740
MiG 23	900-1200
MiG 27 (D and J)	390[10]
Mig 25 (A and E)	1070-1450[11]
Su-15	725
Su-17	360-630
Su-24	322-950[12]
Yak-28	925

Distance from Existing or Potential Base Areas in Afghanistan to Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.

Kandahar to Bandar Abbas	542
Herat to Bandar Abbas	515
Farah to Bandar Abbas	429
Kandahar to Strait of Hormuz	742
Farah to Strait of Hormuz	715
Herat to Strait of Hormuz	629
Kandahar to Karachi	770

Distance From Soviet Air Bases to Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf Targets.

Nebit Dag to Bandar Abbas	742[13]
Jerevan to Bandar Abbas	976
Nabit Dag to Hormuz	942
Jerevan to Hormuz	1176
Kazi Magimed (near Balev) to Hormuz	1660
Askhabad (Turkmenistan) to Hormuz	1325
Askhabad to Karachi	1595

Existing or potential bases could improve the Soviet position in several ways. First, some areas previously outside the range of Soviet tactical aircraft have been put within their range. Second, in the case of targets that are already within the range of Soviet aircraft, but are closer from Afghan bases, this change has several positive effects for the Soviets. The decrease in distance increases the combat capability of Soviet aircraft since there is a negative relation between the combat radius and payload of aircraft from Afghan bases, and Soviet aircraft can carry more weapons than they could from their own more distant facilities. Having facilities closer to target also increases capability of the aircraft to spend longer time in the combat area (combat loiter). Bases closer to the target also increase the potential for damaged aircraft to return to a friendly base for repair and recovery while they might not make it if they had to travel longer distances.

A Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan will have a significant military benefit for the West by reducing the potential Soviet threats to the surrounding region. It will have several other effects as well. It will improve Pakistan's security and decrease its fear of a joint Soviet-Indian assault. It will also improve the prospects for greater US efforts to reduce the prospects for nuclear proliferation in the region.The Soviet invasion has resulted in reduced American attention to this important problem in this area.

At the political level, a political settlement of the Afghan issue could make a contribution in improving relations between the West and the Soviet Union. It could lead to greater regulation of superpower competition in various regions of the world, especially in the Persian

Gulf. Direct superpower conflict is more likely in this region than at the center of Europe. Greater regulation could involve joint efforts to prevent or manage the spread of nuclear weapons and reducing the prospects for superpower involvements in domestic and regional conflicts.

What can the West do to increase the prospects for a political settlement of the Afghan conflict? Ideal-typically, there are three options open to the West: (1) abandon the Afghans by gradually decreasing support or accepting a phony settlement, (2) continue the current policy, providing some support for maintaining a low level resistance, (3) provide greater support to increase the effectiveness of the Afghan resistance. Although it is unclear whether any feasible Western policy might bring about a total Soviet withdrawal, it is my view that the third option has comparatively better prospects than the other two.

Even though it might contribute to a short-term improvement in AmericanSoviet relations, abandoning the Afghans will have a number of negative consequences. The reduction of support for the partisans will over time result in the weakening of the Afghan fighters and consolidation of Soviet power in Afghanistan. A weak resistance diminishing in effectiveness is likely to decrease Soviet incentives to accept a political settlement. It is unlikely that a Western policy to "defuse" the situation by abandoning the resistance will be reciprocated by a Soviet-military withdrawal and recognition of self-government for the Afghans. It is even possible that such a move by the West might be seen as a sign of weakness encouraging further aggression.

Western acceptance of a political settlement consisting of a Soviet oriented government in Kabul and Soviet access to Afghan military

facilities will also have long-term undesirable effects. First, it will set a bad precedent if every time Moscow invades another country, the West responds by helping to establish a Communist dominated government in that country. Moscow's incentives to invade non-Communist countries, such as Iran, would increase. In fact, beside the issue directly related to Afghanistan a major reason for supporting the Afghans is the hope that Moscow would learn that expansion is costly and therefore not to be undertaken lightly.

Second, such a solution will give the Soviets what they want and remove Afghanistan from the world political agenda, thus eliminating an important Soviet political vulnerability. Since the Afghan resistance will not go along with such an arrangement, conflict will continue in Afghanistan.This would insure a Soviet presence in Afghanistan in support of the government. The cut-off of Western support to the resistance would reduce the cost of occupation to the Soviets. The net result would be that the West would at least indirectly be helping the Soviets achieve their goal. Such a development could undermine the confidence of sympathetic groups and governments in the West. A phony settlement will not have any significant gains for the West.

Option two is to continue the current policy. Since the Soviet invasion, the United States has tried to help sustain a low-level resistance in Afghanistan. Since the Afghan program is covert, it is difficult to be confident about the size of the effort. Afghan resistance leaders insist it is very small. It is also possible that much of what is intended for the Afghans does not reach them. Washington, while favoring UN negotiations, has also opposed a phony settlement. This policy has had some success. The war in Afghanistan is still going on; important friends

in the region are broadly in agreement with it; and the war has not spread.Because of these reasons and the usual bureaucratic inertia, major changes are likely to be opposed.

However, the current approach has significant weaknesses and might well lead to a Soviet military victory in Afghanistan. The policy has not produced a political settlement consistent with Afghan sovereignty and is unlikely to produce enough pressure on the Soviets to lead to such a settlement. The conflict will be increasingly forgotten internationally, and over time the many problems of the resistance could diminish its effectiveness and ultimately lead to its defeat.

The third option involves keeping the door open for a genuine settlement while increasing the effectiveness of the resistance. Whether a more effective resistance will pressure the Soviets enough to seek a compromise is not self-evident, but it has better prospects than the other two alternatives.

What can the West do to increase resistance effectiveness? The Afghan fighters are faced with a number of major problems which could threaten their long-term effectiveness. They include disunity, organizational and equipment difficulties, diminishing international attention, and an uncertain regional environment. Dramatic changes cannot take place in these areas quickly, but significant improvement can be made over time.

Some of these changes can be made only in coordination with Pakistan. Pakistan is a key country in affecting the relative capabilities of the Afghan partisans. The fighters are very dependent on it for support. Pakistan can use its leverage to encourage greater unity among the resistance. When Pakistan has promoted greater political coordination

among its Afghan partisans it has usually succeeded. For example, during the Islamic meeting in Morocco last December, at Pakistan's suggestion, the Afghan partisans selected Rabbani as their spokesman. Emphasizing the tole of Pakistan does not mean that purely Afghan factors are not important.They are. Afghans themselves are largely responsible for their lack of unity. But given Pakistan's enormous leverage it can promote greater coordination among Peshawar based resisance. This Pakistan has not always been willing to do. Pakistan's role is also important in increasing the military effectiveness of the Afghan resistance, by allowing more weapons to reach the resistance groups, and in helping them to use these weapons effectiely.

Pakistan might not go along with a policy of increasing resistance effectiveness. The West along with China and the Gulf states can play an important role "encouraging" Pakistan to be helpful in this effort. They can help Pakistan in increasing its ability to deal with existing or potential problems that it might face because of a prudent escalation of the Afghan conflict. Already, in part, in order to discourage Pakistan's abandonment of the Afghan resistance and increase its self-confidence and defense capabilities, Washington has agreed to a $3.2 billion package of economic assistance and military sales. As part of a strategy to increase resistance effectiveness more assistance could be provided to Pakistan. Japan, which has substantial interest in Southwest Asia, could do more in providing economic assistance to Pakistan. At the military end, to discourage possible increased air attacks against Pakistan with Western support the country's air defenses could be strengthened.

It is in Pakistan's own interest as well for the Afghan resistance to become more effective. Of course, there are some potential risks to

Pakistan such as increased air attacks from an increase in resistance pressure against the Soviets. Islamabad, however has to compare the risks to its security from a prudently increased effectiveness of the resistance with the risks associated with an ineffective resistance. A weak resistance could bring about the consolidation of Soviet power along the Pakistani border, increasing Soviet ability to pressure and influence Pakistan. The internal conflicts in Pakistan would provide Moscow with opportunities. However, while the conflict in Afghanistan goes on, the Soviets can hardly spare much of their existing forces there for large ventures against Pakistan. Pakistan is able to manage smaller incursions into its territory should it decide to do so. Should increased resistance pressure lead to a compromise on Afghanistan including a Soviet withdrawal, Pakistan's security would increase significantly.

According to Afghan commanders, what they need the most is an increasse in their ability to protect themselves and Afghan villages against Soviet air power, especially helicopters. Moscow is increasingly relying extensively on helicopters to attack resistance areas and civilian population. Increased resistance capability in the area will significantly increase the cost to the Soviet, perhaps encouraging them to seek a compromise, but will also have a positive effect on Afghan morale.

There is also a need for greater international attention to the Afghan problem. Greater international attention increases the political cost to the Soviets, which in turn can increase their interest in a negotiated solution; conversely, decreased attention contributes to the Soviet effort at pacification. Public interest in the West remains limited. Government leaders here and among our allies have not succeeded

so far in persuasively articulating the importance of the Afghan conflict to the opinion leaders and the public. Afghan resistance leaders have not been very skillful in providing timely and reliable information on the war or in presenting their views and values in a manner that Western audiences can understand. As part of a multiprong effort to help the Afghans, we could do more to assist the Afghans to increase their ability to provide better media access for covering the war and publicizing their cause. More than four years have passed since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.This is longer than many had expected. I believe that without an increase in the effectiveness of the Afghan resistance, a political settlement is in our interest, prudently increasing the effectiveness of the Afghan resistance will have positive effects.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Selig Harrison, "A Breakthrough In Afghanistan?," Foreign Policy, Summer 1983, pp. 3-26.

[2] Edward Girardet, "Russia's War in Afghanistan," Central Asian Survery, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1983, pp. 83-110.

[3] Speech by the Afghan Delegate, UN General Assembly, 1983.

[4] Afghan Information Center, Monthly Bulletin, No. 34, January 1984, 11: 4-5.

[5] Ibid., P.7.

[6] Ibid.

[7] David C. Isby, "Soviet tactics in the War in Afghanistan", Jane's Defense Review, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1983, p. 683.

[8] T. Monthly Bulletin, no.34, p. 14.

[9] Gary Sick, "The Evolving U.S. Strategy toward the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf," unpublished MS, p. 31.

[10] Charles Fairbanks, "On Possible Soviet Threat to the Gulf," Outline-Paper for the European-American Security Workshop, Elvetham Hall, Great Britain, June 27, 1980.

[11] Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1982-1983.

[12] With two external links in hi-lo-hi formation and with 4400 lbs. of weapons, the combat radii could extend to 18 km.

[13] Albert Wohlstetter, Interest and Power in the Persian Gulf: an Overview, Los Angeles: Pan Heuristics, pp. II-49.